

AMERICAN ATHEISTS, INC.

<http://www.atheists.org>

<http://www.americanatheist.org>

For more information, please contact:

Edwin Kagin (859-384-7000 or ekagin@atheists.org)

Frank Zindler (614-299-1036 or fzindler@atheists.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 19, 2006

ATHEISTS CALL FOR OPEN DISCUSSION, "FREE MARKET OF IDEAS" OVER DA VINCI CODE FLAP

An Atheist advocacy group today chided religious groups wanting to boycott or censor the "Da Vinci Code" movie, and instead called for "open discussion and a free market of ideas" regarding the controversial film.

Spokespersons for American Atheists also said that the same level of scrutiny applied to Dan Brown's blockbuster thriller and the film adaptation should also be used to question the Old and New Testaments, and all other religious claims as well.

"If we're going to pick apart the Da Vinci on a line-by-line basis and point out all of the shortcomings of the film, we should be doing the same with some of the astounding claims accepted on blind faith that we find in the Bible," said Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists.

Johnson added that the Vatican and other religious groups are guilty of a double-standard when it comes to the "Da Vinci Code."

"They want us to believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, walked on water and rose from the dead, but then tell us that it is blasphemy to suggest that he may have done something prosaic like engage in an affair or have offspring."

Dave Silverman, Communications Director for American Atheists, said that while both the novel by Dan Brown and the film adaptation of the Da Vinci Code have obvious flaws, religious groups should refrain from insisting that a disclaimer be inserted into the movie.

"We'd have to put a similar disclaimer at the beginning of any religion-themed film," said Mr. Silverman. "What about movies like Cecil B. DeMille's 'Ten Commandments,' or Mel Gibson's 'Passion of the Christ' ? What if Muslims or Scientologists didn't like a particular program?"

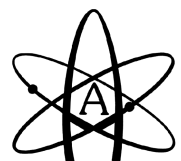
"When it comes to artistic expression, censorship and warning labels are inevitably a dangerous and poor choice for consumers," Silverman added.

For further information on The DaVinci Code and related issues including the historicity of the Bible, contact:

EDWIN KAGIN (859-384-7000 or ekagin@atheists.org)

FRANK ZINDLER (614-299-1036 or fzindler@atheists.org)

AMERICAN ATHEISTS is a nationwide movement that defends civil rights for Atheists; works for the total separation of church and state; and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy.



American Atheists, Inc. P. O. Box 5733 Parsippany, NJ 07054-6733

Tel.: (908) 276-7300 Fax: (908) 276-7402