



# Freedom of religion

On February 17, 2000, World Pantheist Movement members from four countries gathered in Rome to commemorate the martyrdom of Giordano Bruno (*page 8*). We came, not just because Bruno was a pantheist, but to celebrate the importance of freedom of religion and of ideas.

Freedom of religion is a recent gain in Western history, but history has shown that is critical not just for human liberty, but for progress in science, ethics and ways of life.

Repression has a longer history. The pagan Romans fed Christians to the lions. Christians, as soon as they achieved power, persecuted pagans. Throughout the dark ages, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, heretics were tortured and burned, and to express atheism or pantheism meant almost certain death.

This grim repression took its toll, not just on religious thinking but on all thinking, writing and research. At every turn the established churches stood out against advancing science, persecuting scientists whose ideas contradicted the Bible.

We owe our modern freedoms to a very long struggle reaching back to the Reformation. In the 18th century courageous writers tested the boundaries and paid with exile and the banning of their works.

It was not till the nineteenth century that dissenters and Jews could aspire to political office in most European countries, and atheists and pantheists could speak, write and publish without fear of imprisonment.

Religious freedom is still not fully secure in the modern world (*page 2*). Even supposedly civilized Western countries are not exempt. Members of the WPM and lists often tell of how they suffer discrimination and ostracism in certain

parts of the USA (*page 12*).

It's important for us to remember that pantheists, humanists and atheists enjoy the same religious rights as everyone else. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees freedom of religion, worship, observance, practice and teaching, and bans any form of coercion which would impair that freedom. The low-level pressure and discrimination which our members and other non-Christian minorities face in the Bible belt is a violation of rights – rights which the USA has recognized, promotes abroad and should guarantee at home.

Those rights mean that we pantheists have a right to have holidays for our special “sacred” days, such as the solstices and equinoxes.

We have the right to promote our views, and to educate our children in our own beliefs. That right is internationally recognized (*Page 4*).

The use of one's religious rights is essential to the competition of ideas. If we don't use our rights to promote and to teach, while others do, then pantheism will remain the still small voice, discovered by a lucky few, that it has been until now. Meanwhile the voices of Christianity and Islam will permeate the globe.

Of course, we don't have the right to force our beliefs on anyone, nor do we have any means of doing so, nor would we ever wish to. All we seek to do is to inform, make aware, communicate and debate.

Every human being is a free agent who can choose to believe as he or she wishes. Only when that freedom is fully recognized and supported is intellectual progress possible.

**Paul Harrison**

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# Religious Freedom

**Religious freedom is a recent gain, and despite United Nations recognition it is still being fought for in many countries.**

Religious freedom, like so many other human rights, has had to be struggled for at great personal cost by many courageous individuals.

In ancient Greece it was dangerous not to venerate the gods of the state: Socrates was condemned to death for alleged atheism. The Roman Empire eventually encompassed so many cultures that religious freedom was generally tolerated and Rome became a huge melting pot of religions. The Christians, almost alone, were singled out for repeated persecution.

Everything changed when Constantine converted to Christianity in 312 AD and began to favoritize the religion. The emperor Theodosius made Christianity the sole religion of the

Roman state in 380, and in 391 banned pagan worship. From then until the Reformation religious freedom vanished from the West and heretics risked ostracism or death. Jews were tolerated, but often persecuted.

It was the wars and civil wars between Catholics and Protestants, and the compromises necessary to bring peace, that gave rise to the first steps in religious freedom in the 17th century. The Dutch Republic was the prime leader from 1648, but it was not till the end of that century in the UK, and not till 1789 in France, that dissent could be pursued without serious risk to life and liberty.

In the USA settlers were often refugees from persecution and the early colonies enacted religious tolerance – as long as you were some type of Christian. Tolerant Maryland in 1649 made it a crime to decry other Christian denominations – yet blasphemers and atheists were to be put to death.

The American and French revolutions, with their ideology of the Rights of Man, established religious freedom on a firmer footing (see panels). But disadvantages still remained in most of Europe for Jews and dissenters, who could not hold political office until well into the 19th century.

Totalitarianism in Germany and Russia reversed some of these gains. In Germany persecution of Jews, followed by the Holocaust, was based on a twisted view of race rather than religion. In Russia, while it never became illegal to pursue a traditional religion, everything possible was done to suppress and discourage worship

and practice.

The establishment of the United Nations broadened the scope of the human rights approach. Freedom of religious belief, worship, observance, practice, and teaching was recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This was expanded in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1967 (see panel), and further in the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms

of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

Religious freedom now covers all of the following:

The right to have a religion, to change your religion, or to have no religion at all. To worship, to assemble for worship, to have places of worship. To observe holy days, to be given holidays for these, and to observe ceremonies. To observe practices such as special clothing or diets. To solicit funds, to appoint clergy, to teach your beliefs publicly, to publish and disseminate materials about them. Finally, parents have rights to rear their children in their own religion, and to send them to religious schools.

Under the UN rights instruments, none of these activities is to be subject to any form of coercion, including discrimination, distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference – not just by governments, but by any institution, group of persons, or individual person. In practice this means that governments should take active steps to prevent these practices when they occur. The only exceptions are practices that interfere



**Constantine**

## **Religious rights ancient and modern**

All ... are to be allowed the free and unrestricted practice of their religion, for it accords with the good order of the realm and the peacefulness of our times that each should have freedom to worship God after his own choice.

### **Constantine, Edict of Milan, 311 CE**

There should be no compulsion in religion.

### **Mohammed, Koran, The Cow: 256**

No person shall be molested for his opinions, even such as are religious, provided that the manifestation of these opinions does not disturb the public order established by the law.

### **Declaration of the Rights of Man, French National Assembly, 1789 CE**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

### **US Constitution, Amendment I, 1791 CE**

with the rights and freedoms of others or with public order and morality.

Of course making declarations about rights, and actually realizing them and guaranteeing them for all, are different things. The UN machinery to enforce human rights is weak, and relies on moral and political pressure.

Religious freedom is still restricted in many countries. Outright suppression is rare but does occur. Iran has done its best to eradicate the Bahais, who numbered some 300,000 before the 1979 revolution. Two hundred leaders have been executed, the hierarchy destroyed, people have been forced to convert to Islam or flee the country.

In China, all traditional religions were attacked during the cultural revolution: monasteries were wrecked, religious personnel were denounced, temples were closed and their possessions destroyed. After Mao's death in 1976 a policy of toleration of religion was introduced, but there is still considerable state interference in religious affairs, especially in Tibet where Buddhist monks are seen as potential rebels.

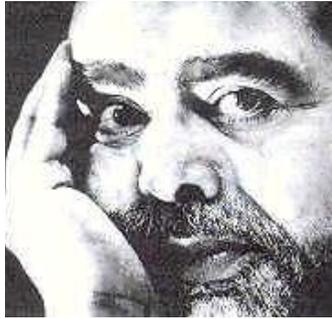
Low-level persecution is quite common in Asian countries, usually at unofficial popular level. Sometimes police forces, by turning a blind eye, encourage persecution to grow. Attacks on Christians and their churches are common in India and in Indonesia.

Discrimination is much more widespread. In a number of countries jobs in the army or bureaucracy are restricted to people of the dominant religion.

Islam has a particular problem with religious freedom. In its early days Islam was very tolerant for its time, especially of Christians and Jews – whom Mohammed saw as worshippers of the same God. They were allowed to practice their religions freely, and their rights were protected. They did, however, have to pay a special tax not paid by

moslems. Adherents of other religions could be forcibly converted.

Today a number of Islamic countries have a poor record on religious freedom, especially where clerics are powerful (and resurgent fundamentalism has made them a force to be reckoned with everywhere). Moslems are not permitted to convert to other religions. In some countries apostasy is punishable by death or confiscation of property.



**Abu Zaid**

If an apostate is married to a moslem woman, he may be forcibly divorced from her. Egypt saw the notorious case of Professor Abu Zaid, who dared to suggest that the Koran had been subjected to different interpretations throughout history. Abu Zaid was labelled an apostate, his marriage was annulled against his wife's wishes, and the couple were forced into exile.

If religions are to develop and adapt to their times, religious freedom is essential. Islamic fundamentalism and its political power means that Islam is bound literally to words composed nearly 1,400 years ago, and is hampered in adapting its teachings to the modern world in the way that most forms of Christianity and Judaism have done.

Even where religious freedom exists, governments can in effect discriminate in favour of one religion – and therefore against others. Although the United Kingdom, according to polls, is among the most irreligious nations in the world, bishops sit in the House of Lords as of right, and schools are legally required to hold a Christian act of worship every day, in the USA, though the constitution forbids the establishment of any religion, God is written into the oath of allegiance and features on the currency (*page 12*).

Some issues in religious are still not clarified. Preaching and conversion are permitted – but are there some forms of harassing proselytization that are an infringement of religious or civic freedoms? If a mission in Africa offers

development projects only in villages where there are Christians, is this improper pressure? Are tribal religions so vulnerable that all proselytization should be banned?

Is it an interference in religious freedom if a religion claims the right to dictate details of your private ethical behaviour – eg, whether you should use modern contraceptives or not – and threatens you with divine punishment if you disobey?

Intolerant fundamentalism may appear to be on the rise, but this is primarily because its positions are under growing threat. In the long run tolerance and religious freedom will prevail.

**Paul Harrison**

## **The United Nations declarations**

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of race, colour, sex, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, 1948, Art 19 and 2**

No-one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

Freedom to manifest one's religions or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

### **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, Art 18**

# Should we *teach our children* pantheism?

***One of the basic religious is the right to teach your religion to your children. Some pantheists believe strongly in using this right, others are more hesitant.***

***This key issue raised a mass of comment on our lists...***

I have a seven year old daughter. She has been lead to believe (by neighbors, school, day care, family members, and friends) that (1) there is a god, (2) there is a heaven and a hell, and (3) good people go to heaven, and bad people go to hell. When we lost my grandparents last year, these beliefs made it MUCH easier on her. While I didn't have that blissful ignorance myself, I couldn't bear to take it away from my daughter.

I think children and christianity go hand in hand. Children need that cushion from reality. I'm thinking she will realize and accept the obvious even earlier than I did, without me pushing her to it at all. In the mean time, she gets the benefit of social acceptance among her peers, and a good deal of creative fun.

She is growing up to be mature and responsible. She cares for all living things, and is as considerate and gentle as she is keen and bright. Aside from the whole god/heaven/hell issue, I am raising her to be a good little pantheist.

While I do not tell my daughter what I believe, I am also very careful not to ever suggest that I actually believe in god. She assumes that I do. She is still much too young for us to deal with this. For her, religion hasn't taken on a feeling of "reality" just yet. It's just another imaginative game to her. She and I will discuss it more in depth when she is ready.

My questions are these: What more can I be doing to guide her towards pantheism, without directly attacking her belief in god? Should I even try to

direct her in that way? Should I let her make up her own mind? Is it even advisable to allow her imaginative play to continue? **Liz Gildea**

## **Teach them to think for themselves**

The best thing to do is let the kid believe what it wants, and let them find something on their own while growing up. But if you are going to teach your kid anything, teach them "pantheism" by showing them to respect nature and all of life. And remind them and teach them to think for themselves. Tell your kids the facts about everything you know and enable him/her to be able to tell between logic and superstition, fact and fiction, positive and negative. **Chuck Ade**

I have raised two daughters to adulthood. I have two more to go. My daughters have grown or are growing to become responsible freethinkers. They have always had the absolute freedom to take on any belief they wish. I only teach them to use reason. I ask them not to dare believe anything that I do, just on my word. They are to come to their own conclusions. When they have questions about gods, the supernatural, right and wrong, etc., I ask them their opinion, give them mine, and never, ever ridicule. They are free and encouraged to come to their own conclusions. The effect has been that ghosts, demons, gods, heaven and hell, etc., are not recognized in my home as anything

more than make-believe. Through the process of applied reason, my four daughters have come to that conclusion entirely on their own.

**Andrew DeMario**

I tell my children what is a fact and what is my opinion or belief. I tell them why I just "believe" in something and what could be my opponent's view on it. I encourage them to argue over my beliefs and faith. If they disagree with me and give some wonderful argument, I take it as a sign of their maturity. In fact, I learn from them thinking afresh on some issues.

If I convert my child in my faith, without telling him/her it is just my "faith", either s/he may succumb to my faith or s/he may revolt against it when s/he grows. In both the cases, the child is a loser and by implication I am also a loser. A healthy debate rather than silence is required for a sound development of a child.

**Harihar Jha**

Just be how you are and the little ones will follow suit, but bear in mind that they are each entitled to form their own views, and to alter them along the way. By all means teach your kids the reality of our existence, but be wary about teaching them a belief system. All kids are natural Pantheists from the beginning of their lives, and so long as you give honest and informed answers to their incessant questioning they will inevitably try out the other religions to see if they fit before returning to the

most sensible and reliable model of reality they grew up with. **Ray Lee**

## Teach them the truth

I am not a pantheist parent, I am a pantheist child... 17 years old. I have never believed in god. Children do not need a cushion from reality... I provide my own little fantasies, but I do not actually believe them. I have a very strong, vivid imagination... is it really compatible with the logical truths of science? There MUST be a balance. Think of all the possibilities, what might be, but don't walk into them with your eyes shut. A hope does not make it true... always hold to reality. But that doesn't mean we still can't dream. **Lunar Magic**



Being a parent of three and a Pantheist I found it rough at times being true to my beliefs and attempting to teach my children what is right. I grew up a Catholic, then Baptist. My children, the two oldest were dedicated in the Christian church as I was born-again at that point. My youngest sometimes says she believes in God, "Do you?" I tell her that whatever makes her feel safe can't be bad, but no I don't. I always leave the door open that I MAY be wrong and that helps. I have always been very truthful. She trusts me

because of that, she I fear would be resentful if I were to allow her to believe a non-truth. She got very upset when she found out there wasn't a tooth fairy! Being bright she questioned the existence of the rest, Easter Bunny, Santa, etc. . . I said I didn't lie, they are real "I am them and I am real!" She hugged me for the efforts! **Tammy Morgan**

In dealing with my own daughter, Sylvia, who just turned 4 years old, honesty is of utmost importance to me. I hold the belief that children are very resilient, and that they can cope with difficult truths when allowed to do so in a loving environment. Sylvia knows that, if she asks me a question,

she is going to get the "truth" as I see it, not a sugar-coated tale. When she brings up the subject of death, which she does frequently, she cries and tells me, "But I don't want to die!" I have to be able to sit with my own anxieties as well as hers. I feel the impulse to give empty reassurances, but I realize that if I did, it would be for my benefit, to quiet her fears temporarily because I can't handle her emotions. Instead, I try to give her what comfort I can, by holding her and empathizing with her feelings, and trust that she can and must work through these

issues for herself.

I believe a rich fantasy life allows children to be creative, to imagine the future and its many possibilities, to devise ways to cope with difficult issues. I would never take away the fantasies that my daughter creates. But should parents devise fantasies for their children and pretend that these are reality? My personal answer to this is, "no." **Cindy Harmon-Jones**

## Teach them what you believe

I'm a mother of three children, 19, 15 and 12 years old.

It's important to always be honest because one day your child will grow up and find out and perhaps ask, "why did you lie to me?" I taught my children without God and Christianity and they are all three very creative and inventive thinking children. When you have progressed and gotten yourself away from Christianity, why not pass that down so your child can stand on your shoulders and start from there and can continue your tradition? That would be a much healthier atmosphere. Pantheism is perfect to teach children. I can teach them honesty, unconditional love, self respect and the respect of others, to think more and more freely and to openly celebrate the diversity of mankind. There are also ways to handle talking about death to children. You can tell your child, we will always remember so and so who died because... You can talk about the person, look at pictures, teach the child to enjoy the memories of him and tell the child your personal memories of that person.

**Cindy Christensen**

Parents may not want to teach children their beliefs and values, but the rest of the world will feel very free to teach theirs. Christians will sell our children their god and their hell. Advertisers will sell the latest product,

promoted as bringing fulfillment and lasting happiness. The school system will preach its version of reality, as will the peers children meet at school. Do we really want these to be the major influences on our children's development of beliefs, ethics and values? I don't want my children to learn religious beliefs only outside the home, while I pretend to remain neutral.

I'm a Pantheist because I believe in this worldview. I believe it is humane, realistic, and life-enhancing. For me, Pantheist beliefs are not a mere intellectual, philosophical exercise, but are an integral guide to the choices I make. My beliefs matter in my life, and they are important enough to be worth passing on to my children.

Now I realize that, as they grow up, my children may come to disagree with my beliefs. That will always be their choice, and I hope to always have a relationship of honesty and respect with them, regardless of their choices. However, I see my honesty and clarity regarding my beliefs as part of expressing my respect for them.

**Cindy H-J**

We affect our children's ideological formation all the time. It's not a frivolous act of power abuse, but rather our responsibility to the children. We teach them what we believe to be right and wrong, wise and foolish, beautiful and ugly – these values will ultimately form the very underpinning of any ideology. Why then are people so eager to teach their children "what's right" ethically or aesthetically, but not take it one step further towards building a coherent ideological outlook? I do not understand why we oughtn't try to teach our children that which we believe to be true. Ultimately, I see it as nothing short of being our parental duty to teach our children as much about the world as we can – and this includes high-level ideological constructs like SciPan.

**Victor Danilchenko**

My own parents were neutral on the subject of religion – in fact the issue was something that was not to be discussed. I realized that there was something missing from my own life. But finding it was a long, frustrating search, and my childhood was less happy because I had no religious direction.

Because my parents said nothing about religion, and my friends had plenty to say about it, I came to see my parents as "fallen" Christians – people who would go to Hell and who had neglected to ensure that I don't go to Hell by having me baptized. If I had children, I would be sure to tell them what I believe so they wouldn't feel the lack that I did growing up.

**Dorene Braun**

I think that saying childhood and the Christian heaven go hand in hand could be damaging. I was raised in a very militant Christian home. I was terrified as a child about hell, and I still harbor fears concerning Christian mythology. **Mark Foley**

We have always raised our children as pantheists, from square one. We have a firm belief that pantheism is wholesome and beneficial. Not teaching it to kids would seem like not teaching them our ideas of right and wrong.

Of course they haven't always had the same ideas as us. One of our boys went through a fear of death phase when he was five or six, and started to believe in reincarnation. Given that this was his own way of dealing with fear, we left well alone. But we have talked about death as a merging with nature, which is how we see it. There is a place on Hampstead Heath where Alvina and I want our ashes buried so we become part of the trees and squirrels and rabbits and birds. This is a lovely idea, it's a lot nicer than heaven. And so Alex has come round to that way of thinking.

I believe we should rear our kids in our own religion. Everyone else does,

why shouldn't we? It would seem rather strange to a person, in adult life, if they found that just about everyone told them what their religious beliefs were, but their own parents kept their beliefs secret; if everyone out there was allowed to influence their religious beliefs, teachers, priests, friends – just not the people who raised you.

What does it mean in practice though? It means inculcating a respect for and love of nature, a love of natural form and beauty, a healthy curiosity about the world, a questioning attitude towards accepted wisdom. And yes, it means raising questions about any other religions the child may come across. In all of this of course adapting what is said to the age group, not forcing your beliefs down your kids' throat, not making the kid think it has to believe like you or you won't love it.

Even if you do raise your kids as pantheists, they will, in their teens, explore other possibilities anyway, and change religions if they feel like it just as most of us did. But at least they will have a solid basis if they want to come back to it. **Paul Harrison**

Children want answers, not questions. I believe that you give the answers first – the question comes by questioning the answers. This is the child's "home base" – their starting point. This provides an anchor in a safe harbor. Once the ship is ready, it can sail the uncharted waters – but not before.

Children do not need a cushion from reality – they need a reality that is cushioned – safe. But it is still reality – the reality of the home. Children should not have to search for their spiritual answers, any more than they need to butcher a cow for hamburger, or day-trade for their allowance. Children should grow up trusting that Mommy and Daddy are there and you can go to ask them the tough questions and get a real answer. **Tony van der Mude**



**Visit these sites daily and save the world's forests:** \* The Rainforest Site: <http://www.rainforestsites.com/>  
 \* Race for the Rainforest: <http://rainforest.care2.com/> \* Webreleaf: <http://www.webreleaf.com/>

## Help save the forests

Almost two acres of tropical rainforest disappear every second. Every hour, six species are lost forever. Thanks to the Internet and an imaginative new approach to advertising, however, we can help change and reverse that.

On the World Wide Web, sites are now appearing that, when you simply click on a button each day, a donation is made to charity. The donations are usually made possible by sponsors whose adverts you get shown after you click. The charity shopping outfit GreaterGood has set up the Rainforest Site (<http://www.rainforestsites.com/>). The front page of The Rainforest Site uses an animated graphic to show the dramatic reduction in the extent of rainforests from 1990 to 1999 and the projection of this trend through to 2011. Watching the green areas shrink is almost painful.

The site donates money to The Nature Conservancy's Adopt-an-Acre program, to buy, protect and manage land in biologically rich areas. Each time you click, you save between 10 and 15 square feet of forest.

A similar site making donations to The Nature Conservancy is Race for the Rainforest (<http://rainforest.care2.com/>). This is more fun,

because if you register, you can see every day how many square feet of rainforest you, and the friends you introduce, have saved. Here, each click currently saves 25 square feet.

Another forest donation site is Webreleaf (<http://www.webreleaf.com/>), This raises money to plant trees in the USA. But non-US visitors to the site can also click daily – and why not approach tree and forest charities in your country and suggest that they introduce click-donation programmes?

Visits to The Rainforest Site and Race for the Rainforest during May alone allowed The Nature Conservancy to protect over 1,600 acres of rainforest (or over six square kilometers), while visits to Webreleaf in their first sixteen days of operation paid for the planting of 12,000 trees.

The loss of the world's rainforests clearly implies a huge and irreversible loss of biodiversity, a large part of which hasn't even been catalogued yet – not only are we rapidly destroying irreplaceable natural treasures, but we are destroying most of them before we have even catalogued and researched them!

However, you can help to change this by visiting these Web sites, at the cost of only a minute or two of your time each day. **Andrew Millard**

### Forest Facts

Consider these statistics:

- The world's rainforests represent 3.4 million square miles of tropical forest that encircle the equator.
- A piece of rainforest just half the size of San Francisco contains 545 kinds of birds, 100 species of dragonflies, and 729 types of butterflies.
- The Costa Rican rainforests are inhabited by 205 kinds of mammals, 845 types of birds, and 10,000 varieties of plants.
- In Peru, 43 ant species were found in a single tree, the same number of species as in the entire British Isles.
- Tropical rainforests have provided between 25% and 40% of all pharmaceutical products, not to mention tomatoes, coffee, vanilla, chocolate and rubber.
- Over the last decade, 113 million acres of rainforest have been destroyed.
- As El Nino and global warming brought droughts in unexpected places, there was

massive damage from forest fires in the late 1990s. In 1998 alone more than 6 million ha were burned in Indonesia, Brazil and Russia.

- The World Resources Institute found that only three areas of very extensive natural "frontier forest" remain on earth – in Canada/Alaska, in Russia, and in the Amazon basin. Some 39 per cent of this remaining extent is threatened, mostly by logging, mining and roads. Some 76 countries have lost all their frontier forest.

# Bruno in Rome

*Remembering a victim of religious persecution*

**In February the WPM had its first international gathering in Rome, to mark the 400th anniversary of Giordano Bruno's martyrdom at the hands of the Inquisition.**

## **In the Field of Flowers**

Grandiose plans had been bandied around in advance: hiring monks' robes, staging a mock burning, lying prostrate in protest. In the event, we decided simply to walk the last walk that Bruno would have taken, at dawn, exactly four hundred earth-orbits ago.

We knew that, before his execution, Bruno had been held in Rome's civil prison, the Torre di Nona. This is now demolished, but we knew the rough location – by the Tiber, opposite the vast Castel Sant'Angelo – so this was where we assembled at 6am the following day. There were only Americans, British and Finns there. No Italians at all.

It was still dark, raining hard and bitterly cold. We walked through the quiet streets, probably much as they were in 1600, to the cobbled Campo dei Fiori where Bruno was burned alive at the stake. Some of us tried to imagine what it must have been like. Bruno was painfully gagged to stop him preaching heresy. For me the worst part would have been the chanting monks who accompanied Bruno on his last steps, trying to get him to recant up to the very end, thrusting the crucifix onto his lips just before the fire was lit. Bruno turned his head away in disgust.

The Campo is named for the weekly flower market that has been held there for centuries. In the centre, an imposing statue of Bruno in monk's robe gazes down paternally (though it appears from what's known that Bruno was short and fiery.)

When we arrived the square was empty, so we retired to a bar to rest and warm up. Later in the day, from

about 11am, the Italian, French and German contingents began to appear. These were all atheist, freethinker, humanist and anti-clerical groups. They set up their tables, awnings and banners and began to sell their tracts and sign up members. There was a "Dewojtilized zone", and one stall was offering De-baptisms.

A continuous stream of people made

labelled "From the World Pantheist Movement.' Twelve-year old Alex Harrison paused for the benefit of cameras, then laid the flowers on the plinth. Our beautiful banner attracted media attention: I gave one newspaper and three TV interviews – one to a Dominican TV programme.

Later in the day there were films about Bruno, pop groups, and more



**Rain before dawn, February 17 Photo: Marko Grönroos**

their way up to Bruno's statue, where they paused in thought. Some posted notices on the plinth, others left flowers and candles. Various groups took the stand in front of the statue and harangued the crowds through megaphones. Most of them looked like old hard-left troopers.

We had our brand new World Pantheist Movement banner, which we took turns at holding, and handing out leaflets. The sky cleared, but the weather remained very cold.

At around noon Tor Myrvang brought a huge wreath of red roses

harangues. Strangely, we were the only pantheists there. It was a haunting and formative experience I will always remember. **Paul Harrison**

## **Events in and around Rome**

Many of the Pantheists and Brunians stayed on in Rome over the weekend following the commemoration of Bruno's martyrdom. We made memorable outings to Hadrian's Villa, to the Catacombs on the Via Appia, and to the Alban Hills, Castel Gandolfo and



**Alex Harrison with our wreath Photo: Paul Harrison**

the haunting Lake Nemi.

I had the pleasure of hosting two get togethers at my home on the Friday and Saturday evenings. On Friday evening John Courtney presented a talk on the pantheist poet Robinson Jeffers who lived for most of life in Carmel, California. John is Vice-President of the Tor House Foundation, which has preserved the dwelling which Jeffers built largely with his own hands on a promontory overlooking the Pacific

Ocean. A video gave us a good idea of the beautiful scenery of Big Sur and of Robinson Jeffers' life.

After dinner, I gave a talk on Giordano Bruno's book "The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast" followed by a discussion. Julia Jones, who was making a film about Bruno, told us about "The School of Night" – a secret London society of the 1580s whose members are thought to have included Christopher Marlowe and Sir Walter

Raleigh as well Giordano Bruno.

"The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast" is possibly the most interesting of Bruno's books in defining his views about religion. It is also the most daring, with thinly veiled criticisms of Christianity, and praise of the pantheistic views supposedly held by the ancient Egyptians. A copy of this book, once owned by Queen Elizabeth I of England, passed into the hands of John Toland and contributed significantly to the development of Pantheism in England in the early Eighteenth Century.

On Saturday night, a number of friends who live in Rome dropped by to participate in the reading of Bill Bruehl's play "Giordano Bruno in the Field of Flowers". The play is an imaginative reconstruction of the night before Bruno's execution. It portrays the attempts of the Church to secure a last-minute denial of his pantheist views, and his courage in persevering to the very end.

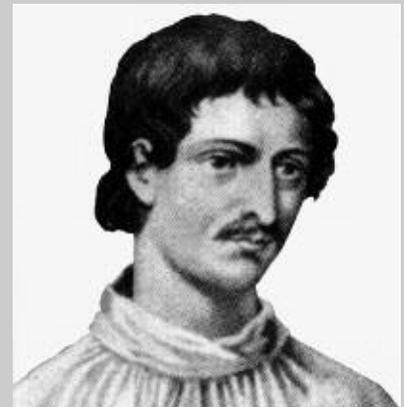
After the non-pantheist guests had left, the assembled Pantheists communed with Nature until late into the night on the terrace under the light of the full moon. **Tor Myrvang**

## ***Bruno's Life and Death***

Giordano Bruno was the first pantheist in the modern mould. Completely abandoning Christian theology, he resurrected the materialism and Stoicism of the ancient world and combined it with a prophetic view of an infinite universe of solar systems, united in a single interpenetrating unity. For his intellectual courage he was condemned by the Inquisition and burned at the stake in Rome on February 17, 1600.

Bruno was born in 1548, the son of a soldier, in the small town of Nola near Vesuvius. In 1565 he became a Dominican monk, but left in 1576 under suspicion of heresy. He travelled and taught all over Europe, and spent prolonged periods in London, Paris, and various German university town.

In 1591 he received a fateful invitation to teach a young nobleman in Venice, Zuane Mocenigo. When they fell out, Mocenigo took him prisoner and denounced him to the Inquisition. Transferred to Rome in 1593, Bruno was held for six long years before solid charges were laid. Though he had often offered to recant, this time he refused. The sentence was read on February 8th 2000. "Perhaps you who pronounce my sentence," Bruno replied, "are in greater fear than I who receive it."



***Giordano Bruno***

***Nature is none other than God in things. Whence all of God is in all things. Think thus, of the sun in the crocus, in the narcissus, in the heliotrope, in the rooster, in the lion.***

# Pearls of wisdom

**Among the most moving and inspiring aspects of the World Pantheist Movement and its lists are members' statements about what they believe.**

Alaska was like nothing I'd ever experienced. Such vastness, such wildness, such diversity – I immersed myself in it, and it taught me to love the other places I visited. For the first time, I was able to gaze with wonder at a hawk circling over the interstate in Ohio – a sight I'd seen hundreds of times before, but it had just never registered as an important sight. Now, every detail of the world took on new meaning. It is a big, beautiful universe out there, and our little tiny corner of it is enough to inspire endless awe.

Once when I was hiking, I paused to watch the sunset colors on the view before me. I overheard a nearby couple talking. One said to the other, "When you see something like this, you can't help but know that it was created by God." And I had just been thinking to myself, "Isn't it miraculous and incredible that this astounding sight just appeared out of the random chaos of the universe? How wonderful!"

I am a pantheist because I believe in the miracle of the universe, I believe that by

being the best person I can be – loving, compassionate, inquisitive, seeking justice, being respectful – I am adding what I can to the universe while I am here. When I am gone, I am stardust, and nothing could be better than that.

**Rachel Zahnd**

I believe that human nature is simply natural and that it is not ugly or sinful. I believe in evolution and that when I pass away, my body and my life force will return to the earth and join back with the circle of life. **Misty Coulter**

I was raised in an American Indian family in Montana. Growing up, I was taught a deep respect and reverence for nature. My family belonged to a Christian Church that seemed alien and barren. So, as a young man I began searching the libraries for a philosophy that put in words what I felt growing up among a people who for thousands of years had worshipped nature. I eventually discovered the writings of Spinoza, and realized that what I felt was called Pantheism. That was

The evidence of my senses tells me there is most definitely a universe. I agree to call it the only true divinity merely because I recognise no other divinity.

However, the term 'divinity' does not mean to me what the term God does to a Christian or a Moslem or a Jew. I do not grovel before the Universe, nor do I worship it (though I do dance alone under the moon). I respect the Universe, its laws and its workings (those tiny few I understand and the vast complexity of those I will never have a hope of understanding). I am in total awe of and in love with It. I believe and feel that I am an interconnected part of It. The idea thrills me to my very bones. I am a tiny strand in its totality. When my personal consciousness flickers out, like the flame of a candle, I hope the people I have loved will retain some happy memories of me. I also believe the beautiful truth that the matter and energy that make up my physical body will be re-integrated into various parts of Nature, like the earth, the rivers, seas and winds. It is all so simple. So beautiful.

**Sue Williams**

nearly 30 years ago. In trying to explain to others my religious beliefs, I was branded an Atheist. I resigned myself to that judgement, and have been living all these years thinking I was an Atheist. Now at last I feel I have come home to a philosophy that truly reflects my way of thinking and a group of people who share my beliefs. **Patrick Juneau**

I believe that what you see is what you get. This is it. There ain't no more. Yet the universe, nature, the

workings of life are incredibly awesome. **Jill Miller**

I feel a growing sense of connectedness to others, to the wider community, to the world itself. This isn't simply a cognitive thing, it's very deeply emotional, a kind of trust in a unity which embraces everything.

**Nick Merleau-Ponty**

When I look up to the night sky filled with stars, a part of me joins with it. I feel the power of "god" in the

thunderstorm and rejoice in its coming. I breathe in the scent of the woodlands and I am refreshed. Am I not part of all... and all in me?

**Dawn Usack**

To me a miraculous thing is a cat always landing on its feet, the plants and weeds that grow between the cracks of a 4th floor cement balcony as well as the anthills, bees collecting pollen, shooting stars or the wonder of no two snowflakes being alike. The universe is a beautiful thing and needs to be revered and preserved. **Melissa Wells**

I used to be a strict Southern Baptist. On my journey, I realized I primarily experienced God in the stability of the trees, the silent beauty of the stars, in another person. I depended less and less on the Bible, and opened myself up to the universe and grew less fearful and more happy.

**Jason Clark**

I KNOW the Universe is Alive, and that I am to it as a cell is to my own body; an intrinsic part of a greater whole. This is something that transcends "belief" or "faith"; it is as immediate and realizable as the knowledge of the fingers at the end of my hand.

**Robert Reppy**

While searching my heart, being, and surroundings for ultimate Truths, my love and reverence always returns to our immense and wondrous Universe. I'm simply blown away by the vastness and possibilities of this Universe.

As a scientist, I am happy to look down the hierarchy for an understanding of the parts and their properties. As a pantheist, my spirituality finds its expression at the highest reaches of the hierarchy. When I say that my god is coterminous with the cosmos I hope to imply that my god is that system for which there is no supersystem. I hasten to add that my god is NOT anything and everything, but rather the ALL. I do not worship each and every part, but rather the whole shebang as a totality. I can accept the loss of a single tree, but I will fight to save the forest. The biosphere is more sacred to me than any single species, including Homo sapiens.

**Lloyd West**

...the gravity of your own pebble totality suspended there, in the vast infinite... that silent witness who through timeless inward flowing answers the unnameable question... pebble in the hand I AM... tossed to that boundless abyss... and rippling shimmer bliss... and when you shake with laughter... when you shake with tears... at that very moment, you are a pulse radiating outward into the void... this precious utter shudder that can't help but be heard... felt all the way to the opposite ends of the universe to return beneath your feet like distant peals of thunder... this is my heart going out to you at this very moment... an open heart knows a network of vibrations across the fathomless night.

**Billy Culver**

Try sitting quietly in a natural setting, or just walking in a wood, or sailing on the ocean, away from the distractions of human urban society and ask yourself what you feel. A sense of connection perhaps? Can you feel yourself being alive? What is that pounding through your veins, feeding your brain so that you can think and be aware. Why does that green leaf look and smell and feel so good? Why does the sight of a leaping whale fill you with awe and love? Why do the stars sparkle so brightly for you? And what is that sensation rising in your chest, so that you draw in air and stand fixed, gazing into infinity?

As above, so below. Within you and without you. All is one. That from which we came, and that to which we will all return.

**Ray Lee**

From the tiniest sub-atomic particles, to the violent and beautiful nebulas giving birth.

**Kim Hummel**

When I sit and look out to the ocean, I feel a real connection, almost as though the waves and I are one. I feel an energy. **Elaine Amenta**

I am a biologist and as a scientist, I never understood how one could study the inexplicable magical beauty and wonder of creation and not be drawn close to The All That Is. Science is a tool of observation through which we might gain a greater understanding of something so fantastic it defied meager language. Only the language of love, through the channels of acceptance, empathy, art, and music, approach the multidimensional fluency to touch the skirt of how wondrous the Life we share truly is. **Ruth Miller**

I have always felt a "kinship" with earth, from the tiniest speck of sand to the oceans. I have always found the universe awe inspiring. I cannot conceive of anything more powerful and am unable to believe in an intelligence greater than the universe itself. **Ahnru Hurok**

I believe the only ultimate reality is the natural world which I hold sacred.

**Alfraetta Zannelli**

I cannot remember a time when I didn't love nature, and feel that only there, was I in my one true home. Everything I explored in the woods and around the lake. when I was growing up, was a miracle to me. I simply could not join the church; it seemed too much like emotional blackmail. I've called myself a pagan before, and I think I've always been a pantheist in spirit. **Glady Morgan**

# God and the USA

## *The unmet promise of religious freedom*

**Though the USA began with refugees from religious persecution, and the Bill of Rights enshrines religious freedom, America is still a way from reaching full freedom of religion, argues Walt Mandell in this personal viewpoint.**

On the first of June in the year 1660, on Boston Common, a woman named Mary Dyer was hung by her neck until dead. Her crime was being a Quaker. She is remembered for the words "My life not availeth me in comparison to the liberty of the Truth."

From the founding of the American colonies until today, a fundamental leitmotif of the American experience has been tension between the will to freedom and the pursuit of social control. Between the freedom of the individual, and the tyranny of the majority, or at times, of a vocal and dominant minority. Time and again this conflict has played itself out around the issue of religious freedom. It still does today.

Many of the British colonies were founded to secure the rights of particular religious communities to practice their religion. The Puritan colonies of New England, the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania and the Catholic colony of Maryland immediately come to mind. Others like the commercial colony of Virginia had, as both a strong secondary motive for their founding, and as an important component of their operation, the promotion and enforcement of militant Protestantism.

In many instances, it was all too clear that what was sought was not religious freedom for all, but rather religious freedom for a particular sect at the expense of the freedom or even the life of dissenters. Examples that come to mind include the Salem witch hunts, the persecution of Annie Hutchinson, the forcing of Roger Williams out of Massachusetts (he then founded Rhode Island as a religious refuge open to all), and the destruction of the Moravian missions to the Delaware Indians. Nor did religious persecution stop with the establishment of the United States. Joseph Smith the founder of the Mormons was lynched by a hostile mob, and his followers were forced west to Utah.

The tension between those who wanted to have religious freedom, and those who wanted to intermingle Christianity with the state, was apparent at the time of the writing of the American Constitution.

Fortunately some of the sharpest intellects of the age, men like Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, George Mason, and

Madison, were aware of this threat to individual rights and fought to have a Bill of Rights which tried to guarantee freedom of religion.

Significantly many of these "founding fathers" were not theists but deists. Deism is the belief, allegedly based solely on reason, in a God who created the universe and then abandoned it, assuming no control over life, exerting no influence on natural phenomena, and giving no supernatural revelation. Jefferson for example was clearly of this belief.

As a result of a compromise at the Constitutional Convention the Bill of Rights was tacked on to the Constitution more or less as an afterthought, and became part of it after being ratified by the individual states.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (Article I of the Bill of Rights) states:

Religious Establishment Prohibited, Freedom of Speech, of the Press.: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging freedom of speech or of the press.

Thus, Article I of the Bill of Rights PROHIBITS the establishment of a state religion, and GUARANTEES the citizens's right to the free exercise of whatever religion they choose to practice. These two concepts are the legal foundation of America's freedom of religion.

But, as Jefferson knew, "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance".

One of the hardest tasks for those with power is simply to refrain from using it to advance their own interests. Many can resist the temptation to use power to line their own pockets, but it is far harder to resist power's subtlest seduction – the temptation to advance the agenda of a group to which you belong. And if that group is a religion the temptation may be overwhelming, for you will sincerely believe you are serving God. So how could that be wrong?

It is for this reason that freedom of religion requires freedom from religion. By "freedom from religion" I mean that no individual shall be forced into (or publicly humiliated into) taking part in ANY form of worship, or religious ritual no

matter how non-denominational. Nor shall anyone be forced to observe any religious prohibition. Only by removing all religious coercion, can a people enjoy freedom of religion. And freedom of religion includes the freedom to completely disown any religious display at all if one so chooses.

Well, at least the U.S. now has religious freedom, right? Despite the Bill of Rights, in practice this freedom is not as nearly complete as you may think. Look on a U.S. coin, it says "In God we trust."

When you take an oath to testify truthfully in court you swear on a bible and say the words "So help me God". When you recite the Pledge of Allegiance you are pledging allegiance to "One nation UNDER GOD". The Senate begins its legislative session with an official prayer.

In the U.S., freedom of religion does NOT encompass freedom from religion. While there is no one established denomination, there is a loosely defined non-denominational theism enshrined as the official state religion. The situation is worse in many states. For example evolution can no longer be taught in Kansas public schools.

The most basic right, the one from which all liberties flow, is the right to be left alone to live your life as you please, so long as your behavior is not harmful to the health, safety, rights, freedoms or property of others. It is from this right that freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association etc. all derive.

To realize how radical a notion religious freedom is, just consider that from it there may follow consequences which might make many people – perhaps even World Pantheist Movement members – VERY uncomfortable. One of these is that no religious group has the right to force others to live by its specific mores – those that are not founded on generally acknowledged human ethics. This is true whether the mores in question are refraining from buying alcohol on Sunday, or participating in school prayer.

If you can accept this consequence, then consider this one: religious freedom also means that anyone with unconventional religious beliefs must be free to practice their religion – even if it is anathema to

mainstream religions. Thus Satanists, Pagans, Polytheists and Atheists must be every bit as free to practice their religions (or their atheism) as are Christians, Jews, Moslems, or other theists. The proviso must always be that no one's health, safety, property, rights (including animals'), or freedoms, are endangered thereby and no harm is done to nature.

It could even be argued that religions that, genuinely and historically, have used as sacraments drugs such as ayahuasca, or peyote, or cannabis (rather than the mainstream religious drug – wine) should be free to commune with the divine in their particular way and to use the sacrament of their choice. Furthermore, if a religion wishes to solemnize gay marriages as well as heterosexual ones, it should be permitted to do so without restriction. The basic principle is that so long as no one's safety, rights, or property are threatened, and no harm is done to nature, any religion must be allowed to "do its own thing."

If you put the consequences so explicitly, you might find that most people are not for religious freedom in general, but are only for religious freedom for themselves or for religions not so very different from their own. And that has been the dilemma of advocates for religious freedom throughout the history of America.

Section 4 of the World Pantheist Movement credo states:

We support and work towards a world community based on full respect for human rights. Section 9 adds:

We uphold the separation of religion and state, and the universal human right of freedom of religion.

These statements implicitly commit us to work for religious freedom throughout the world. For a religion cannot

work for "freedom" in general without committing itself to protect religious freedom in particular. And full respect for human rights, democracy, non-discrimination and justice requires that everyone's religious freedom be respected. But make no mistake, even now, more than 200 years after the US Bill of Rights was enacted, freedom of religion still remains a VERY radical notion. But isn't it yet time to try it?



### **1937 Buffalo dime, and 1976 silver dollar**

"In God we Trust" first crept onto the US coinage during the Civil War, in 1864. It was first used on paper money in 1957, after Congress made this the national motto. The words "under God" were added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954 following a campaign initiated by the Knights of Columbus, a Christian organization. These 1950s developments occurred at the height of the cold war against "godless" Russia. Cases have been brought to reverse both these insertions as unconstitutional, but the courts have held that the word "god" does not constitute state sponsorship of any particular religious faith.

# Almanac

## Meetings

### On-line chat every Sunday at:

<http://www.egroups.com/chat/pantheistnews>  
6 pm London time, 1pm New York, 10 am California.

### San Diego:

August 5, September 2, October 7 Contact Andrew Millard [acm@wsg.ucsd.edu](mailto:acm@wsg.ucsd.edu)

### Los Angeles:

July 16 picnic, Tapia St Park, Malibu Canyon  
Contact David Harrington [phumanism@aol.com](mailto:phumanism@aol.com)

### Ithaca, New York:

Monthly meetings, contact Cory Carter  
[cory-carter@wildmail.com](mailto:cory-carter@wildmail.com)



## Equinoxes & Solstices

2000

### Autumn equinox

September 22 at 22.17

### Winter solstice

December 21 at 22.27  
2001

### Spring equinox

March 20 at 13.31

### Summer equinox

June 21 at 07.38



## Full Moons

2000

July 16 at 13.55

August 15 at 05.13

Sept 13 at 19.37

October 13 at 08.53

All times Universal time aka Greenwich Mean Time (= Eastern Standard Time + 5 hours)

## Special dates

August 12-13

**Peak of Perseid Meteor Shower**

October 31

**Halloween/Samhain**

## Raise Funds for WPM – For Free

The backbone of the World Pantheist Movement's activities are its subscribing members. Not only are you the leading edge of the living community of the World Pantheist Movement, you also make all our activities possible – from this magazine and the Web site and lists, to advertizing and promoting the WPM so that we can reach the numbers needed to create local groups in many places.

There are two significant ways in which you can help gain extra funds for the WPM for free: shopping with Greater Good, and hanging around Zeal, a new kind of Web directory.

### Zeal

Zeal is a unique user-driven Web directory. Users submit Web sites to be listed – and also approve them and update the information. And they review Web sites, either with simple numerical ratings or by entering some text giving their opinions. Zeal pays users for all these activities – not direct, but through donations to your favourite charity.

How it works: First, register at [www.zeal.com/users/register.jhtml](http://www.zeal.com/users/register.jhtml). When they ask who referred you, fill in [wpm@pantheism.net](mailto:wpm@pantheism.net). After you've confirmed your e-mail address, Zeal will credit the World Pantheist Movement with two dollars. Search for the name World Pantheist Movement and click "Set as my favourite charity." After this, every time you recommend a Web site you earn \$0.10, and every time you rate a Website you earn \$0.02. After you have built up just 25 points, you can become a resource person for a specific sector such as your favourite science or environment sector or pop music, or sport, and get your sites approved immediately. You can help to shape your corner of an up-and-coming Web directory.

Zeal has helped volunteers raise significant amounts for charity and 69 of our members have responded heroically. As we go to press WPM and list members had raised over \$1,900, pushing us up to fourth place in the list of 431 charities – ahead of the Sierra Club and the American Red Cross!

### Greater Good

Greater Good are the people who run the Hungersite and the Rainforest Site.

GG is a non-profit online shopping service with dozens of top name discount retailers, covering all sectors from books, software and toys to clothes, sports gear and tools. The prices are exactly the same as these retailers' regular prices, but a commission of 5-15% goes to your chosen charity. Shoppers can indicate which charity or charities they would like to benefit from their shopping.

As a recognized tax-exempt non-profit, the WPM has set up an association with Greater Good so that our supporters can shop there for our benefit.

How it works: To do this, simply go to [www.pantheism.greatergood.com](http://www.pantheism.greatergood.com) and start browsing around. We have tried to remove from the list of shops any that might offend any of our members on ethical or environmental grounds, but if you spot any that have leaked through, please let us know.

## What we are about

When you look at the night sky, are you filled with awe at the beauty and power of the universe? In nature, do you feel a sense of the sacred, like being in a vast cathedral? Are you sceptical about a God with a mind like ours, separate from, and outside, the universe? If you answer yes to these questions, then you are already a Pantheist.

Natural/scientific pantheism transcends both theism and atheism. Its central tenet is that the Universe is the ultimate reality and the highest object of human reverence, while nature and each one of us is a sacred part of the totality. Our naturalistic approach accepts and reveres the universe and nature just as they are, and promotes an ethic of respect for human and animal rights and for lifestyles that sustain rather than destroy the environment.

We do not believe in supernatural entities or personal creator gods. This earth is not a temporary stage that God will soon destroy, it is a paradise we must restore, preserve and cherish. Life is not a passageway to an imaginary world after death: it is all we have, and each moment must be celebrated for itself. We humans must create our own ethics and purposes, to explore and appreciate reality, to save the planet, and to ensure a life of dignity for all its inhabitants.

The World Pantheist Movement opened at the Spring Equinox 1999. Our goal is to promote natural/scientific pantheism as an alternative option to traditional religions. We aim to create local pantheist groups in as many places as possible, for mutual support, shared celebration and action – and to provide a network of celebrants so that pantheists can have weddings and funerals in harmony with their beliefs.

The WPM grew from the Scientific Pantheism mailing list, set up in 1997, which now has members in 47 countries and all US states. We have a quarterly magazine PAN and a growing number of mailing lists, bulletin boards, and local groups. We are a vibrant international community of lively, spiritually aware folk, from high-school students, gardeners and busdrivers to computer programmers and university professors. Join us today, or find out more at our web site <http://www.pantheism.net>.



## What we believe

■ We revere and celebrate the Universe as the totality of being, past, present and future. It is self-organizing, ever-evolving and inexhaustibly diverse. Its overwhelming power, beauty and fundamental mystery compel the deepest human reverence and wonder.

■ All matter, energy, and life are an interconnected unity of which we are an inseparable part. We rejoice in our existence and seek to participate ever more deeply in this unity through knowledge, celebration, meditation, empathy, love, ethical action and art.

■ We are an integral part of Nature, which we should cherish, revere and preserve in all its magnificent beauty and diversity. We should strive to live in harmony with Nature locally and globally. We acknowledge the inherent value of all life, human and non-human, and strive to treat all living creatures with compassion, empathy, and respect.

■ All humans are equal centers of awareness of the Universe and nature, and all deserve a life of equal dignity and mutual respect. To this end we support and work towards freedom, democracy, justice, and non-discrimination, and a world community based on peace, an end to poverty, sustainable ways of life, and full respect for human rights.

■ There is a single kind of substance.

energy/ matter, which is vibrant and infinitely creative in all its forms. Body and mind are indivisibly united.

■ We see death as the return to nature of our elements, and the end of our existence as individuals. The forms of "afterlife" available to humans are natural ones, in the natural world. Our actions, our ideas and memories of us live on, according to what we do in our lives. Our genes live on in our families, and our elements are endlessly recycled in nature.

■ We honor reality, and keep our minds open to the evidence of the senses and of science's unending quest for deeper understanding. These are our best means of coming to know the Universe, and on them we base our aesthetic and religious feelings about reality.

■ Every individual has direct access through perception, emotion and meditation to ultimate reality, which is the Universe and Nature. There is no need for mediation by priests, gurus or revealed scriptures.

■ We uphold the separation of religion and state, and the universal human right of freedom of religion. We recognize the freedom of all pantheists to express and celebrate their beliefs, as individuals or in groups, in any non-harmful ritual, symbol or vocabulary that is meaningful to them.

## Join the World Pantheist Movement today...

### Personal benefits:

- Quarterly 'Pan' magazine.
- Free e-mail forwarding address at our domain, eg: Yourname@pantheism.net
- Membership of associated mailing lists and bulletin boards.
- Membership of a rapidly growing, vibrant international community.

### Public benefits:

- Helping promote earth-honoring life-affirming natural/scientific pantheism as a religious option and alternative to traditional religions.
- Supporting the creation of a network of celebrants for pantheist weddings and funerals.
- Making possible an expanding pantheist presence in all media.
- Helping to promote the formation of local groups.
- Making possible free associate membership for under 17s, hardship cases, and people from developing countries and emerging economies.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP code: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership level (please tick box and write in amount sent):

- Low income (\$10)     Family\* (\$60)     Supporter (\$150-\$249)  
 Student (\$15)     Friend (\$50-\$99)     Sponsor (\$250-\$699)  
 Basic (\$30)     Sustainer (\$100-\$149)     Life (\$700)  
 Donation (please write amount here) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\* Family provides one copy of the magazine plus up to four e-mail forwarding addresses @pantheism.net and four memberships of the World Pantheist Movement bulletin board.

Please mail with your check (US dollars) to: Local contact:

**The World Pantheist Movement,**  
 PO Box 12056, La Jolla,  
 California CA 92039-2056,  
 United States.

Please photocopy double sided and give to friends.

# WORLD PANTHEIST MOVEMENT



# Revering the Universe, Caring for Nature, Celebrating Life

*A religion that stressed the magnificence of the universe as revealed by modern science, might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths.*

*Sooner or later, such a religion will emerge.*

*Carl Sagan, Pale Blue Dot.*

<http://www.pantheism.net/>