



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 1, 2011

Atheist Billboard on Church Property Forced to Come Down

In an effort to bring nonbelievers together and increase the visibility of atheists, the Freedom From Religion Foundation displayed “Good without God” billboards across the nation. Unfortunately for the organization, one of the billboards was placed on church property in Ohio prompting complaints from the church’s pastor and ultimately, the removal of the billboard.



The *Christian Post* [reports](#):

The billboard features a smiling image of Dylan Galos and accompanied with the words “I can be good without God.” The sign campaign is part of a nationwide effort by the Freedom From Religion Foundation to “encourage social acceptance of nonbelievers,” the foundation states.

The campaign also features online entries available at the FFRF site for non-believers to enter their quotes and short bio. The foundation then selects the entries to be used on its billboards. The Ohio campaign billboards are scheduled to be in place for one month.

The billboard drew the ire of Reverend Waymon Malone of Christ Cathedral Church, which owns the property on which the billboard was displayed. According to a source close to the pastor, he was appalled by the sign’s placement and immediately demanded its removal: “It upset him because of what it said. It said we don’t need God, and we’re at church, so we do need God.”

According to the group behind the billboard, its placement was “an unfortunate oversight.” The sign was removed just days after it had been installed and was placed at another site.

Co-president of the Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation, Annie Laurie Gaylor, claims that she was unaware the property belonged to the church. She then took the opportunity to berate the pastor for what she views as intolerance:

The action of this censorious church shows exactly why our campaign, intended to encourage social acceptance of nonbelievers, is so important. Do its deacons truly believe one can’t be good without God?

Galos, on the other hand, a Masters student of public health at Ohio State University and the subject of the poster, admits that churches have a right to decide what is on their property. He added, however, “I was a little disappointed that was the reaction they had, that it was so offensive to the congregation they had it moved.”



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The billboard is part of a larger billboard campaign that has been launched by the organization in the last few years, one that has created controversy in the communities wherein the posters are placed. Dubbed the “Out of the Closet” campaign, it began in Madison, Wisconsin, last fall and has made its way through Raleigh, North Carolina, and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

A similar [endeavor](#) was launched by the United Coalition of Reason, which has plastered signs all over the nation, including on bus shelters, billboards, and transit stations that read, “Are you good without God? Millions are.” The campaign cost the United Coalition of Reason \$100,000, but the group contends it was worth it.

“People are saying, ‘Geez, where have you been all my life? I didn’t know you existed. I thought I was the only one who thought this way,’” explained Fred Edwards, national director of the United Coalition of Reason.

Other signs, found in highways along Texas, Arizona, Colorado, California and countless other areas read, “Being a good person doesn’t require God,” or “Don’t believe in God? You’re NOT alone!”

The campaign launched by the United Coalition of Reason began in response to 10 Christian billboards, which bemoaned the separation of church and state, paid for by wealthy businessman Terry Kemple. One of Kemple’s signs included this quote by George Washington: “Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

Similar efforts have been undertaken in Europe, where atheist and humanist organizations launched an advertising campaign that went even further than the signs found in the United States, encouraging people not to concern themselves with morality because God was a fallacy. City buses in London and Barcelona delivered the following message: “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.”

When the same groups tried to post such offensive signs on buses in Genoa, Italy, however, they faced the ire of Catholics and Muslims.

The Italian Union of Atheists, Agnostics and Rationalists attempted to place signs that read, “The bad news is God doesn’t exist; the good news is you don’t need him.”

In response to the negative backlash it received from Catholics and Muslims, the group attempted to soften the blow by changing the signs to read, “The good news is there are millions of atheists in Italy; the excellent news is they believe in freedom of expression.”

However, the bus bearing the reformed poster barely made it out of the terminal before it experienced “technical difficulties,” forcing it to come off the road.

According to the Italian atheist group, the problem was “curious.”

Perhaps it was divine intervention.

Photo: A billboard that reads " Don't believe in God? Join the club" in Oklahoma City.: AP Images



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