

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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Rev. Marion “Pat” Robertson  
The Christian Broadcasting Network  
977 Centerville Turnpike  
Virginia Beach VA 23463

August 23, 2010

Dear Rev. Robertson,

On behalf of our organization’s more than 16,000 members nationwide, and representing millions of atheists and agnostics, I am writing to protest your inflammatory and slanderous hate speech against nonbelievers, specifically your advice that no Christian should marry an atheist. During a program aired last year on the Christian Broadcast Network that has been recently rebroadcast, a woman with an atheist fiancé asked, “How do you think we can interact with each other peacefully when it comes to spiritual matters?” You responded unpeaceably:

I’m sure this is a nice guy, and you like him a lot, but the bible says, “What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?” There is no fellowship between an atheist and somebody who is a believer in God. . . . I hate to tell you, you’ve got to go find somebody else. . . . I mean, he’s gonna be serving the Devil and you’re gonna be serving God. It’s just that simple.

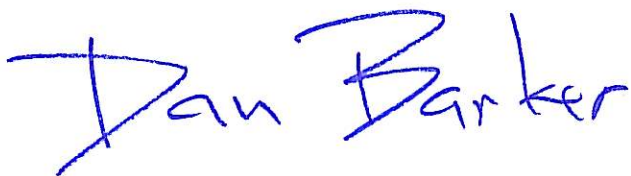
That remark is a blanket prejudicial smear against the character of all nonbelievers. If you had said the same thing about other minority groups — such as the recent controversy caused by Laura Schlessinger’s thoughtless use of the N-word on her show, suggesting to a caller that she should not have married “outside your race” — the country would be demanding your resignation, asking affiliates to cancel your show and calling on viewers to boycott your extremist, intolerant program. If you had told the woman to break up with a Jewish fiancé because Jews are “reprobate, dissolute and uncouth” (which is what “Belial” means), you would be properly branded an anti-Semite. If you had told her to dump her African-American fiancé because blacks are “worthless and useless” (which is also what “Belial” means), you would be quickly exposed as a racist. Likewise, labeling the entire class of nonbelievers as “demonic and evil,” and as the Devil itself (the meaning of “Belial” in the verse you misquoted), is equally abhorrent.

Discrimination is no longer socially acceptable. If it is shameful to be racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic or homophobic, why is it laudable to be “atheophobic”? What gives you the freedom to engage in the irrational, fearful hate-mongering against secular people?

Atheists and agnostics are good people, at least as good as Christians, and in many ways better. It is a fact that we atheists have a lower divorce rate than born-again Christians. Atheists commit fewer crimes. We contribute as much, if not more, to charity, and work to solve social problems. We serve in the military and sit on juries. We are members of the police force that protect your life and property. We vote in elections and serve in government. We write many of the songs you love to sing and the lullabies that soothe your children to sleep. We teach your children and grandchildren, minister to your medical needs, investigate the science and forge the technology that makes our world a better place to live. Is it moral to shun thoughtful, productive citizens merely because they reject your dogma?

You said you were sure the fiancé was “a nice guy,” but with no further evidence of his character you pronounce that he is “serving the Devil.” Atheists are not superstitious and reject the primitive notion of a “Devil,” so your prejudice is doubly defamatory. Your callous anti-family advice may have broken up a good marriage, a union between two people who obviously love each other and are searching for a peaceful way to live in tolerance. Instead of harmony, you preach exclusivity, Christian superiority and cultish segregationism. You said there is “no peace in that situation” where believers are yoked unequally with nonbelievers. But I know of many “mixed marriages” where the couples choose to embrace each other in spite of their differences, respecting their partner’s freedom of thought. Instead of hatred, you should have advised love.

On behalf our members nationwide, I ask you to retract your bigoted statement and make a public apology for your callous religious denunciation of an entire group of people. It is no longer morally permissible to vilify nonbelievers.



Dan Barker  
for the Freedom From Religion Foundation

*Note: Definition of “Belial” from The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (Abington Press, 1986) p. 377*