Scathing Atheist 634:

The “De-Pope-ulated” Edition

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Warning: This podcast contains warnings.

Sponsor:

This week’s episode of the Scathing Atheist is brought to you by … Factor, Mint Mobile, and by… the new human-sized, sound-proof hamster ball for Christian children trying to avoid learning secular stuff at public schools, the Un-hell Shell. The Un-hell Shell: Because this is about to be Supreme Court mandated so we might as well get in on the action early.

And now, the Scathing Atheist.

Intro:

It's Thursday!

It’s April 24th,

And it's New Kids on the Block Day!

Now it's more like "divorced dads on the porch" day.

I’m Noah Lugeons,

I’m Eli Bosnick,

I'm Heath Enwright, and from Kelsey Grammer's New Jersey; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Waycross, Georgia ... this is the Scathing Atheist.

On this week’s episode,

- The pope was DYING to meet JD Vance,

- Donald Trump celebrates the resurrection of the messiah with a "grind my gears" segment,
- And I try to make Heath, Eli, *and* the listeners jealous for not going to AACon.

But first, the Diatribe...

Diatribe

See, the problem with saying that RFK Jr. needs to get fucked in the ass with a Honda CR-V is that when I say that, you instinctively imagine it driving straight in instead of backing in with the doors open. Because fuck this guy as hard as this guy can be fucked. And fuck him right in the goddamn brainworm. Fuck this guy with the whale corpse *and* the chainsaw.

It's hard to be pissed off enough at all the people we need to be pissed off at. With all the hate we need for Donald Trump and Elon Musk and Pete Hegseth and Kristi Noem and JD Vance and Pam Bonid and Marco Rubio and all the belligerent fucks that voted for this bullshit rather than admit that a black person was right when they were wrong. But you know what, that's what I'm here for. I've dreamed for decades of a day when someone came to me and said, "Nobody could be pissed off enough for this." So I've got plenty of rage leftover for this fucking poisonous whoopie cushion of a Health Secretary.

And — not that I needed any new thing to stoke my ire for this anti-vax, alt-med, anti-science scion of shame — but I'm sure you heard the latest. Last Wednesday, Kennedy gave this grotesquely inaccurate speech about autism that pushed the common alternative medicine refrain that the increased prevalence of autism is the result of some environmental toxin rather than the increase in testing people for autism. He pledged to find the "cure" for autism by September, and he's vowed to do so with a wildly unethical collection of private medical data from people's doctors, pharmacies, insurance companies, and *wearable devices*.

So, ostensibly, this speech was a response to a new CDC report that noted an uptick in rates of autism. And in it, he dismissed the prevailing science about genetic inheritance, declared it a "dead end" on no scientific authority than that which he gleaned in law school, accused the public and the media of succumbing to a (quote) "myth of epidemic denial" (end quote) — and thereby implied that the scientific community was perpetuating a myth of denial — and in so doing, he disparaged the SHIT out of people with autism. He described children with autism as (quote):

> "[K]ids who will never pay taxes. They'll never hold a job. They'll never play baseball. They'll never write a poem. They'll never go out on a date. Many of them will never use a toilet unassisted." (end quote)

And, of course, a lot of people's immediate response was to point to all those tax-paying, baseball playing, job holding, poem writing, date going, unassisted shit-taking people with

autism that so very clearly disprove his point. But as instinctual as that might be, it subtly plays into the Nazi-ass framing that he's crafted around the whole thing.

Because yes, there are some places on the autism spectrum where people can't use the bathroom unassisted. But so fucking what? Do we value human beings now based on how hard it is for them to take a shit? How much their existence inconveniences us? And why the fuck are the first two items on that list about "productivity to the state"? I mean, taxes and jobs? Holy fuck. Is that how Robert Kennedy sees human beings? As potential contributions to the state?

Because look, as terrifying as his "conclusions-first" approach to science is, the far more concerning element here is the eugenic presumptions that underlies his whole argument. As though what we want is a world without autism. But a world without autism is a world without *so many of the people that I love*. And even if you could somehow extract the autism and leave the person, you'd be siphoning away a lot of the "them" that I love.

But, of course, this seam of eugenics runs beneath a *lot* of the alt-medicine scene, never acknowledged openly but always just below the surface. It's there in the bigoted horror some parents feel when they realize *their* genes could be faulty enough to make a kid with autism and scramble for some external villain to blame. It's there in all their ableist bullshit about us making our health in our minds; a mindset that necessarily excludes those with congenital conditions and necessarily ostracizes anyone unfortunate enough to develop a chronic condition along the way. And it's there in RFK Jr.'s presumption that neurotypical is an ideal that we should be trying to funnel people into.

Everything about RFK's position is terrifying beyond belief, but nothing is more terrifying than the eugenics groundwork he's laying by defining people with autism as leeches on the state who need to be cured and prevented. I know a lot of people who can't play baseball or hold a job or write a poem or take an unassisted shit. What is Kennedy's cure for them?

Headlines

Joining me for headlines tonight are the fish and chips to my greasy newspaper, Heath Enwright and Eli Bosnick. Fellas, are you ready to slowly give people heart attacks?

I'm bringing the GOOD fats.

And I'll keep it salty

And speaking of how salty Eli is, we'll take a quick break for a word from this week's first sponsor, Us.

And now, back to the headlines.

In our lead story tonight ... JD Vance killed the Pope with his personality. That's the evidence we have. And I know this is "pope hoc ergo propter hoc"...a logical fallacy. But also...CMON, the couch fucker did it. Pope Franatopsis met with the vice president on Easter...despite HATING Jance Dance...and then he went to sleep that night...and he never woke up. The "woke pope" just stayed asleep, presumably to avoid a follow-up meeting with Vance...and because of a cerebral stroke and irreversible cardiocirculatory collapse.

I was gonna say if there was ever a man who both dressed like a couch and had it coming its this pope

Okay, but this means that our show is about to be on its third Pope. That ties us with Queen Victoria, and she reigned for sixty-three years.

So the death of the Pope is an emotional moment for Catholics around the world, and that's why I wanna focus on MY EXPERIENCE. I was up late on Sunday night into Monday morning, doing some editing. And when I got done with that, I decided to look at stories for the show this week. I had a story about holy water causing an epidemic of cholera...which is an amazing metaphor for the entire church...but it's a depressing story. And then I saw a headline from the New York Times entitled: "Pope Meets With JD Vance After Criticism of Trump Administration." And I remembered their feud from earlier this year about immigration policy, so I switched that story into the notes. I pasted the new link...and one Christian second later...I got an alert that said "POPE IS DEAD." I had literally just typed "Pope RELUCTANTLY meets with JD Vance on Easter even though the Pope HATES him"...and then I added "AND IT FUCKING KILLED HIM" with the new link.

And honstly as often as were cursed by something breaking RIGHT after we record this show we were OWED a conveniently timed pope death

I'd also like to share my experience as well. I'm three days into the "stay up until 2am but still make the 9am talk" conference schedule when, at 4am, the Pope dies. And 106 people desperately try to be the first person to send me a text about it. So… maybe if the motherfucker could've died at 4 in the *afternoon* or something. But other than that, yeah, the timing was great.

And here's the last part of my night. I thought about JD Vance's recent timeline...and while holding back tears of laughter, I made a rare post on social media about JD Vance's holy week. Here's how it went for JD. (1): Try to pick up your alma mater's NCAA championship football trophy. (2): Immediately drop it while the White House band plays "We Are The Champions." (3): Demand a meeting with the Pope on Easter, even though he HATES you. (4): The Pope gives you 3 minutes for the meeting, and you're *so obnoxious* during 3 MINUTES...that the Pope literally dies that night, with YOU, Jance Dance Vance, as possibly the last person he met with. And I mentioned that if the Catholic god exists, he's got an AMAZING sense of humor recently.

Doesn't make up for the holocaust, but he's killing it at the moment, yeah.

Also...this is important...I'd love to see JD head back to the White House for a quick meeting in the Oval. There's this book called *The Secret*, and I'm just trying something. But before you dismiss my theory as a big coincidence, you need to see the look on the face of Pope Francis while he's dealing with JD Vance. For a total of 180 seconds. You can see the life leaving his face.




He looks like the blue meany who got kicked out of Pepperland for kid fucking

I don't know what any of that means, but I agree.

So with Franky gone, here's what happens next. First, everyone goes on Peacock to watch *Conclave*, and finds out they JUST removed it last week. It's only available to rent or buy on other services. INTERESTING. <Meh.> But in the meantime, we're in a period called "sede vacante" or "seat is vacant." And this is very serious, so of course there's a series of magical items to be dealt with, and a steampunk mousetrap chimney device to keep track of everything. So right after Francis died, they took his magical fisherman's ring and smashed it with a magical ring hammer. So they just bring the broken pieces to Mordor and that's taken care of. But now they have to decide on the new guy. All the cardinals from around the world under the age of 80 — 135 total — are gonna lock themselves inside the Vatican guest house for a murder mystery election period...also known as a conclave. They need to agree on the new pope with a two thirds majority vote that's done by secret ballot. So they'll argue with each other, and fuck each other on piles of nazi gold, and murder each other, and keep doing votes until they reach a decision. After each vote, the ballots get burned in the official ballot stove along with an additive that gives the smoke a certain color. If the smoke is black, it means they're still not decided. But if it's white, we have a new pope.

So the same way health insurance decides if something is covered

Except the insurance companies don't use the additive.

So here's the field of top contenders among the cardinals...

- I'll start with Pope Franky's second-in-command, Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin of Italy. The Marco Rubio of the Holy See. Nailing it.
- Another option is Fridolin Ambongo from the Democratic Republic of Congo. And the Catholic bigots are torn on this one. On the one hand, he's a DEI candidate, and he'd be the first ever pope from Africa. They're not loving that. But on the other hand, he's been a hardline conservative on continuing the Catholic tradition of severe homophobia.
- And rounding out the list, we have the top LIBERAL candidate (relative to other Catholic cardinals), Luis Antonio Tagle of the Philippines. He's known by papal pundits as "Asian Francis", and I'm told he has a nice smile. We also have the top CONSERVATIVE candidate, Peter Erdo of Hungary. We have the top...Swedish guy...Anders Arborelius of Stockholm. And my personal favorite, just because of the name, which is all that really matters, Pierbattista Pizzaballa. He's also from Italy, by the way. And I know they pick another name if they become the pope but...whatever...I'm not using that. You're Pope Pizza Balla.
- If pope pizzaballa becomes a podcastaverse character shit is gonna get WEIRD everybody. Your gonna need a skeleton key to listen to our podcast

I feel like the podcastiverse can branch into a timeline where there's a schism and Pizza Balla wins regardless, but I'm really just proving your point.

So naturally, a bunch of the news coverage is talking about the amazing life and career of Pope Francis. And most of it was hailing him as the "woke pope" with big compliments about all his progressive liberal influence on the church. So congrats on that. The bar for being the wokest pope is lodged in a ball of iron-nickel alloy in the inner core...and you managed to clear it. Great work. I'll give him some credit on being an advocate for immigrants and refugees...and being anti-war. And he told JD Vance to go fuck himself with his DYING WORDS, so you get a bunch of Heath points right there. But otherwise, he's just Elmer Fudd in a sillier outfit, saying homophobic slurs and NOT fixing stuff. And that's the big key for me. He was the head of a giant organization that's responsible for centuries of sexual abuse, and centuries of bigotry and persecution...including THIS century right now. They own about 177 million acres of land across the world. And they have an estimated net worth in the hundreds of billions. The pope is the king of that, and the conduit to the god of the universe. At any moment, Franky coulda been like "BRRRING BRRRING...oh hello, GOD...what's that?...you want me to let women be priests, and pay all the abuse victims, and create a giant endowment for UNICEF?...ok no problem, GOD...Guys, that was GOD." But Franky did NOT do that. So...fingers crossed for the pizza baller becoming the new shot caller and doing the right thing. Or maybe the smile guy from the Philippines. But I'm not holding my breath.

Pope RELUCTANTLY meets with JD Vance on Easter even though the Pope HATES him:
https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/20/us/politics/pope-francis-meets-with-jd-vance.html
AND IT FUCKING KILLED HIM TO DEATH:
https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/21/world/europe/pope-francis-dead.html
https://www.nytimes.com/article/pope-francis-death-health-problems.html
https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/21/world/europe/next-pope-francis-candidates.html

And in “DownUnder the Bar” news ... America’s hot alcoholic cousin, Australia, finds itself once again in the theocratic thick of it, as its archaic sacrilege law—still on the books—puts the country in danger of sentencing a 25-year-old man to life in prison for breaking into a church and stealing some holy books. So yeah… we’re gonna talk about it.

I'm picturing Nicolas Cage doing a National Treasure thing...and now he's on COPS, sitting on a curb with no shirt.

I’m picturing that now, too — and at least I know who to blame for it in my case.

First off, big thanks to—I believe first-time submitter—Owen, who sent us this story to scathingnews@gmail.com. If you send us atheist news to scathingnews@gmail.com, not only can you help keep our Amerocentric listeners informed about the religious nonsense in your country, but we will also… wash your car. That’s right. When you least suspect it, three middle-aged white guys will jump on your vehicle and get to scrubbing. Watch your six, Owen. Watch your six.

Eli is closer than he appears.

Right, so for those of you unfamiliar with the Land Down Under, it’s a big prison continent—kinda like an old-timey version of the Phantom Zone from superman. <Keeping it universally relatable. Love it.> But they started a country, and now everyone there is two points hotter than their American counterparts. They also don’t have free speech, because it turns out that was a terrible idea.

Yeah the big problem in America right now is too many dissenting voices against our dear leader...solid point.

That’s like me coming out against downplaying Heath’s complexity as a fully formed individual or Heath coming out against tallness.

Now, sometimes that’s good—people face consequences for saying stupid shit without an entire wing of the government pretending they have a magic right to do it. But in some ways, it doesn’t work out—as is the case with the country’s outdated and dangerous blasphemy and sacrilege laws, which, once per administration, remind everyone that letting religion decide morality is a terrible idea. Anywhere. Anytime.

There should be a blasphemy QUOTA. Once a week, every pastor has to be like "Yeah when Jesus fucked a fig tree to death...that was dumb."

I just wanna pipe in to say that letting *Eli* decide morality is also a terrible idea in an equivalent number of places and times.

Exactly. So as I mentioned at the top: this week, police were called after CCTV showed a man entering a church in Murray Bridge, South Australia at 3:30 AM. Officers apprehended a 25-year-old who was allegedly found in possession of scripture books belonging to the church. And look—I get it. Zig-Zag papers are expensive as fuck, Bibles have a lot of pages. Breaking and entering? Have at ye. But he wasn't charged with trespassing. He was charged with sacrilege, which comes with a possible life sentence in prison… for upsetting… the magic books. And right here—this is exactly the kind of situation that organizations like the Rationalist Society of Australia have been warning the government about for years. As Executive Director Si Gladman puts it: QUOTE "No doubt there are people in the community who view places of worship as special to them. But the punishments handed out for crimes such as trespass, theft of property, or damage to property should not be greater simply because such an offence has taken place in a religious building or place of worship."

Yeah, like, I'm way more reverent about my near complete collection of Magnavox Odyssey 2 games than most Christians are about their holy book. But as much as I feel like somebody should get life in prison for fucking with them, I see the wisdom in not letting my feelings dictate that shit.

Now, it's worth pointing out that the last time one of these laws was applied, the charge of sacrilege was dismissed, and a far lesser punishment was handed down. And sure, a lot of apologists point that out. But that doesn't make threatening someone with life in prison for hurting your book's feelings okay. Either way, I hope Australia rids itself of these laws soon—and gets back to tanning their beautiful, beautiful bodies by the seaside.

The history behind controversial laws of sacrilege and blasphemy in Australia:
https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-18/controversial-law-sacrilege-blasphemy-australia/105116860
https://7news.com.au/news/sa/sa-man-faces-possible-life-in-jail-if-convicted-of-sacrilege-over-early-morning-church-break-in-c-18153751

And in "Putting the Ding-Dong in 'Nonbinding-dong'" news tonight, Oklahoma and Indiana are in varying stages of passing state resolutions about how swell their lord and savior is. And since the only thing that such a resolution can do is alienate non-Christians, belittle nonbelievers, and shove the wedge of theocracy just a little further into the door, the sponsors of those resolutions insist that they actually don't do anything at all. Is *their* argument. Their argument is that they're completely wasting the time of the state legislatures, because the truth is worse than that.

It's like they had a sub that day. Slow day at work...everything in Oklahoma is great...you guys wanna name a thought and write it down?

Okay but only if it definitionally excludes a TREMENDOUS amount of humans

So we'll start in Oklahoma, where the resolution has already passed on a 71-16 party-line vote. Now, the wording of this resolution was very clearly crafted by some lawyer who's desperately trying to find a way of saying "Jesus is the best of the gods" without violating the First Amendment. He, she, or they fails, but it's filled with a bunch of language about how all they're doing is recognizing Jesus, not worshipping him, and they're not saying we should join his *religion*, they're saying we should look to him as (quote) "a source of hope, unity, and moral guidance" (end quote). It might as well end with "not violating church state separation, can't get mad."

Stop resolving yourself.

We just think jesus was a swell fella. What YOU do about the fact that he was the son of god is up to YOU.

Of course, Democrats in Oklahoma *did* get mad, and used the tiny little window Republicans provided for debate to emphasize that point. Which is easy to do when your minority whip is also a regional government affairs manager for the Freedom From Religion Foundation. That's non-Monkee (with both and EY and an EE) Micky Dollens, and he fucking nailed his time. After he wrapped the bill's sponsor in a knot about how "all the resolution is doing is acknowledging that many Oklahomans find Jesus inspirational and a great moral foundation," Dollens asked him if he'd sign on to a similar resolution about Allah. To which the dude responded "dot dot dot… That's not addressed in this resolution, so I'll decline to answer that one."

...That's...I'm not...DAD?!?...Mickey's switching out single words and making me look dumb again!

I know this isn't funny and I know these people have to keep doing their jobs but just once I'd like one person to respond to that snake ass bullshit with "no. You have to answer the question even though the magic hammer rules say you dont"

So, I guess once they saw this one pass, Indiana decided they wanted in on the action, so they crafted a *far* less lawyerly resolution that just "we all love Jesus the most possible times infinity squared." It even says in the resolution that the state house is (quote) "unified in its steadfast commitment to individually and corporately returning to God and upholding the biblical principles set forth in the word of God" (end quote), a hell of a statement when it has literally zero chance of passing unanimously.

It's all the kids at the model UN conference who got ignored. Hundreds of nerds figuring out carbon sequestration...Christian kid interrupts: "Can we resolve that god is the coolest?"

Now, like I said, the people defending these bullshit resolutions will emphasize that they aren't laws, they're more like legislative press releases. And that's true, but just because they don't carry the weight of law doesn't mean they don't matter. I mean, think about how they argued that "In God We Trust" had been so bleached of meaning that it was secular — but then used its

presence on so much government shit as proof of how government endorsements of Christianity are okay. And that's to say nothing of the "literally any useful (or even harmless) thing" they could've been doing with the same time.

Oklahoma and Indiana hope to declare official statewide Christianity: https://www.friendlyatheist.com/p/oklahoma-republicans-pass-controversial and https://www.friendlyatheist.com/p/indiana-resolution-declares-unified

And while you're wondering how the fuck I'm not having another heart attack covering these stories, we'll toss you over to a word from our second sponsor this week, Factor.

HEADLINES B:

And in "Super DUPER intendent" news ... When a few of you sent us word that a hate pastor was trying to stop a school administrator from becoming superintendent, I have to admit—I was hesitant to cover the story. We saw enough "gay person loses their job for being gay" stories during the good times. It feels downright sadistic to talk about it now. But when I learned this week that he was a miserable failure at said attempt? I knew I had to talk about it.

Love it when a pastor loses to a teacher. Because the pastor THINKS they're a teacher, but with real magic. And then they still lose. That's gotta hurt.

Yeah, because then your cognitive dissonance has to choose between questioning your god's existence, questioning your god's valuation of the other person's morality, or questioning your god's view of you in comparison to that person's morality. No easy out from there.

So a big thanks to Foxfucker for sending us this story at scathingnews@gmail.com. Foxfucker understands that when you send us atheist news to scathingnews@gmail.com, we'll read that your name is Foxfucker with no judgment at all—assuming this is a furry thing and not an animal abuse thing. Fingers crossed.

If it's *news* abuse, I'm still cool with it.

Right, so here's the story: Tiffany Regan is the former assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction in the Deer Park Independent School District in Deer Park, Texas. So when the current superintendent retired, it made a ton of sense for her to take over. The board announced Regan was their choice for the job in March and invited public comment before offering her the post. And—as is literally always the case when you offer public comment on literally anything—Psychos for Jesus decided to ruin it.

Yeah, the whole idea of public comments sounds great until you meet the public.

Just 50 Christian lunatics doing the Patton Oswalt filibuster about his entire script idea for a Star Wars movie...but they're serious and not from a sitcom.

Yeah, so the psycho in question was Pastor Douglas Harris, who took to the pulpit the following Sunday saying, quote: “When you live a lifestyle of sexual immorality and that is your corrupted worldview, everything that you do stems out of the worldview of which you have, which means it will only be a matter of time before the wokeism and the (liberalism) and the sexual immorality begins to be pushed at a fast pace in our district.”

Slowly pan out to see the city of Sodom on fire...everyone's fucking each other...angels, people, kids, pets...I WILL NOT YIELD MY TIME...

In a sane world, she’d be putting those words on a yard sign for her election: “The wokeism, liberalism, and sexual immorality begins to be pushed at a fast pace: Tiffany Regan.”

So, as you can imagine, the sane people in the district were horrified that Harris was attempting to speak for them. They circulated a petition demanding an apology from him and his church, which gathered 2,400 signatures. And in response, Harris… wrote the petition a letter from some of his bigot pastor friends, saying, quote: “Pastor Harris is standing solidly on thousands of years of Judeo-Christian doctrine, as well as the biblical and historic role that the pulpits have served in being a moral anchor to communities. The fact is that Ms. Regan cannot separate her worldview and deeply embedded sexual identity from her actions. Our concern is that the profoundly distrurbing [sic] pattern of the LGBTQ+ to push that agenda on our children is simply irrefutable.”

Have you not read the bible story about the angels fucking the kids that the pastor was reciting in detail?...Your sexual identity is too deeply embedded...YOURS is.

But herein lies the inherent problem with basing your morality on a book that’s immoral. You’d think that would be obvious.

Exactly. Well, it turns out it is, in fact, refutable—by quite a few people. And the board awarded Tiffany Regan the position this week. So keep your eye out for a series of sexually predatory lesbians out of Deer Park, Texas, in the next decade or so—because now we know where they all got started.

Hate pastor campaigned to stop lesbian from becoming school superintendent; he lost: https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2025/04/hate-pastor-campaigned-to-stop-lesbian-from-becoming-school-superintendent-he-lost/

And finally tonight, in “Dis-Easter-ous” news, there are a lot of parts about the job of President of the United States that seem really hard. I’m pretty sure there are a lot of them I couldn’t do. None that I couldn’t do better than the titian tit we have in there now, but many that I’m not qualified to do. That being said, there are at least a few that I think most of us could breeze through. Like, I could pardon the *shit* out of a turkey. I could probably meet the Girl Scout troop

that sold the most cookies without fucking it up. And I'm pretty sure I could nail the series of uplifting cliches and banalities we've come to expect from our leaders on holidays. Or, failing that, I'm pretty sure I could get all the way through them without railing against my perceived enemies or baselessly accusing anyone of crimes. Which is, of course, more than we can expect from the shart-stain in chief.

Another president thing I could manage...I could talk to a little kid on Christmas without saying Santa's not real. So if Trump ends up yelling at a little kid: "THERE IS NO EASTER BUNNY - THAT'S JUST A GUY IN SUIT" like Willam...I'll be zero percent surprised.

Okay well I can't do any of those things so now I feel like I'm next to get elected. I need a suit.

You have one, but it has pigeons secreted away in it.

So Trump's Easter message is too long and rambling to quote in its entirety here, but the highlights include accusing Democrats of trying to fill the country with (quote) "murderers, drug lords, dangerous prisoners, the mentally insane, well known gang members, and wife beaters" (end quote), railing against judges that have ruled against him, whining about how incompetent Joe Biden was, and — of course — claiming that the 2020 election was stolen. That was his *Easter message*.

And it's NOT like a toadstool!...anyway, he is risen...god bless America.

Also feels like a minor point but your a court adjudicated wife beater Donald. Why you gotta come for your own people?

And for obvious reasons, the wall of text with all that shit in it is the Easter message that's getting all the press, but I want to draw your attention to another missive he finger-shat onto social media on Easter morning, in which he promised to make America (quote) "bigger, better, stronger, wealthier, healthier, and more religious than it's ever been before" (end quote).

My favorite part of the day was Trump and Hegseth trying to defend the insane breach of national security while standing next to the Easter Bunny.

Bunny checks its phone shows the press a bunch of blueprints?

And look, nothing encourages me more about the future of American secularism than knowing that Trump is gonna make America more religious with the same means and competency with which he's making it wealthier and healthier. But the very fact that he thinks it's a goal that he should admit to publicly is a potent reminder that you don't have to be able to define "theocracy" to create one.

Trump uses Easter message to disparage enemies, declare he will make America more religious than ever before:

https://religionnews.com/2025/04/21/we-should-be-shocked-by-trumps-easter-message/ and https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-vows-make-america-more-religious-ever-before-2061904

And on yet another terrifying reminder of why we're here in the first place, we'll wrap the headlines for the night. Heath, Eli, thanks as always.

And when we come back, the music will fade back out.

Top Ten

It's become a bit of a tradition on this show that after we attend big atheist and skeptics' conferences, we devote a segment to our top ten memories from the event. Partly it's to encourage people who have never been to a con to attend, partly it's a shout out to the attendees who helped create all these great memories, and partly it's because after a con we don't really have time to read a whole chapter of a book or break down a Christian song, and "what I did last summer" is an easy assignment.

I always cheated and just told everyone the plot of "I know what you did last summer"...spent a lot of time in the counselor's office

However, this year because of wedding planning obligations and babysitting requirements respectively, Heath and Eli were unable to attend this year's American Atheists Conference, leading us to the conundrum of whether we'd still do that segment even though it would just be me telling the guys all the great shit they wanted to do but couldn't, which seems cruel. So, without further ado, here are my top ten memories from AACon 2025:

10 - Winning at trivia

So for the last few years, AACon has been kicking off the conference with a Thursday Night pub trivia contest and until now I've never been on the winning team. Because Heath has always been there and not been on my team. But this year I was on the dream team; which is Katie Tregenza, Fred Groothuis, and any number of warm bodies. I mean, no offense to any of my other teammates, but if the two of them teamed up with 8 empty duck costumes they'd have won the thing.

Two AMAZING people to have on the team. In my experience with Fred, we'd get the question, and everyone would talk through their ideas, and then Fred would very quietly say the correct answer every time. And he's such a nice person that he wouldn't jump in and tell everyone to shut up because we have it. If it was me, and I had all the knowledge that Fred does, I'd be such a loud asshole about it. But he just softly gets it right every time and lets everyone talk

about their wrongness ideas. Once I learned how it works, I just started staring directly at Fred after each question.

To be fair fred was there when most of the history questions happened so its kinda cheating

So here's the key; Katie (who you might know as Nine-Fingered Lesbian online) is a fucking SEVANT when it comes to music. <9 out of 10 in your program...11 out of 10 in our hearts> And one of the rounds was 12 songs about Minnesota or by Minnesotans (because the con was in Minneapolis) and you got one point for naming the song and another for naming the artist. And Katie went 12 for 12 on that (just like she had the previous year in Philly). And she was so confident and so quick that I got to do this awesome power move. Because they went through the songs once and then they did them a second time at the end. But Katie already nailed all twelve of them, so while they're replaying the songs, I walk to the front just as visibly as possible and turn our answer sheet in early.

Just dancing up to front like you have TSA precheck for Soul Train.

Side note 9 fingered lesbian is her online username…it's not like…a pirate reputation

But yeah, between her encyclopedic musical knowledge and Fred just knowing a LOT of random shit, we ended up winning by, like, 6 or 7 points or something. It was ridiculous.

9 - The Service project

My number 10 came from the first official event of the conference and my number nine is the last. That's the service project. See, every year AACon puts together a charity project of some sort that attendees can participate in on the last day of the con, which is, of course, Easter Sunday. And this year we were bagging up food for food insecure families in the Minneapolis area. <WHAT ARE THEY SCARED OF MACARONI? I joke they're starving cause society is evil.> And Lucinda and I just happened to get placed at the same table as Seth Andrews. And there are, like, ten people at the table or so. So we've got Lucinda, me, Seth, our mutual friend Jamie, and six superfans of Seth's show who have no idea who the fuck I am. It was humbling, which is exactly what a service project is supposed to be.

It's really good that Eli didn't make it. That would've been a MELTDOWN...and then a hitting phase...and then a safe hands reward map on the wall...lots of fallout.

And to be clear that would have all been for ME…if history is any indication my toddler would have just been making lucinda do calisthenics somewhere

Also — and I know this kind of undercuts the 'humbling' thing — but we kind of won the service project. Even though we started slow because one of our scales didn't work, we filled the most boxes in the first hour *and* we ran out of shit and had to pack up first. So … they didn't exactly declare a victor in the service project, but if they had it would've been us.

I think it was pretty shitty of geoff blackwell to make you apologize to that other table cause you told them to suck it. You didn't even tell them what to suck

8 - Winning the Icebreaker contest

Not having Heath around really brought out the victor in me, I guess, because I *also* won the icebreaker contest. And this one had money in it. Trivia contest just got us a box full of candy, but the icebreaker contest came with a $25 credit at the American Atheist merch table.

Did you take my suggestion and goatse? Cause that will get you a t shirt every time

So there was this app called "Whova" that they were using for a lot of the conference stuff. And among the various things you could do on the app was this icebreaker thing. It gives you a list of six or seven different icebreaker questions you can answer and then everybody can upvote the ones they like the best. So I chose the question "What kind of fruit or vegetable would you be and why?" and my answer was "Banana, because Ray Comfort seems like a gentle lover."

Nicely done. If it was QED, I'd be lettuce so I could be a PM with staying power.

Anyway, I won with four more votes than the next competitor, which I felt really good about until I read the second and third and fourth place answers. Because one of them was a civil rights attorney talking about the joy of having his dream job and the other was a woman talking about how she wants to start a blog that rates travel destinations for accessibility, and one was about saving a family of puppies from a burning refugee camp or some fucking thing, and here I am with a fucking dick joke taking the top prize.

To be fair the trump administration is probably gonna make our job illegal WAY after they do those other guys. Its about staying power

7 - Just Minneapolis in general.

Okay, finally have one that has nothing to do with me winning anything. Of course, the American Atheists annual convention moves around every year. And this year we were in Minneapolis, Minnesota; a city and state I'd never visited. And it turns out that I'm a big fan of both. Southern hospitality has *nothing* on Minnesota nice. Literally every interaction I had with a Minnesotan was charming as fuck. And they even did the voice for me.

I like when the best word for the accent is also the name of the accent.

Pro tip this does NOT apply to sexual advances in their truck stop bathrooms. Your just get beat up by a guy who sounds like a weatherman

6 - Winning at the photo contest

Okay, back to me winning at shit. But I have to admit that in this instance, I didn't *actually* win. I took third place. I lost to a fucking rat. So much like the icebreaker contest, the conference app also had a thing where you could upload your pics from the conference and people could upvote their favorites. And my pic of our winning trivia team took an early lead — because it was one of the first pics that anybody uploaded and it had the instant advantage of all ten members of our trivia team upvoting it.

And it's a great photo. My favorite part is that everyone's smiling except for A-Poff, who decided it was a team picture for middle school football, and you gotta establish dominance.

NEVER APOLOGIES FOR HAVING THE EYE OF THE TIGER APRIL. HEATH WANTS TO HIDE YOUR LIGHT UNDER A BUSHEL

But here's the truly remarkable thing about the photo contest. So I never had a chance at this thing because — and here's where I ensure that Heath never misses one of these again — Aron Ra brought his dog to this one. His great pyrenees named Falkor. And if you're not familiar with the breed, we're talking about a white dog the size of a fucking motorcycle. If it stood on its hindlegs, it would have been taller than me. So the photo that took first place was — of fucking course — Lucinda with Falkor. In fact, *three* of the top 10 photos were Lucinda with Falkor.

Okay so I love the idea of a great pyrenees named after a luckdragon. And it fits perfectly. If you met Aron Ra and you knew nothing about him, you'd be like "Cool...where's your luckdragon that you definitely have as a pet?" But here's the thing about *Neverending Story*. It traumatized my entire generation. They made us watch Artax die in the swamp. So we're already weeping uncontrollably, and then they ALSO KILL FALKOR. We don't see it, but it's implied that the Nothing consumes him. And the movie claims they didn't show that explicitly because it might traumatize an entire generation.

Side note. Do you think Aron ra buys normal stuff or does he have to order like goth wizard karate themed toilet paper to? I feel like he can't just grab a pack of charmin at walgreens

And shout out to the second place photo as well, which was Eve Was Framed (who you might remember from episode 357 of GAM) chilling with a rat that belonged to Trinity Pixie (who you might remember from episode 430 of GAM). So when you consider the competition, the fact that our trivia team took third is still pretty impressive.

5 - Fred at the drag show

One of the best decisions American Atheists made this year was that on Saturday night, instead of having some boring magician or some podcast do a live record, they had a drag show. Which was awesome. They brought in a local drag group that was crazy talented. Genuinely one of the best drag performances I've ever seen even though the room set up might not have been ideal for it.

I'd really like the drag performers experience. They did 11 boozy brunches this month and a conference room of retirees who hate god. I wanna know how we ranked

But the highlight of the drag show for me wasn't any of the performers — or, at least, not any of the paid performers. It was watching our mutual friend Fred — who is in his seventies and living his best life — sitting right up front, dancing with the drag queens, making it rain, and very visibly having the fucking time of his life.

My atheist drag name would be Bianca Infidel Rio.

Heath has been shaking while he waited to tell you that podcast listeners

So no, I did *not* win the drag show. Fred did.

4 - Winning at Codenames

Another great benefit of Heath's absence was that I was able to dominate Codenames — or, at least go two for two. After the talks and the awards dinner on Friday, a bunch of us were hanging out at the hotel bar playing Codenames. My team won, then I went out to smoke a joint (which is legal in Minnesota), came back, joined *the other team*, and won again. So I was two for two on different teams.

Just A-Poff 500 feet away from the answer key like Megan's Law...playing from across the bar.

I'm picturing her on the hannibal lecter dolly. Rainbow 4 clarice…

3 - Winning at a One-Legged Standing Contest

Okay, I'll admit that I'm stretching the whole "winning shit" theme a bit on this one. But on Saturday evening they had a VIP event which I was allowed to attend because, you know, I paid for a ticket to it. But during that event, our mutual friend Phil Ferguson of the aptly titled "Phil Ferguson show" comes up, and he's talking about his fitness regime. And as part of it, he starts talking about how he's been practicing standing on one leg. So I immediately challenged him to a one legged standing contest.

And — I know this is weird, given how much weed I smoke — but I've got really good balance. I used to walk slacklines, I used to walk on stilts, I used to ride a unicycle, I've spent a LOT of time on one foot. I own a one-footed balance board for people who just don't find standing on one foot challenging enough. Needless to say, I crushed him like a grape. And then I felt like a bit of a prick, because he was just trying to make a point and my hyper-competitive ass ruined it.

RIGHT IN HIS FACE. His point almost ruined that amazing contest.

Hey podcast listener. If this is your first episode its gonna seem like any time anyone ever says anything noah challenges them to a conte about it but we wanna assure you…thats ALSO true of heath

2 - Arden's talk

Listening to my top ten so far, you might be tempted to think the talks weren't all that impressive, given that they haven't even come up. But there were a bunch of great ones. Friend of the show Geoff Blackwell gave a rousing speech about the state of the Supreme Court's current session, there was a data analytics guy named Juhem Navarro-Rivera that gave a great talk about the population trends that was absolute candy to a demographics nerd like myself, and I thought American Atheists' president Nick Fish really rose to the occasion with his talk on Friday. <His atheist drag name would be Nick Fish.> But the stand out talk of the weekend — and I think damn near every attendee who saw it would agree — was Arden Hart's talk titled "A Guide to Confronting Transphobia in the Secular Movement."

Starts to lay out a bunch of karate matts…okay…I'm listening

So yeah, at a time when some atheist groups are getting a little iffy on trans-rights and some skeptical groups are planting their flags firmly in the transphobia camp, it was really nice to see American Atheists making their position clear with the invite. And holy shit what a great talk. Arden basically just laid out the transphobe arguments, dismantled them in a way that was logically unassailable, and did so with more applause breaks than the politician that was there the day before and brought an audience plant to yell "Yeah!" and start clapping loudly after every point he made.

I tried to do that the first time I saw Eli's magic show, and I picked a stupid time, and nobody was with me. And Eli was like "please sit down, sir."

I told you painting your body with a big E was too much

And I should note that I asked some folks with American Atheists and they assure me that the talk *will* be made available online in the near future. Definitely worth an hour of your time when it is.

And at **Number one**, I'm gonna diverge ever so slightly from tradition. Because normally I always have the same number one, and that is "meeting our listeners." That's the main reason we go to these conventions in the first place and it's always the most fun I have at them. And it was again this year. But instead of just giving the blanket answer, I want to focus in on one single listener that I met.

Noah if its you and you declare yourself a winner your not allowed to go to stuff alone tomorrow

Now, I didn't ask her permission to share this story, so I'm not gonna give her name. But I met her on the first day of the conference and she clearly suffered from some pretty serious social anxiety. She was so nervous to meet Lucinda and I that she was literally shaking. It was clear that she was overcoming some *shit* to come up and introduce herself. But she did and we were flattered that she considered meeting us to be worth so much social anxiety.

I tell people they're not shaking enough when I meet them

But then we saw her again the next day and she was a little less nervous. And the next evening she was a little less nervous. And by the final day we were chatting like old friends, our sort of weird, extended convention-family had pulled her in close, and she felt so comfortable that she was already planning to come to our next live event.

Love that. And for anyone else feeling that social anxiety...SO AM I. So come right over and say hi, and we'll be social about social anxiety together. I learned to fake my way past it as a bartender, but it's there all the time.

And look, I get that podcasts are particularly appealing to people with social anxiety. For a lot of people they serve as sort of a social simulacrum where they can sort of feel like they're sitting in a circle of friends without having to contribute. So we meet a lot of people that are in her position — and we don't meet a lot more because they never get up the nerve to introduce themselves. So it feels really good when you're able to help somebody break through that and sit in the circle for real.

One of my favorite moments at a conference was realizing that me and another guy in the conversation circle were both running the same play. Because we both landed on the same "forced eye contact schedule." We're both doing "look up...person 1, person 2, person 3...done." And I realize we're both the other guy's *person 2* at the same time. Like our cycles matched up, and every so often we'd lock eyes at the same time. So after the 3rd time, I was like "Hey I think we're doing the same social anxiety cadence."

Take a moment to empathize what its like for me and my typical neurons as I watch everyone else at these events choreograph their eye contact like a showtune

So anyway, that was my top ten memories of the con, I could've easily done twenty. And if you'd like to help be a part of those memories next time, next year's con is in Washington, DC — it won't be Easter this year, though. They're doing it in conjunction with some other groups, but we'll keep you posted on dates and stuff. And thanks again to all the wonderful people with American Atheists who made the whole thing possible.