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July 4, 2009: How Will the Children of Secularists Return to Religion?

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Title: How Will the Children of Secularists Return to Religion?

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7/4/2009—Happy Fourth of July, a day of rejoicing unless you are a native American. This is a day to consider the words of the Declaration of Independence: “they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights”. Secularists must come to terms with these words. They cannot be unconstitutional. But I also want to address a story that appeared in the New York Times back on June 14, entitled, "A Child Turns to the Fold". The story tells of Ryan Sweeney, age 13, who suddenly started going to church, much to the surprise of his parents, and took his father with him, and later his mother too. Ryan’s father had been pretty religious once. His mother really not at all. Ryan had been raised without religion. The story is a familiar one of children shaming their parents by being more serious about life than they are. It could have been about raising money for charity, but it was about going to church. But what is this all about really? Ryan finds the sermons “pretty interesting”. But listen to the rest of his reasons for going: “Among the many reasons Ryan wanted to go: he’s a big reader, enjoys fantasy literature and has seen theories suggesting the world may end in 2013... . In that case, he said, it would be nice to be on good terms with God.” Look, I’m not knocking a 13 year old. His thoughts are silly, naturally. But when is someone going to have a serious talk with him? And who is there who can have a serious talk with him? I wanted my kids to engage ideas about God and religion while they were young. And I believe they did. I was always afraid, not that they would have no religion, but that they would have bad religion. Apparently that is what can happen when you raise a child, like Ryan, with no religion at all.