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FAITH

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Posted on February 6, 2012 at 7:06am by  [Billy Hallowell](#)



Author Anne Rice (AP)

Author [Anne Rice](#) is known for her fascinating literary works. Her first novel, "Interview With a Vampire," published in 1976, went on to be a smash hit and a number of her books, including "Interview" were adapted for the big screen. I recently spoke with Rice, 70, about her decades-long career, her passion for writing, social media (she's a huge fan) and, most interestingly, her journey from atheism to Catholicism to — an ambiguous faith standing.

While it was intriguing to hear [Rice discuss her new book](#), "The Wolf Gift" (coming out on Feb. 14), her highly-successful career and her penchant for connecting with fans on social media (she has 569,865 ["likes" on Facebook](#) — and counting), it was her faith journey that was most captivating.

Knowing that Rice had announced her faith — then rescinded her Catholicism — religion was the main focus of our discussion. What was, perhaps, most striking was her ability, despite her stated confusion over her current faith views, to be open and honest. In addition to sharing candid opinions, she showed confidence in her uncertainty.

For most of her adult years, the famed author was an atheist. At the age of 18, she dismissed God's existence as a fallacy and didn't change her mind until later in life. It was then in 1998 that Rice became a Catholic, [surrounding herself](#) with statues, artwork Bibles

ANNE RICE



THE WOLF GIFT

and other religious symbols. The process from non-believer to Christian adherent, she says, was a gradual one. One day, after researching and reading extensively, she finally realized that she believed wholeheartedly in God.

A NOVEL

"I was in New Orleans and I was doing a lot of research on the Jews in history and I was so impressed with the spirituality of the Jews — the fact that they still exist today," she explains. "I fell in love with all of that and I began to see God in history. I'm not sure there's evidence now of God in history."

This last line was intriguing. After studying the Jews and recognizing their historical significance and interconnectedness with a Higher Power, Rice has since abandoned such a notion.

In 2010, after 12 solid years as a believer, she announced her departure from the Catholic Church. "Today I quit being a Christian," she wrote on her Facebook page, going on to call Christians, as a collective, a "quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious and deservedly infamous" group. These words were surprising to many journalists, especially considering that they were coming from a woman who had so openly embraced the faith.

Here she is in a CBN interview just months before leaving Catholicism behind:

During our exchange, I asked her to explain her harsh 2010 characterization of Christians. In addition to voicing concerns with the way in which Christians treat various groups, Rice went on to say that she cannot allow herself to believe that every human being deserves hell, calling such a belief "monstrous."

"When I walked away [from the faith], I was rejecting the whole thing. It was the whole system of Christian belief — that a remnant of people would be saved from the fire," she said. "I don't believe the God of the universe would create a place called 'hell.'"

Considering her hard-hitting departure and the rejection of the core beliefs she held dear, I asked if there was a specific breaking point that led her away from the church. At the heart of the matter was her personal distaste for the church's teaching on abortion and gay marriage, among other issues — something she said was difficult for her from the start of her initial conversion.

"I had already come to realize that I didn't believe in the theological underpinnings of the Christian system," Rice explained. "I could have kept quiet and kept going to church if it had not been for the pressure exerted by things the Catholic Church was doing."

Among these "things," Rice cited the infamous pedophilia scandal and what she saw as a massive coverup. She maintained that "the conduct of the hierarchy was absolutely shameful."

"There was a total disregard for American law...shifting priests rather than stopping them for what they were doing," she continued. "The Catholics have done everything they can to confuse the issue publicly. They've even stooped to level of saying priests don't abuse more than anyone else."



To this point, Rice said that the church should have “a zero number of abusers” and that such an insinuation — that priests aren’t any more likely than the general public to engage in molestation — was a poor defense at best.

But her reasons for leaving the church extended far beyond the sex-abuse scandal. Another issue that ate away at her was the church’s handling of homosexuals, as the famed author went on to say that the Catholic church “scapegoats gays.”

“The other thing was the relentless persecution of gay people...the vilifying of gay people,” she said. “The Catholic Church doesn’t recognize anybody’s civil marriage and here they were coming out of their churches to stop gay people from civil marriages.”

She also went on to cite the case of Sister Margaret McBride, a Catholic nun and hospital administrator [who was excommunicated](#) by Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted after she authorized an abortion to help save a woman’s life at St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona. This, for Rice, was the proverbial “icing on the cake.”

“[The sick woman] was a mother of four children and she was dying in a fatal pregnancy. [The bishop] truly wanted that woman to be abandoned with that fetus,” Rice explained. “My disgust with Roman Catholicism just reached its max so I left.”



This, of course, led me to ask about her opinions about abortion — an issue that continues to be at the core of socio-political debate. While she expressed her wish that women would have their children rather than opt for abortion, she said that she doesn’t support laws that would criminalize a woman’s right to choose. She went on to rail against many in the pro-life movement who have stood firmly opposed to abortion procedures.

"[Those opposed to abortion] don't support contraceptive information. They've started a war on Planned Parenthood," she said. "I can't quite believe they're really all that concerned with human life. They're too blind to the lives of woman involved — there's a focus on the unborn that seems disingenuous."

So, all this considered, where does that leave Rice today? She remains "committed to Christ." When asked what, exactly, that means in practice, she attempted to explain:

"Everyday, I'm asking myself that, because my faith in the Christian belief system totally collapsed. I realized a lot of what I believed about Jesus was rooted in lies and falsehoods. What I've tried to preserve is a love for and a trust in God. Jesus coming here is the most beautiful love story I've ever heard.

I know I feel a palpable God — with a human face. I can't really tell another person what I believe that is. I believe that there is a maker of the universe that knows every hair on our head — and has made this entire universe and is very aware of us and I hope and pray this maker of the universe loves us and — and I think he does."

She characterized her current faith walk as "a state of confusion," which, regardless of whether one agrees with her assessment of Christianity, is a bold and transparent admission.

As for the Bible, Rice no longer views it as something that should be read literally and she claims that "the maker of the universe [wouldn't] write everything down in [only] two languages in one part of the world."

Considering these changes, Rice says she's still looking for ways through which she can worship God. She says worshipping with others is a beautiful experience, but she has serious reservations — obviously — with associating herself with specific churches.

Rice's faith is something that, much like her writing, has gone through intense transformation. Her formerly staunch Christians views have now dissipated, as she seeks to swim through spiritual uncertainty on a search for greater meaning.

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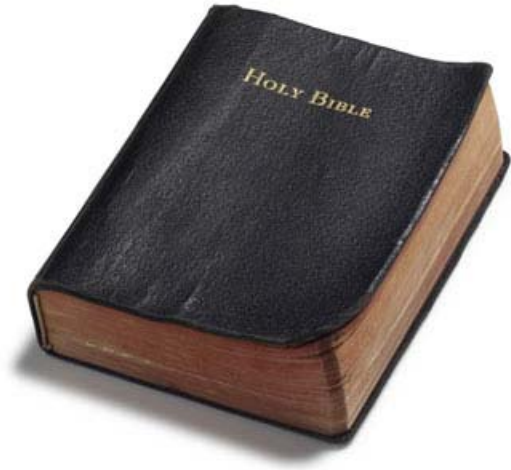
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Posted on February 1, 2012 at 6:27pm by  [Billy Hallowell](#)

The drama over student rights and religious freedom continues to rage at Vanderbilt University, as the higher education facility doubled-down this week on enforcing strict rules that some say discriminate against campus religious groups.

At the center of debate is [the university's nondiscrimination policy](#), which bans student-led faith groups, among others, from requiring leaders to hold specific beliefs.

The policy, which in many ways contradicts theological requirements, has created angst among members of both the student body and the university's faculty. These opponents see the ban as a crackdown on their freedom of religion and speech. School leaders, though, maintain that the policy is necessary to ensure that all students feel welcome at campus clubs and events.



The Blaze [first reported](#) about the situation back in September. Our original coverage provides the background needed to understand how the situation was started:

Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, is making headlines after a Christian fraternity, Beta Upsilon Chi, [asked an openly gay member to resign](#). Upon leaving the group, the young man filed a discrimination complaint and now college administrators are trying to figure out whether the campus organization violated the school's nondiscrimination policy.

Of course, this incident has grown into a much larger controversy in which university administrators are reviewing all student-led organizations. As a result, officials are concerned about specific clauses that five Christian campus groups have in their constitutions.

These clauses [require](#) members of the groups to share their religious beliefs, something that didn't concern campus administrators until the student's complaint was made. Now, the school wants the constitutions amended and the controversial clauses dropped.



Currently, four campus groups violate this policy, as they require their leaders to maintain Christian messages. Club heads argue, though, that leaders responsible for planning Bible studies should actually believe in the material they are preaching. The campus

groups in question are the Christian Legal Society, Beta Upsilon Chi, Graduate Student Fellowship and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

At an event on Tuesday evening, [the college defended](#) its policies to an audience of over 200 students. Provost Richard McCarthy and Vice Chancellor for University Affairs and Athletics said that the university doesn't plan to back down. If student groups fail to comply, they will lose their official status with the college. Despite administrators' insistence, the community forum did provide students with an opportunity to share their opposition and reasoning with policy-makers at the helm.

"The Vanderbilt discrimination policy is directed against the Christian community," said Leighton Watts, a member of Beta Upsilon Chi, a Christian fraternity (he wasn't inside the meeting, but he was watching from a computer outside of the venue and commented to media).

"We want to be able to elect our leaders based on our beliefs," said Joseph Williams, a former student body president at the university. He spoke out against the restrictions during a question and answer period.

McCarthy's response to this was intriguing: Students can vote for any individual they'd like, but the clubs cannot have written rules banning students who don't hold specific views from running for leadership roles. He essentially told students not to vote for people with whom they disagree.

Carol Swain, a law professor at Vanderbilt and an adviser to the Christian Legal Society, disagrees with the college's stance and is working to assist groups who stand opposed to the rule. In [an interview with FOX News](#), she said:

"There are people on campus who are very threatened by the idea of religious freedom and they would like to create an environment where no one hurts anyone else's feelings – unless it's Christians.

This political correctness is running amuck on campus and its constraining one group – and that group tends to be conservatives. They will be forced to either accept the university's policy or leave campus by the end of the academic year. They are in limbo."

The Blaze also spoke with Joshua Charles, who co-authored Glenn Beck's "The Original Argument." Charles, who was a Founding Father and President of the Beta Upsilon Chi chapter at the University of Kansas, had some strong feelings on the matter.

"It seems difficult to imagine a scenario in which any religious group could, without any infringement whatsoever, worship and practice freely if they cannot even make decisions on their own membership or leadership," Charles said. "Groups are formed in order to advance causes, ideals, or something of the sort. But if the integrity of that group cannot be maintained, then neither can the causes or ideals for which it was founded in the first place."

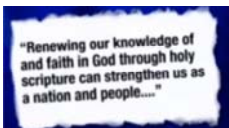
In the end, Christian student groups are clearly stuck at this point, as administrators are refusing to budge. But it's not just religious groups that could encounter a problem. What if a gay and lesbian rights group on campus wants to ensure that those in leadership roles hold true to certain values of equality? Or — what if an environmental group wants members to pledge their allegiance to protecting the earth?

"Freedom of association — the ability to mingle with those you wish to mingle with, to connect with those you wish to connect with, and to join in common cause with them, is a fundamental liberty," Charles continued.

In the end, this is a policy that certainly holds the potential to create further angst and inter-student contention.

(H/T: [Tennessean](#))

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Interfaith Is a Faith

Interfaith is a faith that embraces the teachings of all spiritual paths that lead us to seek a life of compassionate action. Interfaith, as a faith, does not seek to discover which religion or spiritual path is “right.” Rather, it recognizes that we are all brothers and sisters, and that at different times and different places we have encountered the sacred differently.

Interfaith celebrates our differing spiritual paths, recognizing it is our actions in this world that count; that we are called to engage the world, and to do so with compassion and with love.

In the past, “interfaith” has usually meant people of good will from differing spiritual paths getting together briefly for a project and then simply going home. That was worthwhile and hugely important. But today the world needs more. Interfaith, as a spiritual practice, can serve as a model for how we deal with each other.

Living Interfaith means more than participating in the occasional interfaith service or an interfaith project a couple of times a year, or even once a month. We live Interfaith by coming together each week to be nourished by and celebrate the wisdom and love of our varying spiritual paths. And that is but the beginning.

Living Interfaith also means embracing the gift of Interfaith within our lives, and sharing that gift with the world: sharing it without arrogance, sharing it without orthodoxy, and sharing it while respecting those whose spiritual paths may differ from our own. We share Interfaith not as THE right way, but rather a viable way to live in love and in peace; with respect for our shared humanity and the varied spiritual paths that we take.

It is not an easy road ahead. True paradigm shifts are never easy – and humanity has lived shackled for a very long time by a view of the world that insists that there can be but one “right” belief about God (including the “right belief” that there is no God), and that our spiritual communities should be centered around that one “right” belief. Interfaith as a spiritual practice involves a major shift in that foundational assumption and world view. Why is the paradigm shift desirable? A living Interfaith, an active acknowledgement, respect and honoring of humanity’s differing beliefs, can be a powerful and positive influence not only on our own generation but for generations to follow. We can raise our children to respect the beliefs of others.

This is a conversation in a comments section of a news article:

[Rich N. \(Kunlao_Breed\)](#)

Norway has a lot of atheists so for americans who think that a country being atheist is evil, they probably should take a look at some of these north european countries. i lived there lost my wallet on a bus and someone traced me to my apartment to return. turns out she was atheist too.

[20 Feb 12:09 AM](#)

[Jeanne L. \(greenbug14\)](#)

Super User · 75 Fans · I have a vote and I'm not afraid to use it.

I know some lovely atheists. They are so focused on their lives at hand they tend to live more honestly, vs waiting for a heaven and expecting something better.

[20 Feb 12:52 AM](#)



Mother Teresa Will Appeal to Spare Harris

April 07, 1992 | From Associated Press

CALCUTTA — Mother Teresa said Monday that Jesus would have forgiven convicted killer Robert Alton Harris, who is scheduled to die in California's gas chamber April 21.

The Nobel Prize-winning nun was scheduled to make an appeal on Harris' behalf in a telephone conversation Monday night with Gov. Pete Wilson, according to Jesuit seminarian and peace activist John Dear.

Mother Teresa said she has not initiated any telephone calls from India, but she had made her view known when she was in California last year.

"I have already told them what I had to say. I have already told them to do as Jesus would have done," she told an Associated Press reporter.

Then she smiled and said, "He would have forgiven."

According to the statement, Deukmejian told Mother Teresa that capital punishment "has been fully debated for many years in California" and that the public has voted on two occasions "that the death penalty is a just and appropriate punishment for those who willfully murder another person."

The governor said he concluded the call "by expressing his respect for Mother Teresa and her work, and thanked her for her views."

Gen Con Could Leave Indianapolis Over Anti-Gay Bill

By Bob Fekete

[An open letter](#) from the organizers of board game convention Gen Con to the Governor of Indiana says the long-standing gaming convention could be moving to another location if a highly controversial bill gets passed. SB 101 would allow for businesses to refuse service to anyone due to religious standards.

Read as "you're gay/female/poor/Muslim, therefore I can refuse service to you."

This didn't sit well with Adrian Swartout, the CEO and owner of Gen Con LLC. Swartout hopes to help sway [Indiana Governor Mike Pence](#)'s decision by threatening to take his convention elsewhere if this bill passes. The full letter can be read below.

Gen Con's Statement on Diversity and SB 101

Dear Governor Pence,

Last year, Gen Con hosted more than 56,000 attendees from more than 40 different countries and all 50 states at the Indiana Convention Center. Gen Con proudly welcomes a diverse attendee base, made up of different ethnicities, cultures, beliefs, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds. We are happy to provide an environment that welcomes all, and the wide-ranging diversity of our attendees has become a key element to the success and growth of our convention.

For more than a decade, Indianapolis has provided tremendous hospitality and accommodation to our attendees, culminating in an annual economic impact of more than \$50 million dollars to the city. Gen Con and its attendees look forward to receiving the same warm Hoosier hospitality throughout the term of our contract.

Legislation that could allow for refusal of service or discrimination against our attendees will have a direct negative impact on the state's economy, and will factor into our decision-making on hosting the convention in the state of Indiana in future years. We ask that you please reconsider your support of SB 101.

Sincerely,

Adrian Swartout
CEO/Owner
Gen Con LLC

Regardless of the outcome of SB101, Gen Con 2015 will still likely take place in Indianapolis. Depending on how things play out, this could be the final year the convention will be held there, with a new city that is more welcoming to attendees becoming the new home of Gen Con.

On March 23, Governor Pence released a statement regarding SB101.

“The legislation, SB 101, is about respecting and reassuring Hoosiers that their religious freedoms are intact,” the statement read. “I strongly support the legislation and applaud the members of the General Assembly for their work on this important issue. I look forward to signing the bill when it reaches my desk.”

So what do you think? Should Gen Con uproot itself from Indianapolis if SB 101 gets passed? Would you like to see Gen Con come to a different city anyway? Let us know your thoughts in the comments section below.

Lost & Found

- If your items are lost or stolen onsite, visit the Lost & Found in the Show Office (located in the convention center, Room 112).
- Gen Con will not replace lost, stolen, or forgotten badges or event tickets. If this is the case, you must purchase the badges and event tickets at the current listed price.
- Any items turned into the Lost & Found and not claimed by 5 pm on Sunday, August 2, will be transferred to the Indiana Convention Center security office.

Onsite Information

- *Everyone attending Gen Con (excluding children 8 and under) must have their Gen Con badge with them at all times while at the show.* A badge allows an individual entrance to the show, admittance to the Exhibit Hall, Art Show, Anime events, seminars and any events happening in the public areas which do not require an event ticket. Your badge **MUST** be visible while in the convention center or attending events in the hotels.
- Children ages eight (8) and under are free but require a wristband and must be accompanied by a parent or guardian with a badge. Children must be registered for security purposes. Parents or guardians with a valid Gen Con badge may register for a Child Wristband online before the show or at the Customer Service or Registration kiosks onsite.
- Anyone wishing to purchase an event ticket must have a valid badge for the day of the event.
- Event tickets can be purchased at Event Registration in our Main Registration area (near the Maryland Street entrance of the Wabash-East Concourse) or at our Remote Registration stations located in Hall F and the Marriott.

Main Registration

Wednesday, noon – 9 pm
Thursday, 7 am – Sunday, 4 pm

Customer Service & Special Services

Wednesday, noon – 9 pm
Thursday, 7 am – Sunday, 4:30 pm

Will Call

Wednesday, noon – Sunday, 3 pm

Hall F Remote Event Registration

Thursday – Saturday, 7 am – 2 am
Sunday, 7 am – 2 pm

Hall B Remote Event Registration

Thursday – Saturday, 8 am – 8pm
Sunday, 8 am – 1 pm

Marriott Remote Registration

Thursday – Saturday, 9 am – 6 pm
Sunday, 9 am – noon

Exhibit Hall

Thursday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm
Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm

Show Office

Wednesday, noon – 9 pm
Thursday – Saturday, 7 am – 9 pm
Sunday, 7 am – 5 pm

Info Booth

Wednesday, noon – 7 pm
Thursday – Saturday, 7 am – 7 pm
Sunday, 7 am – 5 pm

- There is no flyering, posterage, or showbiling of any kind in or around any of the convention grounds, including the hotels. If caught, you may be asked to leave the convention and have your badge revoked without refund.
- Gen Con reserves the right to refuse service to anyone. Gen Con may deny entry or remove someone from the convention if their actions are disruptive to the convention or to the Event Team. Please handle yourself in a respectful manner.
- Weapons or items that appear to be weapons are not allowed at Gen Con. Please familiarize yourself with the Costumes & Weapons policy, which can be found on our website at www.gencon.com or in our Program Book. Questionable items can be brought to the Info Desk in the convention center during operating hours to check for compliance.