

## GIVING ATHEISTS A BAD NAME

Washington Post - July 17, 1999

Your July 12 news story "Path of California Hate Crimes Led to Strictly Reared Brothers" described the World Church of the Creator as an "atheist" group.

This is an insult to the more than 25 million Americans who are atheists. There is nothing remotely similar between atheism and this goofy outfit. Not only does this group describe itself as a "church"; its leader, Matthew Hale, uses the title "Pontifex Maximum." Although the group claims to reject the Christian religion, much of its ideology is remarkably similar to Christian Identity, a theological system that teaches racial hatred and a fantasy version of human history.

Rejection of Christianity is not tantamount to being an atheist. Atheists have labored for the separation of church and state, defended other important civil liberties and human rights and work to promulgate a rational view of the universe and humanity's role in it.

-- Ellen Johnson

The writer is president of American Atheists Inc.

Edition: FINAL

Section: OP-ED

Page: A17

Column: FREE FOR ALL

Index Terms: Package; Letter

Record Number: 071799LA17FR5475

Copyright 1999 the Washington Post