Edwards reaffirms faith in meeting with bishops

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Gov. Edwards tried to clear the air Tuesday on his personal religious views, meeting with a group of Louisiana Roman Catholic Bishops to reaffirm his belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus and tell them he will leave future religious discussions to those more qualified.

The meeting came in the wake of a controversy that has come Edwards way since statewide publication of an interview in which the governor discussed his religious views.

In that interview, Edwards declared his doubts concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus because of his propensity to believe in natural law.

On Monday, he said he wished he had never gone public with his religious views because he was drawing more heat from them than passage of his massive tax package.

“What I failed to properly point out clearly was that natural law is an obstacle that is overcome by my faith in God and my personal belief in the Scripture, which teaches that Jesus is the God man who was sent to this world to redeem mankind,” Edwards told the bishops.

“I regret that I did not go on to explain that my faith overcame the doubt. I do have doubt, but I also have faith, and I continue to believe by faith,” he added.

In a news release issued after the meeting, Edwards asked for forgiveness and understanding concerning his statements.

“To the extent that I erred or was misunderstood, I apologize and ask for forgiveness and understanding from everyone of all faiths,” he said.

He said following the doctrine of separation of church and state he should refrain from making religious (See FAITH, 7A)
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comments.
"From now on you will not hear from me any public discussions of anyone's religious beliefs — regardless of what they are, including my own," Edwards said.

Edwards said he takes on faith that the death and resurrection of Jesus actually took place because he accepts the Bible as the inspired word of God and without the death and resurrection of Jesus His divinity could not be fully established.

"It is my faith that supersedes any expressed doubt I many have about the physical aspect of it," he said.

In the published interview Edwards had said:
"I think Jesus died, but I don't believe he came back to life because that's too much against natural law. I'm not going around preaching this, but he may have swooned, passed out or almost died, and when he was taken down, with superhuman strength, after a period of time he may have revived himself and come back to life."

Edwards said he will maintain his own religious beliefs, based on the Bible and teachings of the church, but will in the future refrain from public discussions of them.

"I will leave to religious leaders the public discussions relating to theology and biblical interpretations because they are far better trained, qualified and more properly chosen for that position than I am," he said.