



The Cowtown Humanist

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OUR MEETINGS ARE HELD AT WESTSIDE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, 901 PAGE AVE, FT WORTH AT 7 PM ON THE 2ND WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH. MAY'S GATHERING WILL BE HELD ON THE 9TH. JOIN US FOR DINNER AT 5:30 - LUBY'S CAFETERIA ON 8TH AVE (SOUTH OF ELIZABETH BLVD)

MINUTES APRIL 11, 2007

GENERAL MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Dick Trice at Westside UU Church, 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth..

Dick welcomed our visitors.

Treasurer's Report: Dolores Ruhs reported we have \$845.10 in our account and several members paid their 2007-08 dues. Dolores reminded us that she is accepting donations for Westaid.

Ray Weil reported that 11 people picked up trash along our "adopted" portion of Granbury Rd on March 31, and enjoyed breakfast together afterwards.

Marjorie Bixler gave the "Humanist Minute" followed by our speaker, Jean Tant. Jean is a founding member of HoFW and she spoke on civil liberties and the ACLU.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Present Dolores Ruhs, Reed Bilz, Jim Cheatham, Dick Trice, Jim Fogleman, Ray Weil, Bob Vann, and John Huffman.

Dick read the proposal prepared by Russell Elleven for a \$1,000 grant from AHA for a SMART substance abuse recovery program for people who do not want to turn their recovery over to a higher power as required in AA. The \$1,000 would be used for resource materials and mailings to therapists and courts. Westside would provide space for the program evenings or on Saturday. Reed moved that we support this application. The motion was seconded and CARRIED.

Dick told us that an AHA employee from Amarillo, who is a UU, wants to come to Fort Worth May 13 to hear Russell preach and meet with HoFW members after the service. Dick will extend the invitation and search for a place for her and her husband to stay.

Next month at our regular meeting we will have a debate on Globalization between Jim Cheatham and Joel Bailey. We will also hold our election for officers.

Reed K. Bilz, Secretary

"Globalization---Praise It or Damn It"

One of the greatest international issues facing us today, is globalization. Most of us have serious opinions involving the rightness or wrongness of this subject. Two of our most informed and articulate members will debate this question at our May meeting. Be sure to come hear Jim Cheatham and Joel Bailey argue pro and con and offer your concerns and ideas in the open discussion following.

June Meeting: Our speaker will be Jack Z. Smith, editorial writer for the Star-Telegram, subject to be announced.

The Humanists lost a good friend last month:

"I am, incidentally, Honorary President of the American Humanist Association, having succeeded the late, great science fiction writer Isaac Asimov in that totally functionless capacity. We had a memorial service for Isaac a few years back, and I spoke and said at one point, Isaac is up in heaven now. It was the funniest thing I could have said to an audience of humanists. I rolled them in the aisles. It was several minutes before order could be restored. And if I should ever die, God forbid, I hope you will say, Kurt is up in heaven now. That's my favorite joke." ~ Kurt Vonnegut



Kurt Vonnegut, Jr 1922-2007

Two conservative organizations have asked a court to overturn U.S. regulators' decision to allow nonprescription sales of Barr Pharmaceuticals Inc.'s "morning-after" contraceptive.

The Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America said they filed suit on Thursday against the U.S. Food and Drug Administration over its August 2006 ruling on Barr's Plan B drug.

The lawsuit says the FDA violated laws and regulations when it allowed Plan B to be sold to adults without a prescription. The FDA ordered that the pills be kept behind pharmacy counters and only given to girls younger than 18 with a doctor's order.

Two other groups, the American Association of Physicians and Surgeons and Safe Drugs for Women, also joined the suit.

Barr spokeswoman Carol Cox said the company believed the FDA decision was "scientifically sound and fully consistent with applicable law."

"Barr will seek to intervene in the case and will defend the FDA's actions vigorously," she said.

FDA spokeswoman Susan Cruzan said the agency does not comment on lawsuits.

The groups said the FDA lacked the authority to approve such a plan, and to set different rules based on age.

They also said Barr's data did not establish Plan B was safe or effective. The product is a set of two pills that can prevent pregnancy if taken within 72 hours of intercourse.

"The agency skirted laws and regulations put in place to ensure drugs are safe and effective, relenting under undue pressure from political operatives," Concerned Women for America President Wendy Wright said in a statement.

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** Cowtown Humanists editors note: The American Association of Physicians is a Christian organization masquerading as a public interest group, as is The Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America, and Safe Drugs for Women. Another way for fundamentalist Christians to thwart women's rights.*

The following is inspired by [Stephen Colbert's interview with Congressman Lynn Westmoreland](#) of Georgia, who introduced a bill in the House of Representatives mandating the Ten Commandments be displayed in both houses of Congress. I thought I should post the ten commandments so that Christians around the nation could at least brush up before they argue that church and state separation is unwritten and unnecessary. It's all in the interest of fairness, of course. So here you go:

Cowtown editors note: When asked by Colbert to name the commandments, Westmoreland said, "Don't murder, don't lie, don't steal, I can't name them all" Think I Made it up? Go to:

<http://www.gorillamask.net/colbert10c.shtml>

1. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth : Thou shalt not bow down thyself before them, nor serve them: For I the Lord thy god am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Many Christians in this country are all for blurring the line between church and state insofar that they may be able to post the ten commandments in our houses of government, our halls of justice, and even our schools. And it's not just to be there as a reminder of the past, or a historical artifact; they want them there as a guide or set of rules by which we should govern our practices today... yes, in the 21st century.

However, that sort of advocacy begs the question... which ten commandments should we use?

I mean, it plainly states in the bible that Moses smashed the first set of the ten commandments (listed above) out of anger at the Israelites (Exodus 32:19). And his holiness said not to worry, just bring two new stones up the mountain, and he will write on these tables "the words that were on the first" (Exodus 34:1). Now far be it from me to judge God, but reading "his word", it seems that the words on the second ten commandments do not match the words on the first ten commandments. As laid out in the second ten commandments, they read like this:

1. Thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and done call thee, and thou feat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods
3. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt.
4. All the first-born are mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male. But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty
5. Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.
6. Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, even of the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year
7. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread
8. The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning
9. The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God
10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk

Hmmmm, interesting. I know he's all-knowing and all-powerful and everything, but inconsistency seems to haunt even the most improbable of suspects here. But let's give the big guy the benefit of the doubt. That first set that Moses cast out of his hands, we'll just call that the rough draft. So that would make this second set the final version. I mean, since he's omnipotent, he certainly could have recreated the ten commandments verbatim from the first set, if he wanted to. Therefore, he must have considered the second version far superior, right? So is *this* the ten commandments that we should be posting in our courthouses and classrooms?

If we are to use this second version, what guidance does it offer for our justice system and lawmakers and teachers? Are we supposed to leave it up to our elected leaders and those crazy activist judges to weed out our first born? When was the last time you seethed your child in his mother's milk? Did you avoid this activity simply because the Lord forbade it, or because it sounds like something that might land you in a mental institution?

Oh the fun we can have with the Lord's words and inconsistencies. But let's ignore all that. Let's go with the first version because that's what most Christians seem to be referring to when they cry for the ten commandments to be planted firmly on the White House lawn. Since it includes a few (a couple, one each, but who's counting, really?) rules about stealing and killing, it seems the logical fit for what they are talking about when they talk about it as a guide for our lawmakers, justices, and teachers.

But if we are to use God's word as a guide for making these laws then it seems logical, if not *extremely* necessary, that we also prescribe the same punishments that this god did for breaking some of those ten commandments. 'What are those punishments?', you ask. Well it just so happens that this handy dandy little bible tells us what those are too.

1. He that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. (Exodus 21:15)
2. He that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 21:17)
3. Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 22:19)
4. He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed. (Exodus 22:20)
5. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. (Exodus 31:15 and 35:2)
6. And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. (Leviticus 20:10)

7. If a man lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death. (Leviticus 20:13)

8. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death. (Leviticus 24:16)

9. And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart to give glory to my name, ... behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces. (Malachi 2:1-4)

10. He that believeth not, shall be damned. (Mark 16:16)

Hmmmm, interesting. Capital punishment seems to be the avenue of choice here. And the Christians have a lot of catching up to do, especially with their own kind. It gets even worse when you consider the consequences of divorce (at a rate of 60% for Christians in this country) in the context of the ten commandments. Add that to the number of people that do any kind of "work" on Sunday in this country (that includes, most notably, Christian poster boy - Bush), and by all accounts, we should have a much smaller population than we currently do.

Either this god fellow should be taking care of all of the killing or we should be doing it for him. The instructions are kinda vague on who should actually be doing the putting-to-death thing for working on Sunday, or any other broken commandment. I can only assume it must be our responsibility since that god, with his ability to smite without question, seems to have left those people alive after breaking the commandments. One way or the other though, most of the world and well over half the United States should undoubtedly be dead.

Now that's Justice!

So, all you Christians out there... stop half-assing it! If you're gonna advocate that the ten commandments be posted and taught as a guide to be followed by our lawmakers and teachers and judges, then you must also advocate the posting and adherence to the punishments as well, for they are directly connected to each other and both are meted out by the same facets of our society that you wish to use the ten commandments to influence. Lest you forget that you are only human, and *you* are not allowed to cherry-pick which rules to follow, for all of it is the word of your god.

Many thanks to Gratuitous Common Sense for the above.



"Only the very ignorant are perfectly satisfied that they know. To the common man the great problems are easy. He has no trouble in accounting for the universe. He can tell you the origin and destiny of man and the why and wherefore of things. As a rule, he is a believer in special providence, and is egotistic enough to suppose that everything that happens in the universe happens in reference to him."

Robert Ingersoll

"Imagine the people who believe such things and who are not ashamed to ignore, totally, all the patient findings of thinking minds through all the centuries since the Bible was written. And it is these ignorant people, the most uneducated, the most unimaginative, the most unthinking among us, who would make themselves the guides and leaders of us all; who would force their feeble and childish beliefs on us; who would invade our schools and libraries and homes. I personally resent it bitterly and warn the people of Canada..."

Canadian Atheists Newsletter, 1994

"I have observed that the world has suffered far less from ignorance than from pretensions to knowledge. It is not skeptics or explorers but fanatics and ideologues who menace decency and progress. No agnostic ever burned anyone at the stake."

Daniel J. Boorstin

"It is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and expose lies."

Noam Chomsky

"Whatsoever is contrary to nature is contrary to reason, and whatsoever is contrary to reason is absurd, and, ipso facto, to be rejected."

Spinoza

"In religion and politics people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination, from authorities who have not themselves examined the questions at issue but have taken them at second-hand from other non-examiners, whose opinions about them were not worth a brass farthing."

Mark Twain

Ms. Marilyn Westfall, a board member of American Humanist Association, will visit with board members of our HOFW group May 12, three days after our next meeting, to discuss ways and means of improving our club and how the AHA can assist us. A report of our meeting will be in our newsletter for June and open for discussion at our June meeting.

ANNUAL FISCAL YEAR MEETING

Preceding our debate on Globalization we will hold our annual business meeting for the purposes of

- (1) Electing officers whose term shall begin June 1,**
- (2) Reporting financial expenditures, income, and cash balance.**
- (3) Transacting such other business as desired.**

This is the time for suggestions, evaluations and complaints. Your attendance is very important to the ongoing success of our group. Please come.

Dick Trice, Chair

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