
PANViews



*Newsletter of PA Nonbelievers, Inc., affiliated with American Atheists,
Atheist Alliance International and the Council for Secular Humanism.*

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President's Report

Josh CruverKibi

The Inevitability of Life and Death

To be aware of life is to be aware of death. As sentient beings we can spend our time focusing on either. I find that the key to a healthy awareness of life and inevitable death, is to focus on sentience while one has it and have a respect for what is non-existence. We can to some degree control our focus on our lived lives, what we create, what we experience, perceive, and do while we are alive. We can focus on cultivating relationships and attachments with others, ourselves, and our environment. We can also choose to focus on death and the destruction of what we perceive as life.

The hard part of having a sentient awareness of life, or what we have attached emotional value to, is letting that attachment go. Being sentient means inevitably perceiving the loss of what we have found important. Although not comforting to our emotional attachments, the materials that make up us, others, and the things that we develop attachments to will persist and recombine into other existences. Our human bodies, and everything on Earth, were once pieces of other things that could be perceived as having died, such as plants, animals, ancestors, and stars. With sentience, we attach value for a moment to materials that are in constant flux. The material, including our perception of ourselves, is important to us. But our perception of a relationship beyond the material occurs only in our minds. This is a special, but absurd existence, where value for life is what we make of it.

We must ask ourselves what makes us, and that which we assign value to, more special than the material existences that came before us? Who alive can say that they are more important than the star that exploded billions of years ago that created the atoms that make up your body today? What about our forgotten Australopithecine mother that kicked a pursuing predator so hard in the jaw that it fell from the tree to its death, saving our genetic ancestors life that was clutched in her arm? In that regard, although we are unaware of their 'lived' existences, we are materially dependent on those existences that came before us.

We may be woefully unaware and likely cognitively incapable of perceiving the 'life' and 'death' struggles that make up our past and present existence. The material entropy of all matter is in constant flux. But what of the entropy created by sentient actions? What little we can control in the material flux is the intentional sentient actions, or 'life', we bring to our current existences. We can spur intent into an otherwise deterministic equation. We can have a healthy acceptance and gratitude for being briefly sentient. We can choose to act in a way that we find value in before the material that makes up our sentience passes into a different form and combination. We can strive to make our sentient life count.

I say do not waste your life, or the lives and sacrifices that came before you, by desperately fixating on your momentary perceived losses. You are sentient for a finite period. Although the star may not have had

a plan for the material that makes up your arms and brain, you can bring meaning to your life by the intentional choices that you make. Make that sentiently 'forgotten', yet materially important ancestral kick worth something.

Atheist News in Pennsylvania– The Nation – The World!



Double Win!

School board members have found a way to make a point about book banning that PAN members will especially appreciate.

Instead of swearing in on a Bible, they're swearing in on a stack of banned books!

The picture at left shows the books Karen Smith used as she was sworn into the Central Bucks school board, according to the Allentown *Morning Call*, mcall.com.

The Central Bucks school board had passed a policy banning books with “sexualized content,” which led to two books being banned, with 60 others challenged. Smith, a Democrat, had opposed the banning, but Democrats were in the minority at that point. Democrats won the majority in a recent election and chose Smith to lead them.

Smith explained: “I’m not particularly religious. The Bible doesn’t hold significant meaning for me and given everything that has occurred in the last couple of years, the banned books, they do mean something to me at this point.”

She had reasons for picking these particular books. “Night,” by Elie Wiesel is the Nobel Prize-winner’s autobiographical account of surviving the Holocaust. The board had told a Central Bucks high school librarian to remove a Wiesel quote that read, “I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented,” because the GOP-lead school board had banned staff from promoting ideas on “partisan, political, or social policy issues.”

Toni Morrison’s “The Bluest Eye” is frequently banned. People had complained Central Bucks had pornography in its libraries, and one person read from this book at a school board meeting. The novel describes a character being raped by her father. Smith noted comments from “sexual abuse survivors who said it was very important that young people who may have suffered sexual abuse have some way to learn about it, and they’re not alone. Their feelings are valid.”

“Lily and Dunkin,” by Donna Gephart was banned by the group “WokePA” because a main character is transgender. Smith says the book is about friendship, with no sexual activity at all.

“All Boys Aren’t Blue” by George M. Johnson is a young-adult memoir about growing up Black and queer. According to Smith, it does have sexually explicit passages. She says the author has explained he included those passages to help other young gay men, which Smith found “admirable.”

“Flamer” by Mike Curato is a graphic novel about a teenager struggling with his identity. Smith says she has not read it. However, she was on a panel at the American Association of School Librarians conference where a student said the book saved his life.

“Beyond Magenta,” by Susan Kuklin describes the lives of six transgender teenagers. This book was actually retained in Central Bucks after a review.

The Devil Gets His Due

A few months ago, the Saucon Valley School District in Northampton County refused to permit an after-school Satan Club from meeting on school property. The Satanic Temple sued.

Guess what? According to 6abc.com, the case settled with the district agreeing to pay \$200,000 in fees and costs to the Temple. (Won't taxpayers be thrilled?) And the district agreed to allow the Satan Club to meet in its buildings.

Courtesy of John Wolff



Religious Rights for Crackhouses

A Philadelphia non-profit wants to open a safe place for people to consume illegal drugs. That's illegal, but the non-profit has a novel argument. Banning such safe houses infringes on the religious beliefs of the non-profit's members.

According to the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, *inquirer.com*, Safehouse, whose board in comprised of faith leaders from the Philly area, has filed suit in federal court arguing the federal law that bans the operation of spaces for people to use drugs (known as the “crackhouse statute,” the *Inquirer* notes) is an unconstitutional government breach of religious rights.

The US Attorney's Office has stated that Safehouse is not specifically religious, and therefore cannot claim a religious right to prevent overdoses. Safehouse has been trying to open this type of facility for years. It would be the first supervised drug-use site opened in the United States, for years; the federal government first sued to prevent it in 2019.

Even if somehow Safehouse wins in court, both the state and the city have opposed the project. Safehouse explains that it does not want to encourage drug use, but to provide health care for addicts. It originally argued that the crackhouse statute does not really outlaw medically supervised drug use. Although Safehouse won the initial case, it lost on appeal, and at that point offered the religious freedom claim. In addition to arguing that Safehouse is not a religious organization, the government said the real motivation is based on medical and health concerns, not religious ones.

Safehouse counterargued that its mission is tied to its board members' Jewish and Christian faiths. Its attorney, Ilana Eisenstein, pointed out the federal government has declared some private companies, such as Hobby Lobby, exempt from certain laws based on their claimed religious beliefs. “The government has said it's not a tenet of any religion to provide supervised injection sites. No one is standing here pleading that,” Eisenstein said. “The overdose prevention model is an exercise of beliefs — part of the core tenants of the Judeo-Christian traditions of [Safehouse] board members.”

What's a High School Diploma Worth?

In Louisiana, anyone can get one for a price.

The Associated Press, apnews.com, reports that formal homeschooling programs and traditional private schools in Louisiana don't need state approval to grant degrees. The AP story notes that almost all the unapproved schools were created for individual homeschooling families, but some of them do have classrooms, teachers, and multiple students.

These schools cover a small percentage of Louisiana's students. They are growing, though, apparently as a result of the disengagement from public education caused by COVID.

About 21,000 students attend Louisiana's unapproved schools, about double the number from before the pandemic. There is no way to find out if they are getting an education of any kind.

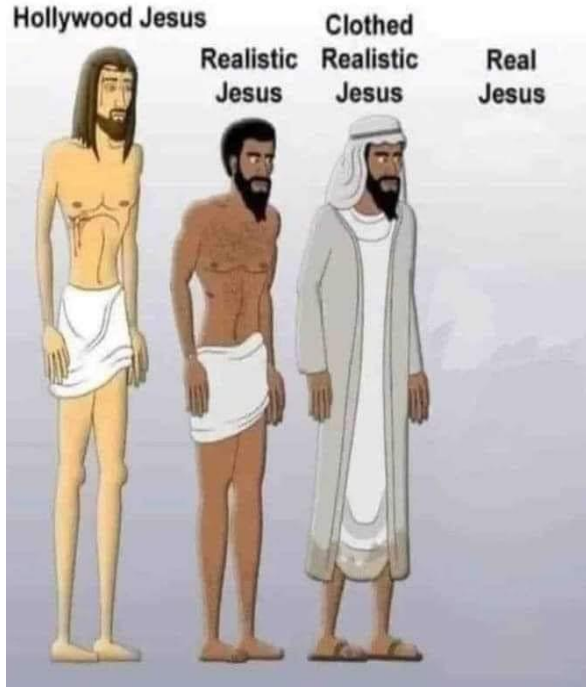


Unsurprisingly, many of these unapproved schools are Christian schools. Kitty Sibley Morrison, the principal of Springfield Preparatory School, which describes itself as an umbrella school for Christian homeschoolers, is willing to grant a diploma to anyone whose parents say was homeschooled, even if it was years ago. The school has a price list taped to its front window, and the prices seem reasonable: \$250 for diploma services, a \$50 application fee, \$35 for a diploma cover and \$130 to walk in a cap and gown at a ceremony.

Springfield is an actual school, with classrooms and teachers. However, the regulations for setting up "nonpublic schools not seeking state approval" are easy. An adult must only report the school's name and address, contact information, and number of students. Some of the schools appear to be having fun with their names; state records show "Ballerina Jedi Academy" and the "Unicorn Princess School." Most of them are located in a single-family home, although last year 30 of them had at least 50 students.

Home-schoolers can receive a state-recognized high school diploma if they submit documentation, such as test scores, or copies of the student's work. State-recognized diplomas are more likely to be accepted by colleges and allow students to apply for an in-state college scholarship program. But people are free to set up schools with no state involvement at all. At least two of the schools have had abuse scandals, but the state department of education has no authority to do anything, and one of the schools is still operating.

Although the unapproved schools have grown recently, they actually began in 1980, when Christian ministers who ran small private schools joined with homeschoolers to push for the deregulation of private schools. Louisiana acquiesced. There have been efforts through the years to repeal the law allowing non-approved schools, but Christian homeschoolers have prevailed. Several states allow families to open private schools for homeschooling, and many of them require that basic subjects – math and reading – be taught. Louisiana doesn't care.



Denmark's New Law

Denmark (and other Scandinavian countries) have seen a rash of public desecrations of the Quran. Its parliament has now passed a law that makes it illegal to desecrate any holy book.

According to the Associated Press, apnews.com, the law was passed not just as a sign of respect for religion, but to protect Danes from terrorism. "We must protect the security of Denmark and Danes," Justice Minister Peter Hummelgaard said in a statement. "That is why it is important that we now get better protection against the systematic desecrations we have seen for a long time."

The law was passed by a 94-77 vote, with eight absentees. The law makes it illegal "to inappropriately treat, publicly or with the intention of dissemination in a wider circle, a writing with significant religious significance for a religious community or an object that appears as such."

Not all Danish legislators were in favor of the legislation. "Does Iran change its legislation because Denmark feels offended by something an Iranian could do? Does Pakistan? Does Saudi Arabia? The answer is no," Karina Lorentzen of the Socialist People's Party asked rhetorically. Inger Støjberg of the anti-immigration Denmark Democrats said that the new law was a capitulation to Islam and a bowing down to countries that "do not share (our) set of values." "A restriction of freedom of expression is wrong in a modern and enlightened society like the Danish one," Støjberg said.

Denmark's approach to the desecrations has been to insist on freedom of expression, while not explicitly supporting the burning of Qurans. Denmark had a law against blasphemy, but it was repealed in 2017.

Problems started in Denmark in 2006 when a Danish newspaper ran cartoons showing the prophet Muhammad, including one where he was wearing a bomb as a turban. Muslims of course do not allow drawings or representations of Muhammad. Muslims all over the world protested at Danish embassies, sometimes violently.

Sweden has also seen Quran burnings. There are no blasphemy laws in Sweden, but it is considering a law where requests for public assembly permits could be denied if the protest is expected to involve the destruction of religious books. This law would look at whether the protest would therefore be a threat to public safety.

Turkey had been blocking Sweden's potential membership in NATO, at least in part because of what it called anti-Turkish and anti-Islamic protests in Sweden. However, it now looks as if Turkey will vote to let Sweden join NATO.

The Mormons Are Buying Nebraska

Over the last few years, Farmland Reserve Inc., a nonprofit few people have heard of, has purchased huge parcels of land in Nebraska. It now owns almost all of Garden County.

People wondered. What exactly is Farmland Reserve? According to klnetv.com, a Lincoln, NE TV station, it's a nonprofit owned by the Church of Latter-day Saints. It has been buying up property in Nebraska for about 30 years; it now owns 370,000 acres, and, if it keeps up its buying pace, may soon become the largest landowner in Nebraska.

The church claims that this investment in agriculture is a way "to generate long-term value to support the church's religious, charitable, and humanitarian good works," according to a Farmland Reserve spokesman. The nonprofit pays state and federal income taxes, although the article points out that some of the revenue goes directly to the church, which doesn't have to pay taxes on passive investments.

The Nebraska Farmers Union isn't happy with the land grab, saying that it is driving up land prices, and making it harder for small farmers to buy land. "All of the land that the Mormon church owns is land that individuals in Nebraska do not have the opportunity to own," President John Hansen said.

The Nebraska purchase represents a small part of the 1.7 million acres of US real estate the Mormon church is estimated to own. Truth and Transparency, a website which describes itself as being dedicated to religious accountability, thinks that figure underestimates how much land the church owns, because it only includes corporations definitively linked to the church. It estimates the church owns at least another \$100 billion in real estate; the article says the Salt Lake *Tribune* thinks the church's investment holdings are greater than \$160 billion.

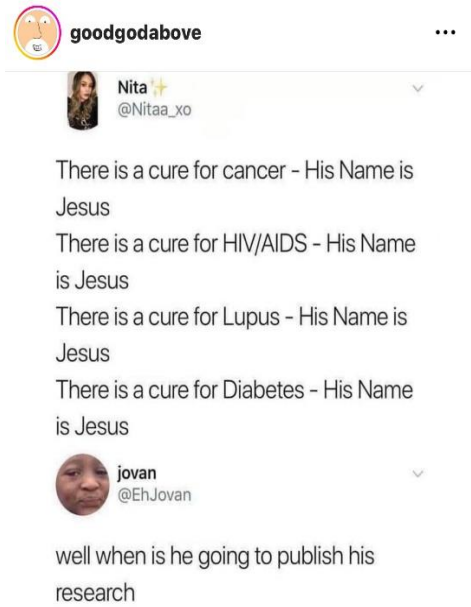
The land is used to grow crops, and to support cattle ranching. AgReserves, one of the church's other farmland subsidiaries, describes itself as "a preeminent supplier of premium-quality nuts and olive oil" and "meeting the demand of today's beef consumers."

Why did the Church of Latter-day Saints get involved in farming in the first place? Two reasons, according to former church president Gordon B. Hinckley in 1991: "We have felt that good farms, over a long period, represent a safe investment where the assets of the Church may be preserved and enhanced, while at the same time they are available as an agricultural resource to feed people should there come a time of need."

Church observers point out that Mormons believe there will be disasters before Jesus comes back, and routinely advise their members to be prepared for upheaval – for example, they suggest that people have a year's worth of provisions, just in case.

Mormons have a lot of experience with farming. They believe that God wants humans to develop the earth and turn wilderness into productive land. It's also a good investment strategy. The church doesn't have to issue financial reports about it and is happy to hold the land as a long-term investment.

The church maintains that it is not expanding its Nebraska ranching operations. But over the last five years it has bought land at a higher rate than any other organization.



Strange Religious Laws

Colleen Dzwonczyk

There sometimes are laws on the books that were instituted long ago and have been forgotten. Here are some of the stranger religious laws that are still hanging around.

Alabama

It is illegal to wear a fake mustache that causes laughter in church.

Delaware

In Rehoboth it is illegal to whisper in church.

Maine

Shotguns must be taken to church in case of an attack by Native Americans.

Massachusetts

It is illegal to eat peanuts in church.

Mississippi

Any private citizen can arrest someone who disrupts religious service.

Nebraska

It is illegal to sneeze or burp during a church service.

New York

In NYC it is illegal to intentionally pass gas in church with the intention of disrupting the service.

North Carolina

It is illegal to engage in sex in a cemetery.

Ohio

It is illegal to kill a house fly within 160 feet of a church without a license.

Texas

It is illegal to go to church in a disguise.

West Virginia

In Nicholas County it is illegal to tell any jokes or humorous stories from the pulpit during a church service.

Source: *Huffington Post*

God Is Still Laughing



Strange Bedfellows

The American Civil Liberties Union has filed suit against the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Who are they representing? The First Liberty Institute, founded by David Barton.

Remember him? He's the guy who wrote "The Jefferson Lies," a book that so thoroughly misrepresented Thomas Jefferson (describing him as, among other things, as "a man who revered Jesus") that its publisher removed it from publication. What could these two groups have in common? According to religionnews.com, the WMATA refused to display ads submitted by First Liberty, claiming the ads violate two of its rules, which ban ads that "influence members of the public regarding an issue on which there are varying opinions" and "promote or oppose any religion, religious practice or belief."

The ACLU says the rules discriminate against certain opinions and violate the First Amendment. Further, according to the ACLU, the ads don't express any religious views, although First Liberty's website is shown on the ads, and its website had religious opinions.

The ACLU and First Liberty have opposed each other many times in the past, but are working together on this issue to show that it's not a "partisan issue, but really an issue of free speech for everybody," according to an ACLU spokesman.

The suit notes that the agency allowed ads on controversial topics before. For example, in 2017 it allowed ads for the musical "The Book of Mormon," which satirizes the Mormon church, and for the Brennan Center for Justice, advocating for term limits for Supreme Court justices.

The WMATA's policy was amended in 2015 when the American Freedom Defense Initiative ran ads showing the prophet Muhammad wearing a turban, waving a sword while saying, "You can't draw me," to which an artist was depicted replying, "That's why I draw you!" The ad was found to be Islamophobic.

This policy has resulted in a lot of lawsuits. The ACLU has filed suits on behalf of banned ads for abortion pills, for a book by conservative writer Milo Yiannopoulos, and Peta's Go Vegan campaign. It is currently a party in suit over the refusal of an ad reprinting the First Amendment in English, Spanish and Arabic.

In 2017, the archdiocese of Washington sued over the rejection of an ad showing Christmas scenes and inviting the public to attend mass and contribute to Catholic charities. WMATA won the case, and the appeal. The archdiocese has appealed to the Supreme Court.

Holy Sexuality Week?

Abilene Christian University is rethinking its policies about sexuality after more than 2,000 students, alumni and others protested ACU's Holy Sexuality Week, because it excluded LBGTQ+ people.

The *Washington Post*, washingtonpost.com, crediting Religion News Service, explains. An alumni group, Wildcats for Inclusion, formed after Holy Sexuality week, wrote an open letter to the school: "You gave a public platform to people who denied the lived reality of LBGTQ+ Christians, claimed inaccurately that homosexuality lacks a genetic basis, and made the ludicrous and hateful statement that 'the opposite of homosexuality is holiness.'"

University president Phil Schubert noted that the board of trustees plan to review the school's Sexual Stewardship Policy this month. However, Schubert said in an interview he doesn't expect the policy to change, in large part because the board spent a large amount of time developing (and praying over) the policy in 2017.

The policy requires "chastity outside of marriage between a man and a woman" and for the university "to create an inclusive environment for all students — even those who disagree with ACU's beliefs — so long as they refrain from sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and woman."

One of these guys has an evil scheme to trick you out of your money. And the other is a fictional Batman character.



Pastor Joel Osteen

The Joker

Holy Sexuality Week took place from November 6 – 9. The university, which is affiliated with the Churches of Christ, featured a variety of speakers, 90% of which, according to Schubert, did not discuss same-sex relationships at all. The most controversial speaker was Christopher Yuan, who has taught at Moody Bible Institute, and used to identify as gay. Yuan said that while God’s love is unconditional, that does not mean he approves of everyone’s behavior. “The opposite of homosexuality is holiness,” said Yuan. “In fact, the opposite of every sin struggle is holiness.”

He went on to say that just as people who struggle with depression shouldn’t make their whole identity about being depressed, people who are gay shouldn’t make being gay their identity. He compared identifying as gay with watching pornography or committing adultery. “None of us should put our identity in our sin struggle.”

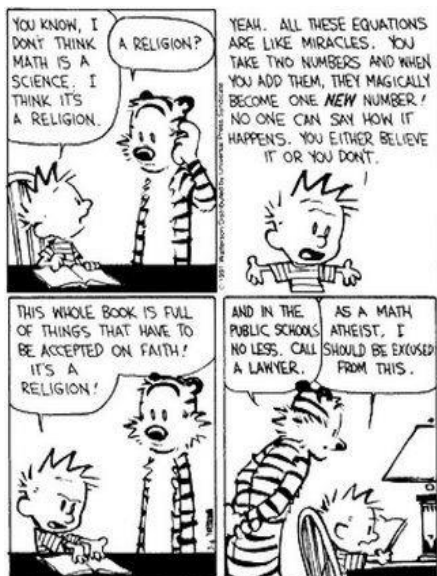
Wildcats for Inclusion commented: “By our count, Christopher Yuan alone compared homosexuality to two mental illnesses, a horrific disease, and a majority of the so-called ‘Seven Deadly Sins’ from Proverbs. Even as he rightly and admirably condemned the bullying of queer people, he perpetuated the conditions that allow bullying to occur.”

Yuan cited Bible references to defend himself. He also said that his story is not merely about his sexual identity, but about finding Christ: “I once was lost and now I’m found. I once did not believe and now I believe in the Son of God and his name is Jesus.”

Another speaker compared homosexuality to anorexia, stating that supporting gay behavior is the equivalent of supporting an anorexic friend who is starving.

Wildcats for Inclusion claimed that many students had been harassed online after Holy Sexuality Week, “experienced panic attacks,” and heard a student joke that “all gay people deserve to die.” The group has made three requests: Reopen discussion about ACU’s Sexual Stewardship Policy; incorporate human sexuality in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion’s efforts; and revise the school’s approach to future series on human sexuality to include diverse Christian perspectives.

The board will be considering making Holy Sexuality a regular event.



Brother Act

A Catholic priest was fatally stabbed in Fort Calhoun, NE in December. According to Front Page, frontpagenewspaper.com, the priest, Father Stephen Gutzsell, was attacked in the church’s rectory, by someone who apparently was trying to break-in to the church. Police had been called about the break-in and found Father Gutzsell when they arrived. The perpetrator was still there and was arrested.

Father Stephen had an interesting past. In 2007 he confessed to embezzling \$127,000 from another parish. He received probation and a restitution order. The archdiocese of Omaha later reassigned him to yet another parish, believing him to be rehabilitated. The local sheriff has stated there’s no indication this theft had anything to do with his murder.

That's nothing. Father Stephen has a brother, Father Michael Gutzsell, with an even more colorful past. The Pillar, pillaratholic.com, says he has pled guilty to stealing \$200,000 from an elderly priest. Father Michael had power of attorney for the older priest, who authorities had classified as a "vulnerable adult." Micheal received two years' probation.

Michael maintains he didn't keep the money. He gave it to a homeless man, he says, along with thousands of dollars of his own money; he claims the homeless man was going to pay him back.

Michael was not just a run of the mill priest. He was chancellor of the Omaha archdiocese from 1994 to 2003 and had been pastor of several Omaha parishes.

But there's more. He also stole \$96,400 from a parish in Nebraska, where he had been a pastor. The charges were dropped after he paid the money back.

Why did the brothers want the money? Police dropped a hint in Michael's charging documents. He is a fixture, they said, in Omaha casinos. The story notes Gutzsell repeatedly told police he wasn't being blackmailed by the homeless man.

It is not clear whether Michael will be reassigned to a parish.



Talk to Jesus!

A new product not only lets you talk to Jesus. Now he can answer!

In what seems like such an obvious good idea that it's hard to believe nobody thought of it before, Amazon is selling a Ouija board that lets you communicate directly with Jesus.

The Holy Spirit Board – which appears to be a serious, non-satiric product – explains you can get the answers you need! "The Holy Spirit Board can answer all of life's most important questions, straight from the man himself!"

But don't Christians warn that Ouija boards risk attracting demons? No worries! The product description explains, "Unlike other spirit boards, this one will NEVER contact evil ghosts or demons, so you can ask your questions with an assured sense of safety."

Not everyone is convinced. The Christian Post, christianpost.com, quotes an interview on EWTN's "News Nightly" with Father Ernesto Caro, a Catholic priest, who called the board game a "trap from the devil."

"The devil is always looking for different ways he can trap all the victims that he can take for him. And this is one," he continued. "Ouija games and all this are forbidden in the Bible." Caro might be prejudiced. He's an exorcist, according to the article, and a product like this might cut into his business.

And the Holy Spirit Ouija Board can be yours for just \$29.95!

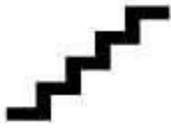

FUN!

These are bookmarks!



Rebus puzzles

Can you guess the words and expressions?

M1Y L111F1E	Get it Get it Get it Get it	Try $\frac{\text{stand}}{2}$
$\frac{\text{TRAVEL}}{\text{CCCCCCC}}$	FAST	T O W N
EYE EYE	father 	ONCE 
POT OO OO OO OO	D movie D movie D movie	SECRET ← SECRET SECRET

Member Submissions

Published Friday, Dec 15, 2023, in the Charlotte Sun

Carl Huber

Another sourpuss is offended about the use of “Happy Holidays”. Obviously, this is someone oblivious to history. People celebrated the winter solstice millennia before the Catholic Church tried to solemnize that time of year by arbitrarily declaring it a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus. They thought they could redirect the partying – worked well, didn’t it?

Show (Christian?) consideration for the billions that don’t follow your belief. Worship, if you must, a supernatural being that automatically condemns the majority of its creations to eternal torment for not following your beliefs. But asserting you’re right, and the other 7 billion in the world are wrong, is presumptuous to the extreme. And if you don’t believe in that kind of supernatural being, then it really doesn’t matter what religious belief someone chooses, does it?

Everybody, hope we all can have a pleasant Solstice, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Festivus, Holidays, etc. during this, and every, winter solstice season.

A Question for Humanists: Optimum Level of Disability?

Richard Slade

One might assume that, as a principle, humanists would wish to alleviate suffering in the world. This would stand in stark contrast to much theology which seems to fetishize suffering. Blood sacrifice is the central tenet of Christianity. A variety of religious persuasions eschew the mitigation of suffering in the real world in favor of a wistful bliss in an imagined afterlife. Humanists also look to rationality as a directing mental process, so one might ask how much suffering is acceptable?

As an example, consider the affliction of orofacial cleft, a congenital malady which produces what is commonly described as hare lip. The result is speech impediment and substantial facial disfigurement, as well as feeding and ear problems. Several decades ago this condition occurred frequently enough that it was a rich source of material for comedians; most audiences were familiar with it. The best those afflicted could hope for was to move through life as the butt of cruel jokes. To alleviate the social stigma and provide a better life, surgical techniques were devised to repair the palate cleft shortly after birth, saving children this suffering, such that today the affliction has nearly disappeared from the population in the United States. Surgeons routinely travel to third world nations to do repairs for children in many parts of the world, spreading the benefits broadly.

Soon the Olympic Games will be contested in Paris, and alongside will be the Paralympics. Broadcast networks will have many stories about a variety of athletes who have overcome a myriad of disabilities to achieve a high level of performance. Presumably this attention will be an inspiration to the able-bodied slackers in society. What thought should be given to those who will not have the opportunity to compete in Paralympics because their disability has been repaired in a well-intentioned desire to alleviate suffering? Recently a social trend has looked at this situation from a different perspective. Such limitations are not problems to be fixed, but simply characteristics to be accepted. This position has remarkable similarities to the idea of a grand plan from God in which humans should not interfere.

Humans no longer suffer the devastation of small pox nor the crippling of polio. Humans have attacked and eradicated any number of scourges. That list would be very long; developing an exhaustive list of those accomplishments would approach the impossible. Society seems driven in that direction, which raises an interesting philosophical question. If half the population only had one leg, that circumstance would suggest an intolerable drag on the smooth functioning of society. A few people with one leg is a problem to be dealt with and can be regarded as inspirational, but how many become intolerable? What is the optimum level of disability within society?

For humanists taking a rational perspective on alleviating suffering, this is a question of some importance. How does society find and allocate resources to alleviate suffering deemed intolerable? If disability is an inevitable consequence of existence which ought to be accepted, how should society deal with the long-term consequences which naturally flow from such disability? There are a great many maladies which cause grievous suffering but occur only very rarely. Such cases often arouse a highly emotional sympathetic demand for remedy. If the previous assumption that half the population with one leg is too much, then what rate is acceptable? Is a rate of mental illness of 25% or obesity at 60% acceptable? If so let us eat, drink and be merry with the situation. If not, how should such conditions be addressed? How would your answer change if you were the one doing the suffering?

PAN News & Updates

Meetings – PAN holds in-person and online meetings. Locations, times, and dates below.

Online meeting: Fourth Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm. We hope to split the meeting into an hour of chat and an hour of presentation or more structured discussion. Anyone with a book/movie review, discussion topic, or potential guest speaker should contact Dietrich

Dellinger @ guyinnagorillasuit@gmail.com

Chambersburg – Second Thursday of the month, 6:30 pm, Volcano Japanese Restaurant
955 Wayne Ave, Chambersburg

Cumberland/Mechanicsburg - Third Wednesday of the month, NEW LOCATION, Gather Your Party
Gaming & Hobby, 219 North Hanover Street, Carlisle, PA. This group plays board (atheist) games!

Harrisburg– First Wednesday of the month, 6:30 pm, Zeroday Brewing Company Taproom, 923 North 3rd
Street.

Lancaster – Fourth Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm, Centerville Diner, 100 S. Centerville Rd.

Lebanon - Second Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm, Plaza Azteca in Myerstown.

Reading – Third Thursdays at 7:15pm, 3rd & Spruce Drafthaus, 238 S 3rd Ave, Reading, PA 19611

York Meeting – First Sunday at noon, Mexitaly Brick Oven Brewhouse, 2440 East Market St.

How to Contribute to PAN

Giant Cards - We will have Giant grocery store cards available for purchase at PAN meetings. You pay face value for the card and use the face value at the store, but Giant lets PAN have 5% of that face value. If you shop at Giant, anyway, use the cards in lieu of cash and help PAN. What could be easier?

Pennies for PAN - Finally, we are happy to take money the old-fashioned way. You can give your tax-deductible contribution to a Board Member at one of our meetings or events, you can donate via PayPal on our website, www.panonbelievers.org, or you can mail a check to us at PA Nonbelievers, Inc. PO Box 702, York, PA 17405. Remember when you donate you can indicate what fund you want your donation to go to, you can find the list of our funds on the PAN website in the Donate section.

PAN Board of Directors

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Dietrich Dellinger
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Elan Lift
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Jim Waldie
Pam Zerba

PANViews Team:
Ally Consoli
Colleen Dzwonczyk
Pam Zerba

Puzzle answers:

1 – For once in my life (four ones in my life)

2 – Forget it

3 – Try to understand

4 – Travel overseas or overseas travel

5 – Breakfast

6 – Downtown

7 – Eyeshadow

8 – Stepfather

9 – Once upon a time

10 – Potatoes (pot 8 O's)

11 – 3D movie

12 – Top secret

