

The North Texas Church of Freethought BULLETIN

A Rational Approach to Religion

Founded 1994

Vol. XV No. I

Sunday, January 4th, 2009

TODAY'S SERVICE



Huxley's Letter to Kingsley

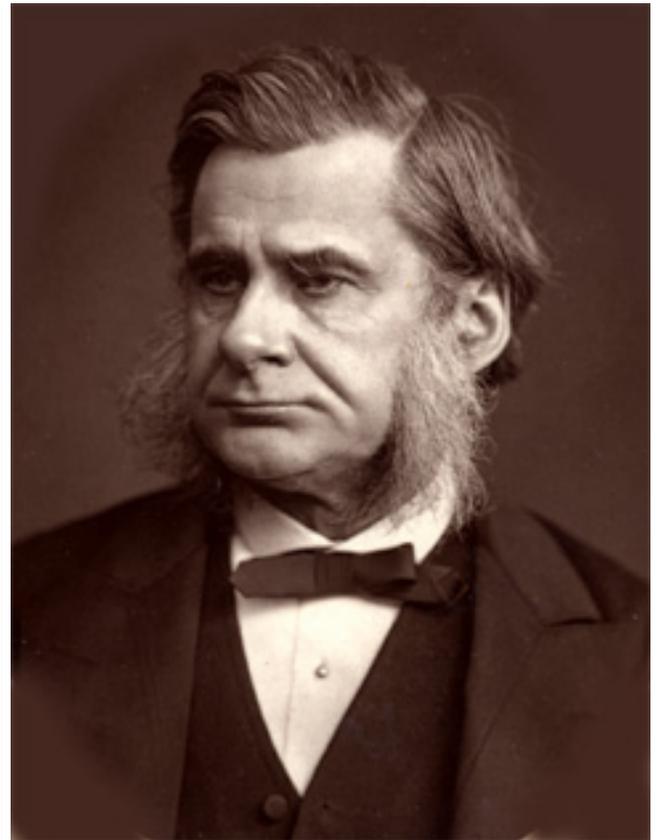
Being T.H. Huxley's response to a long letter of sympathy sent by the Anglican cleric Charles Kingsley on the occasion of the death of Huxley's four-year-old son, Noel. Kingsley, in his letter, had set forth the grounds of his own philosophy as to the ends of life and the hope of immortality.

14 Waverly Place, September 23, 1860

My Dear Kingsley -

I cannot sufficiently thank you, both on my wife's account and my own, for your long and frank letter, and for all the hearty sympathy which it exhibits - and Mrs. Kingsley will, I hope believe that we are no less sensible of her kind thought of us. To myself your letter was especially valuable, as it touched upon what I thought even more than upon what I said in my letter to you. My convictions, positive and negative, on all the matters of which you speak, are of long and slow growth and firmly rooted. But the great blow which fell upon me seemed to stir them to their foundation, and had I lived a couple of centuries earlier I could have fancied a devil scoffing at me and them - and asking me what profit it was to have stripped myself of the hopes and consolations of the mass of mankind? To which my only reply was and is - Oh devil! truth is better than much profit. I have searched over the grounds of my belief, and if wife and child and name and fame were all to be lost to me one after the other as the penalty, still I will not lie.

As I stood behind the coffin of my little son the other day, with my mind bent on anything but disputation, the officiating minister read, as a part of his duty, the words, "If the dead rise not again, let us drink and eat, for to-morrow we die." I cannot tell you how inexpressibly they shocked me. Paul had neither wife nor child, or he must have known that his alternative involved a blasphemy against all that was best and noblest in human nature. I could have laughed with scorn. What! because I am face to face with irreparable loss, because I have given back to the source from whence it came, the cause of a great happiness, still retaining through all my life the blessings which have sprung and will spring from that cause, I am to renounce my manhood, and, howling, grovel in bestiality? Why, the very apes know better, and if you shoot their young, the poor brutes grieve their grief out and do not immediately seek distraction in a gorge.



Thomas Henry Huxley, 1825-1895

Huxley was one of history's most notable freethinkers, known both as "Darwin's Bulldog" as well as the first 'agnostic,' a term he coined to describe his own lack of belief.

Kicked into the world a boy without guide or training, or with worse than none, I confess to my shame that few men have drunk deeper of all kinds of sin than I. Happily, my course was arrested in time - before I had earned absolute destruction - and for long years I have been slowly and painfully climbing, with many a fall, towards better things. And when I look back, what do I find to have been the agents of my redemption? The hope of immortality or of future reward? I can honestly say that for these fourteen years such a consideration has not entered my head. No, I can tell you exactly what has been at work. Sartor Resartus led me to know that a deep sense of religion was compatible with the entire absence of theology. Secondly, science and her methods gave me a resting-place independent of authority and tradition. Thirdly, love opened up to me a view of the sanctity of human nature, and impressed me with a deep sense of responsibility.

continued on Page 2

If at this moment I am not a worn-out, debauched, useless carcass of a man, if it has been or will be my fate to advance the cause of science, if I feel that I have a shadow of a claim on the love of those about me, if in the supreme moment when I looked down into my boy's grave my sorrow was full of submission and without bitterness, it is because these agencies have worked upon me, and not because I have ever cared whether my poor personality shall remain distinct for ever from the All from whence it came and whither it goes.

I know right well that 99 out of 100 of my fellows would call me atheist, infidel, and all the other usual hard names. As our laws stand, if the lowest thief steals my coat, my evidence (my opinions being known) would not be received against him. [The law with respect to oaths was reformed in 1869.]

But I cannot help it. One thing people shall not call me with justice and that is - a liar. As you say of yourself, I too feel that I lack courage; but if ever the occasion arises when I am bound to speak, I will not shame my boy.

If you can show me that I err in premises or conclusion, I am ready to give up these as I would any other theories. But at any rate you will do me the justice to believe that I have not reached my conclusions without the care befitting the momentous nature of the problems involved.

And I write this the more readily to you, because it is clear to me that if that great and powerful instrument for good or evil, the Church of England, is to be saved from being shivered into fragments by the advancing tide of science - an event I should be very sorry to witness, but which will infallibly occur if men like Samuel of Oxford are to have the guidance of her destinies - it must be by the efforts of men who, like yourself, see your way to the combination of the practice of the Church with the spirit of science. Understand that all the younger men of science whom I know intimately are essentially of my way of thinking. (I know not a scoffer or an irreligious or an immoral man among them, but they all regard orthodoxy as you regard Brahmanism.) Understand that this new school of the prophets is the only one that can work miracles, the only one that can constantly appeal to nature for evidence that it is right, and you will comprehend that it is of no use to try to barricade us with shovel hats and aprons, or to talk about our doctrines being "shocking."

I don't profess to understand the logic of yourself, Maurice, and the rest of your school, but I have always said I would swear by your truthfulness and sincerity, and that good must come of your efforts. The more plain this was to me, however, the more obvious the necessity to let you see where the men of science are driving, and it has often been in my mind to write to you before.

-Ever yours very faithfully,

T.H. Huxley

Excerpted from the Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley, by his son, Leonard Huxley, D. Appleton and Company, New York and London, volume 1 (of 2), pages 233-239, 1909.



THINK ABOUT IT!

THE ATHEIST'S GRAVE

I wandered among the churchyard dead
On a sunny Sabbath day,
And I marked a grave where the sexton said
An atheist's ashes lay.
A headstone pointed the lowly spot,
Inscribed with his age and name;
But other memorial there was not
To draw either praise or blame.
Yet the daisy there was as fresh in its hue,
The elm did as lightly wave,
And the springtide grass as greenly grew
As o'er the Christians' grave.
And I marked that the sunbeams through the
trees
Fell as lightly on the sod,
As if its inmate had been of these
Who had lived in the faith of a God.
And o'er my mind the reflection came
Of a new and startling kind:
T'was whispered within me that man may blame
Where Nature can no fault find;
The bigot's curse from the Gothic pile
On the skeptical few may fall,
But Nature extends with a mother's smile
Her pity and love to all.

-Anonymous

2008: YEAR IN REVIEW

The North Texas Church of Freethought had a very active year in 2008, and here are some of the highlights:

Personnel:

Founders and Directors Emeriti Mike and Marilyn Sullivan retired and moved to Kissimmee, Florida

Zachary Moore was appointed to Executive Director

NEW Director positions appointed include:

Cash Foley, **Outreach Director**

Georgene Harkness, **Treasurer**

Howard Harkness, **Music Director**

Brad Watson, **Social Director**

Don Lewellyn, **Operations Director**

Bill Waller, **Welcoming Director**

Outstanding Active Members include:

John Hendricks, Sean Monahan, Cody & Alex Evans, Keith & Susette Geissler



Donations to Operation: Foxhole Atheists at our December service were sent by Susette Geissler to atheist and freethinking military personnel currently serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, through the North Alabama Freethought Association. We're very proud to show American foxhole atheists that we care about them, and want them to be as comfortable as possible until they can come home!

NTCOF Organization:

NEW Summer Feedback Session

NEW Feedback Form on Program

NEW Introduction of Special Interest Groups (SIG)

NEW Monthly Open Business Meetings

Notable Guest Speakers:

Ellery Schempp: Activist, State/Church Separation

Dale McGowan: Author, Parenting Beyond Belief

Lori Lipman Brown: Director, Secular Coalition for America

Social Activities:

NEW Obnoxious Ball

Halloween Party

Solstice/Mythmas Party

Weekly Games Night

NEW Monthly Food Critics Dinner

NEW Monthly Video Game Night

NEW Homebrew Club

Charitable Outreach Activities:

NEW Charitable Activities Group

NEW Foxhole Atheist Drive

NEW Women's Shelter Drive

NEW Quarterly Adopt-a-Highway

Quarterly Blood Drives

Publicity Outreach:

Public Debate: "Is God Good?" Zachary Moore v. John Ferrer

TV interview: Tim Gorski by Ch 4's James Overstreet on teaching the Bible in school as literature

Website: Software Upgrade and Redesign

NEW Winter Solstice cards



Lori Lipman Brown (left) of the Secular Coalition for America, and Dale McGowan (right) of the "Parenting Beyond Belief" book series were two of the distinguished guests we were proud to welcome to our services in 2008.

Events Attended by NTCOF Groups

Dan Barker Lecture: University of Texas at Arlington, modified debate on faith and reason

Dr. Richard Dawkins Lecture: University of Texas at Austin

Inaugural Texas Freethought Convention: Austin, Texas

Dr. Barbara Forrest Lecture: Southern Methodist University, Texas state science standards

Jeff Crilly Workshop: Plano Early Lions Meeting, inexpensive promotion techniques

Dr. Lawrence Krauss Debate: Fort Worth, Intelligent Design and the Existence of God

LOSS: NICHOLAS SCROGGS

Celebration Services for Nicholas Alexander Scroggs (14) of Grand Prairie, TX, were held at 2:00p.m. Tuesday, December 16, 2008 at the Ruthe Jackson Center in Grand Prairie.

Nicholas died December 11, 2008 in Grand Prairie. He was born to Robert and Barbara Dent Scroggs August 18, 1994 in Denton and was attending Grand Prairie High School. Nick was taking a full slate of Gifted & Talented classes at Grand Prairie High School where he was also a member of the swim team and a friend to everyone.

He had a passion for reading, drawing, and playing all types of musical instruments, especially the drums. He was always gung-ho about trying new experiences and his smile and energy were contagious to everyone.

Left behind to cherish his memory are parents Robert Scroggs and his wife Katherine of Grand Prairie, Barbara Brumbaugh and her husband Don of NRH, brother Houston Chapman, sister Madalyn Brumbaugh, grandparents Jack and Charlotte Scroggs of Denton and Charles and Lee Dent of Poncha Springs, CO, great grandmothers Genevieve Scroggs of Denton and Ethel Dill of Fort Collins, CO, and many aunts, uncles, and cousins who also loved him dearly.

Memorial contributions are suggested to the Nicholas Scroggs Memorial Fund.

www.homesteadfuneralhomes.com

The North Texas Church of Freethought
A Rational Approach to Religion

Tim Gorski, MD
Zachary Moore, PhD

Pastoral Director
Executive Director

Deborah Boak
Cash Foley
Georgene Harkness, CPA
Howard Harkness
Don Lewellyn
Brad Watson

Youth Director
Outreach Director
Treasurer
Musical Director
Operations Director
Social Director

3000 Custer Road, Suite 270-353, Plano, TX 75075
24-hour answering line: (972) 395-5343
Website: www.churchoffreethought.org
Email: info@churchoffreethought.org

JANUARY EVENTS

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and friendly discussion at Jason's Deli in Irving, located just south of I-635 on MacArthur, at 7770 N. MacArthur Blvd., phone (972) 432-0555. Easy driving directions: To reach Jason's from the Holiday Inn: turn RIGHT out of the parking lot onto Esters Blvd., RIGHT onto Freeport Parkway, RIGHT to enter I-635 EAST. Exit I-635 at MacArthur Blvd., then RIGHT onto MacArthur, and RIGHT again just ahead into the Jason's parking lot.

Games Night: The NTCOF Games group meets nearly every Friday night at the smoke-free IHOP at 2310 Stemmons Trail in Dallas. The IHOP is adjacent to the Radisson Hotel along North-west Highway, about a ½ mile east of Loop 12. For the latest details, join the NTCOF Games e-list by sending any e-mail message to:

ntcof_games-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Video Game Night: For those of you that want to indulge your affinity for blowing up aliens, illegal street racing, or portly Italian plumbers, the Video Game Night is for you! This month, we're meeting at Keith and Susette Geissler's house on **Saturday, January 24th, at 6:00PM**. Send your RSVP to:

kgeissler@gmail.com

Secular Singles: The Freethinking NTCOF Singles meets at the Vineyard restaurant in the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center in Grapevine (1800 Highway 26 East). To get up to speed on the NTCOF Secular Singles e-list, just send any email message to:

ntcof_singles-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

FINANCIAL REPORT

Folks, you hear this over and over, but it's true: Freethought is NOT Free! Our continued growth is only possible through your generous donations and contributions to the church- our success depends on the commitment of ALL our members. We'll share a more detailed financial summary later in the year, but here's a snapshot of our financial activity from the past month:

Total Income:	\$1,108.39
Total Expenses:	\$2,059.85
Difference:	-\$951.46