

The North Texas Church of Freethought BULLETIN

A Rational Approach to Religion

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MORALITY WITH GOD MORE PROBLEMATIC THAN WITHOUT



We continually hear it said by believers that without their deity there can be no morals. Most of the time they seem to mean by this that without a system of future rewards and punishments there is no incentive to be good. It's a scary thing since Christianity teaches that you can sin all you want – indeed, you're expected to sin because no one is perfect – and then you just get forgiven. Apparently people behaved the

same in the 19th Century as they do in the 21st because Robert Ingersoll called this way of thinking "crime on credit."

But now think about this. If the reason we should be good is to stay out of hell and get into heaven, then doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong is no more than a means to an end. It is not being good for goodness sake, but being good to get some-

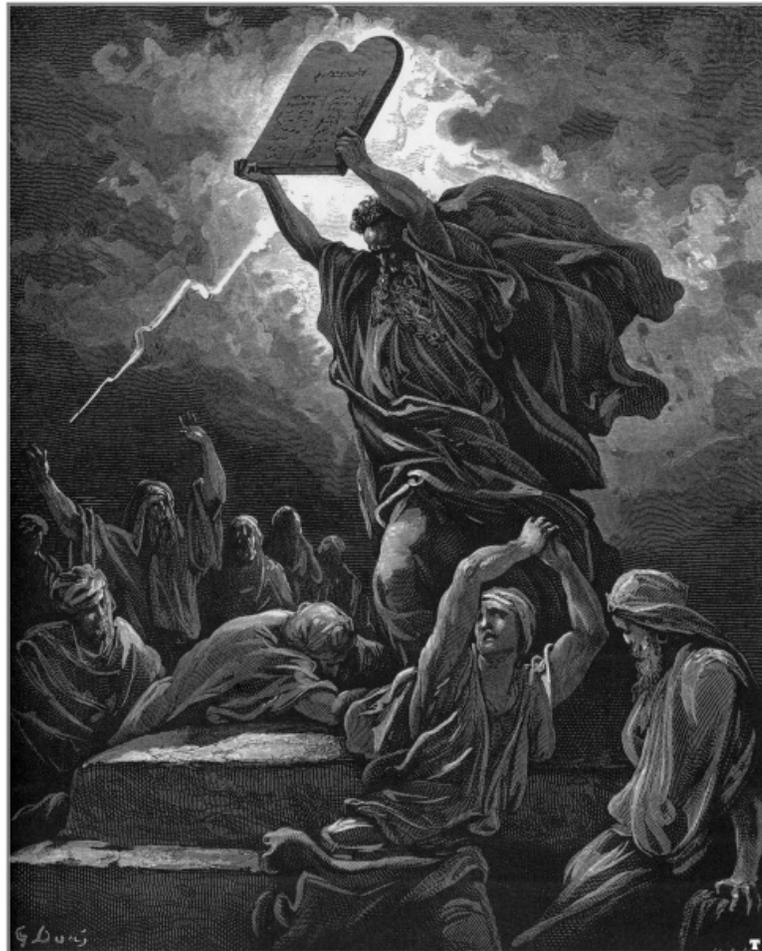
thing else better. The obvious conclusion is that the ultimate good consists of saving your own skin. That can't be right, so the idea that morality comes from a system of future rewards and punishments can't be right either.

There is another problem with the idea that god(s) are needed for morality that was recognized by the Greeks hundreds of years before the current era. The problem is discussed in Plato's Euthyphro in which Socrates asks "whether the good is beloved by the gods because it is good, or good because it is beloved of the gods." Got that? In the context of current claims that "God" is needed for morality, the question is whether "God" commands us to do good or whether what is good is, quite simply, whatever "God" commands.

If what is good exists independently of "God," then what do we need this divine "middleman" for? It also sharpens the problem of the existence of evil: that if "God" knows what is good, how can he have created a universe filled with so much manifest evil?

It is less embarrassing for theologians to assert that whatever "God" commands is what is good and whatever "God" prohibits is evil. But this is done at the cost of distorting the common understanding of right and wrong to such a degree as to make almost all of our thinking about morality irrelevant, if not absurd. One might as well define a circle as a polygon of three sides. We would then need a new word for the geometric shape previously known as a circle. If "God" decides what morality is, then we can have no meaningful understanding of right and wrong beyond the say-so of those who claim to speak for "God."

Morality without "God," to be sure, is a complex subject with many twists and turns and unsettled questions. But morality with "God" is an ugly, treacherous game of counterfactual impostures and painful irrationalisms.



THINK ABOUT IT!

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AUGUST EVENTS

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar, or through our Meetup.com site. Please check these locations regularly, and RSVP through Meetup.

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.

Video Game Night: Enjoy blowing up bad guys, racing around the track, or saving the day? Come on out to the video game night on **Saturday, July 18th** at **Zach Moore's house**, and get your fill of digital entertainment!

Pub Night: Looking for a fun social night out at a great location with the best beer selection? The Pub Night meets regularly every other Saturday at pubs all around Dallas/Fort Worth!

Women's Group: Do you miss getting to spend quality time with female friends? Want a comfortable place to chat without all those pesky men around? Come on out to the newly-formed NTCOF Women's Group, where there will be knitting lessons, conversation, and lots of female freethinking fun! Next meeting is **Sunday, July 19th at 7:00 PM** at Brenda Magee's home.

Camp Quest Texas: The inaugural CQT event will be a Day Camp on Sunday, August 30th at Kevin and Cathy Smith's farm in Princeton, Texas. Sign up your child (age 5-15) today at: campquest.churchoffreethought.org

Also, see Susette Geissler to volunteer to help prepare the Smith farm for CQT Day Camp on Saturday, August 8th!

2009 NTCOF EVENTS

- September 5th: Road Cleanup
- September 6th: Monthly Service
- October 4th: Monthly Service
- October 12th: Freethought Day
- October 31st: Halloween
- November 8th: Monthly Service
- November 14th: Freethought Convention
- November 26th: Thanksgiving
- December 21st: Mythmas