



THE CHICK-FIL-A BROUHAHA

"We are very much supportive of the family – the biblical definition of the family unit. We are a family-owned business, a family-led business, and we are married to our first wives. We give God thanks for that ... We want to do anything we possibly can to strengthen families. We are very much committed to that." [Chick-Fil-A COO Dan Cathy, quoted in a Baptist Press article July 16, 2012]

This seems largely unobjectionable. It is a bit parochial. And it's really unbiblical as well. After all, "the biblical definition of the family unit" Cathy means is what is called "the nuclear family." It is not the sort of family that the biblical Abraham (who, in addition to his wife, Sarah, being his half-sister, had two others) or Solomon (who had a thousand wives and concubines) and other Bible "greats" had. And it's certainly not the example that Jesus Christ and Paul set. But it hardly seems enough to justify a controversy over chicken sandwiches on the charge that Cathy is a horrible homophobe and gay-hater. The problem is that on the very same day Cathy said this on the syndicated "Ken Coleman Show":

"I think we are inviting God's judgment on our nation when we shake our fist at Him and say 'we know better than you as to what constitutes a marriage' and I pray God's mercy on our generation that has such a prideful, arrogant attitude to think that we have the audacity to define what marriage is about."

This is more problematic. It's a statement in support of the idea that the United States ought to be a kind of theocracy where people like Cathy speak for a deity who will smite everyone Old Testament style unless the deity's wishes (as understood by Cathy) are honored. It may be "biblical" but it is certainly unAmerican, as the "We The People" of the US Constitution is exactly the sort of "audacity" that Cathy condemns.

Worse, this is in a context of Cathy, Cathy's family, and/or Chick-Fil-A and their charitable group Winshape Foundation (arguably all the same thing) financing the Family Research Council. The FRC has long advocated "conservative family values," i.e., opposition to emergency contraception and abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, measures to address global warming. Of course, the FRC objects also to homosexuality but one its fellows, Peter Sprigg, has gone on record as saying that homosexual behavior should be outlawed and FRC President Tony Perkins not only declined to disown that statement but said that "homosexuality poses a danger to children." An FRC brochure written by Sprigg, "The Top Ten Harms of Same-Sex 'Marriage,'" available on the group's website, claims that "freedom of conscience and religious liberty would be threatened," "fewer people would marry," "fewer people would remain monogamous and sexually faithful," "more children would grow up fatherless," and "birth rates would fall" if homosexuals were allowed to marry, among other claims. FRC's false accusations linking homosexuals to pedophilia caused the Southern Poverty Law Center to designate the FRC as a hate group.

In fairness, the FRC received only \$1000 from Winshape in 2010. But over the last decade, it has been reported, Winshape contributed nearly \$3 million to other "anti-gay groups." The largest part of this went to the "Marriage and Family Foundation" which ABC News says "lobbies against same-sex marriage and anti-discrimination policies." Some reports have said that some of the groups supported by Chick-Fil-A money have also lobbied to prevent any relaxation of laws against homosexuality internationally, including in nations where it is a capital crime.

The controversy raises many troubling questions. But perhaps the most difficult is that of what the correct response should be to people or groups who advocate for and contribute their money to political causes that are fairly viewed as wrong and oppressive. Clearly, such opinions and the public policy agendas connected with them should be opposed on the field of free speech and public political participation. But should they also be fought in the marketplace? Should they be the basis of economic warfare?

To be sure, there are companies that boast about their "green" policies or their financial support

of various humanitarian causes. So what if a business announced that it would not hire or would fire people opposed to, say, civil rights for gays? Where would such practices stop, if existing laws were not sufficient to prevent or stop them or if claims of "religious liberty" could successfully enable them?

One of the chief attractions of the marketplace is the relative anonymity and interchangeability of its participants combined with the relative standardization and commodification of the products and services exchanged. Thus, anyone at all can buy on the same terms a wide variety of things that are the same for everyone. There is a kind of absolute equality in that which has been a rare condition of human existence. It would be a sad thing to lose that. But this is exactly what is at risk if we begin asking, for each of many billions of transactions, where the money came from and where it is going.

We now know something about how Dan Cathy and his family spend their money. But there are lots of other people who get part of the money that consumers spend on Chick-Fil-A food. Some of those people are undoubtedly gay or have friends and family who are gay. They and many others may also begin to think more about the justice of laws that exclude gays from full citizenship here in the USA and endanger their lives in some other countries. This is likely to give additional impetus to what should be an inevitable recognition of the full rights of association for everyone regardless of their gender preference.

Meanwhile, the neutrality of the marketplace should be preserved because it is the foundation of how we relate to each other as equal participants in our modern civilization. When it comes to the diversity of political and religious opinions, we should strive to limit the inevitable clashes to appropriate forums, be respectful and civil as far as we can and remain mindful of the sensibilities of others. For to "suffer fools gladly" is a virtue, if a difficult one.

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS
TO THE NTCOF ARE NEEDED,
APPRECIATED,
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:
"ECONOMICS & RELIGION"**

**>>> Sunday, September 2nd, 2012 <<<
SHERATON GRAND DFW AIRPORT
SE CORNER OF 114 AND ESTERS**

**All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar (yes, website has now been updated thanks to Sarah and Rusty Nejd!) , or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: - www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought -
JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!**

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Sheraton, cross over the freeway and make a left onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114) going west. Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

Freethought Salon: Get together to discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest to Freethinkers. Most Sundays, over breakfast, at the Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine; see the meetup site!

Game Night: The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

Secular Singles: Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

"The great trouble with religion - any religion - is that a religionist, having accepted certain propositions by faith, cannot thereafter judge those propositions by evidence.."
- Robert Heinlein (from *Friday*)



DFWCOR

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

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