



BULLETIN of THE NORTH TEXAS CHURCH OF FREETHOUGHT

The Fellowship Of Unbelievers Throwing light on Facts and their Logical Consequences since 1994

Volume 23 Number 10

Sunday, October 1, 2017

FEAR LESS BY UNDERSTANDING MORE

Evolutionist Charles Darwin (1809-1882) recognized that the emotion of fear and the physiologic response to it are common across the animal kingdom and similar among very different species. Fear is connected with the most ancient parts of the brain and so has clearly been highly evolutionarily conserved. The reasonable conclusion is that fear and the “flight or fight” response it elicits improves an animal's chances of survival. It's not foolproof, though. The “deer in the headlights” meme and the ubiquity of roadkill attest to this.

For humans, especially, fear has been and remains problematic. On the one hand, it has clearly been a strong motivator to self-preservation. It is part of our being social animals. We band together because we rightly fear weakness and vulnerability and “there is strength in numbers.” We feel anxious and vulnerable when we are alone and cut off from others. Human society would likely not exist without this feeling. Human societies have recognized this and learned to impose it as punishment, as in the Torah's decreeing that an offender “be cut off from his people.” Ostracism, banishment and exile are to be feared for good reason.

Fear has also been an important motivator within and among established societies. The Roman Empire was imposed and maintained by force, but with it came the “Pax Romana,” the period of peace and prosperity fostered by a stable social order that did not make unreasonable demands on people. Indeed, reduced fears of social chaos and lawlessness allowed human efforts to be directed towards alleviating fears of natural disaster, famines, and even ignorance.

On the other hand, fear has as often been a cause of wars and genocide, an impediment to rational and effective problem-solving, and a trigger for panics resulting in needless but very serious person-

al and collective distress. The exploitation of fears has long been a tool of political leaders and, as Machiavelli observed: “It is much safer to be feared than loved.” But in this connection fear is also a tool for breeding hate and Mohandas Gandhi was insightful when he observed in this connection that:

“The enemy is fear.
We think it is hate, but it is fear.”

The deliberate creation and maintenance of an assortment of fears has a long history. Perhaps its oldest form is that of supernatural religion. Threats of hell and damnation (or reincarnation as vermin) and the favorite question “Where will you go when you die?” appear to have been around for several thousands of years. Or as the late writer Christopher Hitchens (1949-2014) put it:

“We are created sick and commanded to be well. ... And over us, to supervise this, is installed a celestial dictatorship ... a kind of divine North Korea. ... greedy for uncritical praise, ... And swift to punish the original sins with which it so tenderly gifted us ... An eternal, unalterable, judge, jury and executioner against whom there could be no appeal and who wasn't finished with you, even when you die. However! Let no one say there is no cure! Salvation is offered, redemption indeed is promised at the low price of the surrender of your critical faculties.”

In the modern era, even as supernaturalism (it is to be hoped) recedes from its high tide, we see that creating and maintaining fear remains a thriving business. It has become a political and commercial art form. In politics, various factions work to instill fears of foreign enemies, conspiracies, police brutality, immigrants, terrorists, climate change, diseases and so on. At the same time, there are partisan accu-

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sations of inciting such fears that are said, in reality, to be largely overblown if not groundless.

Appeals to fear are ubiquitous in advertising as well. Consumers are told that they cannot be safe, happy or socially acceptable without various products and services.

Amid all of this, of course, there is good reason for real concern, if not for what many fear then for the fears themselves and what they may motivate people to do. For, as is well-known, fear tends to cloud rational thought and action. As philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1920) put it:

“When a theatre catches fire, the rational man foresees disaster just as clearly as the man stricken with panic, but he adopts methods likely to diminish the disaster, whereas the man stricken with panic increases it.”

This is certainly the point at which fear affects us most: in our personal lives. And here also there are hazards of being wrongfully or inappropriately fearful. Our own and others' fears may affect our ability to interact with them and/or their ability to interact with us.

What is to be done about this? If fear is the enemy, on the world and national stages and in our everyday lives, what are we to do about it? How else but through attention to facts and an honest commitment to reason can we meet it? Scientist Marie Curie (1867-1934) advised:

“Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”

There is no other choice open to us. It may even be possible, through understanding, to manage the problem of fear as Abraham Lincoln did in attempting to destroy his enemies by making them his friends. That is, fear can inform us. It can teach us. If we can keep it from controlling us.

THANK YOU !!
FOR YOUR GENEROUS
DONATION OF TIME & FINANCIAL
SUPPORT to the NTCOF !!
It is needed, appreciated and
Tax-Deductible !

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar , or 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 Jason's Deli on MacArthur Blvd just south of 635, at 7707 N MacArthur Blvd, phone (972) 432-0555.

Freethought Salon: Discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest. It happens most non-first Sundays of the month, over breakfast, at the Hilton DFW Lakes Hotel restaurant "The Vineyard" - inside the hotel - in Grapevine beginning 10:30 AM.

Game Night: 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 Le Havre, Carcassonne, and other fun games!

Have Another Idea? Email or call! Read bulletins & presentations and post on the FORUM at www.churchoffreethought.org LIKE US at www.facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/ and sign up for our Twitter feed at twitter.com/ntcof !

PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:

“WHAT IS RELIGION FOR?”

> Sunday, November 5, 2017 <

COMFORT INN DFW AIRPORT NORTH

(Take the Freeport Parkway exit, then the frontage road east just past Best Western; service starts at 10:30 but come early for coffee, snacks - you can bring some! - and conversation)

FREETHOUGHT DAY

is OCTOBER 12th !!

325 years ago, 19 people had been hanged and another crushed to death for being “witches.” Scores more were jailed awaiting trial as new accusations piled up. On October 12th, Governor William Phips wrote the Royal Privy Council saying that he had “stopt” the proceedings. It was an extraordinary victory of reason over superstition we remember as Freethought Day.

**The North Texas Church of Freethought
The Fellowship of Unbelievers**

Pastor (It's a job description, not a title!) Tim Gorski	
Presenters (How about YOU?) Fritha Robinson LPC	
Social Media Czar	Aaron Kelton
Welcome Coordinator	Mark Barnick
Videographer	John Gauthier
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