

# VIEWPOINTS

## Think Over 'Under God'

By Tina Dupuy  
CagleCartoons.com

Did you hear atheists are suing God? According to Fox News' for-profit preacher Mike Huckabee they do it all the time! "Dear Lord!" he tweeted this week, "Atheists are suing God AGAIN!"

Never mind the spurious premise of a group of people suing the very thing they don't believe in. That'd be like Republicans suing birth control, scientific evidence or a living wage. Or Democrats, respectively, suing winning.

Why is Huckabee (pronounced with an "F" if you're Megyn Kelly) making such a hokey accusation about those darn atheists?

"The founders believed our inalienable rights derive from a power higher than government," writes Huckabee. "Under God" is a reminder that elected officials did not grant us our rights, and have no power to rescind them."

Apparently, American Humanist Association has sent a letter on behalf of a student in California who was punished by his high school for not saying "under God." A practice which has been held unconstitutional. To clarify, it's a school district, not a god and it's a letter, not a lawsuit.

Now I'm guessing Huckabee believes bearing false witness is breaking one of God's commandments, so I'll give him the benefit of the doubt and just assume his reading comprehension isn't all that strong. Which could also explain why he's blissfully ignorant of American history.

The Pledge of Allegiance was written by noted Christian Socialist, Francis Bellamy, in 1892 for a children's magazine's promotion of the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' sail "across the ocean blue." School children recited the pledge while making the "Bellamy salute" which was an homage to an ancient Rome gesture of raising an arm in front of you with a flat palm with fingers closed. Later the Nazis and their fellow fascists adopted the salute and now it's universally recognized as how you hail Hitler.

It wasn't until the middle of WWII that Congress adopted it as the pledge, later dropping the Bellamy salute and opting for a right hand over the heart. Then it wasn't until the Cold War that "under God" was added because our enemies were godless commies.

So the Pledge is a jingoistic chant created by a children's publication to celebrate an explorer turned brutal torture-happy tyrant with a Hitler salute. It's not the best tradition we have

in this country.

And it's not that "under God" reminds politicians they can't take away our rights. "Under God" is a reminder that politicians invoke faith as a first refuge of scoundrels.

The Founding Fathers are our American religion complete with its own creation story (Paul Revere), wise Kings Solomon (Washington and Lincoln) and Garden of Eden (see: the 1950s). The Pledge of Allegiance, our Founders' homily.

It's very loosely based on a true story. We made most of it up. And it gets retold and resold (as in: click here to donate now!).

We didn't rebel against the crown because of religion. The Founders were not the Pilgrims. The two groups were from different centuries. Think the telegraph in relation to the iPhone.

The passage Huckabee cites with the "unalienable rights endowed by our Creator" is the only sentence even remotely about religion in the Declaration of Independence. The list of grievances in the document have nothing to do with being able to practice religion. That came later in an Amendment to the Constitution. The list in the Declaration of Independence of what they call The Oppressions have to do with the King's neglect of the basic functioning of government. (i.e., "For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments.") The colonists found it arbitrary and deemed it despotic and tyrannical.

It's more accurate to say the Founders loved the morass of government — so much they fought to the death to frame one. Saying the Founders were anti-government is like saying Mrs. Fields is anti-cookie.

Instead the Founders were pro-self-governance. The Founders were anti-monarchy. Religious Americans are unthinking if they want their religion to be the one their government encourages (see: every theocracy ever).

The question of whether we are a nation under God should be asked. Our current enemies are not goddess but are religious extremists, venerating a flag as they worship their deity. Is a pledge to a flag and a god still something we should demand American school children do? Are we really still mandating our kids recite this?

Because we're a nation that welcomes and protects all sorts of beliefs — even the completely mistaken, bordering-on-disingenuous claims about our origin story. Or a grade school pledge.

### OTHERS SAY

**The Daily Star, Beirut, on U.S.-led offensives against Islamic State militants and U.S. relations with Syria:**

President Barack Obama spent some of his weekend tour of Asia discussing his country's policy on confronting the extremist group ISIS, and he had significant things to say about President Bashar Assad.

Observers have been watching the American president closely of late as accusations mount that the White House is coordinating its airstrikes against jihadi groups with the Syrian army, who can only benefit from the actions of the U.S.-led coalition.

Obama made it clear that Washington had no intention of joining forces with Assad to defeat ISIS, calling such a move counterproductive. But when asked whether his team was busy discussing ways to remove Assad from power, Obama answered flatly, "No."

While eradicating ISIS is necessary to deal with the Syria crisis, it's not enough. Obama and his team have become adept at saying what they oppose — and acting on it — when it comes to the

jihadis, but they're not good at spelling out what they support — or acting on it — when it comes to Syria.

Granted, there is talk of a desired "political solution," but U.S. rhetoric and actions remain muddled on how such a process can be accelerated to save more lives.

The words and deeds are carefully calibrated to play to the supposed American public's preferences, namely fight terror, and don't send U.S. troops.

However, the words have nothing to offer to the majority of Syrians who are anxiously wondering how and when the war will end, with all sides benefiting from stability, justice and better government.

When it comes to deeds, the Obama team's casual indifference to Assad's future translates into indifference to millions of Syrians as they prepare for another miserable winter.

Washington has been prompted to act because of ISIS' gains in Iraq, and it has a policy there, but its Syria policy simply can't be placed on autopilot.

http://www.dailystar.com.lb



## Too much TGIF, not so good

By Paula Bosco Damon

MY STORY YOUR STORY

Do you ever worry that a hard day's work is a thing of the past?

I do.

My job in corporate America was to convince employees to live the company values and to achieve the company goals.

But at times, it seemed like all they cared about was making it to Friday, hoping they'd have enough money left over to buy both diapers and formula.

Mondays aren't what they used to be either. I guess now if you're having bad day, they say you're "having a Monday."

And what is this thing about Wednesdays being hump day — as in over the hump?

There was no such thing as hump day when I entered the workforce — eons ago — just plain old Wednesday.

I've spent a lot time wrestling with how people seem to care more about getting off work and getting out of work than they do about doing the work itself.

It's my opinion that people are way too focused on everything else but.

I think that's what happened to my brand new Ford Taurus. A lemon if there ever was one, it was probably built on a Wednesday, when all the assemblers had Friday on the brain and not on my car.

I keep reading about the problems the U.S. is having in mathematics, science and reading. We can't even break the top 20 globally as we continue to fall farther and farther behind other nations, including Japan, China and the Netherlands.

With so many people living for the weekend, is this really how we're going to get ahead?

I don't think so.

I may not understand the X or Y or Z



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"Opportunity is missed by most people because it...looks like work."

THOMAS EDISON, INVENTOR

generations, but I do know how to get the most productivity out of an eight-, 10- or 12-hour day. I was always of the mindset that if I was not busy getting my work done, I was wasting the company's time and money.

But not everyone saw it that way. One day, I stepped into a co-workers office to go over some assignments and she was painting her nails! Right there on top of her desk calendar.

I always thought painting your nails was what you did in the privacy of your own home or at the salon.

I told her the boss wouldn't be happy, but that didn't seem to faze her. Not at all. She kept right on brushing and blowing those ruby reds.

I've heard that productivity also has gone downhill because of social media.

This is just the way it is in the workplace whether I like it or not.

Thinking back to the best of my recollection, there have only been a few times personal matters took over my work life. And those memories are so painful I simply can't repeat them here.

I really do think we should be more careful about how we spend time on the job.

Besides, how can we regain our status as the No. 1 powerhouse in the world if we're always watching the clock?

What benefit is there any way in only doing what we feel like doing?

Not much in my book.

If you figured out the amount of time that's wasted on the job, you'd see what I'm talking about and it would downright scare you.

I don't want to sound like a prude, but I've made a living for 30 years because someone had to work hard and that someone was me.

You may think I'm wrong.

If so, I'll certainly hear about it.

### PASTOR'S CORNER

## 33rd Sunday Of Ordinary Time

By Deacon Denny Davis

MATTHEW: 25: 14-30

What is this Gospel saying to us today? A parable is about a man going on a journey and calls his servants to hand over his funds to them according to each person's ability. The first he gives 5,000 silver pieces, another 2,000 and a third 1,000. The first two double their money, and the third buries his 1,000. Is this parable about capitalism? I'm sure some with an American mind (which is most of us) would think so. Obviously this story is not about capitol or even about money at all. This is a story about faith in God and the gifts God has given us.

As human beings we all have different gifts. Some people have many gifts (5,000 silver pieces), some have not as many gifts (2,000), and still others few gifts (1,000). I see the point of this story, not in the amount of gifts (silver pieces) we have, but what are we doing with the gifts God has given us? We are all called to serve as Jesus did, to share the gifts God has given freely with others.

When we serve with love, compassion, and mercy the gift multiplies and others pass them on and the gift doubles and triples and so on. Love never comes back to us empty and is always expanding outward. The number of silver pieces in the story doesn't matter. The person with 1,000 silver pieces lost what he had not because he had fewer gifts, but because he was afraid to share what he had. Instead of giving himself away, he lost himself. His individualism was more important than his community so he could never grow rich in love and mercy. What he had he wasted and lived an empty life as a result. To share our life is risky, but faith in this God of love gives us the strength and courage to share all that we have and still have plenty left over. Faith allows us to participate in what God is doing in the world and we are a part of its transformation into what being human is all about. When we bury our gifts we stop trusting in God's transforming life within us. I believe the opposite of faith is fear, not doubt. Saying yes to our gifts allows God to use us in wonderful ways.

### FROM AROUND THE STATE

Other thoughts to consider in regard to the value of the XL Pipeline: Consider that the product it will deliver is for the welfare of the greater public, and that this delivery system would be less hazardous and less expensive over many years than the railroad. The railroad then would be able to transport other consumer goods.

I realize and understand the concern (which has been sensationalized) about safety to a public few. What we need to evaluate in the big picture is the greater good for the majority and move forward.

I've been pleased that many public officials realize what's best for most and will proceed to support XL in spite of extra expenses cause by those who have taken a position against its benefits.

HARRY MANSHEIM, BROOKINGS

### CORRECTIONS

Mark Froke's name was misspelled in the Nov. 14 edition of *The Plain Talk* and the school board story on page 3B.

James Kronaizl's name was misspelled in the 1B story "In Recognition of Honor."

Additionally, the St. Agnes school students in the photo on 2B were misidentified.

The *Plain Talk* deeply regrets the errors.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The *Plain Talk* encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in

mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the *Plain Talk* will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same

issue.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion, fax to 624-4696 or e-mail to alan.dale@plaintalk.net.