



THE PROMETHEAN HUMANIST

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HUMANIST VIEWS ON THE PLEDGE CONTROVERSY

Remembering the Original Pledge

I am old enough to have learned the pledge in its original. "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." And I believed it. An autonomous nation working out its own affairs in such a way that there would be liberty and justice for all -- and I am still shocked when I see our failures. And my patriotism goes to make that pledge also a reality.

The original is also euphonious. The language flows without interruption through the beauty of the sentiment.

I was nearly through college when the change came, and there we were, suddenly, no longer autonomous but with an overlord, just like medieval days, under somebody else's command.

The new one (as of 1954) is a jarring, ugly, chopped up version, where the language limps along with commas and pauses, and takes away the actual ideal from the nation itself and gives it to the overlord.

I haven't been able to say it since the change. How marvelous to think we could go back to the Pledge that I recited at the beginning of every school day, and to the notion of one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all, as created by the very people of that nation.

MJ Hardman reprinted from the Gainesville Sun

Excluding the Viewpoint of Nonreligious People

Alan Loewe (July 10) claimed that only one tenth of one percent of Americans don't share his belief in a god. He only missed the actual number of nonreligious by 13.9%. That's right, fully 14% of American adults, roughly 30 million people, profess no belief in a supreme being. This information comes from the 2001 *American Religious Identification Survey* by Barry Kosmin, Egon Mayer and Ariela Keysar of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Those figures show a marked increase from 1990 numbers when 8% (about 14.3 million people) professed no religious belief. As the number of nonbelievers increased, the number who identified as Christian decreased from 86.7% to 77%. That still leaves Christians as the majority, but shows the nonreligious to be the third largest minority behind Roman Catholics (50.9 million) and Baptists (33.8 million).

That means there are more nonreligious people than there are Jews in this country. That would seem to suggest that politicians should try to woo the nonreligious vote at least as much as the Jewish vote, but obviously they don't. Why? Perhaps the same reason Mr. Loewe cited such low numbers -- ignorance. Or maybe its just wishful thinking. If they can brush them aside as an insignificant minority, they won't have to listen to their ideas

At the time the Civil Rights laws were passed to protect racial minorities there were only about 18.5 million blacks. Surely 30 million nonreligious Americans deserve equal protection and consideration.

Ever since the 9th Circuit Court's "pledge ruling," there has been much tumult because "the majority" is being stripped of its right to say "under God" during the con't >

OPEN MEETING: 7:30 p.m., Monday, AUGUST 12, 2002

§ This month's meeting will be held in the Board Room at SFCC Downtown Campus §

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pledge. Too often the argument has been framed as “they” are taking “our” right away. Such unhealthy thinking is what inspired Francis Bellamy to write the pledge in the first place.

At the time, he worried about an “us against them” mentality because of the recently ended Civil War. For 62 years the Pledge of Allegiance acted as a unifying force. It was a way for all Americans to show their pride and patriotism. Far from needing “under God” in the pledge, America survived the Great Depression and won two World Wars with a completely secular pledge.

After “under God” was inserted, it became antagonistic to millions of Americans. As we’ve seen only too clearly, it is no longer a unifying force. The answer should not be to continue antagonizing 30 million of our fellow Americans. They deserve that no more than Christians should have to say a pledge with “under Satan” in it. Only when the Pledge of Allegiance is restored to its original format can America truly be “one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for ALL.”

Mark Mayfield - reprinted from the Gainesville Sun

Heaven-or-hell Argument Ends With Shotgun Slaying
GODLEY, Texas (Reuters) -- An argument over who was going to heaven and who was going to hell ended with one Texas man shooting another to death with a shotgun, police said Monday. The man charged in the slaying is a corrections officer. Johnny Joslin, 20, was allegedly shot by Clayton Frank Stoker, 21, on Sunday. The two had spent Saturday night bar hopping with two other men in Fort Worth, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) northeast of Godley.

Johnson County Sheriff Bob Alford said a witness who was the designated driver for the group told police the four men were sitting at a table outside a trailer park after their night on

the town and began arguing about religion.

The talk became heated when the subject turned to who would go to heaven and who would go to hell. Stoker said he would settle the argument and went into a house and returned with a shotgun, which he loaded and placed in his mouth, Alford said the witness reported. “The victim Joslin then took the gun out of Stoker’s mouth, saying, ‘If you have to shoot somebody, shoot me,’” Alford said, citing the witness report. The shotgun went off, hitting Joslin in the chest and killing him. Stoker, a Johnson County corrections officer, has been arrested and charged with first-degree murder, Alford said.

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