

Law & Religion: An Awful Combination

Sunfrog (Andy “Sunfrog” Smith)

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Last year, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to permit the display of the biblical Ten Commandments in schools as part of larger legislative efforts to combat youth violence.

Rather than “a first step toward reinstilling the value of human life in children influenced by violent culture,” as the politicians claim, this is yet another shallow gesture by hypocritical lawmakers to legislate ethical control in a culture that is ethically out-of-control.

Looking briefly at the tenuous relationship between spirituality and law while attempting to differentiate between valuable teachings and the tyranny of “thou shalt nots” reveals that only the lawlessness of love can deliver us from the philosophical gulag imposed by Judeo-Christian pseudo-morality.

One Republican politician even claimed that if the Ten Commandments had been posted at Columbine High School, the massacre in Colorado last year never would have happened.

Even if the postmodern Pharisees in Washington actually practiced what they preached, is there any reason we should want to ground public ethics in edicts that enforce the oppressive nature of marriage and family or the property rights and moral authority of men?

These plutocrats and demagogues believe we need more laws. They want to legislate ethical conduct by publishing the negative prescripts of the punitive Old Testament God, that patriarchal Nobodaddy of vengeance and repression.

Religious and political leaders are truly hypocrites; common people can experience unconditional love and boundless forgiveness without a return to the vicious calculation of Old Testament law.

Ancient pagans subscribed to one law: “Harming none, do what you will.” Antiauthoritarian mystics such as philosopher Lao-Tzu and poet Rumi share a sharp rejection of legislative spirituality: “The louder the call for law and order, the more the thieves and con men multiply.” (Lao Tzu). Anarchists frequently reject human laws on principle but acknowledge certain natural laws reflected in the organic chaos and biological cooperation of the animated universe.

Without law, outlaws cease to be lawless and lawmakers look more like the criminals we already know them to be. Without priests and politicians, people can reclaim the redemptive power of love to transcend all law, exposing the cynical resignation of power-brokers and empowering the powerless. We will do what we will. We will harm none. We will love our neighbors. Do we need more laws than these to liberate our desires, encourage mutual aid, and share all things in common?

Lawless comrades seek the fellowship of their magical equals, or as Hakim Bey suggests: “[Y]ou’re the monarch of your own skin—your inviolable freedom waits to be completed only by the love of other monarchs.”

Laws cannot force us to love our neighbors, honor our relations, or stop killing innocent people. The politicians who live in glass houses continue to throw stones even though all the windows in their Babylonian buildings are already broken.

These lawmakers who endlessly irritate, legislate, and litigate are like a cancer to the power of the imagination. They hoard the power of the almighty dollar and the industrial sword; we hold tight to the power of love.

An Anarcho-Pantheist Ten Commandments (sidebar)

If politicians want to post ten commandments in school, perhaps they should try these.

1. We are all gods and goddesses; we will praise everything that lives and everything that loves.
2. We will worship the wilderness with all living things.
3. We will not idolize or fetishize the commodities of the consumer-capitalist economy.
4. We will honor the seasonal cycles of the earth, making every day a sacred day.
5. We will honor all our relations but question all authority.
6. We will not kill.
7. We will make love with whomever we want as long as the act is consensual, for all acts of pleasure are sacred.
8. We will not exploit others for profit.
9. We will tell the truth (except to cops, judges, and bosses) because the truth will set us free.
10. We will abolish all private ownership because property is theft; we will create a propertyless, communal society where all things are shared as gifts of the great mystery.

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