

AWARE ONES OF THE TREASURE COAST

BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

"We are Progressive Humanists
We are the Soul of the Coffee House
We are Love and Laughter"

Vol.2, No.2
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-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

INTRODUCTION

Ed Zillioux

Alas, the second issue of Vol.2 is late again. The easy excuse is that I've been wasting away in the hospital with pneumonia. But, actually, I was just jealous of all the attention my Ivy was getting.

Nevertheless, we have a new issue due entirely to the support of our loyal contributors. Yes! AOTC lives on!

By now it's already old news, but we have reached a milestone with the launch of our very own web page. Check it out at <http://awareonesofthetreasurecoast.com>. As you can see, it still needs some serious tweaking, but the structure is up and will only get better with time and your input. The primary credit for this momentous event goes to someone not even an AOTC member. It was my stepson John who stepped out of his own world to come down from Charleston, SC to care for me for a couple of weeks throughout my recovery. He saw me struggling with the web software and just took over. I hope you all will have the opportunity to meet him some day.

The Website consists of four pages: Home, About, Contact, and Newsletter Archives. In my humble and unbiased opinion, it was worth all the effort just to preserve the history of our group through its newsletters. The About page was largely spearheaded by Bert, with both a recent descriptor of who we are and material I lifted going back to his *Who We Are* article published last year in Vol.1 No.1. The latest descriptor (1st ¶) benefited from a wider membership review and comment. The Contact page will remain a draft as we work through the mechanism of attracting, vetting, and accepting new members. The web edition of each newsletter refers readers to a password-protected, members-only page that is yet to be constructed. But we're working on it so stay tuned.

MEMBER LIST

This section is password protected. Access limited to AOTC members only.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, Stuart, 10 a.m.'ish, outside when weather is tolerable, i.e., no snow.

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 p.m.; January 12 & 26; February 9 & 23.

Events

March 17, Friday, 2 p.m. Finger-food potluck, commemorating St. Patrick's Day and Ivy's release from her internment. 4411 Sunrise Blvd, White City.

March 20, Monday, __p.m. Vernal Equinox celebration at Stretch & Marilyn's

Monthly Potlucks

MEMBER NEWS

This section is password protected. Complete access limited to AOTC members only.

COMMENTARY

"The time has come," the Walrus said, "To talk of many things..."

David Silverman's Presentation

Dan Vignau

Recently, the president of the American Atheists, David Silverman, spoke to the combined Atheist-Humanist groups of the Treasure Coast. Several of our Aware Ones were in attendance. Since Bert is no longer allowed go to events associated with the Humanists of the Treasure Coast, and since many of us are uncomfortable around some of them, especially their hypercritical board members, many of us stayed home. There are other reasons, but I like that one.

I felt like self-medicating in advance, but decided that I needed to keep my wits to fulfill my promise to keep these people at bay. I promised Bert. Everyone was very friendly, at least the ones who spoke to us. Several avoided eye-contact. I made very few notes; the ones I did put into my phone are hidden somewhere in the ether, or as computer nerds say, the cloud.

Bob Haskins, the leader of the Treasure Coast Atheists, not only made it a point to recognize our group's presence, but to point us out, especially Bert, to everyone, just in case the lack of warmth from the Humanists TC was an accidental oversight.

(TeeHee)

Our speaker, David, is a firebrand, and quite interesting with his near rabid approach to the situation we atheists have while living amongst superstitious believers in fairy tales about stone-age ghosts, devils, gods, and other psychotically-derived delusional characters in the clouds.

David projected some of his atheist billboards on interstate highways around the United States, with an accompanying chart describing the baseline number of hits over time when people google the word, "Atheist." This was a pretty constant straight line until the billboards began to appear. Whenever one did appear, it would get into the newscasts and then be googled. Atheist hits would have large spikes, reminding me that, in 2015, the most googled concept in the US was "Socialist" along with "Democratic Socialist," a fact we can easily attribute Bernie Sander's new-found, national popularity.

Over time, not only did the number of "Atheist" spikes on the Google chart increase with each sign erected, but along with the accompanying newsworthiness, the base line rose, too, but unlike Jesus, stayed risen. Distinct plateaus increased and never subsided. More and more people are taking a permanent interest in atheism as an alternative to superstition.

Another chart showed how many people understand what is being discussed when they are told someone is an atheist. Knowledge of other concepts such as Humanist, Skeptic, Secular, Free Thinker, etc. was measured. With this chart he really dissed the Humanists: Moving boldly from his perch in front of the Atheist banner, he stood before the Humanist banner and told us in no uncertain words, how timid it is to call yourself a Humanist, etc. He stressed, "Humanist." Why?

Because he was having to speak to a group of cowards (I think that was his word. It is definitely his gist.), too timid to tell people they are atheists, and are therefore worthless to the cause of an atheistic, scientific, and fact-based outlook on life. He stressed his idea that it is kowtowing to lie to them, and that by pretending to have respect for their antiquated, prescientific religious beliefs, we are actually legitimizing their totally erroneous system and the dangerous social policy that becomes law due to its influence. Saying we respect their beliefs means we do not care what laws they enact, what science they ignore, which people they hurt, or whether it is OK to lose the Earth's atmosphere from their fanaticism.

Hey people, we have a lot of problems in the world. Countless resources are wasted to appease and to placate believers in this nonsense. We have a planet to keep alive with fact-based policies.

Well, what were the numbers, you ask? Ninety percent of people who were asked what Atheists were knew. Ten percent could tell the researchers

what a Humanist is. His point was why would anyone even bother to claim to be a Humanist if nearly no one knows what it means? We are trying to have a movement here, not simply have a circle jerk of closeted unbelievers.

Even when they tell us they will respect our disbelief, we cannot lie to them and say we respect their beliefs in fairy tales. When we do this, we are lying, we are approving of their ignorance of facts. We are saying religion is indeed a viable social and scientific philosophy. We make the world believe it is OK to base our science on their - I'll be nice for once - on their stone-aged anti-science superstitions and fear of death.

Wasn't that nice of me?

When we say we respect their beliefs, when we use terms such as Secular, or maybe worse, Freethinker - Hey, does that mean free sex? - and especially, when we say, "Humanist," we are denying the truths that we hold to, thereby enabling them to deny human rights. We simply cannot allow these primitive, culturally and ritualistically anachronistic beliefs that defy science to be used to set social policy.

When you deny being an atheist, even by claiming to be a Humanist, you are denying that our cause is just, right, and moral. You tell them it is OK to have their prejudices: It is just fine to believe their ignorant, bat-shit crazy fairy tales.

When you say you respect their religious beliefs, you are adding cannon fodder to the incorrect moral decisions inflicted into our legal system to use against those who prefer myth over facts. You are approving of their psychotic delusions, superstitions based on ancient texts written by totally ignorant goat herders. These texts were told, retold, and reedited for thousands of years before even being written to become dogma. They were written for scientifically illiterate tribes, not for all of posterity to believe. Their stories lead to policies that will exacerbate the end of life on Earth, which the Christians and Muslims will then say is God's will. They want to bring on the apocalypse (from the cover of The Salvation Army's "War Cry" monthly magazine). They do not want to interfere with their god's plan to scorch the Earth.

Is that what we want?

(Well, I guess a little of me did enter into this summary, but I wanted to really give you the gist of the presentation. After all, he does call his book, "Firebrand Atheism.")

THE WAY WE WERE

Music Lessons

Dan Vignau

Ed is not the only person in this group to take music lessons. In fact, one of our commonalities is that we pretty much all took such lessons. I took a series of 12 trumpet lessons, but that is not the focus of this story.

I also took piano lessons. Was it a great teacher who inspired me to greatness? Did I excel in dexterity to master the instrument? Did I enjoy it? Hell No to all the above! My piano teacher played organ at her church. That SHOULD be all I need say!

It is humiliating enough to go to a small county high school, especially following years at Oak Ridge, where we regularly visited the Atomic Energy Commission, and played with a lot of toys not available to my newest classmates. The mechanical hands through the wall was my favorite. It was how scientists, real scientists, grabbed radioactive material, poured it, mixed it, heated it, cooled it, etc. without being exposed to deadly invisible death rays, death rays available at shoe stores in Knoxville: Step up onto the X-Ray machine son, and look at the bones in your feet for a few minutes.

My second favorite science device in Oak Ridge was The Van de Graaf generator. It was really cool. A belt spun inside a metal globe and rubbed against a comb looking device, which was simply called a comb. Zillions of electrons collected inside the surface of the sphere, providing a high voltage and, more importantly, practically a zero amperage, bolt of lightning akin to what we see in Frankenstein movie labs. When a person stands on an insulating mat and grabs the globe, his hair stands on end.

Another demonstration I remember well is the clear Coca Cola. When we poured it through activated charcoal, the color was absorbed, but the taste was the same. I am working on a version for tea to get my teeth back to white, without stopping my gallon of tea every day.

Scientists also showed us their lunch. One day, it was pork chop sandwiches that had sat out for days without refrigeration. Oak Ridge

scientists really liked to brag about this experiment. One would show us a sandwich that was left in a hot window sill for days. Then, he would take a bite out of it, usually finishing it.

Their secret was irradiating the sandwich to kill all of the germs so it did not spoil. My great-grandfather had simpler solutions. He hung hams in a smoke house to cure them.

Now, here I was working very hard to learn to play trumpet, with more science background than any of my teachers, riding my bicycle six miles down US 11 to go to a nutty, Christian Church Organist's house to learn to play piano.

Lest you think I am being a smart ass by claiming my science background in high school was better than my science teachers, consider this: The year before I transferred to Loudon County High School, their science and chemistry teacher was badly burned when he entered his classroom/lab while smoking a cigarette. Someone had entered the lab earlier and turned on the gas lines. KaBoom! A whole wall of windows was blown to smithereens and the teacher refused to return, forever.

Sooo! The Home Ec teacher taught science and chemistry. Our principal said, "What's the difference? It is all just mixing stuff together." This is when I quit being the best little boy in the world.

During a demonstration of a soda-acid fire extinguisher, a teacher trusted me when I told her and the class that if she turned it upside down and let it spray a bit, that when she turned it back over, the stopper would go back in the little jar of acid, and it would stop. I knew all the acid would immediately drain and the device would keep spewing. Also, we had unscrewed the mesh cover under a lab sink and installed a class change bell from another building. As she stood gaping at the extinguisher, she could not put it down or the hose would flop around and spray everywhere. We turned on the bell and walked out of class, trying not to laugh as we filed out.

From then on, she picked on me, mostly by telling my main crush and me to stop holding hands in class, but he was so damned cute. She said that we were going to have to stop playing handsies and try to learn from her.

They had the same problems hiring a band director. No one would move there for what was offered. Luckily, a nice Christian man, who had a jazz band that toured around the South, was coerced into just filling in for a year. He learned to love it and maybe the small but steady stipend helped his decision to stay for several years. He took the best of his students to classical and jazz concerts in Knoxville where I saw and heard my first live and importantly, non-Looney Toons or Lone Ranger classical music. Before this, to me, classical music was the theme to The Lone Ranger, and Elmer Fudd's Wagnerian rendition, "Kill the Wabbit, Kill the Wabbit!"

A term I have learned recently from a Winton Marsalis interview is "Practicer," and boy, did I practice! I did not really master my trumpet, but I could practice and learn to play almost anything within reason. The band director would give me clarinet pieces to sight read as he played faster and faster on his clarinet. This gave me an incredible upper register range on my trumpet.

Piano was different. I had no comprehension where my fingers were, and absolutely could not place them on the correct keys without looking. Later, I even had to add my feet into the equation, because this ancient teacher thought I might eventually replace her on the organ at her Church of God's Sacrament of Flesh and Blood, or some such crappy religious , f this.

It was bad enough that I had to take piano lessons while attending my new, seriously retarded school, but I had to tell my redneck classmates that not only did I do this, and that I had learned to play a stomping version of "How Great Thou Art", which their parents always made me play for them; worse, my parents wouldn't even let me drive to the lessons.

I was fifteen. I had been driving four miles into town for errands at least two years. But no! I had to suffer the indignity of riding my bicycle six miles down US 11 to Philadelphia, Tennessee to study religious piano.

Jeez! So to speak. BTW, when I say "Jeez" I am no more referring to an imaginary savior than I am to poop when I say, "Shit."

Worse, the crazy piano teacher decided that I should learn to play the organ. Not only did my fingers not cooperate, but now I had to add the toes.

ARTICLES

LETTERS

Environmental Consequences of a Trump Presidency

Letter to the Op-Ed Editor, New York Times
(Rejected, 11/16/16)
Ed Zillioux, Fort Pierce, Florida

Some supporters of Hilary Clinton view Trump's win philosophically, like it's a temporary setback to the collective sanity, like if we just wait 4 or 8 years, we'll have our turn again and the Trump legacy will just fade away, a footnote in history. But reading the NYT article, "Climate Policy Faces Reversal by New Leader," of 11 November 2016, it became clear to me that, barring some miracle, this is not the case.

I agree that most of Trump's changes would eventually be overcome. We may be talking about generations, but eventually they would. This includes: economic shifts in favor of those who need it the least; no significant increase in minimum wage; the disruption of families owing to deportation of their undocumented immigrant parents; the lost dreams of a college education by those who might have excelled but whose parents just couldn't afford it; etc. I could go on about the sociological damage that we may well be facing if Trump runs true to his commitments. But I agree these are probably "temporary" setbacks (that is if we don't consider the increased potential for a nuclear Armageddon). Maybe my great-grandchildren will read about his "movement" in some future history class.

But if he screws around with the environment, particularly America's key role in achieving hard-fought climate initiatives, as he has promised to do, we could be looking at damage that could easily be "permanent," very possibly tens of thousands of years. And Trump supporters, at least those who believe, as Trump himself believes, that human-caused climate change is a hoax, would not care. They, and their immediate children would hardly be affected at all, perhaps a mere inconvenience (read blinders). It's not just the fact that he considers global warming a hoax, but that, as the NYT article reminds us, he is likely to "'cancel' last year's Paris climate agreement...and dismantle Obama's domestic climate change regulations."

Nearly as important, "he has vowed to dismantle the Environmental Protection Agency 'in almost every form.'" This latter boast may be out of his reach, at least in terms of total dismantlement. I say this hopefully, but in the context of experience. I was at EPA when Reagan appointed Ann Gorsuch to roll back EPA's research initiatives (i.e., effectively dismantle the agency), and James Watt to do the same with the Department of the Interior. I found myself in the middle of Gorsuch's Hatchet Team's efforts to chop or totally cancel program after program of cutting-edge research out of EPA's 14

Environmental Research Labs and Centers across the country. I had senior project managers come to me virtually in tears, asking if my Branch couldn't find some way to keep their research program alive. But after eight years, EPA and DOI were still intact, albeit bruised and bloody. With a new administration, Gorsuch was gone and we witnessed the remarkable image of Watt, astride his horse, riding off into the sunset. I have often cited this example to folks who complain about Washington bureaucracies. By their sheer size alone they have proved remarkably resilient to demise by any one administration. Although we are surely in for serious environmental setbacks, including the total loss of some crucial initiatives, let us hope that Trump will be at least no more successful than was Reagan.

Pipeline Protest Wasn't Necessary

(original title: Army Corps of Engineers' Delayed Response to NEPA Law)

Letter to the editor, TC Palm News

(Published 12 December 2016)

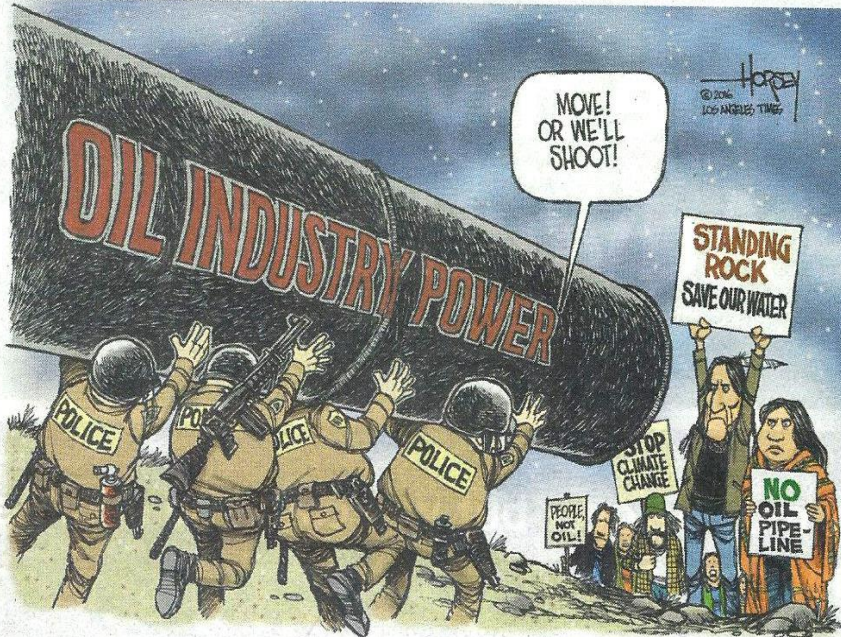
Ed Zillioux, Fort Pierce, Florida

12/12/2016

THE PALM BEACH POST REA

THE DEBATE STARTS HERE

CARTOON VIEW DAVID HORSEY



day), about PIP's demise, I wonder how all the other states without PIP (Personal Injury Protection) have any cars on the road.

As for every car carrying liability insurance, it is a stretch. A lot of drivers have no license, let alone insurance.

I am forced to pay for insurance for which I already pay a hefty health insurance premium, and being injured, cannot claim any money for lost wages.

In my opinion, PIP should be replaced by some kind of restriction on lawyers chasing every little accident they can find. This smells like tow trucks chasing ambulances.

CLIFF COXBILL,
OKEECHOBEE

Pipeline protest wasn't necessary.

After the much-publi-

cized and prolonged protest in opposition to the Dakota Access Oil Pipeline led by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, the Army Corps of Engineers has decided that alternate routes will be considered.

This protest never should have been necessary. Nor should the protesters have suffered the atrocity of being sprayed by water cannons in sub-freezing temperatures.

The National Environmental Policy Act requires that an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared for major federal actions that are determined, in a preliminary assessment, to potentially cause significant environmental impacts.

Both the assessment and the more detailed EIS are required to consider alternatives to the proposed action, including alterna-

tive routes in the case of pipelines. Since a pipeline that crosses parts of four states could not qualify for a categorical exclusion from these requirements, the Corps deferred to the pipeline's developer, Dakota Access LLC, to perform its own assessment. Predictably, the developer's EA found "no significant impact," thus serving the EA preparer's own self-interest.

It's safe to assume that if the Corps had originally fulfilled its obligation under NEPA law, the confrontation between thousands of protesters and law enforcement officials, and the water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas from one side versus reports of slingshots from the opposing side, all might have been unnecessary.

EDWARD ZILLIOUX,
FORT PIERCE

[And let's not forget this one that showed up on Nov 14. Authenticity unknown.]

Yuge!

Hi Losers!

It's me! DJ Trump! As the WHOLE world knows, I'm the Pres Elect of the US of A! It's YUGE! Like everything I do! I'm the STAR! Actually, it was one of the easiest things I've ever done. All I had to do was to find the biggest bunch of voters that no one else cared about and then talk just like them, you know, locker room stuff. As soon as they figured I was one of the guys, I couldn't lose! Women? Hell, any woman that marries a stupid white guy wouldn't dare go against her MAN! So, for every SWG I landed outta that bunch, it was a twofer! And the guys loved the way I talked about women! Especially the raunchy stuff! Like I said, I just had to talk like them, and for me that was just natural. I let the other side worry about the intellectuals, the progressives, the Latinos and Blacks and M0000slems, and all those uppity women – Just do the arithmetic! Put all those losers together and you can't come up with as many votes as I could get just playing up to the SWGs! But they're not all stupid, you know, some are just ignorant! All I got to do now is figure out what to do next. But that's easy, 'cause I know how to WIN. Besides, if I get stuck I'll just ask my buddy Putin. Oops, gotta go, I hear Melinea calling me. Now there's a babe! But don't go thinkin' that I kowtow to her, It's just that I like to grab her...well, you know. Heh, heh...

Oh yeah, and don't be misled by the addressee on this e-mail. It was just a random hack so I can't be blamed for any off-message stuff. Putin showed me how to do it! Now there's a smart guy!

DJTrump!!!

POETRY

Freedom

By Dan Vignau

There is no Heaven!
There I've said it.

Logic and common sense have ganged up
on Sunday School and hope,

Of course, they have won.

At last, I am free.
No more fairy tales,

except for Artistic Merit.

How joyous to admit to all the world,

Good, Bad, Beautiful, Ugly,
I wish to live a thousand years.

Hello, all you lovely and unlovely people.
Let me touch your lives.

I am HERE!
So are you.
Not from fear of damnation, but
because I won't pass this way again.

You are warm,
You are cool.

God might not be god,
nor earth, nor nature, nor time.
or not.

Being or nothingness:
That is our dilemma.

The impracticality of Heaven slays me.

I won't go kicking, or clawing, or screaming.
I might rage. I might go gently.
None the less, I go.

From being to not being,
awareness to nothingness.
Be brave my heart.
There is no salvation,
No soul,
Just cosmic dust.

After five, I thought wings would feel silly.
Later, I knew I did not want to go
without a child, a book, a lover.

All that gold and no place to spend it.
There is little of Midas in me.

Such a relief, to doubt no more.

The heart has its reasons,
but reason knows nothing.

There were others, you know,
others I wanted,
needed
to see again.
Before I go.

To say, "I love you." "Thank You." "Forgive me."
to Explain.

Whom would I sacrifice
to live
a thousand years?

To be headless,
without a thought,
and never know.

Would I sacrifice
my children?
knowledge?
books?
music?

Eternal harp plunking
would be hell,
but a real Hell,
might be interesting.

Goodbye.

Capitalist Linguistics

By Gloria Cosgrove

We pay a visit

Pay our respects

We spend time

Pay attention

We buy time

Coin our phrases

Capitalize our proper nouns

At any rate

We count the costs

Consider the face value

You can bank on us.

COMEDIC CORNER

Bible Abstract

By Dan Vignau

The Bible is all true, especially the parts about a man in the sky who made a man from dirt and a woman from a man's rib, with no explanation how she got female DNA, then put them in the most idyllic place ever imagined, plants a tree of knowledge, but forbids these uneducated creations of his to learn from it, then allows a talking snake to convince them to eat a magic apple from this tree.

This prick in the sky then totally alters his creatures' position in society, for the reason of trying to learn something. He is so mad that he kicks them out of this heavenly place, allows them to fornicate and create other inbred people, only to condemn them to a fiery hell for eternity, unless they wait 4000 years, believe that a pregnant woman, who was only trying to keep from being stoned to death when she told her husband, for whom she apparently never put out, that she is a virgin, and that the man in the sky, who can create a man from dirt, had to personally impregnate her instead of just create another being from dirt, to make a savior one must believe in or go live an eternity in the fiery place. Jeez!

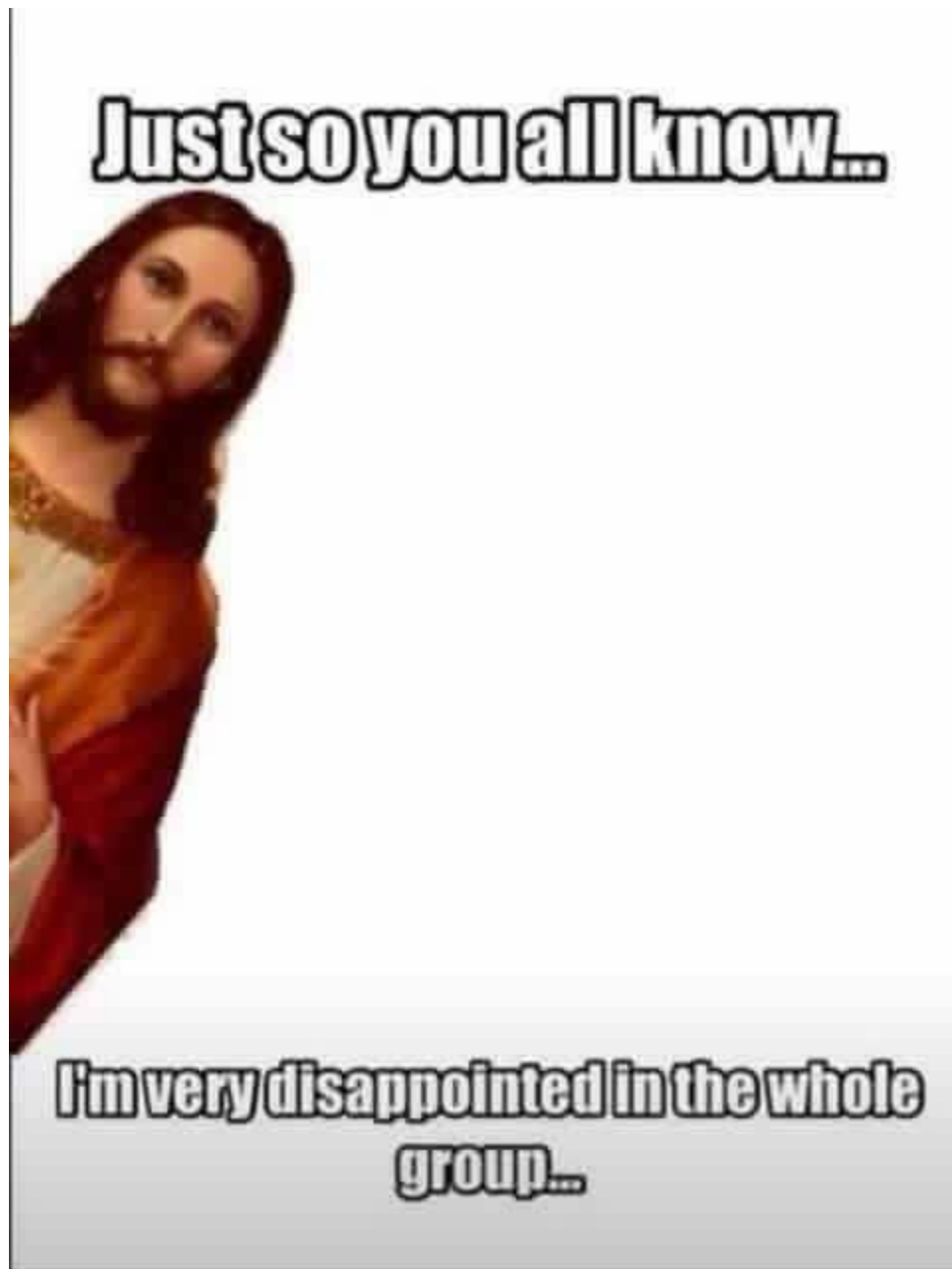
In the meantime, a leader emerged, got lost and walked across arid desserts for 40 years while the faithful followed for lack of anything else to do.

Next, this god killed every land based creature with a flood, except for the ones he puts on his boat, a ship that is designed by desert nomads to be bigger and better than all the ships built by centuries of seafarers. This supposed god gets penguins, kangaroos, lions and tigers and bears, etc. to trek across the tundra, the deserts, and the mountains, not to mention that many had to swim thousands of miles across the major oceans to get to the boat in the middle of the desert to be saved.

Of course, this god fed the dinosaurs to the other animals and used FedEx to return them to their native environs. Far fetched, you say about FedEx. Is that really the problem you have with this story?

Apparently, giving all of the evil people heart attacks was beyond god's pay grade.

Jesus



Contributed by Dan Vignau
