



The Enlightenment

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A Rare 360 Degree Rainbow Captured From an Airplane

Rainbows are one of nature's most magnificent sights, often instilling feelings of awe and wonder, particularly whenever we see a full 180 degree rainbow. How much more thrilling is the sight of a rare 360 degree rainbow, as shown in the picture above? For many millennia humans had no idea of how the colours of the rainbow were produced. Then in 1672, Sir Isaac Newton passed white light through a prism and the phenomenon was revealed. Some people may say that this scientific discovery took away the aesthetic beauty of the rainbow, but I submit the opposite is true. Understanding the science behind the creation of the rainbow makes it even more aesthetic and even more beautiful. (DAH).

Who is Right and Who is Wrong About Rights?

By Goldwin Emerson

Recently a Brantford judge, Justice G. Edwards, decided that in the case of an eleven year old native child who has cancer (acute lymphoblastic leukemia) it is her parents and not the courts that will choose the manner of her treatment. The parents have chosen to ignore the overwhelming medical advice of doctors at McMaster Children's Hospital who estimate that with chemotherapy her chances of survival are as high as 95 % or more.

On the other hand, the parents believe that as aboriginals they have the right to use other methods. At the court hearing, the judge mentioned the long history of aboriginal medicines which preceded the arrival of Europeans to North America. According to unconfirmed reports, the parents have already enlisted the services of the Hippocrates Health Institute in Florida at a cost of approximately \$18,000. When viewed from the perspective of Canadian doctors, the approach used is not likely to be effective although it is not well known at Canadian cancer treatment centres. Among other things, this unique treatment emphasizes the consumption of raw vegetables, infrared rays and a hypobaric chamber.

This court case brings up the philosophic question as to where do rights come from. In Canada, we are fortunate to enjoy many freedoms and rights. These include the right to the choice of one's religion, the right to vote under specified conditions, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, health care, educational rights, equal protection under the law and many other additional rights. In fact, Canadians usually assume that these rights are something we are born with. It is as though we believe our rights float down to us from on high. Some would go so far as to say they are "God given rights". Others simply believe we are born with certain inalienable rights.

In actual fact, the rights we enjoy are the rights given to us by the societies where we live. Do women have a right to vote? Only in certain countries, and in Canada, only in fairly recent Canadian history (since 1918) women are allowed to vote. Should women have the right to vote? Yes, they should in a fair and just society, but the decisions about rights are human-made and come from the laws of the communities in which they reside. Until these freedoms and privileges are recognized in law and in general acceptance, they do not really exist other than as ideals yet unrealized.

If this young 11 year old native girl were instead in her adult years, many of us would feel more at ease about her being able to make her own informed choice as to whether to use traditional aboriginal treatments or instead to choose the best of more modern treatment based on present day medical knowledge. But since she is so young she is really at the mercy of her parents' decision no matter how much she is loved and cared for by them.

Let's assume for the moment that she was an eleven year old non-aboriginal girl with non-aboriginal parents. Very likely her parents would choose chemotherapy treatments at McMaster Children's Hospital. They would make that choice believing it to hold the best chance of curing, controlling, and surviving her cancer. In fact, in a court of law, the judge would be likely to insist on that kind of treatment whether or not her non-aboriginal parents agreed. The court could order that she should be offered the best medical treatment presently available to her.

If that is the best course for non-aboriginals it is ironic that the judge in this present case is basing his decision on the rights of aboriginals. Having said that, I do believe that there are many other cases in which aboriginal rights ought to prevail. Yet, in the case of life and death matters, court decisions have

previously been made in favour of using the best medical treatments. In the past, the cases for blood transfusions for Jehovah's Witnesses have already set precedents in these matters.

It would be unfortunate if the judge in an effort to uphold aboriginal rights did so at the expense of risking the life of an eleven year old aboriginal child. Let's hope that does not happen and that this judgment may be overturned.

Editor's Note. Since Goldie submitted this article in November, Makayla Sault, an 11 year old aboriginal girl, was taken off chemo treatments in accordance with Justice Gethin Edwards finding that "aboriginal parents have a constitutionally protected right to choose traditional forms of treatment". Unfortunately, Makayla Sault died in the week of January 19th, 2015 from leukemia.

Proselytizing

By Don Hatch

Proselytizing is defined as converting a person from one belief, practice or attitude to another. For example: from Catholicism to Protestantism or vice versa, or from a Christian to a Muslim, or from a theist to an atheist.

Research has shown that quite often individuals will remain with the religion of their parents throughout their lifetime. Even though many of these people may not remain active participants, they will still consider themselves to be adherents of the religion of their youth. On the other hand, there are those who may harbour doubts about what they have been taught to believe and start to look for alternatives. Sometimes people in this position may decide to convert on their own after careful consideration, but in other cases, conversion occurs after being proselytized by another individual or organization.

One instance that immediately comes to mind is the proselytizing of Christian evangelists who preach that a person must be saved or born again in order to enter God's kingdom or heaven. This is happening with considerable success in the United States where evangelical churches are growing. (While at the same time mainline churches are in decline in places such as Western Europe, Canada and Australia). This growth of fundamentalism and evangelicalism in the United States is of considerable concern because some of these people have been elected to Congress and are beginning to have undue influence in areas such as birth control, abortion, LGBT rights and separation of church and state. Not a desirable situation!

Another instance of religious conversion that is of great concern is the radicalization of dissatisfied youth who are convinced they should engage in Islamic jihad. Al Qaeda and Islamic State militants have been successful in convincing and recruiting young people (male and female) not only in the middle-east, but also in western countries, to fight and carry out terrorist acts on behalf of their brand of Islam. And we in Canada have not been immune. Attacks have occurred in St. Jean-sur-Richelieu and Ottawa. Also, three young Muslim men from London Ontario were recruited to fight in North Africa. Of all proselytizers, radical Islamists are among the most harmful, and Western nations are struggling to help get them under control. But the battle is by no means over and unfortunately it will be a long one.

An area of interest to humanists is the conversion of a theist to an atheist, or putting it another way, from a believer to a non-believer. Is this proselytizing? How can it not be? It fits the definition.

Most proselytizers believe they are doing the right thing. They believe fervently in their cause whatever it might be. And they will usually face opposition. Secularists oppose all forms of religious proselytizing and religious right people oppose the secularists or atheists who are sometimes branded agents of the devil. This presents a challenge for humanists who fervently believe that a secular democratic society with a firm wall separating church and state is superior to one with no wall or one where the wall is threatened to crumble, as in the United States, with the Republicans in control and favourably disposed toward the religious right.

So how have humanist organizations countered this threat? They publish academic articles in low circulation magazines, hold great conferences that the popular media often ignore and put up signs claiming God does not exist, all with minimum effect. Humanists and all secularists need to take a lesson from the religious right, and help elect secularists to political offices in order to counter any efforts that threaten separation of church and state. Experience in north-western Europe has demonstrated that the way to decrease religiosity and promote secularity in a society is the establishment of a thriving economy with social safety nets that provide prosperity and peace of mind for all citizens. Under these conditions, God will almost disappear without proselytizing that he, she or it does not exist. The world would be better off if all forms of proselytizing involving religions came to an end, while concentrating on the establishment of prosperous secular societies with low income disparity.

Some Revealing Statistics

If you could fit the entire population of the world into a village consisting of 100 people, maintaining the proportions of all the people living on earth, that village would consist of:

- 57 Asians
- 21 Europeans
- 14 Americans (North, Central and South)
- 8 Africans

There would be:

- 52 Women and 48 men
- 30 Caucasians and 70 non-Caucasians
- 30 Christians and 70 non-Christians
- 89 Heterosexuals and 11 homosexuals

The inequality in the world is evident from the following:

- 80 would live in poverty
- 70 would be illiterate
- 50 would suffer from hunger and malnutrition
- 1 would be dying
- 1 would be being born
- 1 would own a computer
- 1 would have a university degree

Looking at the above realities, the need for understanding and assistance is obvious. So consider:

- If you woke up this morning in good health, you have more luck than one million people who won't live through the week.
- If you have never experienced the horror of war, the solitude of prison, the pain of torture, were not close to death from starvation, then you are better off than 500 million people.
- If you can go to your mall without fear that someone will assault or kill you, then you are luckier than 3 billion people.
- If you have a full fridge, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, and a place to sleep, you are wealthier than 75% of the world's population.
- If you currently have money in the bank, in your wallet and a few coins in your purse, you are one of 8 of the privileged few amongst the 100 people in the world.
- If you can read these words, you are not one of the 2 billion people who can't read.

These statistics were assembled prior to 2000, so they are somewhat out of date. However, they do serve to reemphasize the inequalities that exist on our planet, and the need for concentrating on helping to lessen the extent of the inequalities. This is a gargantuan task, but it would be made a lot easier if the money now being spent on senseless wars was diverted to helping the needy help themselves.

Lexophilia Provides a Few Laughs

"Lexophile" is a word used to describe those that have a love for words, such as: "you can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish", or "to write with a broken pencil is pointless." A competition to see who can come up with the best lexophiles is held every year in an undisclosed location. This year's winning submission is posted at the end of the list.

- .. When fish are in schools, they sometimes take debate.
- .. A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.
- .. When the smog lifts in Los Angeles U.C.L.A.
- .. The batteries were given out free of charge.
- .. A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.
- .. A will is a dead giveaway.
- .. With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.
- .. A boiled egg is hard to beat.
- .. When you've seen one shopping center you've seen a mall.
- .. Police were summoned to a daycare center where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.
- .. Did you hear about the fellow whose entire left side was cut off? He's all right now.
- .. A bicycle can't stand alone; it's just two tired.
- ∅ When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.
- ∅ The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine is now fully recovered.
- ∅ He had a photographic memory which was never developed.
- ∅ When she saw her first strands of grey hair she thought she'd dye.
- ∅ Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.

And the cream of the twisted crop:

- .. Those who get too big for their pants will be totally exposed in the end.

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