APRIL 25, 2010 THESKEPTICARENA.COM

HOBBY LOBBY JUST WANTS TO SHARE CRAFT SUPPLIES AND CHRIST WITH YOU

THE BIG BOX CRAFT STORE CALLED, HOBBY LOBBY, FAMOUSLY PLACES FULL-PAGE, CHRISTIAN-THEMED ADS EVERY EASTER IN NEWSPAPERS IN THE MARKETS WHERE IT HAS STORES. THEY ALSO MAKE THIS MESSAGE THE CENTERPIECE OF THEIR WEB SITE DURING THE PERIOD RIGHT BEFORE AND AFTER EASTER.

SARAH TELLS CONSUMERIST THAT SHE NOTICED THIS WHEN SHE VISITED THE CHAIN'S SITE TO PRINT OUT A COUPON, AND WROTE TO THE COMPANY TO TELL THEM THAT SHE WAS OFFENDED. A HOBBY LOBBY REPRESENTATIVE ANSWERED THAT HE WAS SORRY THAT SHE WAS OFFENDED, BUT THE COMPANY BELIEVES THAT IT WOULD CONVERSELY BE "TRULY INSENSITIVE" NOT TO SHARE THEIR RELIGIOUS MESSAGE WITH ALL CUSTOMERS, CHRISTIAN OR NOT.

SARAH, A NON-CHRISTIAN, VISITED HOBBY LOBBY'S WEBSITE TO PRINT OFF A COUPON BEFORE VISITING THEIR STORE. BUT AFTER SEEING THEIR HOME PAGE, SHE FELT MAYBE SHE OUGHT TO GO SOMEPLACE ELSE. AND AFTER CONTACTING THEM ABOUT IT, SHE WAS SURE OF IT.

(SARAH, AS MUCH AS I HATE TO SIDE WITH RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS, IN THIS CASE I THINK YOU ARE WRONG. THEY ARE NOT VIOLATING ANY LAW BY USING THEIR BUSINESS TO PROSELYTIZE. IF YOU ARE OFFENDED, THEN YOU DO NOT HAVE TO PATRONIZE THEIR BUSINESS).

HERE IS SARAH'S ORIGINAL E-MAIL:

AS A NON-CHRISTIAN CUSTOMER OF HOBBY LOBBY, I FIND THESE MESSAGES TO BE VERY EXCLUSIVE AND INSENSITIVE. I FEEL QUITE ALIENATED AND TODAY I'M TAKING MY BUSINESS TO MICHAEL'S, WHERE THE STAFF ISN'T CONCERNED WITH MY SPIRITUALITY, BUT WITH MY SATISFACTION AS A CUSTOMER.

(SARAH, THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT I SUGGESTED. IF IT BOTHERS YOU THAT MUCH - GO ELSEWHERE).

DEAR SARAH,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR EMAIL. I AM SORRY THAT YOU FELT OUR MESSAGE WAS EXCLUSIVE AND INSENSITIVE. THAT IS NOT OUR INTENTION. WE FEEL THAT WE ARE BEING INCLUSIVE AND VERY SENSITIVE; LET ME EXPLAIN WHY.

IN JOHN 14:6 JESUS SAYS "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME." THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO HEAVEN AND THAT IS CHRIST ALONE. WE WOULD LOVE FOR EVERYONE TO COME TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST; WE DO NOT WANT ANYONE EXCLUDED. THAT IS WHY WE SHARE THE HOPE THAT CHRIST FREELY GIVES.

SINCE WE KNOW THAT CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY TO HEAVEN; IT WOULD TRULY BE INSENSITIVE FOR US NOT TO SHARE CHRIST WITH THE WORLD.

I AM SORRY THAT YOU FEEL ALIENATED.

HOBBY LOBBY STORES, INC.

(MY COMMENT: BELIEVE IT OR NOT - I FIND NOTHING IN THAT RESPONSE TO CRITICIZE. IN FACT, THEY SEEM LIKE REALLY NICE PEOPLE).

SARAH'S RESPONSE:

THAT WAS THE MOST JUDGMENTAL AND CLOSED-MINDED RESPONSE I COULD HAVE HOPED FOR.

(SARAH. I AM AN ATHEIST. I DESPISE ALL RELIGION. I DO NOT BELIEVE IN ANY GOD. BUT EVEN I DON'T AGREE WITH YOU. HOBBY LOBBY'S RESPONSE WAS NOT JUDGMENTAL, NOR WOULD I DESCRIBE IT AS CLOSE-MINDED. I WOULD DESCRIBE THEIR BELIEFS AS CLOSE-MINDED - BUT NOT THEIR REPONSE. THEY DID NOT ARGUE WITH YOU, THEY MERELY TOLD YOU WHAT THEY BELIEVE).

I AM TAKING MY BUSINESS AWAY FROM HOBBY LOBBY ENTIRELY.

(GOOD CHOICE SARAH. I'M SURE THAT THE $4 A YEAR THEY WILL LOSE WILL TEACH THEM TO GIVE IN TO WHINY BABIES NEXT TIME).

ASKING TO BE ACCEPTED FOR WHO WE ARE SHOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH FROM A CUSTOMER.

(SARAH, THEY DID NOT ASK YOU TO CONVERT. IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU ARE THE ONE WHO IS NOT ACCEPTING THEM FOR WHO THEY ARE).

YOU CAN'T HAVE ANOTHER DOLLAR OF MY MONEY AND I HOPE FOR YOUR SAKE, YOU CAN LEARN TO OPEN YOUR HEARTS AND BE TRULY KIND AND LOVING PEOPLE, NOT THE PREACHY IGNORANT ONES YOU'VE PROVEN YOURSELVES TO BE.

(SARAH, SARAH; WHEN YOU SAY "YOU CAN'T HAVE ANOTHER DOLLAR OF MY MONEY" IT MAKES YOU SOUND LIKE A SNOTTY LITTLE CHILD. AFTER READING THIS ARTICLE, EVEN A HARDENED ATHEIST LIKE ME WOULD PREFER THE COMPANY OF THESE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TO AN AGGRESSIVE, IMMATURE NON-CHRISTIAN LIKE YOURSELF. BASED ON THEIR RESPONSE TO YOUR FIRST EMAIL, THESE PEOPLE DO SOUND KIND AND LOVING - YOU DO NOT.

"PREACHY" WOULD DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO CONTINUES TO PUSH THEIR BELIEFS ON OTHERS AFTER BEING TOLD NOT TO. HOBBY LOBBY ISN'T DOING THAT. THEIR ADS ARE NOT DIRECTED AT INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS YOURSELF, BUT THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL.

CALLING THEM "IGNORANT" IS ... WELL ... JUST IGNORANT).

HOBBY LOBBY'S REPLY:

SARAH,

I WAS HOPING TO BE ABLE TO HAVE A CIVIL EXCHANGE WITH YOU AND EXPLAIN WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO AND ANSWER YOUR ORIGINAL EMAIL WHICH YOU CHOSE TO SEND IN. WE DO HAVE “OPEN HEARTS” AND ARE “TRULY KIND AND LOVING PEOPLE”; ONCE AGAIN, THAT IS WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO. IF WE DIDN’T HAVE OPEN HEARTS AND WERE KIND AND LOVING WE WOULD NOT TELL ANYONE ABOUT CHRIST.

LET ME USE AN ANALOGY. LET’S SAY I AM STANDING ON A STREET CORNER AND THE PERSON NEXT TO ME (WHO I DON’T KNOW) STEPS OUT IN TO THE STREET BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE ‘WALK’ SIGNAL. I SEE THE WALK SIGNAL BUT I ALSO SEE A SPEEDING CAR THAT IS RUNNING THE RED LIGHT AND HEADED RIGHT FOR THE PERSON NEXT TO ME. WHY WOULD I NOT WARN THEM? HOW MUCH WOULD I HAVE TO HATE THAT PERSON NOT TO TELL THEM OF THE DANGER THEY ARE STEPPING INTO?

WE SHARE CHRIST BECAUSE WE SEE THE “SPEEDING CAR” AND WANT TO WARN PEOPLE. CHRIST TRULY IS THE ANSWER AND HE IS KIND, LOVING AND HAS AN OPEN HEART. AT NO POINT IN MY EMAILS HAVE I HAD A CLOSED HEART, BEEN UNKIND OR LOVING IN MY ANSWERS TO YOU. IF YOU FEEL I HAVE, I APOLOGIZE.

IF YOU EVER IN THE FUTURE WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT CHRIST, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT NEED HIM MINISTRIES AT 888-NEED-HIM. THEY ARE NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY DENOMINATION, THEY ARE PEOPLE WHO TRULY LOVE CHRIST AND LOVE PEOPLE.

HOBBY LOBBY STORES, INC.

(MY FINAL COMMENT: IF ALL CHRISTIANS WERE LIKE THE ONES AT HOBBY LOBBY THIS WOULD BE ONE HELL OF A GREAT COUNTRY. AS A NONBELIEVER, I AM EMBARRASSED BY THE EMAILS THAT THESE SWEET PEOPLE HAD TO ENDURE FROM THIS NON-CHRISTIAN.

NO - I WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO CHRISTIANITY. BUT HOBBY LOBBY IS A STORE THAT I WOULD BE HONORED TO PATRONIZE. IN FACT, I AM TEMPTED TO SEND THEM $4 A YEAR JUST TO MAKE UP FOR THE BUSINESS THEY'LL LOSE WHEN SARAH GOES TO MICHAELS.

I AM WHAT MANY WOULD CONSIDER A "MILITANT ATHEIST." BUT EVEN I CANNOT SIDE AGAINST CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG. IF HOBBY LOBBY WERE GOVERNMENT-OWNED, THEN I WOULD AGREE WITH SARAH. BUT HOBBY LOBBY IS FAMILY-OWNED. WHILE IT IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE ANY PARTICULAR RELIGION, INDIVIDUALS RETAIN THE RIGHT TO DO SO; AND AFTER READING THEIR 2 EMAILS, I SEE NO EVIDENCE OF RELIGIOUS HARRASSMENT OR DISCRIMINATION BY HOBBY LOBBY).

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

GENE THAT ALLOWS WORMS TO GROW NEW HEAD AND BRAIN DISCOVERED

SCIENTISTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM HAVE DISCOVERED THE GENE THAT ENABLES AN EXTRAORDINARY WORM TO REGENERATE ITS OWN BODY PARTS AFTER AMPUTATION -- INCLUDING A WHOLE HEAD AND BRAIN.

THEIR RESEARCH INTO THE PLANARIAN WORM IS ANOTHER PIECE IN THE SCIENTIFIC JIGSAW THAT COULD ONE DAY MAKE THE REGENERATION OF OLD OR DAMAGED HUMAN ORGANS AND TISSUES A REAL POSSIBILITY.

THE RESEARCH LED BY DR AZIZ ABOOBAKER, A RESEARCH COUNCILS UK FELLOW IN THE SCHOOL OF BIOLOGY SHOWS FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT A GENE CALLED 'SMED-PREP' IS ESSENTIAL FOR CORRECTLY REGENERATING A HEAD AND BRAIN IN PLANARIAN WORMS. THE STUDY IS PUBLISHED ON APRIL 22, 2010 IN THE OPEN ACCESS JOURNAL PLOS GENETICS.

PLANARIAN WORMS HAVE AN AMAZING ABILITY TO REGENERATE BODY PARTS, INCLUDING A HEAD AND BRAIN, FOLLOWING AMPUTATION. THESE REMARKABLE CREATURES CONTAIN ADULT STEM CELLS THAT ARE CONSTANTLY DIVIDING AND CAN BECOME ALL OF THE MISSING CELL TYPES. THEY ALSO HAVE THE RIGHT SET OF GENES WORKING TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN EXACTLY AS IT SHOULD SO THAT WHEN THEY RE-GROW BODY PARTS THEY END UP IN THE RIGHT PLACE AND HAVE THE CORRECT SIZE, SHAPE AND ORIENTATION.

DR ABOOBAKER SAID: "THESE AMAZING WORMS OFFER US THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE TISSUE REGENERATION IN A VERY SIMPLE ANIMAL THAT CAN REGENERATE ITSELF TO A REMARKABLE EXTENT AND DOES SO AS A MATTER OF COURSE.

"WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HOW ADULT STEM CELLS CAN WORK COLLECTIVELY IN ANY ANIMAL TO FORM AND REPLACE DAMAGED OR MISSING ORGANS AND TISSUES. ANY FUNDAMENTAL ADVANCES IN UNDERSTANDING FROM OTHER ANIMALS CAN BECOME RELEVANT TO HUMANS SURPRISINGLY QUICKLY.

"IF WE KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING WHEN TISSUES ARE REGENERATED UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, WE CAN BEGIN TO FORMULATE HOW TO REPLACE DAMAGED AND DISEASED ORGANS, TISSUES AND CELLS IN AN ORGANISED AND SAFE WAY FOLLOWING AN INJURY CAUSED BY TRAUMA OR DISEASE. THIS WOULD BE DESIRABLE FOR TREATING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE, FOR EXAMPLE. WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE WE CAN ALSO ASSESS THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STEM CELLS GO WRONG DURING THE NORMAL PROCESSES OF RENEWAL -- FOR EXAMPLE IN THE BLOOD CELL SYSTEM WHERE ROGUE STEM CELLS CAN RESULT IN LEUKAEMIA."

SMED-PREP IS NECESSARY FOR THE CORRECT DIFFERENTIATION AND LOCATION OF THE CELLS THAT MAKE UP A PLANARIAN WORM'S HEAD. IT IS ALSO SUFFICIENT FOR DEFINING WHERE THE HEAD SHOULD BE LOCATED ON THE WORM. THE TEAM HAVE FOUND THAT ALTHOUGH THE PRESENCE OF SMED-PREP IS VITAL SO THAT THE HEAD AND BRAIN ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE, THE WORM STEM CELLS CAN STILL BE PERSUADED TO FORM BRAIN CELLS AS A RESULT OF THE ACTION OF OTHER UNRELATED GENES. BUT EVEN SO, WITHOUT SMED-PREP THESE CELLS DO NOT ORGANISE THEMSELVES TO FORM A NORMAL BRAIN.

DANIEL FELIX, A GRADUATE STUDENT WHO CARRIED OUT THE EXPERIMENTAL WORK SAID: "THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE MOLECULAR BASIS FOR TISSUE REMODELING AND REGENERATION IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE FOR REGENERATIVE MEDICINE. PLANARIANS ARE FAMOUS FOR THEIR IMMENSE POWER OF REGENERATION, BEING ABLE TO REGENERATE A NEW HEAD AFTER DECAPITATION. WITH THE HOMEOBOX GENE SMED-PREP, WE HAVE CHARACTERISED THE FIRST GENE NECESSARY FOR CORRECT ANTERIOR FATE AND PATTERNING DURING REGENERATION. IT HAS BEEN A REALLY EXCITING PROJECT AND I FEEL VERY LUCKY TO HAVE HAD THIS STUDY AS THE CENTRE PIECE OF MY THESIS WORK"

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RELIGION

MAN WHO SHOT FAMILY WISHES HE'D HAD MORE BULLETS

SAYS VOICE OF ALLAH TOLD HIM TO DO IT

THE MAN POLICE SUSPECT SHOT AND KILLED HIS WIFE, INFANT SON, AND TWO NIECES SAYS THE VOICE OF ALLAH TOLD HIM TO DO IT, AND THAT HE WOULD HAVE CONTINUED KILLING IF HE HADN’T RUN OUT OF AMMO, A PERSON CLOSE TO THE CASE TELLS THE AP. POLICE FOUND FOUR PEOPLE DEAD IN A CHICAGO HOME EARLY YESTERDAY, AND ARRESTED THE SUSPECT SOME 90 MILES AWAY.

THE AP’S SOURCE SAYS THE GUNMAN HAD LEFT THE HOUSE TO CHASE A 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL, WHOM HE FIRED AT BUT MISSED. THEY SAY THE GUNMAN WAS MARRIED TO ONE VICTIM, A 19-YEAR-OLD GIRL, AND THE FATHER OF ANOTHER, A 7-MONTH-OLD BOY. THE OTHER TWO, GIRLS AGED 3 AND 16 RESPECTIVELY, WERE HIS NIECES. “MY HEART IS CRUSHED,” SAID ONE RELATIVE. “HE’S NOT A BAD PERSON. I DON’T KNOW WHY HE WOULD DO THIS.”

(MY COMMENT: I WONDER WHAT SOMEONE WOULD HAVE TO DO BEFORE THIS RELATIVE WOULD CONSIDER THEM "A BAD PERSON?")

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FAMOUS QUOTES

PZ MYERS (BORN 1957) 53 YEARS OLD.

HE IS AN AMERICAN BIOLOGY PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MORRIS AND THE AUTHOR OF THE SCIENCE BLOG PHARYNGULA. HE CURRENTLY WORKS WITH ZEBRAFISH IN THE FIELD OF EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY (KNOWN AS EVO-DEVO), AND ALSO CULTIVATES AN INTEREST IN CEPHALOPODS. HE IS A PUBLIC CRITIC OF INTELLIGENT DESIGN AND OF THE CREATIONIST MOVEMENT IN GENERAL, AND IS AN ACTIVIST IN THE AMERICAN CREATION-EVOLUTION CONTROVERSY.

"A WEALTH OF IGNORANCE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR EVEN A GRAIN OF KNOWLEDGE."