

O

EAST OREGONIAN

PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
Publisher

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

WYATT HAAPT JR.
News Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Hemp growers at odds with pot producers

The 2018 Farm Bill just passed by both the Senate and House of Representatives takes hemp off the list of controlled substances and legalizes its cultivation as an agricultural commodity.

Huzzah. Hemp has been grown for fiber for centuries. Colonial Virginia required its cultivation in 1691 and it became an American staple until the 20th century. By the 1930s it had been lumped together with marijuana and made illegal by most states — some say at the bidding of cotton interests.

During World War II the federal government encouraged farmers to grow hemp to replace jute and other fibers from Japanese-held areas in the Pacific necessary for the manufacture of rope. The plant proved so prolific that farmers in the Midwest still struggle to stamp it out of ditches and fence rows more than 70 years later.

After serving its hitch, hemp again fell out of favor. Since the 1970s it’s been placed on the list of controlled substances, illegal to cultivate or sell in its raw forms.

But as we’ve said many times, hemp is as much like marijuana as a poppy seed muffin is like heroin. Although hemp and marijuana are of the same species, hemp lacks a significant amount of active tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the psychoactive compound that produces pot’s high.

All the while preventing its cultivation here, the federal government allowed the importation of goods — clothing, foodstuffs, cosmetics and essential oils — made abroad from hemp. A commercial market clearly exists for the crop.

The last farm bill allowed states to establish some experimental cultivation programs the skirted around the narcotics laws.

It’s not clear to us that hemp will be the big crop its promoters envision. It takes a lot of water, which is in ever shorter supply in this part of the country. Because it’s relatively easy to grow, the sudden boom in production could easily produce a bust at market.

But that’s the nature of farming. At least hemp growers will be free to succeed or fail outside the yoke of severe government regulation.



Hemp Northwest/Capital Press

Hemp grows on the Colville Confederated Tribes reservation in northeast Washington. The Farm Bill removes hemp from the federal list of controlled substances, but the crop still faces stiff regulations from the states.

Well, federal regulation anyway. Would-be hemp growers in the Northwest are finding themselves at odds with marijuana producers.

Pot growers worry that their high-THC plants will be contaminated through cross-pollination with low-THC by large-scale hemp production.

When both crops were illegal no one gave this serious consideration. But in recent years both Oregon and Washington, with a wink and a nod from the feds, have made marijuana cultivation and sales legal under state

law. All this is heavily regulated, and heavily taxed.

And that’s the rub for hemp producers. With millions of dollars in tax money coming in, the states are neck deep in a narcotics trade that is illegal under federal law. The tax produced by legal hemp will be negligible.

The states and their partners are unlikely to put their interests at risk, so hemp growers could easily face stiff regulation under a state regime.

Such is the beauty of our federalist system of government.

OTHER VIEWS

Was Jesus really born to a virgin?

This is the latest installment in my occasional series of conversations about Christianity. Previously, I’ve spoken with the Rev. Timothy Keller, Jimmy Carter and Cardinal Joseph Tobin. Here’s my interview of William Lane Craig, professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology and Houston Baptist University.



NICHOLAS KRISTOF COMMENT

Kristof: Merry Christmas, Dr. Craig! I must confess that for all my admiration for Jesus, I’m skeptical about some of the narrative we’ve inherited. Are you actually confident that Jesus was born to a virgin?

Craig: Merry Christmas to you, too, Nick! I’m reasonably confident. When I was a non-Christian, I used to struggle with this, too. But then it occurred to me that for a God who could create the entire universe, making a woman pregnant wasn’t that big a deal! Given the existence of a Creator and Designer of the universe (for which we have good evidence), an occasional miracle is child’s play. Historically speaking, the story of Jesus’ virginal conception is independently attested by Matthew and Luke and is utterly unlike anything in pagan mythology or Judaism. So what’s the problem?

Q: Why can’t we accept that Jesus was an extraordinary moral teacher, without buy-

ing into miracles? **A:** You can, but you do so at the expense of going against the evidence. That Jesus carried out a ministry of miracle-working and exorcisms is so widely attested in every stratum of the sources that the consensus among historical Jesus scholars is that Jesus was, indeed, a faith-healer and exorcist. That doesn’t prove these events were genuine miracles, but it does show that Jesus thought of himself as more than a mere moral teacher.

Q: You don’t believe the Genesis account that the world was created in six days, or that Eve was made from Adam’s rib, do you? If the Hebrew Bible’s stories need not be taken literally, why not also accept that the New Testament writers took liberties?

A: Because the Gospels are a different type of literature than the primeval history of Genesis 1-11. The eminent Assyriologist Thorkild Jacobsen described Genesis 1-11 as history clothed in the figurative language of mythology, a genre he dubbed “mytho-history.” By contrast, the consensus among historians is that the Gospels belong to the genre of ancient biography, like the ‘Lives of Greeks and Romans’ written by Plutarch. As such, they aim to provide a historically reliable account.

Q: How do you account for the many contradictions within the New Testament? For example, Matthew says Judas hanged himself, while Acts says that he “burst open.” They can’t both be right, so why insist on inerrancy of Scripture?

A: I don’t insist on the inerrancy of Scripture. Rather, what I insist on is what C.S. Lewis called “mere Christianity,” that is to say, the core doctrines of Christianity. Harmonizing perceived contradictions in the Bible is a matter of in-house discussion amongst Christians. What really matters are questions like: Does God exist? Are there objective moral values? Was Jesus truly God and truly man? How did his death on a Roman cross serve to overcome our moral wrongdoing and estrangement from God? These are, as one philosopher puts it, the “questions that matter,” not how Judas died.

Q: Over time, people have had faith in Zeus, in Shiva and Krishna, in the Chinese kitchen god, in countless other deities. We’re skeptical of all those faith traditions, so should we suspend our emphasis on science and rationality when we encounter miracles in our own tradition?

A: I don’t follow. Why should we suspend our emphasis on science and rationality just because of weakly evidenced, false claims in other religions? I champion a “reasonable faith” that seeks to provide a comprehensive worldview that takes into account the best evidence of the sciences, history, philosophy, logic and mathematics. Some of the arguments for God’s existence that I’ve defended, such as the arguments from the origin of the universe and the fine-tuning of the universe, appeal to the best evidence of contemporary science. I get the impression, Nick, that you think science is somehow incompatible with belief in mir-

acles. If so, you need to give an argument for that conclusion. David Hume’s famous argument against miracles is today recognized, in the words of philosopher of science John Earman, as “an abject failure.” No one has been able to do any better.

Q: You’re an evangelical Christian, and let me acknowledge that religious people donate more to charity than nonreligious people and also volunteer more. But I’m troubled that evangelical leaders have sometimes seemed to be moralizing blowhards, focused on issues that Jesus never breathed a word about — like gays and abortion — while indifferent to poverty, inequality, bigotry and other topics that were central to Jesus’ teachings.

A: Yes, I hear you. I sometimes cringe at the people that the media trot out as spokesmen for Christianity. The media shun intelligent and articulate Christians in favor of inflammatory preachers and televangelists. Just know that the Christian church is involved not only in defending the sanctity of life and marriage but in a whole range of social issues, such as combating poverty, feeding the homeless, medical care, disaster aid, literacy programs, fostering small businesses, promoting women’s rights and drilling wells, especially in the developing world. Honestly, Christians have gotten very bad press.

■
Nicholas Kristof was raised on a sheep farm near Yamhill, Oregon and is a columnist for the New York Times.

An open letter to Blue Mountains communities

By MIKE RASSBACH
Umatilla National Forest

As the Walla Walla District Ranger, I have had the privilege of talking with many of our community members regarding the two Sno-Parks at Spout Springs Ski Area. I want to sincerely thank everyone who has contacted me and engaged in conversations around Spout Springs. Through all of these discussions it is apparent to me that this area of the Umatilla National Forest is highly valued by many of the communities that we serve. I also recognize that the values in this area include a whole spectrum of forest uses, including skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling skiing, powersports, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, cabin recreation, swimming, tim-

ber production, horseback riding and more. In fact, the Spout Springs area is a perfect example as to why the Forest Service has a mandate to support multiple uses.

In the past two years, the Spout Springs Ski Area has not opened for business, citing safety concerns with the administration of the parking lot north of Highway 204. I have been working with the owner to address these concerns, which he states are preventing him from obtaining liability insurance needed to open for winter operations. In order to alleviate these concerns, I recently agreed to modify the north parking area by eliminating overnight parking once Spout Springs opens for the 2018/2019 season. My objective with this agreement was to have Spout Springs operate their downhill and cross country operations

during the 2018 and 2019 ski season, while providing for the safety of all users that enjoy recreating in this area.

The north parking area is within the Spout Springs Mountain Resort Special-Use Permit and is utilized by ski area customers and other winter recreationists. The north parking area is managed in partnership with Spout Springs and the Forest Service and is part of Oregon’s Sno-Park program. A second parking area (known as the south parking area) is across the highway from the Resort. The south parking area is outside of the Spout Springs Ski Area permit and managed by the Forest Service under a separate Sno-Park agreement with ODOT. In the past, the south parking area has been designated only for passenger vehicles.

Since announcing the north parking area modification, I have received numerous phone calls and emails from various community members regarding concerns over the loss of overnight parking in the Spout Springs north parking area. Through these discussions, including input from ODOT, I decided to modify the configuration of the south parking area in order to authorize overnight parking for trucks and trailers.

The new parking arrangements for both the north and south parking areas provide equitable and safe access for a variety of recreational uses, including alleviating the concerns raised by the Spout Springs Ski Area. I encourage anyone with questions to contact me directly or visit the Umatilla National Forest website for the latest information.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801, or email editor@eastoregonian.com.