



Nobel Laureate: World Needs “Secular Ten Commandments” and Universal Values

Old utopians may die, but utopianism never does fade away. While speaking at a summit of Nobel Peace Prize winners in Warsaw on Monday, Nobel Laureate and former Polish president Lech Walesa added Modern-day Moses of Magog to his résumé, advocating a “secular Ten Commandments” as a basis for universal values. Said Walesa, “We need to agree on common values for all religions as soon as possible, a kind of secular Ten Commandments on which we will build the world of tomorrow,” reports *France 24*.



Ah, “build the world of tomorrow.” Somehow that reminds me of WWI being “the war to end all wars” or, to cite intended fiction, the paternalistic android in an old *Star Trek* [episode](#) that summed up his purpose in dominating man by saying, “And you will be happy ... and controlled.” Captain Kirk was not amused.

And nor should we be with Walesa. Oh, I’m sure he means well. After all, one can see how a good person living in an ever-shrinking world — with weapons of mass destruction deliverable in minutes — would seek a unity that prevents conflict. But some cures are worse than the disease.

First, what would “common values” be? Christians, Muslims, and atheists (as a group) simply don’t agree on certain basic matters. And since life isn’t as simple as just singing Kumbaya and living happily ever after, we have to wonder how these “common values” would be adopted by the common man and, in particular, even common religionists. History has shown that even the best evangelistic sales pitches fail to convince large swaths of humanity. So would the common-values commissars be left with the Muslim jihadist tactic of conversion by the sword? Achieving universality that way could take a mighty big government.

If by “common values” Walesa means the things most people happen to agree upon at the moment, he misunderstands the very nature and purpose of religion and, in fact, of the pursuit of morality. Sincere people of faith don’t choose their moral principles by committee. Eternal doctrines and ephemeral democratic will are not synonymous.

This brings us to the rather odd formulation “secular Ten Commandments.” While Walesa was likely just turning a phrase he fancied clever, we should analyze the terminology and ask: Who would be doing the commanding? The idea behind the Ten Commandments is that they’re transcendent principles handed down by God Himself, who, as even an atheist could understand, certainly would have the status to “command.” But what secular entity could even pretend to such status? Again, this sounds like



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a mighty big government.

But the deeper question is what secular entity would have the credibility to command. There's a reason why injunctions considered divine carry weight. It's the reason why the Founding Fathers insisted that our rights were granted not by kings but were endowed by the Creator: What God has given, no man can rightly put asunder.

Likewise, what would give "morality" credibility? Well, let's start with Philosophy 101 and ask who or what determines what the thing called right and wrong is. Only two possibilities exist: Either man does or something outside of him does. If it's man, then "morality" is just illusion. Why? Well, consider: If we learned that the vast majority of the world liked chocolate but hated vanilla, would this make vanilla "wrong" or "evil"? It's just a matter of taste. But then how can we rightly say that murder is "wrong" *if the only reason* we do so is that the vast majority of people don't like what we call the "unjust" killing of human beings? If consensus is all it is, then murder falls into the same category as flavor: preference.

The point? A serious thinker embraces his philosophy or faith and its moral tenets not because they're popular, but because he believes they're *true* — absolutely, eternally, transcendentally. He believes they're universal not because they're embraced in every time and place, but because they're the same in every time and place — whether people know it or not. Oh, he may be right, wrong, or insane, but his beliefs are at least logically consistent. He isn't putting lipstick on the pig of preference and calling it "values"; he isn't saying there is no Truth and the Gospels are false, but let's pretend taste can be gospel. This isn't to say there aren't more logical atheists. Why, one I happen to know of accepts the implications of his atheism and has said, "Murder isn't wrong; it's just that society says it is." He also may be a sociopath, mind you, which is the logical outcome of taking atheism's corollary of moral relativism to its ultimate conclusion.

As for Walesa, if he were a wiser man, he'd realize that for values to mean anything, they must be virtues. Mother Teresa had values — but so did Adolf Hitler. Only virtues are good, and transcendent, by definition. And if Walesa were a wiser man, he'd realize that Truth isn't determined by majority vote. Doesn't history bear this out, too? When Nicolaus Copernicus said that the Earth revolved around the sun, Dr. Joseph Goldberger said pellagra was caused by poor diet, and Louis Pasteur said that germs cause disease, the majority stood against them. Likewise, the majority at one time accepted slavery, human sacrifice, and, in certain places, pedophilia. Democratic determinations are not deific.

So what of "common values"? G.K. Chesterton once said, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried." But you don't have to be Christian to understand that if Truth, moral perfection, existed, it would likely be uncommon. For who can live up to perfection? And many, not realizing they should nonetheless try and that an ideal doesn't cease to be an ideal because it becomes an inconvenience, will reject it.

Peace cannot be achieved through error; unity is not desirable at any cost. We could have had unity during WWII had everyone just agreed with the Nazis or during the Cold War had all decided "better red than dead," which is perhaps a good example of why Jesus said that He hadn't come to unite the world, but brought a sword dividing brother against brother. And what God has put asunder, let no man try to join.



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