

HUMANISTS

of FORT WORTH

Volume 14, Number 8

Happy



Humanist

August, 2013

This newsletter is presented by the Humanists of Fort Worth (HoFW), Texas for its members.

The "Happy Humanist" symbol is presented by IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union).

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There was *never* a time when there was nothing; If there were, there would be *nothing* now.

Anon

NEXT MEETING

August 14, 2013 7:00 PM

SPEAKER: (name withheld)

TOPIC: The Religion of Islam

More on page 4.

The *Humanists of Fort Worth* (HoFW) meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Westside Unitarian Universalist Building, 901 Page Ave.

! Thanks !

Many 'thank-yous' to the members and friends who are assisting with the cleanup and rearrangement duties after our meetings. It is much appreciated.

If you are interested in lending a hand please see one of the Board Members.

! Thanks !

The Meaning of Humanism

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

Humanism as a philosophy has ever competed with other philosophic viewpoints for the allegiance of men. But however far-reaching its disagreements with rival philosophies of the past and present, Humanism at least agrees with them on the importance of philosophy as such. That importance stems from the perennial need of human beings to find significance in their lives, to integrate their personalities around some clear, consistent and compelling view of existence, and to seek definite and reliable methods in the solution of their problems. Philosophy brings clarity and meaning into the careers of individuals, nations, and civilizations.

2. HUMANISM DEFINED

First: Humanism believes in a naturalistic metaphysics or attitude toward the universe that considers all forms of the supernatural as myth; and that regards Nature as the totality of being and as a constantly changing system of matter and energy which exists independently of any mind or consciousness.

Second: Humanism, drawing especially upon the laws and facts of science, believes that we human beings are an evolutionary product of the Nature of which we are a part; that the mind is indivisibly conjoined with the functioning of the brain; and that as an inseparable unity of body and personality we can have no conscious survival after death.

Third: Humanism, having its ultimate faith in humankind, believes that human beings possess the power or potentiality of solving their own problems, through reliance primarily upon reason and scientific method applied with courage and vision.

Fourth: Humanism, in opposition to all theories of universal determinism, fatalism, or predestination, believes that human beings, while conditioned by the past, possess genuine freedom of creative choice and action, and are, within certain objective limits, the shapers of their own destiny.

Fifth: Humanism believes in an ethics or morality that grounds all human values in this-earthly experiences and relationships and that holds as its highest goal the this-worldly happiness, freedom, and progress— economic, cultural, and ethical— of all mankind, irrespective of nation, race, or religion.

Sixth: Humanism believes that the individual attains the good life by harmoniously combining personal satisfactions and continuous self-development with significant work and other activities that contribute to the welfare of the community.

Seventh: Humanism believes in the widest possible development of art and the awareness of beauty, including the appreciation of Nature's loveliness and splendor, so that the aesthetic experience may become a pervasive reality in the life of all people.

Eighth: Humanism believes in a far-reaching social program that stands for the establishment throughout the world of democracy, peace, and a high standard of living on the foundations of a flourishing economic order, both national and international.

Ninth: Humanism believes in the complete social implementation of reason and scientific method; and thereby in democratic procedures and parliamentary government, with full freedom of expression and civil liberties, throughout all areas of economic, political and cultural life.

Tenth: Humanism, in accordance with scientific method, believes in the unending questioning of basic assumptions and convictions including its own. Humanism is not a new dogma, but is a developing philosophy ever open to experimental testing, newly discovered facts, and more rigorous reasoning.

The preceding was taken from *The Philosophy of Humanism*, by Corliss Lamont, Eighth Edition, Revised.

August 2013

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Single Member | \$25.00/yr. |
| Couple | \$40.00/yr |
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Choose the category that best fits your needs.

See the Treasurer, Dolores Ruhs, or a member of the Board for an application.

Pay in cash or mail the application, with your check, to:

Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer-HoFW

1036 Hill Top Pass, Benbrook, TX 76126-3848

NOTE:

If you do not have access to the internet, the Newsletter may be mailed to you for an additional annual fee of \$12.00.

PRESENTATION FOR AUGUST MEETING

Our speaker for this evening will discuss the religion of Islam and his experiences growing up in a moderate Muslim family in the Middle East.

He has a fascinating personal story to tell!

All Freethinkers are welcome to attend.

From the . . .



. . . Sam Baker

The World Wrought by Judeo-Christian "Morality" and the Promise of Humanism

I recently read one of the most impressive graduation speeches I have ever read or heard, and it was written and delivered by a young gay man named Mitch Anderson who was the Salutatorian in the 2013 graduating class of Belton High School in Belton, Texas. The speech as a whole is very inspiring and can be read here:

<http://wac.450f.edgecastcdn.net/80450F/myktem.com/files/2013/06/Standing-On-The-Sun-by-Mitch-Anderson3.pdf>

The most heart-rending part was what this young man had to go through growing up in a small Texas town, but his experiences are no different than those of many thousands of kids all over America.

**

. . . I'm gay. It is both a significant portion of who I am and an inconsequential aspect. It's as natural and effortless to me as breathing. I couldn't change myself even if I wanted, and believe me, I have. I have been bullied a lot. I've been called unspeakable things and relegated to a place of lower class. I have been made to feel worthless, unneeded, a blight on the world. People have mocked me, said that I was virtually subhuman. So, for a while, I was in a very dark place. I had no concept of self-worth, and frequently pondered suicide. I became so dejected, that many times I thought of killing myself not just because I saw no point to life, but because I had been convinced that doing so would actually make the world better. And so, for many years, I continued the cyclical, destructive thought patterns. This happened both before and

after I thought about my sexuality. And after I had realized I was gay, I hated myself. I wished and prayed endlessly that I could just go on with life normally, that I could be like everyone else. Being different felt like a curse, an unfair sentence to the life of an outcast.

There were moments when I believed I was next to nothing.

Some cultures not only don't denigrate gay people but actually exalt them and value them for their differences. Not surprisingly, these cultures developed outside of the Abrahamic religions.

So what is it about our Christian dominated culture that might have created the hateful atmosphere that kids like Mitch have to try to survive? According to the Bible, homosexuality is an "abomination" to God (as is eating shrimp and wearing cloth of mixed fibers).

Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Leviticus 18:22

Except that unlike eating shrimp, the punishment for homosexuality is death.

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. Lev. 20:13

This is "morality" according to the Bible.

Continued on page 6 >>>

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<<< Continued from page 5

A few modern Christian denominations have for all practical purposes excised these verses as they have numerous other verses, or made up some reason why they should no longer apply, but the atmosphere of hate created by them has poisoned the culture to its core, and it will take decades more to fully extirpate it.

Think of the millions of children all over the world like Mitch who have suffered physical and mental abuse and rejection by everyone around them all their lives, even by their own families, simply for being who they are. Think of all the children and young adults who have committed or attempted suicide because they were rejected by their loved ones and made to feel guilty for their feelings. All of this misery in the world for what? For no reason at all other than irrational, hateful religious dogma.

Humanists are committed to advancing equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their families because we recognize the obvious facts that sexual orientation and gender identity are as immutable as skin color. They are not "lifestyle choices" as those who exalt religion over reason are compelled to believe.

Sam

.....

“Atheism is more than just the knowledge that gods do not exist, and that religion is either a mistake or a fraud. Atheism is an attitude, a frame of mind that looks at the world objectively, fearlessly, always trying to understand all things as a part of nature.”
Carl Sagan (1934-1996)

The following quote was incorrectly cited in the June edition of this newsletter. I had the pleasure of reading the novel when it first appeared.

This particular version of the quote was taken from *The GOD Delusion* by Richard Dawkins. Don

When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion, it is called Religion.

Robert M. Pirsig (b. 9/6/1928)
ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE (1974)



”The trouble with the world is that the stupid are cocksure and the intelligent are full of doubt.”

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

"Is There Any Difference Between Atheism and Secular Humanism?"

Someone recently asked this question, and it's a good one. I can only speak for myself, and I have to start by defining those terms as I understand them.

First, I definitely think of myself as *secular* and *humanist*. I take *secular* to mean: not subscribing to any main-stream, religiously-recognized theology, or any of the socially and culturally conservative views emanating from such theology. By that definition one may (as I do) resist patriarchal rule, the cult-worship of "family values", and obeisance to the corporate/religious/military/surveillance complex's dominance of the global economy and its (many times underhanded) meddling in culture and society both here and abroad -- because the religion-derived principles on which that complex operates are destructive of human liberty and freedom of belief and conscience and action. To me *humanism* is the belief in the right of human beings, individually and collectively, to set their own course and find their own happiness *as they themselves define happiness*, free of authoritarian interference and coercion inspired by supernatural myth-based religious dogma and a desire to control society, which I think of as *political religion*. And I want the religious proselytizers, who often appear at least as motivated toward engineering society according to their religious beliefs as by any genuine concern for my soul, to *leave me alone*. I have no interest in "preserving civilization" in its current form, as the centuries have shown what a miserable failure it is, for all but a privileged few. *That* to me is *secular humanism*.

Secondly: If by *atheism* is meant non-belief in a sky-dwelling father-god who will judge human beings after death, who fathered a god-man with a teenage girl to perform substitutionary

atonement for me thousands of years in advance, and who wants me to be a moral conservative, then I am an *atheist*.

If being *atheist* means that I never feel a larger presence that enfolds me in love and acceptance in the teeth of all the outward negative feedback and disapproval, even in the teeth of my own resistance to it, then I do not qualify as *atheist*.

According to the above definitions, I see these as two different, distinct issues:

1. I live by secular, human-centered values, *not* values commonly understood to be religious. I am a *secular humanist*.
2. I reject the traditional Jewish/Christian/Islamic understanding of "God" or "Allah". But I'll take love where I find it, and I find it outside of, and transcending, any human agency. Depending on definition of the term, I am, or am not, an *atheist*.

To me, a strict equivalence between *secular humanism* and *atheism* deadens intellectual and, yes, *spiritual* freedom, and risks making of humanism merely another contending, divisive *orthodoxy*.

Letting people who consider themselves humanists decide these things for themselves without threat of being disqualified from being humanists, in my opinion, puts the free back in "freethought."

John Fisher, HoFW Secretary

SECULAR HUMANISM OR ATHEISM?

The question: *Is there any appreciable difference between Secular Humanism and Atheism?*

Consider: The primary tenets of Secular Humanism have been defined in several books, magazines, and periodicals. (!) Some of the major points basic to the Secular Humanist philosophy are:

1. A denial of the existence of any god/gods;
2. A denial of the existence of an immortal soul;
3. A denial of the possibility of a life beyond this one;
4. A rejection of the need for dependence upon an unknown/unproven identity;
5. A knowledge that human beings have an ability to learn about themselves and the world they live in.

I believe that humanism (Humanitarianism?), has existed for millennia. Early man, and even many, if not most, of the animal kingdom, had the feeling, or wisdom, of the necessity to take care of themselves, their families and their social groups. Might we identify this as an innate need for survival; an inherent attribute, if you will?

Consider: The mere sound of the words Atheist/Atheism is an anathema to the fundamentalist religionist, whether he/she be Jewish, Christian or Islamist; he/she believes the Atheist to be an evil being destined to spend eternity in a state of perdition. With this kind of hatred toward atheists it's no wonder we find ourselves discriminated against by the deists; it matters not that the Atheist may be a responsible person of high moral standards. All that matters, it seems, is that the Atheist simply does not accept the existence of the gods currently in vogue. In fact, I don't believe the terms atheism/Atheist could have existed before man created his god, his *theos*! For, to not believe in the theos makes one anti-theos, or, anti-theist, an Atheist.

DEFINITIONS:

- A. ATHEISM (Webster's New World Dictionary): **1.** The belief that there is no god, or denial that God or gods exist; **2.** Godlessness.
- B. HUMANISM (ibid): **1.** The quality of being human; human nature. **2.** Any system of thought or action based on the nature, dignity, interests, and ideals of man; specifically, a modern nontheistic, rationalist movement that holds that man is capable of self-fulfillment, ethical conduct, etc., without recourse to supernaturalism.
- C. SECULAR (ibid): Of or relating to worldly things as distinguished from things relating to church and religion; not sacred or religious.

To me, then, there is *no* appreciable difference between being a Secular Humanist or an Atheist. Unless, of course, one likes to think of him/herself as being a Christian Humanist, or a Jewish Humanist, etc. Oxymorons if there ever were any.

Don Ruhs, Editor/Publisher HoFW Newsletter

(!) Lamont, Corliss (1902-1995): *The Philosophy of Humanism*; Sidney Hook (1902-1989): *The Quest for Being*; Karen Armstrong (1944-present): *A History of God*; Susan Jacoby (1945-present): *Freethinkers*; etc.

Ball State President: Intelligent Design not science!

By TOM COYNE The Associated Press
Wed. 07/31/2013

Creation science and intelligent design are religion and not appropriate content for science courses at a public university such as Ball State University because it violates academic integrity, the school's president said in a letter Wednesday to faculty and staff.

"Intelligent design is overwhelmingly deemed by the scientific community as a religious belief and not a scientific theory. Therefore, intelligent design is not appropriate content for science courses," Jo Ann Gora wrote.

She wrote that more than 80 national and state scientific societies have said that intelligent design and creation science do not qualify as science. Such ideas can be taught in humanities or social science courses, she said, but must be discussed in comparison to other views and philosophical perspectives, each other, with no endorsement of one perspective over another.

"Our commitment to academic freedom is unflinching. However, it cannot be used as a shield to teach theories that have been rejected by the discipline under which a science course is taught. Our commitment to the best standards of each discipline being taught on this campus is equally unwavering," she wrote. "As I have said, this is an issue of academic integrity, not academic freedom."

The letter was criticized by the Discovery Institute, a Seattle-based, proponent of intelligent design. Senior fellow John West called Gora's letter outrageous, saying academic freedom is designed to protect minority and dissenting views.

"If all it means — which seems to be the argument that she is making — is that you have the freedom to teach what the majority of people think in a discipline then that is a sham. It really is Orwellian," he said. "It's no news that there is evidence of intelligent design is a minority viewpoint in the sciences."

The letter from Gora was in response to the state-supported college in Muncie, 60 miles northeast of Indianapolis, coming under scrutiny for hiring a science professor who wrote a book on the intelligent design and another professor being accused of teaching creationism.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation had filed a complaint in March claiming a class taught by Eric Hedin called "Boundaries of Science" violated separation of church and state by promoting religious belief at the public university. The syllabus says the course explores arguments for "hidden wisdom within this reality."

Ball State drew more attention in early July when it hired Guillermo Gonzalez, who gained notoriety in 2004 when his book about intelligent design, "The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos is Designed for Discovery," was published. He was later denied tenure at Iowa State University. Foundation attorney Andrew Seidel says he's pleased by Gora's letter, saying it addressed the organization's concerns.

"The only outstanding question is, how will the concerns that President Gora espoused in her letter translate into the curriculum in Hedin's class?" he said. "But she raised all the right concerns."

The university announced in June it had appointed a review panel to investigate the allegations. Provost Terry King has received the panel's report, reviewed it with Hedin, and is working with the professor to make sure that course content is aligned with the curriculum and best standards of the discipline, university spokeswoman Joan Todd said Wednesday.

Gonzalez declined comment by email, saying it would be unwise to comment on a letter from the university president when he doesn't have tenure.

He recommended seeking comment from West. Hedin did not respond to a telephone messages left at his office Wednesday by The Associated Press or an email requests for comment.

Creationist Tells Parents: Science Textbooks Must Acknowledge God's Word

By Dan | Published July 16, 2013

From TFN Insider

The Texas Home School Coalition (THSC), run by religious-right activist Tim Lambert, is promoting arch-creationist Ken Ham's speech at the group's convention in The Woodlands near Houston next month. An email to the group's supporters today includes a link to a revealing essay on Ham's Answers in Genesis website: "Should Homeschoolers Let Children Decide on Evolution?"

It's revealing because it demonstrates the lengths to which anti-science extremists will go in undermining the education of children and handicapping their ability to succeed in the 21st century. That's important to keep in mind as the State Board of Education prepares to adopt new science textbooks this year for Texas public schools. What those textbooks teach about evolution will be at the center of the adoption debate.

The author of the essay THSC is promoting, Elizabeth Mitchell, doesn't argue that homeschooled students should learn about creationism as an alternative to evolution. She goes much further, arguing that students should simply be taught to reject evolution altogether and accept creationism:

It is particularly important for science textbooks to acknowledge that God's Word is trustworthy. Observable, scientific facts will never violate God's Word when properly understood but rather affirm it. In fact, the history of creation and the global Flood are not only consistent with scientific observations, but they also can help explain what we observe in the world.

In addition, she argues, teaching that evolution and faith need not be in conflict actually endangers children:

When Christian parents compromise on scriptural truth by twisting it to make it fit with the claims of evolution regarding abiogenesis, the rise of biological complexity, and the age of the earth and universe, they risk causing irreparable, faith-damaging harm to their own children.

Students should learn what scientists say about evolution, Mitchell writes, but only so that those students can pass the tests needed to get into college:

Children should also not be sheltered from evolutionary claims but rather taught *discernment*. Genuine scientific truth will never violate biblical truth when properly understood. Parents need to teach their children what evolutionists claim. Standard tests such as the Advanced Placement exams and the Medical College Admissions Test do not test what students believe about evolution but only their knowledge of evolutionary assertions. They can be equipped to answer these questions without embracing them as truth.

None of this is terribly surprising. But it's distressing to see Mitchell deny that her approach will handicap the future success of those children. She writes:

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(W)ill children fail in life if they aren't taught to accept the claims of mainstream scientists? Bill Nye 'the Science Guy' says so. The popular mantra claiming that 'nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution,' though easily refuted, is practically proverbial among evolutionary educators. Will our kids be unfit as the leaders of tomorrow if they don't accept evolutionary dogma?

To illustrate how unnecessary it is for a student to actually *believe* evolution in order to be successful, one need look no farther than the local doctor's office. For decades, evolutionists have attempted to get medical schools to implement evolutionary courses for medical students. They have made some inroads, and the 2015 version of the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) will include more questions about evolution. Nevertheless, most medical doctors and most medical schools continue to consider evolution to be fairly irrelevant and useless to their practice. The objective facts of biology make perfect sense without any evolutionary overlay.

People who don't understand or accept evolution aren't necessarily stupid or can't succeed in careers that have little to do with science. But scientific ignorance certainly limits their options, and it can't be good for a society. Teaching children to reject science means that there will be fewer people to support the research and discoveries that help society progress. (More >>>)

RSECLIEGNICOEN

Confusing? They don't mix well, do they?

At next month's Texas Home School Coalition convention, parents will be encouraged to promote ignorance. We are working to make sure that similar efforts don't succeed when the State Board of Education decides this fall which science textbooks millions of students should use in their public school classrooms in Texas.

Stay tuned for how you can help.

Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has; it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but -- more frequently than not -- struggles against the divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God.

People gave ear to an upstart astrologer [Copernicus] who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever must devise some new system, which of all systems is of course the very best. This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred scripture tells us [Joshua 10:13] that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth.

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The above quotes are from Martin Luther (1483-1546), a Catholic Monk. These are from some of his teachings about the conflicts between faith and reason, or between religion and science.

Editorial . . . Know Your Bible? 12
Don Ruhs

All Bible quotes are taken from the King James Version (KJV).

From: Various sources, including the Holy Bible.

HOW DOES “HOLY(?) SCRIPTURE”
DEAL WITH THE TREATMENT OF
WOMEN?

What happened when a woman told Yahweh (God) that she had talked to a snake?

Ans. Gen. 3:12-16

How should a mother be treated if she gives birth to a boy? What if the baby is a girl?

Ans. Lev. 12:2-5

What should happen to a man who forces himself upon a woman who is betrothed (engaged to be married)?

Ans. Deut. 22:25-27

But what should happen to a man who forces himself upon a virgin who is not betrothed?

Ans. Deut. 22:28,29

Should men be allowed to give their daughters to sons of “foreign” lands, or to take the daughters of “foreign” lands for their sons?

Ans. Ezra. 9:12

How should women conduct themselves in their churches?

Ans. 1 Cor. 14:34,35

How should women “adorn themselves”? How should they learn? Or teach?

Ans. 1 Tim. 2:9, 11-12

How are male “virgins” identified in the Bible?

Ans. Rev. 14:1-4

How should wives present themselves to their husbands?

Ans. Eph. 5:22-24 (Of course this is Paul regarding women)

What should be the “natural use” of women?

Ans. Rom. 1:27

How does Paul deal with “men with men”?

Ans. Rom. 1:27

Is it possible that today’s fundamentalist Christians would approve of a girl, or woman, being the victim of rape, or forced marriage? What if the victim were a family member? Or a resident of a nursing home? Or if the victim had been raped by their priest, or minister?

NOTE: If one will take a little time to browse through these few passages, one would soon learn of the *many fallacies* to be found in the Holy(?) Bible. Plus, they become useful when discussing this holy(?) book with the “fundies.”

Don

If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay—others will easily undertake the irksome work for me.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

The poets were not alone in sanctioning myths, for long before the poets the states and the lawmakers had sanctioned them as a useful expedient. They needed to control the people by superstitious fears, and these cannot be aroused without myths and marvels.

Strabo, *Geographia*, I.2.8, c. 20 BC-AD 23

August 2013

**HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH
MONTHLY MEETING**

JULY 10, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. By Chair Sam Baker. There were thirty-four people present, including twelve visitors.

There was an open discussion, led by former Chair Dick Trice, of the Wikileaks/Assange, Manning and Snowden leaks of classified government information and American militarism/imperialism.

After a break for refreshments, discussion continued of Humanism, Humanists of Fort Worth, its future and ideas for growing the group.

The meeting was adjourned at 8: 55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Fisher.

John Fisher, Secretary

Humanists of Fort Worth

August 2013

Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

Treasurer's Report

Report Date: 10-July-2013

Beginning Balance 12-June-2013 **\$1,219.55**

| CREDITS | Date | Amount |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| DUES | 7/10/2013 | \$65.00 |
| Snack Donations | 7/10/2013 | 7.00 |

TOTAL CREDITS **\$72.00**

| DEBITS | Activity | Ck. # | Date | Amount |
|--------------|-------------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| To Treasurer | Snacks & Supplies | 425 | 7/16/2013 | \$16.39 |

TOTAL DEBITS **\$16.39**

TOTAL CREDITS LESS DEBITS

Ending Balance 10-July-2013 **\$1,275.16**

Attest:

Signature: *Dolores M. Ruhs* Date: 10-July-2013

Dolores M. Ruhs Treasurer

Don Ruhs Clerk

Copies:

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Chair | Sam Baker |
| Vice-Chair | Vacant |
| Rec. Secy. | John Fisher |
| Treasurer | Dolores Ruhs |
| Board Member | Don Ruhs |
| Board Member | Dick Trice |

c:\My Documents\HoFW Treasurer's Reports MSXL 10-July-2013



Church

&

STATE



the BOOK NOOK

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The 1st Amendment to the Constitution of the United States—"The Establishment Clause."

From: *Americans United for the Separation of Church & State* July/August 2013, page 22

AROUND THE **W**ORLD

Czech Republic To Give Churches Billions In Compensation!

The top court in the Czech Republic has upheld a plan in which the government will give billions of dollars to churches that lost property under the former communist regime.

The *Associated Press* said the June decision is a big win for churches that had sought compensation since the fall of communism in 1989. The plan calls for 16 religious groups, including Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, to receive the equivalent of \$3 billion over the next three decades, the AP said. They will also get back 56% of their property that is now in state hands, estimated at a total of \$3.8 billion.

Examples of property lost include farms, woodlands and buildings that are still controlled by the Czech government. The Catholic Church is expected to get the bulk of the government money in the agreement.

World News Group, a Christian media organization, reported that the ruling had been opposed by atheist groups and that the compensation plan is controversial in a country that contains one of Europe's largest atheist populations.

The *Prague Post* said the Social Democrats party fought hard against what it called a "handout." Social Democrat Jan Babor said last year that the plan "is ... against the spirit of our Constitution, because a democratic secular state should not tie itself to any church."

This space is intended to focus attention on books, authors, subjects and articles that may be of interest to humanists, agnostics, atheists, and freethinkers.

FAREWELL TO GOD

My reasons for rejecting the Christian Faith

By Charles Templeton (b.1915, d.2001)

Published 1996, McClelland & Stewart Inc., Toronto, Ont.

Templeton was a respected Christian evangelist in the church in Canada. During the 1950's, he and Billy Graham were the two most successful exponents of mass evangelism in North America. However, increasing doubts about the validity of the Old Testament and the teachings of the Christian church finally brought about a crisis in his faith, and in 1957 he resigned from the ministry.

It's one of those books, which, as an Atheist, the title immediately caught my eye and I had to check it out. Reading the review blurbs on the back cover enhanced my curiosity and I had to read it. Some of the chapter titles include: *The God Myth; The God of the Old Testament; The God Men Created* (a.k.a. Jesus), etc., were enough to hook this old warhorse. A further quick-scan of the text and this one came home with me; it was also a case of having a complimentary birthday (2004) gift card from one of my children and, having a passion, and the time, for reading, I had to buy something. Otherwise, most of my books were purchased from a discount bookstore.

Beginning with the O.T. and continuing into the N.T., Templeton cites many passages that are counter to today's understanding of science, history, and logic.

Charles Bradley Templeton died June 7, 2001, after a long bout with Alzheimer's Disease.

Don Ruhs, Editor, Publisher