

HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH

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**SYED HASSAN SPEAKS ON MUSLIMS IN  
AMERICA AFTER 9/11**

**HOFW TO CELEBRATE WINTER SOLSTICE AT  
WEST SIDE DECEMBER 16**

**ACLU'S JIM CORNEHLS TO SPEAK ON  
DANGERS TO CIVIL LIBERTIES AT JANUARY  
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**Happy Holidays!**

**AMERICAN MUSLIM ALLIANCE OFFICIAL CRITICIZES U.S.  
TREATMENT OF CORELIGIONISTS**

by Jim Cheatham

*We must not descend to the level of those who perpetrated Tuesday's violence by targeting individuals based on race, religion or national origin.*

-Attorney General John Ashcroft, September 13, 2001

Despite the message of tolerance to the American public, the Bush administration has since 9/11 chosen a highly discriminatory course in its treatment of aliens,

both legal and illegal, in our midst. The government has moved to deport more than 13,000 men as part of an administration dragnet that its own officials acknowledge was a

hastily assembled and blunt tool to lessen the chances of domestic terrorist acts. USG officials claim that they are not targeting Muslims, but rather persons from countries in which terrorists operate. A principal focus has been on "scofflaws" (aliens without valid visas). Under the

"Absconder Apprehension Initiative" some 5,000 persons, mostly Muslims, have been apprehended for deportation proceedings. Some 85,000 persons, selected mostly on the basis of nationality, have been required to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now the Bureau of Immigration & Customs Enforcement - ICE). Many Muslims here legally have chosen to leave rather than face the prospect of detention for possibly a lengthy period of time. Of the thousands apprehended, only 11 are considered possible terrorist threats and none has so far been charged. Since the meeting, the ICE, in an announcement December 1, officially abandoned the program. See related story in this issue.

Syed Hassan, Secretary General of the American Muslim Alliance, Southwest region, outlined to the HOFW November meeting how counterproductive current policies are to fostering amity with the Muslim community. He cited the example of a New Jersey Pakistani, operator of a 7-Eleven store, who had been in the U.S. for 13 years and who had an American family; nonetheless, he was detained in April and held for six months. He agreed to voluntarily return to Pakistan rather than to be detained for an unspecified period of time awaiting a deportation hearing. The presence of many thousands of non-Muslim aliens with expired visas is largely ignored, most with far less claim to lenient treatment. (In fact, the numbers of aliens here with expired visas has risen since 9/11 from about 300,000 to about 400,000.) Differential treatment meted out to Muslims neither goes unnoticed in 24 predominantly Muslim countries, nor for that matter among the eight million strong Muslim

community in the U.S. They too occasionally undergo indignities formerly either unknown or rare. He cited the treatment he received at the U.S. port of entry on his return with his family from a trip to Bolivia. Although he holds an American passport, he was asked by the immigration officer "where he really was from." Persons who appear to be of Middle Eastern, North African or Southeast Asian origin are automatically suspect.

Hassan claimed that historically the Muslim religion has been no more intolerant of nonbelievers than the Christian religion. In this connection he contrasted the benign treatment Saladin gave Christians upon the recapture of Jerusalem in the late 12th century with the murderous conduct of its Christian capturers during the first crusade. All Christians were spared by Saladin; the Crusaders put all Muslims to death. Moreover, Christians and Jews had lived peacefully under Muslim rule for many centuries until the post-World War II era.

Hassan put much of the blame for the fanaticism of some Muslims on U.S. policy. The Reagan administration, he said, had been a strong supporter of Pakistani dictator, General Huq, who had incited Muslim fundamentalism in his own backyard for political reasons, and had supplied and encouraged jointly with the Saudis religious extremism in Afghanistan as the most effective means for repulsing Soviet invaders.

The "needle in the haystack" approach for dealing with the domestic terrorist threat he criticized as alienating the Muslim world and getting us nowhere in countering terrorism. As a consequence, "Americans don't like Muslims" has become a

common lament in the Islamic world.

**Addendum:** Most of our readership will probably have seen the front-page story in the November 29th edition of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* relating the 26-month detention of a young Algerian avionics professional by the F.B.I. Although he was cleared of any terrorist connection over two years ago, he is still being detained for possible deportation action. Much of his 26 months was spent in solitary confinement. Although U.S. officials have acknowledged his rights were infringed, no apology has been rendered, nor has any other ameliorative action been taken.

## **CORNEHLS TO SPEAK ON PATRIOT ACT FOR JANUARY MEETING**

By Michael Rivera

Dr. Jim Cornehls, Professor and Director of the Graduate Certificate Program in Law and Public Policy at the University of Texas at Arlington, will give an update on the USA PATRIOT Act and its relation to censorship. There are some encouraging developments in opposition to the Act, but an equal amount of discouraging developments with regard to its use. In a recent speech, Dr. Cornehls asserted that the PATRIOT Act potentially violates six of the original ten amendments in the Bill of Rights. Don't miss what promises to be an enlightening discussion.

An attorney at law, Dr. Cornehls expertise includes Civil Rights & Urban Minorities, Urban Economics, Environmental Law & Policy, and Political Economy. He currently holds a professorial position at the University of Texas at Arlington.

## More on Civil Liberties

Compiled by Jim Cheatham

### Homeland Security Ends Foreigner Registration Program

On December 1, a Bush administration official announced that the controversial anti-terrorism program requiring thousands of Middle Eastern men in the U.S. to register with the government was being terminated. Asa Hutchinson, the Department of Homeland Security's undersecretary for borders and transportation, said in an interview that the domestic portion of the program "didn't yield sufficient leads" to justify the money being spent. The government will focus more on individuals rather than "whole categories" of people, he said.

"Unfortunately, Muslims felt they were being targeted," said Azhar Azeez, a board member of the Council on American-Islamic Relations Dallas-Fort Worth Chapter. "We feel that any visitor screening system should be free of racial or religious bias. (Knight-Ridder & UPI)

### F.B.I. Steps Up Monitoring of War Protests

The F.B.I. has collected extensive information on the tactics, training and organization of anti-war demonstrators and has advised local law enforcement officials to report any suspicious activity at protests to its counter terrorism squads, according to interviews and a confidential bureau memorandum. The intelligence-gathering effort is reportedly aimed at identifying anarchists

and "extremist elements" plotting violence, not at monitoring the political speech of law-abiding protesters. Herman Schwartz, a constitutional law professor at American University and an authority on the F.B.I. commented in this connection: "As a matter of principle, it has a very serious chilling effect on peaceful demonstration. If you go around telling people, 'We're going to ferret out information on demonstrations,' that deters people. People don't want their names and pictures in F.B.I. files." (NYT)

### Gay Marriage in Massachusetts

*The right to marry means little if it does not include the right to marry the person of one's choice.*

-Massachusetts Supreme Court

On November 18 the Massachusetts Supreme Court by a 4-3 decision ruled that a ban on same-sex marriage violates the state's constitution. Chief Justice Margaret Marshall, a former anti-apartheid campaigner, gave the state legislature 180 days to take the steps "it may deem appropriate in light of this opinion". In 1996, Bill Clinton signed the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage as being between a man and a woman. The conflict will probably have to be decided by the Federal Supreme Court. Governor Matt Romney, a Republican and a Mormon, has vowed to fight for a constitutional amendment, defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman. But the soonest an amendment could be legally enacted is 2006. (The Economist)

## CHURCH & STATE

Compiled by Jim Cheatham & Michael Rivera

### STATE FUNDING OF THEOLOGY STUDENT

The Supreme Court on December 2 heard arguments as to whether a state is constitutionally obligated to offer the same financial assistance to theology students as to other university level students pursuing a secular curriculum. The State of Washington constitution even more strictly than the federal constitution prohibits state funding of religion. Conservative justices have been favoring states rights in recent cases before the court. Will states rights trump the tender regard they have for religion?

Several of the justices, including O'Connor and Kennedy ("swing" justices) were skeptical of the validity of Solicitor General Olsen's arguments in support of the student, particularly with regard to the alleged discriminatory character of the Washington constitution. Justice Breyer pointed out that a decision upholding the theology student's right to state financial assistance would affect not just educational programs, but social welfare programs and contracting programs throughout the government would all be subject to the argument that they cannot be purely secular, that government must fund all religions who want to participate in such programs. (NYT)

### GEORGIA GOVERNOR SEEKS CHURCH-STATE REPEAL

Georgia's governor is pushing for an amendment to the state's constitution to allow for

government funding of religion. In a press statement, Governor Purdue said the amendment would allow religious groups to receive state funds to operate programs addressing social concerns, such as poverty and drug addiction. Legal experts and state education officials argue that Purdue's proposed amendment would allow the state to institute a private school voucher program. (C&S)

### **RELIGIOUS RIGHT AND REPUBLICANS PLOT STRATEGY**

Religious Right organizations are proposing a constitutional amendment to countermand the Massachusetts Court decision and to thwart the adoption of like measures in other states. Divisions have arisen in their ranks on how far to go: Should an amendment ban only same-sex marriage, or also take aim at Vermont-style civil unions and California-style partnerships that some opponents claim amount to marriage in all but name? The pragmatic faction is supporting a Republican-sponsored resolution that would ban marriage but leave open the possibility of civil unions. A hard-line faction of religious leaders is pushing for language that clearly would block Vermont-style civil unions. Known as the Arlington Group, it unites the heads of almost every major political advocacy organization on the Christian Right, including James Dobson of Focus on the family, Gary Bauer of American Values, William J. Bennett of Empower America, Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, Sandy Rios of Concerned Women for America and Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation. Spearheaded by Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship Ministries (and of Watergate fame), the Group wants to add wording to

the amendment that "Neither the federal government nor any state should predicate benefits, privileges, rights or immunities on the existence, recognition, or presumption of non-martial sexual relations." Some have indicated willingness to settle for the current amendment wording if it should appear that that is as much as will win Senate approval although some fear at the same time that this watered down version may be too weak to fire up the four million evangelicals who neglected to vote in the last presidential election. (NYT and wire reports)

### **DEATH PENALTY AND NEW YORK**

Honoring his campaign promise of 1994, newly elected New York Governor George Pataki signed the state's death penalty bill into law in March 1995. At the time he characterized the legislation as "the most effective of its kind in the nation." Eight years later and no executions. In the latest rebuff of a jury-mandated death sentence, the New York Court of Appeals in a 4-2 decision found that the jury had not considered certain mitigating circumstances in the case of a Syracuse man who had murdered his wife. Many are wondering whether the court will ever allow an execution to go forward, hence, whether the expense of seeking a death judgment can be justified. Among other objections to the law are 1) the death penalty can be sought arbitrarily by prosecutors, making it possible for life-or-death decisions to be tainted by racism; 2) if a jury is unable to reach a unanimous decision on the penalty in a capital punishment case, the judge is to impose a sentence of 20-25 years. Many jurors favor the death penalty, under these circumstances, to an excessively lenient judge-imposed sentence. (NYT)

### **PEREMPTORY JURY CHALLENGES BASED ON RELIGION UPHELD**

On October 17 the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in *U.S. v. DeJesus* that prosecutors may use "peremptory challenges" to eliminate jurors who are very religiously involved. Convicted on a felony charge, DeJesus argued, *inter alia*, that the prosecutor impermissibly exercised peremptory challenges based on a prohibited ground, namely religiosity. (In *Batson v. Kentucky* the high court ruled peremptory challenges could not be based on race or sex.) The government countered that it did not eliminate jurors based on their religious affiliation, but only those highly committed to the practice of religion. (Does religious zealotry make one more compassionate? Arguably, not.) This one looks to be headed for the high court's decision. Should the right of peremptory challenges be further curbed to eliminate not only religion but also religiosity as criteria in jury selection? (FindLaw.com)

### **DISPLAY COMMANDMENTS, BUT NOT KORAN VERSES**

A majority of Americans believe government should be able to display the Ten Commandments but would not extend that right to displays involving passages from the Koran, a recent CNN/Gallup/USA Today Poll indicates. The survey found that 70 percent of Americans back displays of the Ten Commandments in public schools. However, only 33 percent approved of displays featuring a verse from the Koran in those same settings. Sixty-four percent opposed them. Sixty-four percent said they approve of using tax funds to pay for

community services run by Christian groups. But 56 percent said they would not support funding of community groups with an Islamic affiliation. (C&S)

### A QUESTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS

This is a question of civil rights, and the nation's democratic foundations of fairness and equal protection are shaken if one sector of society is treated differently from the others. Separate-but-equal has always been a failure. It was wrong when George Wallace was parading around the South crying "Segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," and it's wrong now. The question before America is one of every citizen's rights to disposition of property, visitation privileges at hospitals, inheritance, making medical decisions for one's partner in emergencies, bereavement and sick leave, rights extended by employers, shared benefits like Social Security and Medicare. This is not about one's standing in the eyes of God. This is a temporal question, not a heavenly one. (J.R. Labbe, FWST)

## NEWS BRIEFS

### TOP OF THE NEWS

Compiled by Jim Cheatham & Michael Rivera

#### BIOLOGY TEXTBOOKS APPROVED

The Texas State Board of Education voted 11-4 on November 7 to place all submitted high school and advanced placement biology books on the "conforming" list making them eligible for adoption by local districts. Books on this list are the only textbooks that will be paid for by the state. Pressure by the Discovery Institute and its Texas allies, Texans for Better Science Education, was unsuccessful in getting more than cosmetic changes to the textbooks up for adoption. (For more see the National Center for Science Education website.)

#### U.S. VOTES "NO" ON UN AIDS RESOLUTION; CLINTON TO THE RESCUE

In November, a U.N. resolution on access to drugs in global epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria was approved by a vote of 167-1. The U.S cast the lone "nay" vote. The resolution emphasized that the failure to deliver lifesaving drugs to millions of people who are living with HIV/AIDS constitutes a global health threat. The U.S. vote appears to have been

swayed by the desire to appease pharmaceutical company interests against the need to afford treatment with low cost generic drugs to people in underdeveloped countries.

But all is not lost. Former President Clinton recently helped broker a deal to reduce the price of antiretroviral drugs to more affordable levels for poor countries. The World Health Organization is urging those countries to train 100,000 health care workers to deliver antiretroviral drugs to 3 million AIDS patient by the end of 2005. That is half of the 6 million who are in immediate need of antiretroviral treatment. There are approximately 46 million HIV infected persons worldwide. (FindLaw.com and NYT)

#### PASSING OF A DISTINGUISHED HUMANIST

Edward Schempp, a parent whose lawsuit against the required reading of Bible verses in New York public schools led to a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1963 restricting such practices, died Nov. 8 at a nursing home in Hayward, Calif. He was 95. His suit was joined with that of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who got most of the fame from the case. Justice Tom Clark in his majority opinion said the 14th Amendment due process protections made the First Amendment prohibitions of establishing or inhibiting religious expression applicable to the states. (NYT)

**Join us December 16!**  
**Bring a Side Dish & Can of Food**  
**7pm at Westside UU Church**

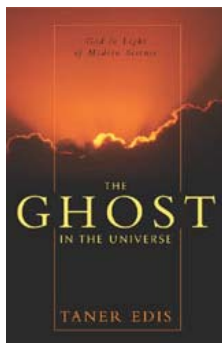
## HoFW NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### OUR NEXT REGULAR MEETING: LUCULLIAN FEAST

On December 16 we celebrate the winter solstice with dinner at Westside Unitarian Universalist Church. Please bring a dish. Dolores Ruhs will bring the meat. So that she will know how many are expected, please e-mail or telephone Dolores and let her know if you plan to attend. And don't forget a can of food for the needy.

### BOOK CORNER

By Jim Cheatham



*The Ghost in the Universe*, by Taner Edis. (Prometheus Books)

*Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has: it never comes*

*to the aid of spiritual things, but — more often than not — struggles against the divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God.*

Martin Luther, Table Talk (1569)

Given the publisher of this work, it will come as no surprise that “The Ghost” isn’t there, either in a material or in a transcendental sense, as far as the author is concerned. “Religious conservatives suspect the theory of evolution chases God out of world, reduces us to material beings, and turns us into accidents. They are correct.” It’s

the “turning us into accidents” which sticks in the throats of the religious. For if the evolutionary mechanism held out a promise of progress, or if Darwinism allowed for a “designer” God with some sublime purpose for his creation, a reconciliation of theists and evolutionists would long ago have allayed most of the controversies. But the conservatives rightly perceive that natural selection does not need a deity and liberals, vainly striving to find a way to make God responsible for it all, have only brewed theological “mush”. (Is it any wonder that the mainline churches are in decline and the evangelical are in ascendance?)

Usually the blurbs that appear on the covers of “explanatory” books consist of a good deal of puffery. In this case, they are all well deserved. In fact, astonished that a physics professor could write so clearly and incisively about religion and philosophy as well as science I was inspired to look for more information about his background on the internet even before I had read very far into “Ghost”. I discovered that Edis is the son of American and Turkish parents and has his bachelor’s degree from an Istanbul university. I suppose that Istanbul is as good a place as any, and much better than most, to become acquainted with the three great monotheistic religions since all three have, at one time or the other, had a strong influence there and evidence of Judaism’s and Christianity’s presence is still apparent. In any event, Edis has a much deeper appreciation for all three than would come with the leisure time curiosity of a physics professor.

Edis explores the histories of Judaic, Christian and Islamic religions for their plausibility.

Unsurprising, for most of us at least, he finds that all three are enveloped in myths that have been reinterpreted to the demands of the times. Judaism’s is to a large extent shrouded in the depths of a remote past; Christianity’s in many conflicting reports about its founder until 4th century orthodoxy gave its imprimatur; Islam’s in obscure events in a little known part of the world that were only clarified decades after the death of the founder. What accounts for their hold on believers? They have developed powerful stories, myths if you will, that bind believers to a collective purpose.

Surely the fact that they are monotheistic accounts in no small measure for their widespread influence and for their continuing relevance. Monotheism obviously has survival value. Yet, we can imagine that history might easily have been otherwise. What would Judaism have become absent a Babylonian captivity? The story of Christianity would surely have been far different had not Constantine the Great decreed it the state religion in 324 CE. Mohammed might easily have lost the battle of Badr against Meccan forces. Believers, however, cannot accept historical contingency; there has to be purpose in all events that only an omniscient and omnipotent God can provide.

Not only does religion provide purpose, it also provides the only basis of morality, at least in the eyes of believers. It is the bastion against the moral relativism of “anything goes”. The problem is, however, that it is very conservative and more often than not too hidebound to adjust to a world that will move on no matter how hard true believers may resist. Edis suggests that we

should not regard morality as standard fixed for all times but as an enterprise, an “imaginative activity”, that never becomes a mold. Here is where Humanists should have something to contribute. Edis suggests that we are not doing a very good job. Yes, there have been three manifestos that vaguely echo a social democratic political philosophy. But what most is lacking is an approach for addressing the isolated individualism of modern life. “Humanists should also recover some of the radicalism of the freethought tradition; secularists today are all too often complacent about the status quo.”

*The Ghost in the Universe* was awarded the prize for the best Humanist book of 2002. It well merits it. I will only add that it deserves a place in the library of all interested in science, religion and philosophy.

### HoFW Events

For an up-to-date listing of meetings and events, see the calendar on the HoFW e-list group page.

### December Solstice Celebration

The regular December HoFW meeting will be replaced by a celebratory dinner at 7pm, Tuesday, December 16 at West Side Unitarian Church. No speaker, just good food and conversation. Bring a side dish to share and a canned food item for the needy in our community.

### Board Meeting

The next quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors is set for January 20, 2004 after the regular monthly meeting at Westside Church.

### January Meeting

The regular meeting in January will be Tuesday, January 20, 2004 at Westside Church. Dr. Jim Cornehl, Professor and Director of the Graduate Certificate Program in Law and Public Policy at the University of Texas at Arlington, will give an update on the USA PATRIOT Act and its relation to censorship.

### Darwin Day Trash Bash

Our next Adopt-a-Street pick-up will be February 7, 2003 at 10 a.m. Kimberly Rivera coordinate this effort. The meeting place is at the Osteopathic Family Medicine Clinic parking lot on the corner of Granbury Road and South University Drive. The address is 3750 S University Dr, Fort Worth. Contact Kimberly or Michael Rivera with questions.

### YOUR OFFICERS, AND HOW TO REACH THEM

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