



February

2010

**The Humanists of Ft Worth meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist building 901 Page Ave at 7 PM**



## From The Chair

Mr. Tom Woods, past President of Westside UU Church and long-time friend of Humanists of Fort Worth, will be speaking at our February meeting. He will be reviewing and leading a discussion of one of the most alarming books to be published in a long time, *THE FAMILY*, by Jeff Sharlet.

Sharlet discovered a fundamentalist super-secret sect on 'C' Street in Washington D.C. whose power should scare hell out of Americans who believe in democracy and justice.

The Family was established in 1935 to oppose FDR's New Deal and the spread of trade unions, and since then has organized well-attended weekly prayer meetings for members of Congress and annual National Prayer Breakfasts attended by every president since Eisenhower.

Many of our country's top leaders are secret members of this religio-political group and are directly involved in "forging relationships between the U.S. government and some of the most oppressive regimes in the world." Sharlet was present when one of the leaders tells a dozen men who live in a large rooming house near the capital, "You guys are here to learn how to rule the world." He wasn't kidding.

This is a dangerous organization and we should learn as much as possible about it. Come, learn, inform, and share ideas with other freethinkers.

Meeting begins at 7 p.m. at 901 Page Avenue (one block west of the 2400 block of Hemphill Street). Discussion will end no later than 8:15, at which time we'll serve coffee and sweets and enjoy one another's company without having to drive somewhere else.

See you there.

Dick Trice, Chair



## Humanists Reach out to Haiti

Thank you to everyone who answered our call for donations to support the American Humanist Association's Humanist Charities project and Sebastian Velez's efforts in Haiti to bring food, water, and supplies to the people of Jacmel, a city also devastated by the earthquake but received little media attention.

Thanks to the generosity of our members, Sebastian's team of volunteers and Dominican Republic NGOs were able to work through the night to pack food, water, medical supplies, and rescue tools to send to Haiti. Yesterday, the supplies were put on a Dominican Navy boat and arrived in Jacmel. *Humanist Charities' shipment of supplies was the first to arrive*. Medical supplies and rescue tools were put to use immediately, and food and water were distributed successfully.

**Read the letter from Sebastian** and a news article in *El Nuevo Diario*, a Dominican Republic newspaper, that highlights the AHA's efforts.

The photos show just how your donation made an immediate impact. You can see more photos on our Flickr page.

**Your donations were immediately put to use to buy food, medicine, water and other supplies to Haitians who desperately needed our help. Thank you.**

All of this would not have been possible without the generosity and quick response of AHA members like you. Over \$32,000 has been raised so far, and we want to keep sending our support. Together, as humanists, we are making a difference. **Donate today.**

Sincerely,

Roy Speckhardt  
Executive Director



P.S. Humanist Charities will continue to send donations from the Haiti Emergency Relief Fund to aid in more shipments to Haiti. **Your tax-deductable donation right now will make an immediate impact. Please give generously.**

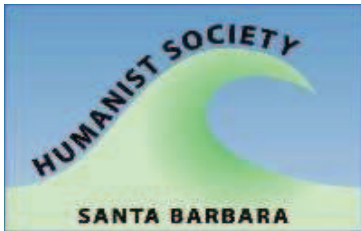
For more info see page 5



New York City



Scotland



Slovakia

**Abbas Naji**

It just doesn't make sense to me that there is a god. There are fossils from millions of years ago; according to them, god's prophets came and brought something called religion to deceive and exploit people only a few thousand years ago. They use religion to scare and intimidate people into submission to a god and give false promises of a heaven and earth so they can rule over them. I think people should not bother and help and being kind to others and also be happy and enjoy their lives. In the hope that we can be free from religion and superstition.

**Abdul Hye**

I am an Ex-Muslim. With all this flag burning and protesting going on I feel a little left out. It's good to have an origination that I can join.

**AbdulR, London**

I would like to join a group of like minded individuals, ever since I could think for myself and apply logic -- I was doomed to be a non-believer of religion. I don't openly tell everyone because I don't want to cause offence to people like my parents who I respect. It's the religion they were born with and hard built into their culture-- would be impossible to shift this. With time I think a lot will change on the religion front, will be more people speaking out against the nonsense -- I honestly believe by the year 3000 religion will be more or less eradicated with only a few pockets existing like cults. Joining an organisation like this means I can express how I feel with other people for once.

P.S although a lot of ex-Muslims are probably against Islam in general , I have to admit I probably am a little bit anti-Islam myself, but I will not be joining hands with Islamophobic English people because their only agenda is being racist and I saw one commenting earlier and I don't want anything to do with ignorant fascist scum

**Adam Sherwood, London**

I just want to be an atheist, free from any religious influence in my government.

**Al Haq**

Surely I am allowed to love the truth.



Humanists of Florida Association  
*Reason and Compassion in Action*



Minnesota



Utah



India



Western Australia

We are not alone



## NPR had an interesting segment on Morning Edition (Jan 11, 2010)

About a [comprehensive new nationwide Pew Research Center survey on race](#) which focused on the finding that African Americans are upbeat about Black progress and optimistic about their future. The host of the program discussed the study with NPR news analyst Juan Williams, who advised the researchers in developing and interpreting the [poll](#).

Juan talked about several positive aspects of the [poll](#) and I was thinking it was a decent news segment but then the host closed out the piece by asking Mr. Williams how much of the [poll](#) surprised him and to my dismay he answered thusly in a joyful tone with a snicker to top it off:

*I think I was surprised to see that when it comes to intermarriage, young people - black and white - pretty much no problem. But once you get into a group in the mid-50s among whites, you see a precipitous drop in acceptance of interracial marriage. And here's the really funny thing, Deborah - that if you ask people about who they most object to marrying into their family, it's not a black, white, Hispanic, it's atheists. They say they don't want any atheists to marry into their family.*

## 'Aye, those be slighting words against the Lord!' Ireland's blasphemy law

On the first day of 2010 (note: not 1310), Ireland's new blasphemy law came into effect, making statements about the folly of religion punishable by a 25,000 euro fine. Specifically, the law forbids "publishing or uttering matter that is grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters sacred by any religion." Ireland, yet again, has shown the world the toxic result of religious influence on the state.

Fortunately, the Irish specialize in blasphemers as well as zealots; a group called Atheist Ireland is flouting the law by posting on its website 25 quotations selected intentionally to outrage religious sensibilities and daring the authorities to prosecute them. They chose a wide range of blasphemy, which was smart, because the new laws, ironically, are intended to promote tolerance. Blasphemy was already a crime in Irish law; the new legislation merely extends the right not to be offended to people of any faith at all. Alongside quotes from Frank Zappa about "The Cloud Guy who has The Big Book," the atheists are promoting attacks on Muslims and even Buddhists, such as Icelandic pop singer Björk's uncharacteristically hostile comment: "The Buddhists say we come back as animals and they refer to them as lesser beings. Well, animals aren't lesser beings, they're just like us. So I say f--k the Buddhists."

There's only one blasphemer on the list of 25 blasphemous quotations that's deemed worthy of two entries, and he is, of course, the greatest blasphemer of them all: Jesus Christ. Two thousand years after his ministry, if Jesus were to choose Ireland as the spot for his return to Earth, he would be fined €25,000. I guess the good news is he wouldn't be crucified.

(You have to take progress where you can find it.) Pope Benedict XVI should probably be careful what he says, though. If he were to repeat the remarks he made at the 2006 Regensburg lecture, in the course of which he quoted the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II's statement that Muhammad's teachings are "evil and inhuman," he might well be subject to prosecution.

Surely the problem with a multicultural blasphemy law will be in its implementation: With so many religious violators, whom should the police fine first? The Irish law stipulates that it is meant to punish only people who are "intentionally causing outrage among a substantial number of adherents." Most atheists don't care enough to blaspheme. Despite the recent spate of atheistic polemics, from Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and the rest, we simply don't have a dog in the fight. Priests, rabbis and imams have to outrage other believers; it's part of the job description. Muslims are supposed to outrage Christians. Protestants are supposed to outrage Catholics. And they all are supposed to outrage the Jews. Religions are inherently blasphemous against each other, which is exactly why, in successful societies, humanists have managed, through the painful effort of centuries, to kick religion out of government.

Religion is creeping back by any means it can find. The same week that the Irish government redefined blasphemy, Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard managed to survive an assault in his house by a Somali man wielding an axe and knife. The assailant wouldn't have had to attack if they had both been living in Ireland. Rather than being apprehended by the police, the assassin could have contacted them; Westergaard, and not his intended killer, would be the criminal in Ireland.

Religious tolerance has been confused with respect. How can you legislate that people not only put up with other people's beliefs but validate them? What about new religions? Are they entitled to the same protections? What about people with private religions, i.e., the insane? What about people who believe in gnomes and fairies, an ancient religious tradition? Is it blasphemous to claim that the woods are not possessed by magical spirits? What if you work for the department of forestry? What if you insult little girls' imaginary friends?



Would Richard Dawkins' bus ads make him a subject to a fine under Irish law?

## A kind god? . . . . . Go figga!

### Haitians praise God after apocalyptic quake

Jan 17, 11:48 AM (ET)

By MICHELLE FAUL and MIKE MELIA

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Drumbeats called the faithful to a Sunday Mass praising God amid a scene resembling the Apocalypse - a collapsed cathedral in a city cloaked with the smell of death, where aid is slow to reach survivors and rescue crews battle to pry an ever-smaller number of the living from the ruins.

Sunlight streamed through what little was left of blown-out stained windows as the Rev. Eric Toussaint preached to a small crowd of survivors. A rotting body lay in its main entrance.

"Why give thanks to God? Because we are here," Toussaint said. "We say 'Thank you God.' What happened is the will of God. We are in the hands of God now."

As Catholic and Protestant worshippers across the city met for their first Sunday services since the magnitude-7.0 quake, many Haitians were still waiting for food and water and some took vengeance against looters.

Rescue workers were frustrated by the struggle to get aid through the small, damaged and clogged airport run by U.S. military controllers, and to get it from the airport into town.

Doctors Without Borders said Sunday that a cargo plane carrying a field hospital was denied permission to land at the airport and had to be rerouted through the Dominican Republic - creating a 24-hour delay in setting up a crucial field hospital.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called the quake "one of the most serious crises in decades."

"The damage, destruction and loss of life are just overwhelming," he said before flying toward Haiti on Sunday.

Nobody knows how many died in Tuesday's quake. Haiti's government alone has already recovered 20,000 bodies - not counting those recovered by independent agencies or relatives themselves, Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive told The Associated Press.

The Pan American Health Organization now says 50,000 to 100,000 people perished in the quake. Bellerive said 100,000 would "seem to be the minimum."

At the roofless cathedral, elderly women worried the beads of their rosaries and prayed for the intervention of Our Lady Of The Ascension, to whom the 81-year-old church is named.

The Minneapolis Star-Tribune [published a letter](#) from Satan to evangelist Pat Robertson, responding to his comment that Haiti's persistent troubles, including the earthquake, are due to a [pact the nation made with Mephistopheles](#).

### Dear Pat Robertson,

I know that you know that all press is good press, so I appreciate the shout-out. And you make God look like a big mean bully who kicks people when they are down, so I'm all over that action.

But when you say that Haiti has made a pact with me, it is totally humiliating. I may be evil incarnate, but I'm no welcher. The way you put it, making a deal with me leaves folks desperate and impoverished.

Sure, in the afterlife, but when I strike bargains with people, they first get something here on earth -- glamour, beauty, talent, wealth, fame, glory, a golden fiddle. Those Haitians have nothing, and I mean nothing. And that was before the earthquake. Haven't you seen "Crossroads"? Or "Damn Yankees"?

If I had a thing going with Haiti, there'd be lots of banks, skyscrapers, SUVs, exclusive night clubs, Botox -- that kind of thing. An 80 percent poverty rate is so not my style. Nothing against it -- I'm just saying: Not how I roll.

You're doing great work, Pat, and I don't want to clip your wings -- just, come on, you're making me look bad. And not the good kind of bad. Keep blaming God. That's working. But leave me out of it, please. Or we may need to renegotiate your own contract.

Best, Satan

### Linda Keenan

Linda Keenan is a former CNN senior producer.

Before you right-minded liberals go fire-bombing my house, let me state for the record that I am a new, proud member of the Facebook group "Pat Robertson is a Douchebag", which I joined in response to the televangelist's atrocious and entirely predictable assertion that Haitians had it coming to them.

So what in the world did Robertson get right? According to my philosopher friend Ted Kinnaman, Robertson, ghoulish as he might be, understands that natural disasters and inexplicable suffering demand an explanation, if one can credibly maintain a belief in a benevolent God. Kinnaman chairs the Philosophy Department at George Mason University. A shorter version of this post can be found at his new blog, <http://attachedobserver.blogspot.com/>



## Vanity Fair reviews the Creation Museum

Category: Creationism

Posted on: January 21, 2010 10:04 AM, by PZ Myers

A good take-down is a thing of beauty. A.A. Gill visited the "museum" in Kentucky, and gets right to the heart of the matter: it's not a museum, it's a national embarrassment.

The Creation Museum isn't really a museum at all. It's an argument. It's not even an argument. It's the ammunition for an argument. It is the Word made into bullets. An armory of righteous revisionism. This whole building is devoted to the literal veracity of the first 11 chapters of Genesis: God created the world in six days, and the whole thing is no more than 6,000 years old. Everything came at once, so *Tyrannosaurus rex* and Noah shared a cabin. That's an awful lot of explaining to do. This place doesn't just take on evolution--it squares off with geology, anthropology, paleontology, history, chemistry, astronomy, zoology, biology, and good taste. It directly and boldly contradicts most -onomies and all -ologies, including most theology.

It's also ugly, cheesy, and stupid. People often try to excuse faith by claiming it inspired a lot of great art...but here is the evidence that god is dead. All his rotting corpse seems to inspire any more is cartoon kitsch. And Christian rock.

defies belief, beggars faith. Compare it to the creation story in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, Masaccio's expulsion from Eden, or any of the thousands of flickering images, icons, and installations based on faith rather than literalist realism. It truly makes you wonder, Is all this righteous ire, all this money, all this Pentecostal flame-throwing the best they can come up with? This cheap county-fair sideshow--this is their best shot? It may be more replete with proof than a Soviet show trial, but this creation is bereft of any soul.

I spent a lot of time in the Eden picnic area, trying to wrest some sort of spiritual buzz, a sense of the majesty and the mystery, but it's conspicuously absent. Literally beaten to death. This is Ripley's Believe-It. It is irredeemably kitsch. In fact, it may be the biggest collection of kitsch in God's entire world. This is the profound represented by the banal, a divine irony. (The penchant for kitsch is something that gay men and born-again Christians share.) This tacky, risible, and rational tableau

We've criticized Ham a lot for the inanities of his museum, but I wonder if the accusation that he's a cheap, tasteless rube will sting a little more than harping on the fact that he's ignorant and irrational (which he considers virtues). We'll have to see if a response appears on his blog.

By the way, Ken Ham reads Pharyngula, even if he never links to us or mentions us by name. He has a blog post that quotes me and commenters here, to show how *evil* we are. You should check it out to see if he found you worthy of damnation.



PZ Myers is a biologist and associate professor at the University of Minnesota, Morris.

### The following is from the Creation Museum site

The **state-of-the-art** 70,000 square foot museum brings the pages of the Bible to life, casting its characters and animals in dynamic form and placing them in familiar settings. Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden. Children play and dinosaurs roam near Eden's Rivers. The serpent coils cunningly in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Majestic murals, great masterpieces brimming with pulsating colors and details, provide a backdrop for many of the settings. Want more nonsense?

**Cut and paste the following** <http://creationmuseum.org/>





**Letter from American Humanist Association member Sebastián Vélez who is coordinating humanist relief efforts on the ground in Haiti.**

Dear Roy and Maggie:

**Delivery of the American Humanist Association food supplies and tools**

Finally the Dominican navy gunship came through yesterday. We had everything ready since Saturday, and shipped Monday 3am. On arrival to Haiti, UN was in control. There was a large crowd at the dock, everybody wanting to help. After 1hr of negotiating between Navy and UN, PAM (World Food Program) was set to take all the supplies for distribution. The trucks arrive, a hundred people are let into the docks, and we start unloading the ship into the trucks. We set apart a small part for an orphanage that had not had food for 4 days (see small pickup truck by big white PAM trucks on pics). We deliver to orphanage (see pics), go to PAM warehouse to verify delivery (see pics), and with PAM coordination send one of the trucks to hospital area with food and medicines. The Dominican ship with supplies was the first to arrive to Jacmel after the earthquake, and delivery of relief supplies from the AHA 100% accomplished.

**Damage and safety in Jacmel**

I estimate around 20% buildings were completely destroyed. The 50% estimate by others is probably counting buildings that are not safe anymore after cracks and collapsed walls (vs whole building on ground trapping people). UN reports 306 dead. Unlike Port-au-Prince, there are no bodies left out on the streets, and despite a broken jail and the destruction and the hunger and crisis, the city is safe. Since only one small Colombian team are removing people from the rubble, body count will go up when more workers arrive and after our delivery of tools. Smell of dead bodies in many, many areas. Colombians still removing live people.

**Relief situation in Jacmel**

*Ours was the first shipment by land or sea of any supplies.* Most of the supplies from other NGOs that also went on this ship where tents, bottled water, and individual packs of food. Ours was the only one with medicines and rescue tools. A few small airplanes with teams were starting to arrive, and when I left a small US military plane had just arrived. PAM had a presence there before the earthquake and have the trucks and logistics to handle food and medicine donations, although they don't seem to have enough personnel to handle this size of crisis, so Haitians say aid not arriving to them. Spanish doctors in Pedernales about to sail to Jacmel. Others arriving to Pedernales (border) every minute. More DR Navy ships set to leave today.

**How the American Humanist Association can help now**

Large organizations (mostly European) starting to arrive, with teams of doctors and logistics specialists, so after we finish relay of information, I suggest the AHA uses new funds to continue delivering food and supplies to orphanages and other pockets that are cut-off from supplies as a result of the earthquake since we have the fastest operation. On our personal situation, I am well, but all my students are sick and in bed

(none went to Haiti).

I want to stress the importance of the AHA's membership response. Our shipment justified the first trip from the Dominican Navy. Now many more shipments coming from Santo Domingo, since logistics are solved. Our tools and medical supplies were the first to arrive (as per UN bluecaps) and put to use immediately. We were the only ones from that dock that went into the city and got first-hand information for those here at the DR/Haiti border. These International organizations are using our list of medicines starting at the top of the list we provided.

Best,

Sebastian

For those who wish to contribute cut and paste:

<https://secure.americanhumanist.org/SSLPage.aspx?pid=288>

Note the American Humanist logo on the wheelbarrow



**Humanists of Ft Worth Contact Information**

**Chair:** Dick Trice [trice932@yahoo.com](mailto:trice932@yahoo.com) 817-791-9927  
3500 Hidden Pines Court, Arlington, TX 76017

**Vice Chair:** Don Ruhs [laidback935@sbcglobal.net](mailto:laidback935@sbcglobal.net)  
1036 Hill Top Pass Benbrook 76126 Tel 817-249-1829

**Secretary:** Suzie Lotven [lotven@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lotven@sbcglobal.net)  
1727 Hurley Ave Ft Worth 76110 Tel 817-927 -7213

**Treasurer:** Dolores Ruhs [ruhsdol@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ruhsdol@sbcglobal.net)  
1036 Hill Top Pass Benbrook 76126 Tel 817-249-1829

**Past Chair:** Michael Little [slittle71@gmail.com](mailto:slittle71@gmail.com)

**Webmaster:** Russel Elleven [doctorelleven@gmail.com](mailto:doctorelleven@gmail.com)  
6120 Comfort Dr Ft Worth 76132 Tel 817-370-2171

**Newsletter Editor:** Ray Weil  
Cowntown\_humanist@yahoo.com

