

# COWTOWN



# HUMANIST

January

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

**This month's speaker will be a frequent visitor, Joel Baily who will discuss current economics**

## Court dismisses atheist's lawsuit regarding Fort Riley

TOPEKA | A federal judge in Kansas dismissed a lawsuit Thursday by an atheist soldier who claimed his rights were violated because he had to attend events where prayers were said while stationed at Fort Riley.

U.S. District Judge Kathryn Vratil ruled Army Spc. Dustin Chalker failed to exhaust all other alternatives before he and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation sued the Department of Defense in 2008.

The Military Religious Freedom Foundation said Chalker's case reflected a pattern of religious intolerance and proselytizing by members of the armed forces. Mikey Weinstein, president of the Albuquerque, N.M., foundation, said an appeal of the ruling would be filed with the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver.

"It's a shame because Dustin did all that he could," Weinstein said.

The U.S. Justice Department declined to comment about the ruling. Pentagon spokeswoman Eileen Lainez also declined to comment specifically about it but said the Pentagon doesn't endorse any religion or religious organization and allows service members to practice their faith of choice.

## The Various Types of Humanism:

In the religious arena, many words have a number of different meanings. Some examples are: *Christian, cults, Humanist, pagan, Satanist, Witch and Witchcraft*. The terms *Humanism* and *Humanist* are essentially meaningless when used by themselves; their meaning only becomes clear when preceded by an adjective, as in:

**Christian Humanism:** a philosophy based on Christian beliefs about the nature of God, and which advocate people's fulfillment by personal effort.

**Cultural Humanism:** A concept that knowledge can be obtained through rational thought and experimentation. It has its roots in ancient Greece and Rome. It developed into the scientific method and is the major underpinning of all sciences today.

**Literary Humanism:** pursuit of the humanities (languages, literature, philosophy, history, etc.)

**Modern Humanism:** a generic term encompassing both Religious and Secular Humanism.

**Philosophical Humanism** is a philosophy centered upon the needs and interests of people.

**Renaissance Humanism:** A movement starting at the end of the Middle Ages which renewed an interest in classical studies and promoted the concept that truth could be discovered by human effort.

**Religious Humanism** is similar to secular humanism, except that it is practiced in a religious setting with fellowship and rituals, as in *Ethical Culture Societies*, congregations associated with the *Society for Humanistic Judaism* and some groups affiliated with the *Unitarian Universalist Association*.

**Secular Humanism** a non-religiously based philosophy promoting humanity as the measure of all things. It had its roots in the rationalism of the 18th Century and the free thought movement of the 19th Century.

## Humanist beliefs and practices:

*A Humanist Manifesto* was prepared in 1933, endorsed by 34 leading Humanists, and published in the 1933-MAY/JUN issue of *The New Humanist* (VI:3:1-5). <sup>1</sup>

It was updated as the *Humanist Manifesto II* in 1973. <sup>2</sup> Some of the themes of the latter document are:

Continued on Page 5

## Beware of Science Fiction

By: David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Center

Science fiction takes the reader into a strange world without God. Oh, there might be "a god," a "force," but it is definitely not the God of the Bible, and the prominent names in this field are atheists.

Take **CARL SAGAN**, for example. His best-selling sci-fi novel *Contact* was made into a movie. Sagan was one of the high priests of atheistic evolution. In his novel he has the main character debating two preachers and saying, "There is no compelling evidence that God exists." In 1997 Sagan said, "I share the view of a hero of mine, Albert Einstein: 'I cannot conceive of a god who rewards and punishes his creatures or has a will of the kind that we experience in ourselves. Neither can I--nor would I want to--conceive of an individual that survives his physical death. Let feeble souls, from fear or absurd egotism, cherish such thoughts'" (*Parade*, March 10, 1997).

Consider another prominent name in Sci-Fi, **ISAAC ASIMOV**. In a 1982 interview he said, "Emotionally, I am an atheist. I don't have the evidence to prove that God doesn't exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn't that I don't want to waste my time" (Paul Kurtz, "An Interview with Isaac Asimov on Science and the Bible," *Free Inquiry*, Spring 1982, p. 9).

Consider **ROBERT HEINLEIN**, called "the dean of science fiction writers." He rejected the Bible and promoted "free sex." His book "Stranger in a Strange Land" is considered "the unofficial bible of the hippie movement." Heinlein was a nudist and practiced "polyamory." He promoted agnosticism in his sci-fi books.

Consider **ARTHUR CLARKE**, author of many sci-fi works, including *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Clarke, who was probably a homosexual, promoted evolutionary pantheism. He told a Sri Lankan newspaper, "I don't believe in God or an afterlife" (*Life Beyond 2001: Exclusive Interview with Arthur C. Clarke*, *The Island*, Dec. 20, 2000). In the instructions he left for his funeral in March 2008 he said, "Absolutely no religious rites of any kind, relating to any religious faith, should be associated with my funeral."

Consider **KURT VONNEGUT**. He was an atheist, and as an honorary president of the American Humanist Association he subscribed to its code which "does not accept supernatural views of reality."

Consider **GENE RODDENBERRY**, creator of *Star Trek*. He was an agnostic and humanist who envisioned a world in which "everyone is an atheist and better for it" (Brannon Braga, "Every Religion Has a Mythology," *International Atheist Conference*, June 24, 2006).

Science fiction is intimately associated with Darwinian evolution. Sagan and Asimov, for example, were prominent evolutionary scientists. Sci-fi arose in the late 19th and early 20th century as a product of an evolutionary worldview that denies the Almighty Creator. In fact, evolution IS the pre-eminent science fiction. Beware!

<http://wayoflife.org/>

## KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)

Religious tensions in Muslim-majority Malaysia turned violent Friday with firebomb attacks on three churches following a court decision that allows Christians to translate God as Allah.

"Allah is only for us," said a poster waved at one of at least two protests outside mosques in Kuala Lumpur on Friday, the Muslim holy day.

Many Muslims are angry about a Dec. 31 High Court decision overturning a government ban on Roman Catholics' using "Allah" for God in the Malay-language edition of their main newspaper, the Herald.

The ruling also applies to the ban's broader applications, such as Malay-language Bibles, 10,000 copies of which were recently seized by authorities because they translated God as Allah.

"We will not allow the word Allah to be inscribed in your churches," a speaker shouted over a loudspeaker at the Kampung Bahru mosque. "We will not allow the word Allah to be inscribed in your churches," a speaker shouted over a loudspeaker at the Kampung Bahru mosque.

The Herald says its Malay edition is read mainly by Christian indigenous tribes in the remote states of Sabah and Sarawak.

But the government contends that making Allah synonymous with God may confuse Muslims and ultimately mislead to them into converting to Christianity, a punishable offense in Malaysia despite a constitution that guarantees freedom of religion.

It suggests using "Tuhan," but Christians say Tuhan is more like "Lord," and can't replace "Allah."

Leading Muslim scholars, activists and opposition politicians have supported the Christians' right to call God Allah, and Friday's protests were relatively small, with most of the congregation ignoring them.

Still, the unprecedented church attacks compounded the difficulties for a country that prides itself on having managed to maintain broad harmony among a mix of racial and religious gaps. About 9 percent of Malaysia's 28 million people are Christian, including 800,000 Catholics, most of whom are ethnic Chinese or Indian. Muslims are 60 percent.

Minorities have long complained of discrimination. The government refuses to allow construction of new churches and temples, court verdicts in religious disputes usually favor Muslims, and an array of laws guarantee preferential treatment for Malays, the dominant and largely Muslim ethnic group, in jobs, housing and education.

## Maybe Brit Hume Should Preach Buddhism . .

...And maybe Tiger Woods, who has described himself as a Buddhist, should become a bit more observant.

As everyone knows by now, Brit Hume, the Fox News analyst, used last Sunday morning's talk show to advise the serially adulterous golfer "to turn to the Christian faith and you can make a total recovery and be a great example to the world."

And as we [wrote here](#), Hume made his pitch in part by comparing Buddhism unfavorably with Christianity -- a characterization that was disputed by many Buddhists, and one that I also took issue with by noting data showing that Christians don't seem to be much better than anyone else at staying faithful or married.

Yet now it seems Christians aren't just as bad as everyone else when it comes to marriage, but Buddhists are actually better than everyone else.

## From the Jan/Feb 2010 issue of the American Humanist

*He's been called an iconoclast, a provocateur, a misanthrope, and a conspiracery theorist ("I'm a conspiracy analyst," he corrects). And now, with his acceptance last spring of the American Humanist Association's honorary presidency, the acclaimed writer and critic Gore Vidal can add "humanist" to the mix. On August 4, 2009, Humanist Editor Jennifer Bardi and AHA President David Niose sat down with Vidal at his home in Hollywood, California, for a lengthy conversation. Many of the familiar topics were discussed—his famous family, forays into politics and the film industry, brushes with fellow writers and public figures, his admiration for Amelia Earhart and his disgust with U.S. foreign policy—peppered with spot-on impersonations of John F. Kennedy, Greta Garbo, and George W. Bush. Something else that emerged is the unapologetic humanism of this acclaimed novelist, playwright, essayist, screenwriter, and esteemed public intellectual. Vidal, now in his eighty-fourth year, continues to entertain, enrage, and enlighten. His latest book, Gore Vidal: Snapshots in History's Glare, was published in October.*

**Jennifer Bardi:** We wanted to start by telling you how thrilled we are that you've accepted the honorary presidency of the American Humanist Association. Of course, you know you follow in the footsteps of Kurt Vonnegut and Isaac Asimov, so even though humanists aren't known primarily as literary folks, I think it's a great tradition.

**David Niose:** The membership is very happy about it as well. We've gotten a lot of positive feedback.

**Gore Vidal:** Well, thank them with my feedback, equally positive.

**JB:** What's your familiarity with the AHA and the humanist movement?

**Gore Vidal:** I see items from time to time. I knew Asimov fairly well and Kurt very well. Do you know he was walking his dog when he fell? Darling puppy dog pulled him and he lost his balance, fell on his head, and died, which is grim because he was in pretty good form the last few years. Had something disagreeable to say about almost anything.

But yes, humanism is a great tradition and highly necessary, highly honorable. It's all we have left of Les Lumières—the lit up ones—to which Thomas Jefferson and company belonged. And there's no living movement. I mean, "progressive" sounds like Theodore Roosevelt gasping away.

**DN:** Right, you can be an imperialist and still be a progressive.

**Gore Vidal:** You can be a definite progressive when you're progressing on other people's land all the time.

**JB:** It would be nice if using the tag "humanist" could invoke all the issues that humanists support. But at this point, typically, it just generates the question, "Are you an atheist then? Is that what humanism is about?"

**Gore Vidal:** I think no. I think where you're on strongest ground is the Constitution of the United States. All of Jefferson is humanism, writ large in his own marvelous prose. And I've always been a constitutionalist because I'm a Jeffersonian.

**DN:** We've taken the position that in order to improve the image of humanists, we're going to have to get America used to the idea of atheists. The humanist chaplain at Harvard, a young guy by the name of Greg Epstein, has a book coming out and we're hoping that it'll be the next step in the New Atheist literature. I'm sure you're familiar with the very popular books by Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris debunking religion. Epstein is trying to take it to the next level with his book, *Good Without God*, i

To read the entire interview go to:

[http://thehumanist.com/humanist/10\\_jan\\_feb/Vidal.html](http://thehumanist.com/humanist/10_jan_feb/Vidal.html)

# Help Humanists Fight Blasphemy Laws

By Matt Hennessy

Blasphemy! It's a cry as old as [freethought](#), perhaps as old as religion. It's also a crime wherever religion can get enough control of government to impose it.

And now blasphemy is making a comeback, at the UN of all places!

If the Organization of the Islamic Conference has its way, the UN will impose a global blasphemy law under the guise of combating "defamation of religions."

Defined as disrespecting God, blasphemy may seem to be the ultimate victimless crime. But all too often the real victims of blasphemy laws are [Humanists](#) who dare to speak out. Just ask [Dr. Younus Shaikh](#), the Humanist leader in Pakistan who spent more than three years on death row after being charged with blasphemy in 2000. Or [Dr. Taslima Nasrin](#), the Humanist writer from Bangladesh who listened to a mob of 300,000 people demand that she be hanged for blasphemy. In response, her government issued an arrest warrant against her for "hurting religious feelings."

In both cases, the [International Humanist and Ethical Union](#) (IHEU) successfully campaigned to save the lives of these courageous Humanists. Yet both must still live in hiding, fearing for their lives, even in the West.

"Even in the West." It's a phrase I find myself using a lot these days to puncture a certain complacency among Humanists confident that secular progress will take care of itself. Progress never happens unless we work for it. Religion always fights back.

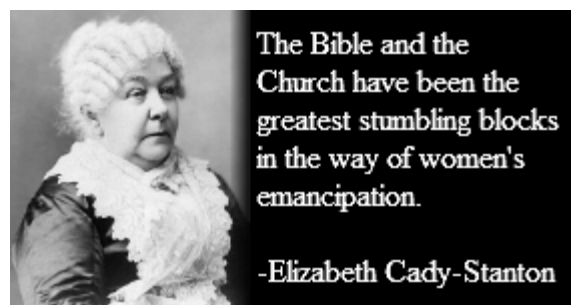
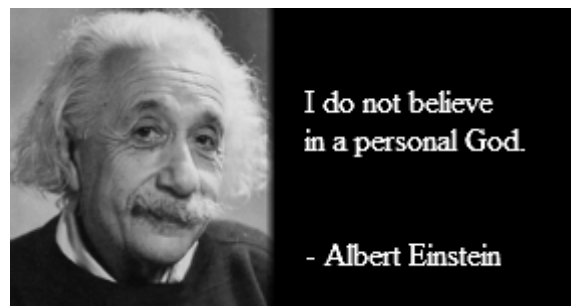
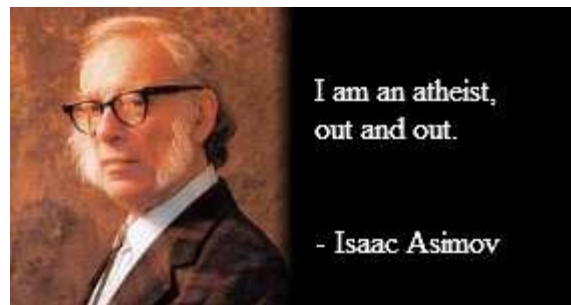
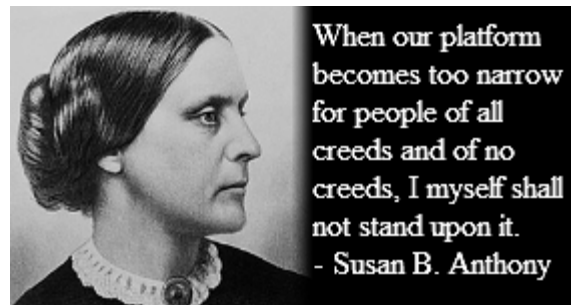
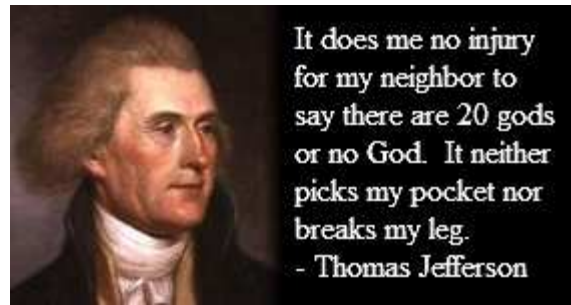
If you don't believe me, check out the new blasphemy law that Ireland introduced this year. Or consider the Danish cartoonists, editors and publishers living in fear of their lives because they dared to poke fun at the Prophet Mohammed. Now a Jordanian court has summoned these Danes on charges of blasphemy. Jordanian prosecutors say that they hope the case "will help establish an international law against slandering religion."

IHEU has been [leading the campaign against the blasphemy push at the UN](#). Our teams in New York and Geneva have pushed back with policy papers, briefings and lobbying within the UN. And IHEU has also made sure this issue gets media attention. All this work has produced results. For example, attempts to include language against "religious defamation" in the UN's "Durban II" anti-racism agreement were a complete and unexpected failure.

But we need your help to continue and strengthen our campaign. It's not too late to stop the blasphemy measure becoming international law.

**From: International Humanist and Ethical Union**

<http://www.iheu.org/>



## Continued from page 1

They trace their roots to the rational philosophy first created in the West in ancient Greece. Many regard Socrates as the first and greatest of the Humanists.

They value knowledge based on reason and hard evidence rather than on faith. Being secular Humanists, they reject the concept of a personal God, and regard humans as supreme. From this belief naturally follows:

"the preciousness and dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value." ● a rejection of a created universe in favor of the [theory of evolution](#) and an uncreated universe that obeys

natural laws. ● a rejection of divinely inspired ethical and moral codes in favor of codes derived by reason from the human condi-

tion. ● the belief that full responsibility for the future of the world, its political systems, its ecology, etc. rests with humans. There is no God in heaven to intervene and save us from a disaster.

Many Humanists believe that much historical progress has arisen from the conflict between organized religion and secular society in which the former beliefs and practices have been gradually

replaced with secular beliefs. ● They feel that religious groups' "promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful."

They accept democracy and reject both theocracy and secular dictatorships as political systems that are dangerous to individual

freedoms. ● They value freedom of inquiry, expression and action. They have a history of combating bigotry, hatred, dis-

crimination, intolerance and censorship. ● They are energetic

supporters of the principle of [separation of church and state](#). ●

They tend to have very liberal beliefs about controversial ethical topics, like [abortion](#), [corporal punishment of children](#), [death penalty](#), [enforced prayer in schools](#), [homosexuality](#), [physician assisted suicide](#), etc.

### Generally speaking, they do *not* believe in

- a personal God, a Goddess or a combination of Goddesses and Gods.
- supernatural beings such as angels, demons, Satan, Holy Spirit, etc.
- heaven or hell or life after death.
- the separation of a person into body, soul and spirit.
- survival of an individual in any form after death.

Humanist Manifesto III, titled "Humanism and its aspirations" was written in 2003. It is not published as dogma that Humanists must believe; rather it represents a consensus of what Humanists do believe. Its basic points include:

- Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.
- Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.
- Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.
- Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.
- Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.
- Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.

The *American Humanist Association* encourages people who agree with the *Humanist Manifesto III* to become a signer

Taken from:

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/humanism1.htm>

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