

HUMANISTS

Volume 14, Number 1

Happy



Humanist

of FORT WORTH

January, 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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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.

**Meeting
January 9, 2013 7:00 PM**

**SPEAKER: Zach Moore, PhD
Coordinator of DFW
Coalition of Reason
(DFW_COR)**

**TOPIC: Texas Freethought
Convention in Austin.**

See page 6 for more info.

! 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 !

Truth is like oil; in time it will rise to the surface.



THE AFFIRMATIONS OF HUMANISM: A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES *



WE ARE COMMITTED to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems.

WE DEPLORE efforts to denigrate human intelligence, to seek to explain the world in supernatural terms, and to look outside nature for salvation.

WE BELIEVE that scientific discovery and technology can contribute to the betterment of life.

WE BELIEVE in an open and pluralistic society and that democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.

WE ARE COMMITTED to the principle of separation of church and state.

WE CULTIVATE the arts of negotiation and compromise as a means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding.

WE ARE CONCERNED with securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance.

WE BELIEVE in supporting the disadvantaged and the handicapped so that they will be able to help themselves.

WE ATTEMPT to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity and strive to work together for the common good of humanity.

WE WANT TO PROTECT and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species.

WE BELIEVE in enjoying life here and now and in developing our creative talents to their fullest.

WE BELIEVE in the cultivation of moral excellence.

WE RESPECT the right to privacy. Mature adults should be allowed to fulfill their aspirations, to express their sexual preferences, to exercise reproductive freedom, to have access to comprehensive and informed health-care, and to die with dignity.

WE BELIEVE in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, responsibility. Humanist ethics is amenable to critical, rational guidance. There are normative standards that we discover together. Moral principles are tested by their consequences.

WE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED with the moral education of our children. We want to nourish reason and compassion.

WE ARE ENGAGED by the arts no less than by the sciences.

WE ARE CITIZENS of the universe and are excited by the discoveries still to be made in the cosmos.

WE ARE SKEPTICAL of untested claims to knowledge, and we are open to novel ideas and seek new departures in our thinking.

WE AFFIRM HUMANISM as a realistic alternative to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence and as a source of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in the service to others.

WE BELIEVE in optimism rather than pessimism, hope rather than despair, learning in the place of dogma, truth instead of ignorance, joy rather than guilt or sin, tolerance in the place of fear, love instead of hatred, compassion over selfishness, beauty instead of ugliness, and reason rather than blind faith or irrationality.

WE BELIEVE in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.

* by PAUL KURTZ

From the . . .



Sam Baker

It would be nice if our "Christian" country would live up to one of its most basic precepts, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18), but, unfortunately, most Americans don't care what happens to their fellow citizens. If they have mental illness, most Americans don't want to think about it. If they are dangerous, most Americans just want to ensure they stay at a safe distance. Officials at the college that the Colorado theater shooter attended knew he was dangerous and barred him from the campus but didn't lift a finger to warn the city police or the community, much less see to it that he was hospitalized.

We let the politicians get away with wasting billions on unnecessary wars and billion dollar weapons systems even the Pentagon doesn't want, yet we don't hold them accountable for not spending money on mental health services for people needing them. Shootings like that at the Connecticut school is the price we pay for not caring about the mentally ill.

Here are some quotes from George Carlin to start the New Year (slightly edited for brevity).

The Real Owners of America

The real owners are the big wealthy business interests that control things and make all the important decisions. Forget the politicians, they're an irrelevancy. The politicians are put there to give you the idea that you have freedom of choice. You don't. You have no choice. You have owners. They own you. They own everything. They own all the important land. They own and control the corporations. They've long since bought and paid for the Senate, the Congress, the statehouses, the city halls. They've got the judges in their back pockets. And they own all the big media companies, so that they control just about all of the news and information you hear. They've got you by the balls. They spend billions of dollars every year lobbying to get what they want. Well, we know what they want: they want more for themselves and less for everybody else.

But I'll tell you what they don't want. They don't want a population of citizens capable of critical thinking. They don't want well-informed, well-educated people capable of critical thinking. They're not interested in that. That doesn't help them. That's against their interests.

You know what they want? Obedient workers, people who are just smart enough to run the machines and do the paperwork but just dumb enough to passively accept all these increasingly shittier jobs with the lower pay, the longer hours, reduced benefits, the end of overtime and the vanishing pension that disappears the minute you go to collect it. And now, they're coming for your Social Security. They want your fucking retirement money. They want it back so they can give it to their criminal friends on Wall Street. And you know something? They'll get it. They'll get it all, sooner or later, because they own this fucking place. It's a big club, and you ain't in it. You and I are not in the big club.

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Religion

Religion has actually convinced people that there's an invisible man living in the sky who watches everything you do, every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a special list of ten things he does not want you to do. And if you do any of these ten things, he has a special place, full of fire and smoke and burning and torture and anguish, where he will send you to live and suffer and burn and choke and scream and cry forever and ever 'til the end of time.

But He loves you. He loves you, and He needs money! He always needs money. He's all-powerful, all-perfect, all-knowing, and all-wise, but somehow just can't handle money. Religion takes in billions of dollars, they pay no taxes, and they always need a little more.

I want you to know, when it comes to believing in God, I really tried. I really, really tried. I tried to believe that there is a God, who created each of us in His own image and likeness, loves us very much, and keeps a close eye on things. I really tried to believe that, but I gotta tell you, the longer you live, the more you look around, the more you realize, something is fucked up.

Something is wrong here. War, disease, death, destruction, hunger, filth, poverty, torture, crime, corruption, and the Ice Capades. Something is definitely wrong. This is not good work. If this is the best God can do, I am not impressed. Results like these do not belong on the resumé of a Supreme Being. This is the kind of shit you'd expect from an office temp with a bad attitude. And just between you and me, in any decently-run universe, this guy would've been out on his all-powerful ass a long time ago. And by the way, I say "this guy", because I firmly believe, looking at these results, that if there is a God, it has to be a man.

No woman could or would ever fuck things up like this. So, if there is a God, I think most reasonable people might agree that he's at least incompetent, and maybe, just maybe, doesn't give a shit. Doesn't give a shit, which I admire in a person, and which would explain a lot of these bad results.

Prayer

I've often thought people treat God rather rudely, don't you? Asking trillions and trillions of prayers every day. Asking and pleading and begging for favors. Do this, gimme that, I need a new car, I want a better job. And most of this praying takes place on Sunday, His day off. It's not nice. And it's no way to treat a friend.

And I say, fine. Pray for anything you want. Pray for anything, but what about the Divine Plan?

Remember that? The Divine Plan. Long time ago, God made a Divine Plan. Gave it a lot of thought, decided it was a good plan, put it into practice. And for billions and billions of years,

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the Divine Plan has been doing just fine. Now, you come along and pray for something. Well, suppose the thing you want isn't in God's Divine Plan? What do you want Him to do? Change His plan? Just for you? Doesn't it seem a little arrogant? It's a Divine Plan. What's the use of being God if every run-down shmuck with a two-dollar prayerbook can come along and fuck up Your Plan?

And here's something else, another problem you might have: Suppose your prayers aren't answered. What do you say? "Well, it's God's will." "Thy Will Be Done." Fine, but if it's God's will, and He's going to do what He wants to anyway, why the fuck bother praying in the first place? Seems like a big waste of time to me. Couldn't you just skip the praying part and go right to His Will? It's all very confusing.

. . . I've been praying to Joe [Pesci] for about a year now. And I noticed something. I noticed that all the prayers I used to offer to God, and all the prayers I now offer to Joe Pesci, are being answered at about the same 50% rate. Half the time I get what I want, half the time I don't. Same as God, 50-50. Same as the four-leaf clover and the horseshoe, the wishing well and the rabbit's foot, same as the Mojo Man, same as the Voodoo Lady who tells you your fortune by squeezing the goat's testicles, it's all the same: 50-50. So just pick your superstition, sit back, make a wish, and enjoy yourself.

PRESENTATION FOR JANUARY MEETING

Our January meeting will be a presentation by our friend Zach Moore, Coordinator of the DFW Coalition of Reason (DFWCOR).

Zach has agreed to tell us about his experiences at the Texas Freethought Convention in Austin last month and to discuss the current state of the Freethought movement in Texas.

This should be a great meeting. See you there!

Sam Baker, Chair, HoFW

*Editorial . . . Know Your Bible? 5**Don Ruhs*

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

From: Various sources, including the Holy Bible.

Commentary:

Continuing with the story of the “great flood” from the November issue of the Newsletter page 5.

. . . and after the flood where goeth the water? . . .

One would think that the preposterous story of the gathering of the millions of species of animals aboard Noah’s craft would be enough of a fairy tale but, no, the myth continues. Let us now consider the question of: What happened to all that water? Where did it go? Where is it now?

One explanation from the Bible believers (Secularism) is that the water evaporated into clouds. However, Earth science (Naturalism) tells us there are not enough cloud formations to verify that claim.

Another explanation is that the water seeped into the holes in the Earth. Again, Naturalism, and logic, tell us that even before the water could cover the Earth “to the highest mountain” it would have to fill all of those holes. One could try an experiment of placing a sponge into a bucket and then slowly pour water into the bucket. Before the water could rise above the sponge it would have to completely saturate into the sponge.

There are several flood stories within the many religio-culture belief systems of man.

From Wikipedia:

The Mesopotamian flood stories concern the epics of Ziusudra, Gilgamesh, and Atrahasis. In the Sumerian King List, it relies on the flood motif to divide its history into pre-flood and post-flood periods. The pre-flood kings had enormous lifespans, whereas post-flood lifespans were much reduced. The Sumerian flood myth found in the Deluge tablet was the epic of Ziusudra, who heard the Divine Counsel to destroy humanity, in which he constructed a vessel that delivered him from great waters.

Assyriologist George Smith translated the Babylonian account of the Great Flood in the 19th Century.

Further discoveries produced several versions of the Mesopotamian flood myth, with the account that is closest to that in the Bible (Genesis 6–9) found in a 700 BC Babylonian copy of the Epic of Gilgamesh. In this work, the hero, Gilgamesh, meets the immortal man, Utnapishtim, and the latter describes how the god, Ea, instructed him to build a huge vessel in anticipation of a deity-created flood that would destroy the world; the vessel was not only intended for Utnapishtim, but was built to also protect his family, his friends and animals.

From *Science and Earth History* by Arthur N. Strahler, Prometheus Press, 1987, p. 197:

Two professors of earth science at St. Cloud Univ., Minnesota, Leonard Soroka and Charles S. Nelson, have made extensive calculations of the total quantity of water required to raise present sea level to the height of Mt. Everest, so as to satisfy the Genesis provision of covering all mountaintops (Soroka and Nelson, 1983). The total requirement comes to 4.4 billion cubic centimeters.

Even more damaging to the theory of an atmospheric water source of such magnitude is the thermodynamic effect of condensation of the water vapor. Soroka and Nelson show that the rise in temperature caused by liberation of the latent heat of evaporation during a 40-day period would raise the atmospheric temperatures over the entire earth to over 3,500 C (6,400 F). Before this heat could have been dissipated by radiation into space, it would have set the ocean to boiling and would have cremated the Ark.

There is no doubt there were, and still are, devastating floods the world over. Just in the past few years we’ve seen examples in the US and Japan of such devastation, however, this does not prove that there was ever a flood of such magnitude as portrayed in the Holy Bible. It just never happened.

Humanists of Fort Worth HoFW

Minutes

December 12, 2012

Humanists of Fort Worth met for a special social meeting/celebration of the holiday season. There were 23 members and 4 guests in attendance.

Past chair Dick Trice presented a narrative containing anecdotes and quotes from the life and career of syndicated journalist Molly Ivins.

This was followed by a short concert by Myron and Linda Ice of traditional carols and holiday music.

There was food and drink for all.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Fisher
Secretary

Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

Treasurer's Report

Report Date: 12-Dec-2012

Beginning Balance	14-Nov-2012	\$1,309.06
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CREDITS		Date	Amount
Dues collected			
Donation	For Snacks	11/14/2012	5.00

TOTAL CREDITS	<u>\$5.00</u>
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DEBITS		Activity	Ck. #		
Kelly Quinn		Honorarium	490	11/14/2012	25.00
Lesha Flanigan		Honorarium	491	11/14/2012	25.00
West Aid		Donation	492	11/15/2012	100.00

TOTAL DEBITS	<u>\$150.00</u>
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-\$145.00

Ending Balance 12-Dec-12	\$1,164.06
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Signature: *Dolores M. Ruhs* Date: 17-Dec-2012

Dolores M. Ruhs Treasurer
Don Ruhs Clerk

Copies:

Sam Baker	Chair
Gene Gwin	Co-Chair
John Fisher	Rec. Secy.
Dolores Ruhs	Treasurer
Don Ruhs	Board Member
Dick Trice	Board Member



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* December 2012, pages 3 & 22

Supreme Court Skips Oklahoma 'Personhood' Case

The U.S. Supreme Court has decided not to hear a case that sought to allow Oklahomans to vote on a "personhood" amendment.

Without comment, the justices turned down *Personhood v. Barber*. The Oct. 29 decision leaves in place a holding by the Oklahoma Supreme Court, which struck down the personhood amendment before it ever reached the state ballot.

When the Oklahoma court blocked the initiative in April, Personhood Oklahoma, the group behind the effort, was still gathering signatures to get the measure to the voters in November. The ruling said the personhood initiative conflicted with the U.S. Supreme Court's opinion in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which generally reaffirmed a woman's right to have an abortion.

If passed, the amendment would have defined a person as "any human being from the beginning of the biological development of that human being to natural death." It would also have granted due process and equal protection rights to fetuses from the moment of conception.

The effort in Oklahoma is part of a nationwide scheme by Colorado-based Personhood USA, which seeks full legal rights for fetuses. Similar measures have popped up in Virginia, Arizona, Mississippi, and Colorado.

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

ATHEIST UNIVERSE

The Thinking Person's **Answer** to Christian Fundamentalism

By David Mills, Pub. 2006 Ulysses Press, 271 pgs.

From the back cover:

IS THERE REALLY A **GOD**?

OR DOES GOD **EXIST** ONLY IN OUR HEADS?

IS THE **BIBLE** TRULY GOD'S WORD?

OR IS IT A JUMBLE OF FANCIFUL **MYTHS**?

Atheist Universe details why God is unnecessary to explain the universe's diversity, organization and beauty. Using simple, straightforward logic, this book rebuts every argument that claims to "prove" God's existence.

A comprehensive primer for countering today's religious dogma, *Atheist Universe* addresses all the historical and scientific questions including:

- * What is Atheism, and why is it so misunderstood?
- * If God is a myth, then how did the universe appear?
- * Without God, is there an objective "right" and "wrong"?
- * What is the meaning of life without God?
- * Is there evidence of Jesus' miracles and resurrection?
- * Can atheists explain "near death" experiences and medical miracles?
- * Can science and the Bible realistically be reconciled?
- * What is the behind-the-scenes relationship between politics and religion?

"Properly read, the bible is the most potent force for atheism ever conceived"

— ISAAC ASIMOV (1920-1992) Scientist and Writer.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

Single Member	\$25.00/yr.
Couple	\$40.00/yr
Patron	\$50.00/yr.
Student	\$10.00/yr.

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

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Phone: 817-994-8868

Email: sambaker@hotmail.com

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! PREVIEW OF UPCOMING EVENTS !

February 13

Professor Dave Aftandilian of the Anthropology Department of TCU will speak to us on the topic of the role of animals in religion.

One of Professor Aftandilian's areas of study is Native American religions.

NOTE

NOTE

NOTE

NOTE

HoFW Members and Friends

"Darwin and Intelligent Design"

A lecture by Professor Sobel

Wed January 30 7:00 p.m.

TCU Moudy North Rm. 141

If you plan to attend this lecture please reply.
I need to get a head count.

Thanks, Sam

sambaker@hotmail.com