

# HUMANISTS

Volume 15, Number 1

Happy



Humanist

# of FORT WORTH

January, 2014

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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## ! THANKS !

Thanks to everyone who visited Dolores while in the hospital, the rehab center and at home, to those who sent cards and flowers, and to those who took the time to call.

We greatly appreciate the love and care you've shown.

Don

## NEXT MEETING

**January 8, 2014 7:00 PM**

**SPEAKER: Dick Trice**

**TOPIC:**

**"Just Who Are Those People Who Made It Possible For Us To Think Freely Today?"**

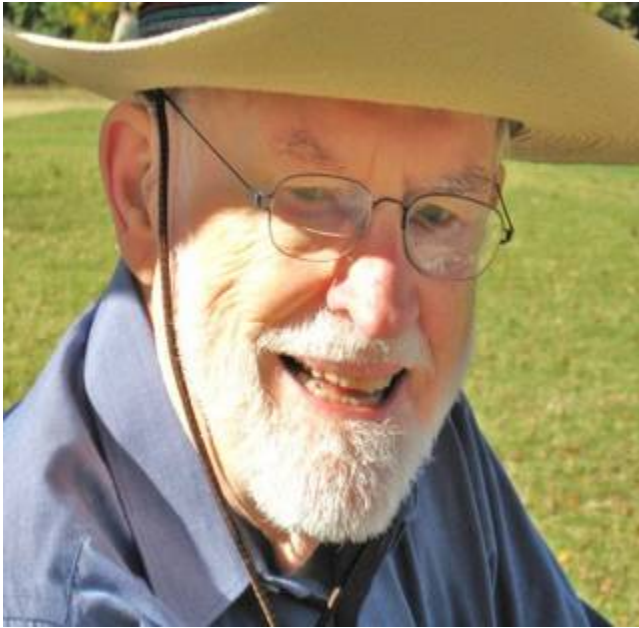
**More on page 11.**

**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.



**Dr. John Edward Johnson Jr.** passed away in the early morning hours of Dec 21, 2013. Born in 1925 in Galveston, Texas, John spent his childhood in Mineral Wells before attending the University of Texas in Austin where he graduated at the age of 19.

He earned his M.D. degree from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, where he remained for internship and residency in internal medicine. He spent two years in San Antonio in the USAF during the Korean Conflict.

During Medical School he married the love of his life, Mary Shirley Jimmerson and together they had seven children. After teaching at UTMB Galveston, John spent six years at William S. Merrell Co. in Cincinnati where he was instrumental in developing the first fertility drug brought to market. He came to Fort Worth as the Medical Director of Alcon Laboratories in 1969 and joined the Fort Worth Clinic in 1972. Although he had never planned to have a private practice, he discovered a love for being a primary care physician and developed close relationships with his patients, making house calls long after this was common practice.

During this time he served his profession and the community in many ways: Chief of Medicine of Harris Methodist Hospital, Chair and member of the Harris Ethics Committee,

Texas Medical Directors Association, Lighthouse for the Blind and served on boards and committees for the betterment of medicine in Fort Worth and beyond too numerous to count.

He retired from active practice in 1997, and devoted his time to social activism beside his wife Shirley, where they both made great impact until their deaths. John started the religious education program at the Galveston Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and was active in First UU Church of Cincinnati and Jefferson UU Church of Fort Worth. John touched so many people in so many ways; he will be remembered for making a difference in his community, his church and on the many individual lives he touched.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Shirley Johnson, brothers Willard Johnson and Morris Johnson, sister Kay Griffin, son Allen Charles Johnson, Son JEB Johnson M.D., and great-grandson and namesake Isaiah John Edward Johnson. Survivors include children Meredith (Joe) Donaldson, Anna Kay Johnson (John Watt), Susan Dycus, Michael Johnson (Kevin Stein), and Jamie Johnson, and children by choice, Dorine VanRijssel, Walt Adams, Julie Fields. Grandchildren Susanna Donaldson, Andrew Donaldson, Marylee Donaldson, Jessie Watt, Joshua Johnson, Sarah Cherry-Gruener, Amy Jones, Jeremy Watt, Joshua Watt; 5 great-grandchildren and a plethora of nieces and nephews across the country.

**Celebration of Life Service**

January 26, 2014 2:00 pm  
Reception following  
Trinity Terrace Retirement Community  
1600 Texas Street  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

**In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the**

NTUUC (North Texas Unitarian Universalist Congregations), Att. John E. Johnson Fund for Social Justice, c/o First Unitarian Church of Dallas, 4015 Normandy, Dallas, TX 75205



## 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

For a parchment copy of this page, suitable for framing, please send \$4.99 to FREE INQUIRY, P.O. Box 664, Amherst, New York 14226-0664

## Officers and Board Members

**Chair: Sam Baker**

Phone: 817-994-8868

Email: sambaker@hotmail.com

**Vice-Chair**

**Vacant**

**Secretary: John Fisher**

Phone: 682-556-9894

Email: jmfthird@hotmail.com

**Treasurer: Dolores Ruhs**

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**Past Chair: Dick Trice**

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**Newsletter Editor/ Past Chair : Don Ruhs**

Phone: (M) 817-343-3650

Email: laidback935@sbcglobal.net

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### 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

### 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.

**HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH  
MONTHLY MEETING  
OCTOBER 9, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. By Chair Sam Baker. There were twenty-five persons present, including five visitors and two new members.

Our speaker this month was Ms. Ann Sutherland, Fort Worth ISD School Board Trustee District 6.

Ms. Sutherland has a B.A. and a Ph.D. in school administration from the University of California. She taught for twenty-five years, and was teacher of the year in her region in California in 2002.

Ms. Sutherland gave a very interesting talk about her sometimes contentious experiences serving on the school board, all with her very heartfelt mission of helping children learn and channeling more resources into the classroom.

There was a break for refreshments during which an informal discussion continued.

The meeting was adjourned at 8: 50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*John Fisher*

John Fisher, Secretary

**HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH  
MONTHLY MEETING  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm. By Chair Sam Baker. There were 64 persons present, including 27 visitors.

This month's speaker is an international figure in free-thought, Mr. Tom Flynn, Director of the Center for Scientific Inquiry and Executive Editor at Free Inquiry magazine.

He presented a fascinating talk entitled "Who Are These Doubters? The Demographic of Unbelief" accompanied by PowerPoint presentation of statistics and trends.

The numbers of the American public who are religiously unaffiliated, as well as of those who avow unbelief in any deities, are growing. There has been a steady-growing plurality among scientists who disbelieve, plus a super-majority of elite top-tier scientists who are atheists.

While atheists may never be the majority in the US, it is probable that non-believers will soon constitute a sizable minority in this country, disrespect to whom will be deemed politically incorrect.

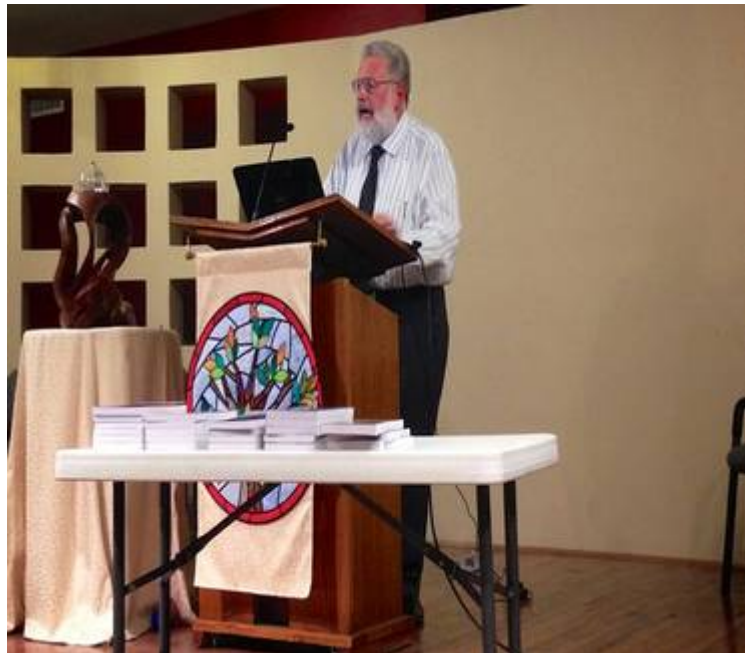
There was a break for refreshments and then a very lively Q & A session.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

*John Fisher*

John Fisher, Secretary



**TOM FLYNN**

# Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

## Treasurer's Oct. Report

Report Date: 9-Oct-2013

Beginning Balance 11-Sep-13 **\$1,058.55**

CREDITS	Date	Amount
Dues	10/13/13	75.00
Donations Snacks	9/11/13	10.00

TOTAL CREDITS **\$85.00**

DEBITS	Activity	Ck. #		
Claude Trice	Plaque	434	9/21/13	97.43

TOTAL DEBITS **\$97.43**

Credits +/- Debits **-\$12.43**

Ending Balance 9-Oct-13 **\$1,046.12**

Attest:

Signature: *Dolores M. Ruhs*

Dolores M. Ruhs Treasurer  
Don Ruhs Clerk

Copies:

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

c:My Documents/HoFW Treasurer's Reports MSXL 9-Oct-13

# Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

## Treasurer's Nov. Report

Report Date: 15-Nov-2013

Beginning Balance 11-Sep-13 **\$1,046.12**

CREDITS	Date	Amount
Dues		0
Donations for Snacks		0

TOTAL CREDITS **\$0.00**

DEBITS	Activity	Ck. #		
SCAC	Donation	435	11/22/13	<b><u>\$100.00</u></b>

TOTAL DEBITS **-\$100.00**

Credits +/- Debits

Ending Balance 15-Nov-13 **\$946.12**

Attest:

Signature: *Dolores M. Ruhs* 27-Dec 2013

Dolores M. Ruhs Treasurer  
Don Ruhs Clerk

Copies:

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

c:My Documents/HoFW Treasurer's Reports MSXL 27-Dec-13



# Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

## Treasurer's Dec. Report

Report Date: 11-Dec.-2013

Beginning Balance 15-Nov-13 **\$946.12**

CREDITS	Date	Amount
Dues		0
Donations for Snacks		0

TOTAL CREDITS **\$0.00**

DEBITS	Activity	Ck. #	Date	Amt.
* Chadra's Grill	Dinner	436	12/11/13	<b>\$48.22</b>
Bobbi Lotven	Snacks	437	12/11/13	<b>\$15.00</b>

TOTAL DEBITS **\$63.22**

Credits +/- Debits **- \$63.22**

Ending Balance 11-Dec-13 **\$822.90**

Attest:

Signature: *Dolores M. Ruhs* 27-Dec 2013

Dolores M. Ruhs Treasurer  
Don Ruhs Clerk

Copies:

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

c:My Documents/HoFW Treasurer's Reports MSXL 27-Dec-13

\*Twelve members of HoFW got together for a social evening at Chadra's Mezza & Grill. An enjoyable evening was had by all wishing one another Happy Holidays and Good Wishes for the New Year.

As agreed upon by the Board, HoFW picked up the tab for the appetizers.

*From the . . .*



*. . . Sam Baker*

## **Why Health Care for All Americans is Public Enemy Number One**

One question has nagged me. Say a young person has a congenital heart defect, or some middle-aged person has high blood pressure or depression, and neither could buy health insurance in the individual market prior to the Affordable Care Act. Why would one political party prefer to shut down the federal government than provide the funds for this health care law to help people like these? What is so terrible about trying to provide health insurance for all Americans? Why is health insurance for all worse than allowing the government to default on its financial obligations, worse than driving up the government's borrowing costs, and worse than putting the country's credit rating at risk?

Every other industrialized country considers it a moral obligation to insure that their citizens have good health care, but one of our political parties does not. What possibly could be this party's motive for wanting to deny health care coverage to forty million Americans?

National Defense magazine ("The Enemy the Pentagon Should Fear Most") figured it out:

The U.S. military keeps searching the horizon for a peer competitor, the challenger that must be taken seriously. Is it China? What about an oil rich and resurgent Russia?

But the threat that is most likely to hobble U.S. military capabilities is not a peer competitor, rather it is health care.

A worldwide military empire, as the Romans discovered, is very expensive to maintain. Our military empire, with 800 to 1,000 bases around the world, is far more vast than anything the Romans could ever have imagined. In addition, the industrial part of the military industrial congressional complex ("MICC") has become so greedy and so influential that it insists upon building weapons that the military doesn't even want. Over 2000 new Abrams tanks collect sand in a giant desert parking lot an hour north of Reno because the Army doesn't want them.

The military and its industrial arm depend on tax revenue, and whatever the government can borrow, for their existence. They are America's biggest welfare queens, and their minions in the Congress will sacrifice everything to insure their empire survives. The 2012 U.S. military budget is 6–7 times larger than the \$106 billion military budget of China and is more than the next twenty largest military spenders combined. There's simply not enough money to maintain our vast military empire and to provide adequate health care for all our citizens. This is an existential battle for the MICC and that's why health care for all Americans is its Public Enemy Number One. This is why the MICC is willing to risk economic and financial disaster in order stop Obamacare.

*Sam*

# PRESENTATION FOR OUR NEXT MEETING

**\*\*\* JANUARY 8, 2014\*\*\***

OUR SPEAKER WILL BE PAST CHAIR DICK TRICE.

Presentation:

**JUST WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE WHO  
MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO THINK  
FREELY TODAY?**

Topics for discussion:

How many of these people do you know?

Are you sure?

What's our future to be?

What's your prediction?

**WEDNESDAY JANUARY 8**

# Students learn about atheism on "Ask an Atheist Day"

## Free Thinking Frogs holds first event of the semester

By Andrea Masenda

Posted October 9, 2013

In an effort to change preconceived notions of what it means to be atheist, Free Thinking Frogs, a student organization, gave students the opportunity to ask questions.

The Free Thinking Frogs declared Tuesday night "Ask An Atheist Day."

Student members of Free Thinking Frogs consider themselves to be secular, or not bound by religious rules. Many categorize themselves as atheists, agnostics, humanists and skeptics, said Alexis Lohse, the group's founder and junior political science major.

"There's a lot of stereotypes about atheists," sophomore computer science major Harrison Engel said. "People think we're arrogant, people think we're amoral, people think that we're mean-spirited."

Any student was welcome at the forum. They prompted questions to the group about heaven and hell, varying upbringings, science and morality.

"A lot of times you encounter people with other beliefs via short snippets on a Facebook post, so that doesn't have any real dimension. That doesn't have any real human factor to it," Lohse said.

Establishing the organization last spring did not go unnoticed. The news of an atheist organization on TCU's campus caught the attention of several news outlets, including WFAA and Fox 4.

The group decided to begin its first semester on campus with the forum in order to open up about lifestyles and mentalities of the members of the group, Lohse said. The group began with 12 members in the spring and has more than doubled since then.

We knew that starting an organization like this would raise a lot of questions for a lot of students and we wanted to create an opportunity to have a dialogue about misconceptions," Lohse said.

Sophomore psychology major Tyler Casteel-Provost is a Christian who said he knew very little about atheists before the forum. He said he now has a new perception of atheists and how they think.

"If you don't understand it, it's scary, so you shy away from those people," Casteel-Provost said. "But when you come out here and you see that these people are humans, they have hearts that beat and they breathe and everything and they have emotions just like you. You see easier ways to connect with people."

First-year transfer student Joel Huffman said he had friends on both sides of the spectrum, Christian and atheist, and that he would come to another forum like it in the future.

"You can always learn something from someone else, especially just to support them and understand them as a person and where they're coming from," Huffman said.

Sophomore piano performance graduate student Edo Frenkel said although he attended a Jewish school, he considers himself to be a "devout atheist." Frenkel said talking with students with different beliefs was a subtle reminder of how friendly people can be.

"It's just really nice when you just have a purely nice thing," he said. "Everyone's just talking and regardless of what we think about something, regardless of the differences, we're just unified."

The Free Thinking Frogs are part of the Religious and Spiritual Life department at TCU. Lohse said in the future the group hopes to partner with other groups in the program for public forums and bringing different speakers to campus.

The Free Thinking Frogs of *Texas Christian University* meet every Thursday at 7 p.m. in Jarvis Hall.

# Modern Humanism Has Become Outdated; Humanists Need a New Humanism Today

From [Barry F. Seidman](#)

*Many people fear nothing more terribly than to take a position which stands out sharply and clearly from the prevailing opinion. The tendency of most is to adopt a view that is so ambiguous that it will include everything, and so popular that it will include everybody.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

In various magazines and websites dedicated to philosophical humanism, there has been an important, if outdated debate on the core nature of humanism. I say outdated because, although humanism has been (and should always be) a philosophy in flux—being that it is an “ism” which depends on our ever evolving understanding of the human experience—a clear understanding of the core of humanism ought not be up for debate so late in the game.

Modern humanism, though reconceived many times over, can be said to have been crystallized in 1933 with the Humanist Manifesto I. When we talk today about humanism—at least in the United States—we are more than likely referring to that which has resulted from that radical document drafted over 70 years ago. We can also refer back to the work of Corliss Lamont (*The Philosophy of Humanism*), Paul Kurtz, and perhaps, to a lesser extent, Felix Adler, as well as those organizations which they helped bring into existence – The American Humanist Association, the Council for Secular Humanism, and the Ethical Culture Society respectfully.

Though it is clear to me that all participants in this debate all have legitimately argued their concerns regarding the state humanism finds itself in today – internally fractured and ineffective in changing minds - I feel that before we can talk about how to make humanism more appealing to “moderate” religious folks (the majority of our fellow citizens), we must first decide what the heck humanism means to those of us who claim the word as our own.

The word is out, “atheistic” humanism has failed. This is most evident in the United States as we witness via organized humanism’s

ineffectual response to the religious Right’s worldview, and via the general attitude of Americans toward religion, superstition and science. Why has this happened to humanism when other “movements,” such as those championing African-Americans or Jews or Gays, have made significant progress, and have done so despite the secular and religious Right’s thirty-year affront to progressive ideals? Could humanism’s failure as a worldview, to some extent, be because so many humanists see their worldview as an alternative to religion rather than a self-contained one of its own? How many times do we humanists find ourselves describing our beliefs by calling out a litany of ideas and faiths we don’t happen to subscribe to? It is at times as if humanism would not exist if it were not for religion. It is no wonder that organized humanism, cautious about becoming a religious alternative tend to follow a big tent model, wrapping as much as they can into their message – secularism, science advocacy, atheism, skepticism, and somewhere in the mess, humanism – while boosting their revenues even if that means diluting their original message.

There may be another reason as well; one which may explain why humanism has been promoted as an alternative to religion. The term “atheistic humanism” was chosen for a reason. Humanism, as will be described more later on, is a sociopolitical philosophy “informed” by scientific naturalism (which includes atheism), but has been promoted as a “philosophy for non-believers or atheists.” Thus the emphasis has not been on the full picture, but on one part of the whole. Humanism, as a vibrant and widespread ideology (one protected from dogmatism by its reliance on naturalism, by the way), has failed because it has been promoted not as naturalistic humanism – or just plain humanism – but as “atheistic” humanism. In other words, humanism (as a movement or re individuals), has pushed ‘atheism as *philosophy* (which it is not), rather than ‘humanism as

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sociopolitical philosophy' (which it is). In this way, humanism has failed.

Individual humanists, or even big tent humanist organizations, struggle to describe what there is unique to their message. Science advocacy, skepticism and secularism are not unique to humanism, that much is clear. And without a concrete understanding of what humanism actually means to our lives, atheism begins to take on that roll of unique difference. This is not very surprising in a country such as America where religion is so much a part of the fabric of what it means to be American. But atheism is not a worldview.

That deserves repeating. Atheism is not a worldview. When we decide to focus on atheism to express what it is about our worldview which we feel has the best chance of creating a better society, we are missing the point (of humanism).

Even in times such as these, where religious fundamentalists are waging war on each other, we mustn't take the easy route and merely bash religion. But this is what today's spokespersons for atheism, from [Sam Harris](#) and Richard Dawkins to Christopher Hitchens and Ibn Warraq are doing. The problem with this is not that there are people willing to do battle with the irrationality of supernaturalism; there should always be such warriors on "our" side willing to take on what is the most dangerous aspect of religion. The problem instead is that these same people often either self-identify as humanists, or are identified as such by organized humanism.

Once humanism is tainted with the "us vs. them" mentality, which characterizes the battle between theism and atheism, it has forfeited its ability to bring naturalism into the marketplace of ideas... Where all folks, religious or not, can partake in the human endeavor toward better means and ends.

So therefore, as I want to argue, humanism needs a re-boot. Its not that a key element of humanism isn't atheism (or [agnosticism](#)), it's just that the negative and combative stance of humanism-as-atheism (or secularism) wins us

no friends, and even more enemies. And as for the perhaps arrogant notion that all humanists need to do is educate the masses and they will leave their silly beliefs behind, science has shown us that religion is an evolutionary part of who we are, and much of what it offers folks will not go away even if people become experts in the arguments against God or in science.

Humanism needs to rediscover its ethical and naturalistic foundations, and allow the [meta-physics](#) to become part of the overall movement, and not its core and face. By ethical, I am referring to the egalitarianism of humanism which has been one of its defining characteristics long before the scientific revolution replaced religion as the best way to understand reality. These can be found, in part, in the Humanist Manifestos I and II. Where there are atheists or other "freethinkers" who defend the politics or economics of oppression and regression - from war to capitalism to neo-liberalism to neo-conservatism - there must be humanists to point out that atheism is not the same thing as humanism.

Humanism is wholly and unabashedly progressive in its understanding of the human condition and what sort of society bests allows our species to be mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy. What this means in detail will require a longer essay - and such may be forthcoming on this website - but for starters, authors from Alfie Kohn and Franz De Waal to Doug Fry and Ashley Montagu would be good to read.

Much of Western religion (Christianity, Judaism & Islam) has failed to lead the way because they promote authoritarian, Hobbesian, and highly hierarchal societal systems. To the extent that "liberal" religionists interpret these as otherwise, is the extent that they wish to unify their progressive ideals with their particular mythistory ... and though perhaps as intellectually problematic as this might be, at least they understand the problems with such religion. Why then should it be that atheists, having broken free from the need to believe in supernatural entities, realms or ideas, should otherwise subscribe to the same authoritarian, Hobbesian,

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>>> cont'd from page 13.

and hierarchal societal systems most religions teach?

By naturalistic, I do not mean the mere defense of the hard sciences or the methodology of science, but a fully integrated naturalism obtained by us from all the sciences (natural and social), a naturalistic understanding of the origins and evolutionary reasons for religion (which needs to be understood if we wish to address supernaturalism and how to separate spirituality from supernaturalism), and from an understanding of philosophical determinism which would allow us to exorcise the most dangerous element of religion, the belief in counter-causal free will. This too needs more explanation. For starters, visit the [Center for Naturalism](#).

In short, a re-booted humanism would recognize ethics and naturalism as its core. It would

*more >>>>*

then be best defined as a sociopolitical philosophy, both democratic and non-hierarchal, which is informed by scientific naturalism, and promotes individual freedom, economic and social equality, human cooperation and planetary peace. It is time for humanists to, as Dr. King said more than forty years ago, take a position which stands out sharply and clearly from the prevailing opinion (opinions from within as well as from without humanist circles). Humanism is a positive, politically progressive, socially cooperative, scientifically sound worldview. It's time to define humanism as such.

Barry F. Seidman, Executive Producer/Host, worked as a humanist/freethought community leader and events coordinator for the Council for Secular Humanism and the Center for Inquiry from 2000-2006.

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## **DUCK DYNASTY AND THE CHRISTIAN HOMOPHOBE**

By Adam

I don't watch Duck Dynasty, but that hasn't kept the uproar in the news from reaching me. Phil Robertson, TV star and patriarch, didn't have the good sense to keep his mouth shut when asked what he thought of homosexuality. He described in crude language how he couldn't imagine a man choosing not to be with a woman. He then went on to describe how this was not in accordance with the biblical God's way, and that it eventually led to all sorts of sexual impropriety, including adultery and bestiality.

There is a tendency for us in the secular community to raise our voices in unison: "See! We told you that Bible can't be trusted. Look what its practitioners do in the name of their holy book!" We add this to other examples of Christians behaving badly. They expect their religiously based ideologies to trump the civil rights of others whose lifestyles they don't agree with. The Christian intellectual who would do this has no place in an enlightened society. He should be shunned, disgraced, and tidily put away where he can disturb no more.

There certainly are people who fit this description. Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell come to mind. They successfully promote their conservative Christian beliefs. They help elect officials who share their views. As society changes, they warn that we're drifting further from God's plan and should expect his divine wrath.

To paint Phil Robertson with this brush is too easy.

We all know a Phil Robertson. He is the neighbor who is happy to help haul in a new piece of furniture. He is the uncle who hosts the family at Thanksgiving. He is the grandfather who tells the same old jokes every time you see him. It's easy to vilify. It's harder to try and understand.

Cont'd on page 15 >>>>>

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

From: Various sources, including the Holy Bible.

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## Prayer

Pray: *to ask very earnestly; make supplication, as to a deity.*

Prayer: *the act or practice of praying, as to god; a person who prays.*

Webster's New World Dictionary

## Sago Mine Disaster

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

The **Sago Mine disaster** was a coal mine explosion on January 2, 2006, in the Sago Mine in Sago, in Upshur County, West Virginia, USA, near the county seat of Buckhannon. The blast and collapse trapped 13 miners for nearly two days. One of the 13 trapped miners survived. It was the worst mining disaster in the United States since the Jim Walter Resources Mine Disaster in Alabama on September 23, 2001, and the worst disaster in West Virginia since the 1968 Farmington Mine Disaster.

The disaster received extensive news coverage worldwide. After mining officials released incorrect information, many media outlets, including the *New York Times*, reported that 12 survivors had been found alive, when *only one* of the thirteen trapped miners survived.

From what I understand of the people of West Virginia, most of them were Christian and believed in the "Efficacy of Prayer"<sup>[1]</sup>. I say they "were" Christian and "believed," as the Bible leads them to believe, that their prayers would be heard. But, it didn't happen. The thirteen victims suffered for two days in that mine before twelve of them ultimately died. It's hard to imagine the trauma those miners experienced before they were removed from that pit.

If we "do the math" we learn that it was a 92% failure rate for God, if in fact he did intervene.

As a Christian, I was taught to believe that the God of the Bible was a "loving God" an "all-knowing" being and that we but need to have faith.

<sup>[1]</sup> efficacy: *power to produce effects or intended results; effectiveness.*

END

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Duck Dynasty and the Christian Homophobe:

My grandmother was born in rural east Texas in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She was surrounded by people who had known slavery in their lifetimes. Not surprisingly, she was racist. My mother grew up in the same rural setting. Her high school years were marked by the struggles with de-segregation. She, too, grew up to be racist, though less so than her mother. Likewise, I can claim with certainty to be much less racist than my mother. Each successive generation is better than the one before it.

As society's collective morality changes, some people get left behind. They have been taught backwards thinking and had that thinking reinforced throughout their lives. They have a vague sense that the Bible says that's how things should be. They probably haven't read the Bible, and they probably haven't thought too hard about it. That it's tradition is good enough for them.

Along comes a disturbance that brings to light some aspect of their beliefs. Polite society asks them to go away, and the common man resents being told what to do by an arrogant, enlightened elite. It's almost enough to make one sympathetic.

We should not ignore the true evils that have been committed. Our nation has at times treated segments of our population very poorly. Religion and tradition have been used to justify these abuses. We need to root out mistreatment when it occurs. When tradition fails us, we must challenge it and find what is right.

Let us do so without a sense of smug superiority. When evil is encountered, it should be condemned. But let's not conflate true evil with benign ignorance.

END





**Church**

**&**

**STATE**



*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* October 2013, page 22

AROUND THE **W**ORLD

## 'Secularism Charter' to be posted in some French Schools

French education officials have unveiled a new "secularism charter" that will be posted in every state-funded school.

Education Minister Vincent Peillon said the 15-point charter merely reinforces ideas found in France's 1905 law mandating separation of church and state, which the French call *Laïcité*.

"The first article of our constitution states that the republic is indivisible, democratic, social, and secular," Peillon told the newspaper *Journal du Dimanche*. "The school must teach these values, explain their meanings and their history—because if we do not teach them, we should not be surprised if they are misunderstood or even ignored."

However, several Muslim groups have criticized the charter, saying some of its provisions violate their beliefs.

"Ninety percent of Muslims are going to have the feeling they are being targeted by this charter," Dalil Bou-bakeur, chairman of the French Muslim Council, told *Agence France Presse*.

Disputes over the role of Islam in public life have rocked France in recent years. But Peillon insisted that the charter is not meant to make a statement about Islam.

"Secularism is not against any religion," the education official said. "It provides a protected and neutral space in which to give everyone, regardless of religion, regardless of their social or geographical origin, the means to choose and build a life."



the **BOOK NOOK**

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



**ESSENTIAL READINGS FOR THE NONBELIEVER**

*selected and with introductions by*

**CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS**

Publisher: Da Capo Press © 2007

Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011)  
American citizen (2007)

"Hitch," as he was better known to his friends and associates has gathered together a fantastic assemblage of forty-seven different pieces from writers of past and present decades in this work.

Notables such as: Lucretius, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Mark Twain, George Eliot, Emma Goldman, Bertrand Russell, Michael Shermer, Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, Penn Jillette (Penn & Teller), Sam Harris, and Salman Rushdie, just to name a few, are here giving their thoughts on what it means to be a non-believer; especially in a world where we are so greatly outnumbered; in an atmosphere in which we are considered by the religious to be without morals, or feelings, or respect, or consideration for others.

By bringing these notables together here "Hitch" lets us know that we are not, were not, and will not be alone in our beliefs or in our philosophy.

Although I read this book in 2011, I was encouraged to revisit it in light of the topic to be presented by our November speaker **Tom Flynn**.

*Don Ruhs*