

COWTOWN



HUMANIST

July

2011

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



From The Chair

The link to our meetup page is <http://www.meetup.com/Humanist-of-Fort-Worth/>

We can use Meetup to reach more people, set up more events and keep organized on-line

We need to get as many of our current members and guests to join as possible.

The more people who join the group on-line the more interest it will bring.

Joining the group on-line is free to everyone.

Thanks,
Gene

Nobody Much Likes the GOP Candidates, Except God, Sort Of



After a thorough investigation, Daily Intel has discovered that God is separately backing at least three different contenders for the Republican presidential nomination. Over the course of the past few months and even years, God has sent signs and direct messages to each of these candidates encouraging them to run, presumably without telling them that he supports other candidates as well.

Herman Cain: When Cain's granddaughter was born in 1999, Cain says his first thought upon holding her was, "What do I do to make this a better world?" Cain told Christian radio host Bryan Fischer in January, "I know that that had to be God almighty sending that thought through my mind." That's the background for what happened twelve years later. While campaigning for president around December of 2010, Cain was feeling tired and discouraged when he received a direct sign from God that he *must continue*. This sign was delivered via God's preferred method of communication, the text message:

Cain has also heard from God more directly, as he told a [tea party rally in April](#):

Cain told the crowd about his battle with cancer in 2006, saying he's been "totally cancer free" for the past five years.

"You want to know why? God said, 'Not yet Herman,'" Cain told the crowd. "God said, 'Not yet. I've got something else for you to do.' And it might be to become the president of the United States of America."

Rick Santorum: But around the same time God was encouraging Herman Cain to run for president, he was also telling Rick Santorum to throw his hat in the race. As Karen Santorum [told CBN's David Brody in May](#)

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Why I Am an Amoral, Family-Hating Monster... and Newt Gingrich Isn't?

P Z Myers



Published in the [May / June 2011 Humanist](#).

I recently celebrated my wedding anniversary, having been married to the same woman for thirty-one years without ever straying. Newt Gingrich has

been [married three times](#), [divorced one wife while she was recovering from surgery](#), and has [had extra-marital affairs](#).

Guess who is considered the defender of traditional sexual morality?

It's a strange situation where the [political party with more ex-wives than candidates](#), that houses and defends a [disturbingly amoral network of fundamentalist operators](#), is regarded as the protector of the sanctity of the family. They're anything but.

I think I understand, though—it doesn't matter what you do, all that matters is what you say. The Republicans support a version of marriage that rests on tradition, authority, and masculine dominance, and everything they do props up one leg of the tripod or the other. Public piety reinforces religious tradition; the insistence that there is one true form of marriage, between a man and a woman, which represents a legal and social commitment is part of the authoritarian impulse; and of course, if a man steps out of the matrimonial bounds, it's an expression of [machismo and patriotism and entitlement](#). In a March 7 interview with the Christian Broadcast Network's David Brody, Gingrich explains his own marital infidelity like this:

There's no question at times of my life, partially driven by how passionately I felt about this country, that I worked far too hard and that things happened in my life that were not appropriate. And what I can tell you is that when I did things that were wrong, I wasn't trapped in situation ethics, I was doing things that were wrong, and yet, I was doing it. I found that I felt compelled to seek God's forgiveness.

Gingrich was cheating on his wife, but it's OK — because he also tells us that it was wrong and inexcusable, and then he wraps it all up in God and country to make excuses for it. Hypocrisy is acceptable as long as the right words are said to reinforce the public face of propriety.

Gingrich was cheating on his wife, but it's OK — because he also tells us that it was wrong and inexcusable, and then he wraps it all up in God and country to make excuses for it. Hypocrisy is acceptable as long as the right words are said to reinforce the public face of propriety.

Now look at those dirty rotten hippies, like me. We say the ties between a couple should be made with respect and affection, not the strictures of law and precedent; letting gays marry, for instance, strengthens the public approval of our kinds of bond, while weakening the authoritarian bonds. Our ideal is a community of equals, while theirs is a hierarchy of power, a relic of Old Testament values in which marrying a woman was like buying a camel, a certification of ownership, and nothing must compromise the Big Man's possession of properties.

If we strip marriage of the asymmetry of power, as we must if we allow men to marry men and women to marry women, then we also strip away the man and wife, dominant and submissive, owner and owned, master and servant relationship that characterizes the conservative view of marriage. This is what they want to preserve, and this is what they are talking about when people like Gingrich echo those tired phrases about "Judeo-Christian values" and complain that their "civilization is under attack". And it is, when we challenge their right to treat one partner, so-called, as chattel.

And once you look at it that way, you see no abuse of their values when Gingrich goes tomcatting around—he's simply asserting his traditional privilege as the Man.

Paradoxically, though, it turns marriage into a brittle business where women are stressed by subservience and oppression (believe it or not, women are human beings who might resent being treated as servants), and men feel it is their right possess any woman willing to surrender to them. It's not surprising that their relationships break up in courtroom battles.

I don't condemn Gingrich for getting divorced, since it just means that so far he has managed to make a couple of women very happy twice. It's also paradoxical that I see absolutely no problem in dissolving those bonds — if two people aren't happy together, they should separate — and that that attitude might also make a marriage stronger.

I know. I've been married for thirty-one years, and my relationship with my wife is solid. Not because I've got her shackled with a prenup, a pile of legal documents, and a willingness to abuse her to keep her in her place, but because we're comfortable together, she with me and me with her, and there's no stresses that might tear us apart. With both of us in academic careers, there have been years where we've had to live apart, and those separations have been made with complete trust in one another — while we've both had times when we've "worked far too hard," and we've been "driven" by passions for our work, strangely enough it never seems to have the side effect of sending us shopping for a different mate.

So, just a suggestion: if you want a relationship that lasts, don't rely on god, lawyers, and social pressure to force it to work. Love and reciprocal trust are the only chains that last, and the only ones that make you feel happy while wearing them.

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I think those are the “secular, atheist” values that Newt and his ilk find heretical and threatening. Those values allow me to sit smug and content in a happy home while watching authoritarians discard wives.

PZ Myers is an associate professor of biology at the University of Minnesota, Morris, creator of the popular science blog, Pharyngula, and is the 2009 Humanist of the Year.

Medina Valley graduates hear prayers aplenty San Antonio Express News June 4, 2011



CASTRO-VILLE — After a contentious week that involved two conflicting federal court rulings and heated rhetoric from Texas' governor and attorney

general, [Medina Valley High School's](#) seniors graduated Saturday. And did so with plenty of prayer.

Despite a disclaimer at the beginning of the ceremony by the school district's superintendent that the students' and speakers' views were their own, the gathering at times resembled a revival as much as a small town graduation.

“The judge of all judges commands us to pray,” state Rep. [John V. Garza](#), R-San Antonio, said during his remarks to the crowd, adding that his own daughter invoked God while graduating last year. “I still cringe thinking some left group would complain or file a lawsuit ... I thank God that all is well this evening and none of us will be thrown in jail.”

Applause erupted from the school's packed football stadium with each “amen” — more so than during speakers' frequent references to school spirit and claims of Medina Valley's superiority over other schools.

The political firestorm surrounding the school started late last month when the parents of an agnostic senior filed a lawsuit with the help of Washington, D.C.-based Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

The suit argued that in past years, the school violated a 1992 [Supreme Court](#) ruling barring school-sponsored prayer by including a student-led invocation and benediction at graduation ceremonies.

The battle heated up Tuesday, when Chief U.S. District Judge [Fred Biery](#) of San Antonio largely seemed to agree with the plaintiffs, granting an emergency court order that banned public prayer at Saturday's ceremony.

Under Biery's ruling, student speakers were allowed to refer to individual beliefs but the district was to instruct them not to ask for a group prayer, or ask for audience members to bow their heads, or use terms such as “amen.”

Few defenders of that ruling could be found Saturday as families filed into the stadium.

“We're for prayer and so is the entire student body,” said [Hilda Longoria](#), whose son was graduating. “They're all sticking together.”

Representatives of the Medina Valley Independent School District have maintained they weren't violating the Constitution. The district did, however, remove the words “invocation” and “benediction” from the commencement program.

Instead, a student gave what were labeled opening remarks that began, “Those who wish, would you please pray with me?”

Soon after the initial ruling, both the school valedictorian, [Angela Hildenbrand](#), and Attorney General [Greg Abbott](#) held news conferences decrying it as an unconstitutional ban on free speech and religion.

Both filed briefs with the 5th U.S. [Circuit Court of Appeals](#) in New Orleans supporting the district's emergency appeal.

Gov. [Rick Perry](#) and U.S. Sen. [John Cornyn](#) also joined the criticism, along with conservative groups such as the [Liberty Institute](#) and AGAPE Movement, which announced plans to hold a “One Nation Under God” rally outside the stadium. No one showed.

By Friday afternoon, a three-judge panel of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Biery's decision, ruling it's not substantially likely the plaintiffs will be able to prove individual student prayers equate to school-sponsored prayer. The suit will remain pending in federal court.

Hildenbrand also led the audience in prayer, thanking God “for the freedom to be here today.”

Parent [Michael Ethridge](#), watching his daughter cross the stage, said he believes whole-heartedly in the separation of church and state. But he also supports the valedictorian.

“You don't trample on First Amendment rights to appease the separation of state and church,” he said. “These were her words. If the boy didn't want to hear it, don't listen or don't come.”

The Atheistic Critique of Humanism Has Been All But Forgotten From The Guardian (UK)

New atheists duck the philosophical arguments of atheistic anti-humanism

The World Atheist Convention is currently under way in Dublin. Among those addressing the conference is Richard Green from [Atheism UK](#). His is a new and small group seeking to establish itself in the marketplace of ideas where the most familiar voices are those of the National Secular Society and the British Humanist Association. What is distinctive about Atheism UK, Green insists, is that it's an atheist organisation for all atheists, including those not committed to humanism. "We cater for atheists who are not humanists," he says.

These days, atheists who are not humanists are an unfamiliar breed. Most atheists, and in particular the new atheists, regard themselves as committed humanists. Indeed, they are new in name only for they appeal back to the atheistic humanism of the Enlightenment, with its optimism about human nature and strong belief in the power of human reason and the inevitability of progress. Here humanism and atheism formed an alliance against all that stands over and against human flourishing. God must be dead so that humanity can thrive. Once emancipated from religious tyranny and dogma, humanity will thrive. As Kant believed, humanity must be its own highest being and ultimate end.

Yet throughout the 20th century many atheists rejected this picture. The sunny optimism of the Enlightenment – not least its commitment to progress and a sense of the intrinsic goodness of human nature – was profoundly dented by the horrors of the first world war and the Nazi death camps. The Enlightenment hadn't found another word for sin. And just as Nietzsche proclaimed the death of God, a developing anti-humanism started to announce what, in less gender-conscious times, Foucault was to call "the death of man". Indeed, Nietzsche himself insisted the belief in humanity was itself just a hangover from a belief in God and, once God was eradicated, the belief in human beings would follow the same way.

It was mostly Marxists who developed this idea and ran with it. Louis Althusser coined the term anti-humanism. Forget the significance of the human individual, he argued, it is historical processes that make the difference. There is no such thing as intrinsic humanity, we are all the product of external forces. Everything that cannot be analysed structurally is false consciousness. Humanism itself is false consciousness. Others made a parallel critique using Freudian psychoanalysis. Human beings are not little gods free to choose for themselves on the basis of reason alone. We are subject to forces outside the reach of rational scrutiny. And, broadly speaking, the intellectual left all rose in applause. As Emmanuel Levinas observed in 1957: "Contemporary thought holds out the surprise for us of an atheism that is not humanist."

Texas' Perry Urges Other Governors to Join Him at Prayer Events, Published:

June 5, 2011

SAN ANTONIO (Reuters) -- Saying "there is hope for America, and we will find it on our knees," Texas Governor Rick Perry has invited other governors to join him in a "solemn gathering of prayer and fasting" in August in Houston, according to the event's website.

Perry, who said recently he is considering a run for the Republican nomination to contest the presidency in 2012 against Barack Obama, has frequently made calls for prayer while governor.

"I sincerely hope you'll join me in Houston on August 6th and take your place in Reliant Stadium with praying people asking for God's forgiveness, wisdom and provision," Perry wrote in materials promoting the event, called "The Response, a Call to Prayer for a Nation in Crisis."

A message on the event's website says it is in response to a historic crisis and calls it "a non-denominational, apolitical Christian prayer meeting," with the goal "to rise up and make a sound that will be heard in heaven."

The site says Perry "has invited all US governors as well as many other national and Christian political leaders."

"Right now, America is in crisis," Perry says in a message on the site. "We have been besieged by financial debt, terrorism, and a multitude of natural disasters. As a nation, we must come together, and call upon Jesus to guide us..."

Perry's spokeswoman could not be reached for comment on the August event on Sunday.

Eric Bearse, a spokesman for The Response, said on Sunday: "The governor told the American Family Association about a month ago that we need to call Americans together for a time of prayer."

Bearse said the Mississippi-based American Family Association, a conservative Christian activist group, is paying for the event, and admission will not be charged.

In April, when Texas was in the middle of wildfires that burned nearly 3 million acres of the state, Perry issued an official proclamation calling for three "pray for rain days."

Last week, he urged a federal appeals court to overturn a ruling that prohibited graduating seniors at a Texas high school to pray during their commencement address.

(See article on page 3 of this newsletter) Ed.

Perry's Prayer-Palooza by Jim Hightower



I'm fairly certain that God doesn't want anything to do with this goober's show.

When Texas became a republic in 1836, its constitution banned "ministers of the gospel" from holding any political office.

Our problem these days, however, isn't ministers in office, but politicians posing as ministers, seizing the pulpit to preach and proselytize. To see such Elmer Gantryism in action, look no further than the showboating Texas governor, Rick "The Pious" Perry. Embarrassingly inept at governing, he has lately turned to prayer as his official solution for all problems. I don't mean a quiet, contemplative kind of praying, but garish public displays.

In April, with a Biblical-level drought and some 800 wildfires ravaging the state, Perry's gubernatorial response was to proclaim three "Days of Prayer for Rain." Three days came and went, but no rain. Presumably, Perry the Pious was praying up a storm, but not a drop fell from the heavens.

Undeterred, the gubernatorial padre simply doubled down on prayer politics. Proclaiming August 6 as a "Day of Prayer and Fasting," he invited all other governors to join him in Houston for a seven-hour prayer-palooza, dubbed "The Response."

It's billed as "a nondenominational, apolitical, Christian" event to unify all Americans by calling upon Jesus "to guide us through unprecedented struggles." Wait...What about all those Americans who are Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or members of other faiths? No room at the inn for them?

Adding to this fiasco, Perry's co-sponsor for The Response is the American Family Association — a Mississippi-based extremist outfit infamous for bashing gays and Muslims.

The governor's spokeswoman loudly insists that his Prayerfest "doesn't have anything to do with (Perry's presidential ambitions)" — which, of course, means that it does. But I'm fairly certain that God doesn't want anything to do with this goober's show.

The atheistic critique of humanism has been all but forgotten New atheists duck the philosophical arguments of atheistic anti-humanism reprinted from the *Gardian UK*

The World Atheist Convention is currently under way in Dublin. Among those addressing the conference is Richard Green from [Atheism UK](#).

His is a new and small group seeking to establish itself in the marketplace of ideas where the most familiar voices are those of the National Secular Society and the British Humanist Association. What is distinctive about Atheism UK, Green insists, is that it's an atheist organisation for all atheists, including those not committed to humanism. "We cater for atheists who are not humanists," he says.

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It is worth recounting a small part of this increasingly forgotten tale to lament what has become of a noble tradition. For it seems the atheistic critique of humanism has been all but forgotten. Richard Green's "atheists who are not humanists" could meet in a phone box. Indeed, the new atheists simply duck the challenge made by atheistic anti-humanism, believing their expensive scientific toys can outflank the alleged conceptual weakness of their humanism. Thus they dismiss the significance of philosophy just as much as they have always done of theology — as if the two were fundamentally in cahoots. But this is nonsense. Nietzsche, Marx and Freud attacked Christianity with passionate ferocity.

(Continued from page 1)

We have prayed a lot about this decision, and we believe with all our hearts that this is what God wants." Karen Santorum declared.

Michele Bachmann: Meanwhile, Michele Bachmann is [all but certain](#) to jump into the race soon, and when she does, it will signal that God has been quietly encouraging her to run for president as well. As Bachmann [told World Net Daily in 2009](#), she would never run without God's personal endorsement:

"If I felt that's what the Lord was calling me to do, I would do it," she answered. "When I have sensed that the Lord is calling me to do something, I've said yes to it. But I will not seek a higher office if God is not calling me to do it. That's really my standard.

"If I am called to serve in that realm I would serve," she concluded, "but if I am not called, I wouldn't do it."

Bachmann [recently confirmed](#) that she has, indeed, "had that calling and that tugging on my heart."

God hasn't been universally generous with his support. He [went out of his way to let Mike Huckabee know that he shouldn't run for president](#), lest he take his focus off the much more important task of producing a series of [conservative American history DVDs](#). And though God [arranged for Sarah Palin to be chosen as John McCain's running mate](#) in 2008, there's nothing to indicate that he backs her potential candidacy in 2012. Nevertheless, the fact that God has privately encouraged the candidacies of three different Republicans may cause voters to question whether, in reality, he really even has any preference at all.

God could not be reached for comment by press time, because, a spokesman says, he was helping a baseball player hit a game-winning home run, giving an old churchgoing lady the winning lottery numbers, making sure that a plane made it through the turbulence okay, helping someone survive a heart attack, and also, just for fun, creating a new animal that's like a cross between a leopard and an alligator.

This article was first posted on The Daily Intel

Your editor has also spoken with God, and was informed that his/her choice will be Rick Perry, because he is indeed the most "God fearing" of all the candidates.

This will be my final editing of the your newsletter - I tried diligently to find a replacement, to no avail. I've enjoyed my tenure and hope someone will replace me soon

Ray Weil

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