

HUMANISTS

of FORT WORTH

Volume 14, Number 6

Happy



Humanist

June, 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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Laziness pays off now, but hard work pays off in the future.

Anon

Meeting

June 12, 2013 7:00 PM

SPEAKER: Dick Trice

TOPIC: HUMANISM

More on page 4.

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.

! Thanks !

The Meaning of Humanism

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

Humanism as a philosophy has ever competed with other philosophic viewpoints for the allegiance of men. But however far-reaching its disagreements with rival philosophies of the past and present, Humanism at least agrees with them on the importance of philosophy as such. That importance stems from the perennial need of human beings to find significance in their lives, to integrate their personalities around some clear, consistent and compelling view of existence, and to seek definite and reliable methods in the solution of their problems. Philosophy brings clarity and meaning into the careers of individuals, nations, and civilizations.

2. HUMANISM DEFINED

First: Humanism believes in a naturalistic metaphysics or attitude toward the universe that considers all forms of the supernatural as myth; and that regards Nature as the totality of being and as a constantly changing system of matter and energy which exists independently of any mind or consciousness.

Second: Humanism, drawing especially upon the laws and facts of science, believes that we human beings are an evolutionary product of the Nature of which we are a part; that the mind is indivisibly conjoined with the functioning of the brain; and that as an inseparable unity of body and personality we can have no conscious survival after death.

Third: Humanism, having its ultimate faith in humankind, believes that human beings possess the power or potentiality of solving their own problems, through reliance primarily upon reason and scientific method applied with courage and vision.

Fourth: Humanism, in opposition to all theories of universal determinism, fatalism, or predestination, believes that human beings, while conditioned by the past, possess genuine freedom of creative choice and action, and are, within certain objective limits, the shapers of their own destiny.

Fifth: Humanism believes in an ethics or morality that grounds all human values in this-earthly experiences and relationships and that holds as its highest goal the this-worldly happiness, freedom, and progress— economic, cultural, and ethical— of all mankind, irrespective of nation, race, or religion.

Sixth: Humanism believes that the individual attains the good life by harmoniously combining personal satisfactions and continuous self-development with significant work and other activities that contribute to the welfare of the community.

Seventh: Humanism believes in the widest possible development of art and the awareness of beauty, including the appreciation of Nature's loveliness and splendor, so that the aesthetic experience may become a pervasive reality in the life of all people.

Eighth: Humanism believes in a far-reaching social program that stands for the establishment throughout the world of democracy, peace, and a high standard of living on the foundations of a flourishing economic order, both national and international.

Ninth: Humanism believes in the complete social implementation of reason and scientific method; and thereby in democratic procedures and parliamentary government, with full freedom of expression and civil liberties, throughout all areas of economic, political and cultural life.

Tenth: Humanism, in accordance with scientific method, believes in the unending questioning of basic assumptions and convictions including its own. Humanism is not a new dogma, but is a developing philosophy ever open to experimental testing, newly discovered facts, and more rigorous reasoning.

The preceding was taken from *The Philosophy of Humanism*, by Corliss Lamont, Eighth Edition, Revised.

June 2013

Officers and Board Members

Chair: Sam Baker

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Email: sambaker@hotmail.com

Vice-Chair/Past Chair: Gene Gwin

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Secretary: John Fisher

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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

PRESENTATION FOR JUNE MEETING

HUMANISM
A CONVERSATION
ABOUT WHO WE ARE
AND WHY

*

Presented By
Dick Trice
Board Member
Past Chair of HoFW



“Humanists recognize that it is only when people feel free to think for themselves, using reason as their guide, that they are best capable of developing values that succeed in satisfying human needs and serving human interests.”

ISAAC ASIMOV (1920-1992) - scientist, author, and past-president of the American Humanist Association.

From the . . .



. . . *Sam Baker*

Deifying the Founding Fathers: "How Dare You Think You Could Do Better"

We are raised to believe that America's Founding Fathers occupy positions just below the Christian triumvirate and that they were almost as perfect as Jesus (if you can forget that most of them were slave owners and believed that only white landowning males should be able to vote).

Although we have expanded the categories of people who have the right to vote since 1789, we haven't changed the framework of congressional elections we inherited: winner-take-all. Since that is the system we all grew up with, most of us accept it uncritically because our parents and teachers did. Even if a congressional candidate wins with only 50.1% of the vote, somehow it seems "fair" to us that the other 49.9% have no representation at all in the House. After all, if this is the system the Founding Fathers bequeathed to us, then it must be as close to perfection as humanly possible.

Here is an interchange I had with someone on a Huffington Post discussion board (I'll refer to other guy as "Average American"):

Me:

Single member, winner-take-all congressional districts insure that the House is not representative of the people. We may have had the most

democratic government in 1789, but most Western countries have far more democratic systems now than we do. We need to adopt multi-member districts like they have.

<http://archive.fairvote.org/?page=107>

<Http://fairvote.org/choice-voting#UZA4EafUJ>

Average American:

You think you could write a better Constitution than Jefferson, Adams and the other founding fathers? What an outsized ego you have!

They constructed two houses so that the people would have direct representation in the House and states large and small to have equality in the Senate. They did a damned good job.

Me:

The Founding Fathers weren't gods, and they shouldn't be worshiped as such. They were Enlightenment intellectuals. They knew they were fallible, and they knew they were embarking on an experiment which would require adjustments.

<<< Continued from page 5

Our public schools fail to teach people to think critically.

We need proportional representation.

<http://www.fairvote.org/fair-voting-proportional-representation#.UZA5-EafjUI>

Average American:

Wake up! We have proportional representation in the House. The founding fathers were brilliant. Who are you to think you are smarter than they were?

Me:

What we have in the House is the product of 400 plus gerrymandered single member congressional districts.

<http://archive.fairvote.org/?page=107>

Average American:

I still think the founders developed a good system, not perfect but the best in the world.

Let's recall again what George Carlin so wisely observed (my editing in brackets):

*

But I'll tell you what [the real owners of America] 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. They don't want people who are smart enough to sit around the kitchen table and figure out how badly they're getting fucked by a system that threw them overboard 30 fucking years ago.

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 . . . [the way things are].

*

Here's a modest proposal. Let's develop a new patriotism based on reality rather than myth.

If you believe in your own hallucinations, it's called insanity.

If you believe in another's hallucinations, it's called a Religion!

Anon

Editorial . . . **Know Your Bible? 10**

Don Ruhs

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

From: Various sources, including the Holy Bible.

THE REAL STORY OF THE RED SEA CROSSING OF MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES MAKES IT PRETTY MUCH IMPOSSIBLE

It's been a while since I'd read about Moses arguing with the Pharaoh to get out of Egypt. Moses ultimately led the Israelites out of Egypt after the final plague of killing all first born Egyptians (see: Passover).

After Moses held up his staff to part the waters of the Red Sea (Reed Sea) to allow the Israelites to pass through to the other side, the Egyptian army followed, the waters closing in on them, drowning and destroying all. We all know this old Exodus story from church and Sunday School classes.

What they did not tell you in Sunday School was to check Num 1:1-4 and Num 1:44-49. These verses cast serious doubts on the story.

The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt saying: "Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male of their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: Thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies." Num 1:1-3

The number of able-bodied men for each tribe varied from 32,200 (Manasseh) to 74,600 (Judah). The total number of men for the army was 603,550 (Num 1:46). Sure, this was described after the Red Sea crossing, but only by two years and not enough to seriously affect the over-all census.

Realize that this count is only of able-bodied men. Biblical scholars have calculated from demographics and family sizes of the time that by counting older men, women, and children there would be a total population of about two to three million. Add another calculated 600,000 cattle to this mass movement.

That means that those two million (let's be conservative) Israelites marching ten across would have made a column 150, or more, miles long. With hard marching, that would take, at least, a week for a 150 mile long column to get through the Red Sea.

The Bible information and the calculations of Biblical scholars places serious doubt on this story. Would the sea waters stay parted for a week? Wouldn't the Egyptian army catch up with the Israelites in a week before they all crossed to the other side? Would the river bed have been dry enough for the 600,000 cattle not to muddy it hock deep and flail around like June Bugs in maple syrup?

The Bible (Ex 14) describes this passing as occurring in one day. This would have been impossible. And would the entire Egyptian army have been drowned as described in Ex 14:28?

Doesn't this fable as described in the Bible and the calculations of Biblical scholars make it impossible to believe this fairy tale? Isn't it better to be skeptical and face the truth of the world as we know it from facts and honesty? Isn't it good to be skeptical?

C. Boyd Pfeiffer

Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because if there be one, he must approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

Thomas Jefferson (1734-1826)

Humanists of Fort Worth

June 2013

Humanists of Fort Worth

Minutes

May 8, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Sam Baker. There were thirteen in attendance including five visitors.

A discussion circle was held to give individuals an opportunity to speak about what drew them to Humanism, their personal experiences, evolution of thought, etc.

After a short break for refreshments, the discussion resumed until 9:00 PM, when the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

John Fisher

John Fisher, Secretary

Humanists of Fort Worth

June 2013

Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

Treasurer's Report

Report Date: 8-May-2013

Beginning Balance 10-April-2013 **\$1,314.55**

CREDITS	Date	Amount
DUES	5/08/2013	0

TOTAL CREDITS 0

DEBITS	Activity	Ck. #	Date	Amount
Westside UU Church	Donation	424	4/28/2013	<u>\$300.00</u>

TOTAL DEBITS **\$300.00**

TOTAL CREDITS LESS DEBITS **\$300.00**

Ending Balance 8-May-2013 **\$1,014.55**

Attest:

Signature: *Dolores M. Ruhs* Date: 8-May-2013

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

c:\My Documents\HoFW Treasurer's Reports MSXL 8-May-13



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* May 2013, page 22

AROUND THE WORLD

Malta May Limit Church Control of Marriage

Malta's prime minister is seeking to drop the Catholic Church's control over the country's marriage laws.

The Times of Malta reported that Prime Minister Joseph Muscat said he will be asking the Vatican to discuss revising the 1992 church-state agreement, including ending the subordination of Malta's civil marriage law to the church's Ecclesiastical Tribunal.

The newspaper reported that in a meeting with church officials, Muscat made a point to discuss civil unions.

"It is obvious that the church will not agree with this and I understand the position of the Roman Catholic Church, but the government has a very clear mandate to legislate civil unions in this country and that is what we will be doing," Muscat said, according to the Times.

A church representative did not, however, take a hard-line stance against civil marriage.

"Together we will see what is best for the Maltese population even regards to civil marriage," Archbishop Paul Cremona said, according to the Times.

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

The Evolution of GOD

By Robert Wright

Pub. 2009 by Little, Brown and Company.

In THE EVOLUTION OF GOD, award-winning and best-selling author Robert Wright takes us on a sweeping journey through history unveiling a discovery of crucial importance to the present moment: there is a pattern in the evolution of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and a "hidden code" in their scriptures. Reading these scriptures in light of the circumstances surrounding their creation, He reveals the forces that have repeatedly moved the Abrahamic faiths away from belligerence and intolerance to a higher moral plane. And he shows how these forces could today let these faiths reassert their deep proclivity toward harmony and reconciliation: the reconciliation of science and religion.

Using the prisms of archeology and, theology, history, and evolutionary psychology, he repeatedly overturns conventional wisdom:

- Contrary to the belief that Moses brought monotheism to the Middle East, ancient Israel was in fact polytheistic until after the Babylonian exile.
• Jesus didn't really say, "Love your enemies," or extol the Good Samaritan. These misquotes were inserted in scripture decades after the Crucifixion
• Mohammad was neither a militant religious zealot nor a benign spiritual leader but a cool political pragmatist, at one point flirting with polytheism in an attempt to build his coalition.

Wright shows that, however mistaken our traditional ideas about God or gods, their evolution points to a transcendent prospect: that the religious quest is valid, and that a modern, scientific worldview leaves room for something that can meaningfully be called divine.

Vast in ambition and brilliant in execution, The Evolution of God will forever alter our understanding of God and where He came from — and where He and we are going next.

Reminder

**HoFW Membership Renewal
For fiscal year 2013-2014
Is due the first of March**

Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer

See membership categories on page 3.

Reminder

Secular Humanism: A definition

Secular humanism is a philosophy and world view which centers upon human concerns and employs rational and scientific methods to address the wide range of issues important to us all. While secular humanism is at odds with faith-based religious systems on many issues, it is dedicated to the fulfillment of the individual and humankind in general. To accomplish this end, secular humanism encourages a commitment to a set of principles which promote the development of tolerance and compassion and an understanding of the methods of science, critical analysis, and philosophical reflection.