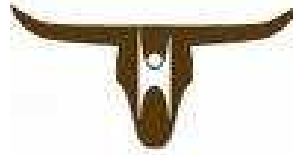


COWTOWN



HUMANIST

March

2010

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

From The Chair



If you weren't present at our February meeting you missed a good report of THE FAMILY by Tom Woods and a spirited discussion, to say nothing of the cake and coffee refreshments. We had two new members join, Lon and Sharon Heldenbrand, both long-time freethinkers and tireless workers for equal rights and better government. They are most welcome!

For our March meeting, the tenth, Mr. Lin Wells will bring everyone up-to-date on the 9-11 controversy. It may not be common knowledge but more and more VIPs are questioning the incredible Bush version or, better yet, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) version, of the incredible Bush version or, better yet, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) version, of the disaster.

Of the many speaking out for the first time are the two co-chairs of the 9-11 Commission who are now making disclaimers of their so-called investigation. Even if you feel doubters are conspiracy nuts, you will be interested in knowing the latest developments and the people who are involved.

Come, hear, and contribute you two cents for either side to a really important debate. go to the following for more info:

www.losthorizons.com/911.htm and <http://globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=13242>

Where do these people come from?

The state legislature in Virginia is debating whether they might be the end times. The involuntary implantation of microchips in people might be the biblical "mark of the beast," a Virginia state legislator contends, and should be outlawed.

Now, "I'm not a theologian," Republican Mark Cole contends that privacy is the main reason he's sponsoring a bill, but "there's a prophecy in the Bible that says you'll have to receive a mark ... in end times."

"Computer chips might be that mark," Cole tells the *Washington Post*. As the theory goes, chip implantation by employers and government for information gathering or monitoring could lead to a totalitarian state, controlled by the antichrist, similar to the one foretold in the Book of Revelation.

"This is part of a larger attempt to constantly read current history in the light of the symbolic language of the Book," an expert says. A foe of the bill is less charitable. "At least when Nero fiddled, they got good music."

while a handful of Americans might have taken a few minutes to reflect favorably on George Washington and Abe Lincoln on Presidents Day, some evangelical leaders devoted their time to praying for Barack Obama's death. The "Imprecatory Prayer" is a favorite of Arizona's Baptist preacher Steven L. Anderson and Orange County's Wiley Drake, who told supporters in an email over the weekend that the supplication is "now your DUTY."

If "you have an evil leader above you, you pray that Satan will stand by his side and you ask God to make his children fatherless and his wife a widow and that his time in office be short," Drake told *Daily Beast* columnist John Avlon. Anderson has said he hopes Obama dies of brain cancer "today." To those offended by the sentiments, Wiley responds: "**I'm praying the word of God. I didn't write it. Don't get mad at me.**"

Call for Nominations to the AHA Board of Directors

In accordance with the AHA bylaws, the AHA Board of Directors approved the appointment of five AHA members, none of whom are current members of the Board or can be nominated for the current election, to serve on the Nomination Committee for the 2010 AHA Board of Directors election. They are Mel Lipman (chair), Carl Coon, Amanda K. Metskas, Sue Reamer, and Warren Wolf. The Nomination Committee was approved at the AHA board meeting on October 9, 2009 in Sacramento, CA.

The Nomination Committee has issued a call to the AHA membership to nominate candidates to serve on the AHA Board of Directors. Six seats of our twelve member board are up for election in 2010. Nominees must have been members in good standing of the AHA for one or more years immediately prior to nomination. The deadline for submitting candidates is April 19, 2010.

And for the first time, all AHA members will have the option to vote online for the board! Voters will still be sent paper ballots, but instead of sending back a ballot card, members who choose to do so can go online, enter in a unique identification number (which will be provided) and vote. More details will follow about this exciting new opportunity

To learn more about the criteria for serving on the Board, or if you'd like to nominate yourself or another individual for consideration, visit

Haiti and the hypocrisy of Christian theology by Richard Dawkins - op ed in The Washington Post

We know what caused the catastrophe in Haiti. It was the bumping and grinding of the Caribbean Plate rubbing up against the North American Plate: a force of nature, sin-free and indifferent to sin, un-premeditated, unmotivated, supremely unconcerned with human affairs or human misery.

The religious mind, however, restlessly seeks human meaning in the blind happenings of nature. As with the Indonesian tsunami, which was blamed on loose sexual morals in tourist bars; as with Hurricane Katrina, which was attributed to divine revenge on the entire city of New Orleans for harboring a lesbian comedian, and as with other disasters going back to the famous Lisbon earthquake and beyond, so Haiti's tragedy must be payback for human sin. The Rev. Pat Robertson sees the hand of God in the earthquake, wreaking terrible retribution for a pact that the long-dead ancestors of today's Haitians made with the devil, to help rid them of their French masters.

Needless to say, milder-mannered faith-heads are falling over themselves to disown Pat Robertson, just as they disowned those other pastors, evangelists, missionaries and mullahs at the time of the earlier disasters.

What hypocrisy. Loathsome as Robertson's views undoubtedly are, he is the Christian who stands squarely in the Christian tradition. The agonized theodiceans who see suffering as an intractable 'mystery', or who 'see God' in the help, money and goodwill that is now flooding into Haiti, or (most nauseating of all) who claim to see God 'suffering on the cross' in the ruins of Port-au-Prince, those faux-anguished hypocrites are denying the centrepiece of their own theology. It is the obnoxious Pat Robertson who is the true Christian here.

Where was God in Noah's flood? He was systematically drowning the entire world, animal as well as human, as punishment for 'sin'. Where was God when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed with fire and brimstone? He was deliberately barbecuing the citizenry, lock stock and barrel, as punishment for 'sin'. Dear modern, enlightened, theologically sophisticated Christian, your entire religion is founded on an obsession with 'sin', with punishment and with atonement.

Where do you find the effrontery to condemn Pat Robertson, you who have signed up to the obnoxious doctrine that the central purpose of Jesus' incarnation was to have himself tortured as a scapegoat for the 'sins' of all mankind, past, present and future, beginning with the 'sin' of Adam, who (as any modern theologian well knows) never even existed? To quote the President of one theological seminary, writing in these very pages:

"The earthquake in Haiti, like every other earthly disaster, reminds us that creation groans under the weight of sin and the judgment of God. This is true for every cell in our bodies, even as it is for the crust of the earth at every point on the globe.

" You nice, middle-of-the-road theologians and clergymen, be-frocked and bleating in your pulpits, you disclaim Pat Robertson's suggestion that the Haitians are paying for a pact with the devil. But you worship a god-man who - as you tell your congregations even if you don't believe it yourself - 'cast out devils'. You even believe (or you don't disabuse your flock when they believe) that Jesus cured a madman by causing the 'devils' in him to fly into a herd of pigs and stampede them over a cliff. Charming story, well calculated to uplift and inspire the Sunday School and the Infant Bible Class. Pat Robertson may spout evil nonsense, but he is a mere amateur at that game. Just read your own Bible. Pat Robertson is true to it. But you?

Educated apologist, how dare you weep Christian tears, when your entire theology is one long celebration of suffering: suffering as payback for 'sin' - or suffering as 'atonement' for it? You may weep for Haiti where Pat Robertson does not, but at least, in his hick, sub-Palinesque ignorance, he holds up an honest mirror to the ugliness of Christian theology. You are nothing but a whited sepulchre.



From the Humanist at Harvard



I've been thinking a lot about the concept of home lately. As many of you know, I was away much of last semester, traveling around the United States, talking with people from all backgrounds and walks of life about Humanism in general and my book [*Good Without God*](#) in particular.

I've sat on panels with rabbis, priests, pastors, and imams; been protested by a troupe of comedians in religious drag; met with groups of Harvard alumni wanting to know how they can help their alma mater grow more supportive of Humanism; and just sat around for long evenings with young people from Baltimore to Tulsa to Palo Alto to New York City, dreaming together of building a Humanist movement strong enough to take a leading role in fighting for the dignity of every person. The response has been overwhelming.

I continue to hear by email, phone, and on Facebook from dozens of people who are hungry to learn more, get involved, and take a leadership responsibility for building Humanist community. My very small but dedicated staff and I are doing our best to get back to everyone, starting of course with members of our own Harvard community. For my new office hours schedule and other opportunities for us to meet.

I'm so happy to be home; back on campus and working with students, alums and **Page 2**

The God Crisis By Landon Ross

As far back as I can remember contemplating the nature of the world on any serious level, I have been an atheist. Of course, I didn't know there was a word for it, I simply felt the same thing towards God that I felt towards the tooth fairy. For a time, I assumed that everyone felt the same way as they grew up and shed the superstitions we like to believe as children. But that was short lived, of course. I soon realized that there was a particular implausible story that even adults clung to. In the past years, beginning with 9-11 and accelerating during my time at university, speaking up against religion and its encroachment into the classroom and the state became a worthy and consuming goal.

Last week, I attended the [Atheist Alliance International](#) conference. It had been their largest meeting to date. The speakers included scientists and luminaries, philosophers and activists. The impressive coalition included cosmologist Lawrence Krauss, planetary scientist Carolyn Porco, evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, philosopher Daniel Dennet, [Pharyngula's](#) PZ Meyers, Eugenie Scott, and the always witty Bill Maher.

A few years ago, author Sam Harris told this convention's hall full of atheists, that we shouldn't be using the term "atheist" to describe ourselves. I agree, and I rejoice in Harris' dedication to reason and science, but I couldn't disagree more with his corollary argument that we should advocate for reason and science "under the radar." We've *been* under the radar, it hasn't worked very well. Harris was referring to the fact that atheism is not an affirmation of anything, but rather a negation of certain beliefs: we don't say we're non-astrologists, non-racists, or a-Zeusians, we simply refuse to believe such nonsense. However, I'll use the term here for the sake of expediency.

American atheists and agnostics outnumber all (American) Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus *combined*, so how many lobbying firms do we have in Washington? You might imagine my surprise when Sean Faircloth, Executive Director of the [Secular Coalition for America](#), gave me his sobering answer: one ... his own. That's right, in the face of the Christian lobby and the religious right - with more money than "god" in their coffers - we secularists are an insignificant speed-bump. That we have reason and the constitution on our side won't make enough of a difference, if we don't organize.

It's a (bad) joke we tell each other: organizing atheists is like herding cats (we're no flock of sheep). I can see the malformed logic behind this, and many repeat the meme, but the reality is that there's no reason this should be true. Heterogeneous groups are quite capable of organizing behind a cause, or a movement. Luckily, I felt a sense of growing urgency and frustration at this year's conference. No longer can we afford to play nice with those who refuse to be *reasonable*.

This is 2010, we now know more about our world than we have throughout all of human history. We live in the golden age of science. Yet, in an America where pundits and politicians so often revel in American "exceptionalism," an NSF survey found that:

-50% of *adults* don't know that the Earth orbits the Sun, and takes a year to do it.

-53% of *adults* were unaware that the last dinosaur died before the first human arose.

-only 53 % of *adults* knew that: "Human beings, as we know them today, developed from earlier species of animals."

(Lawrence Krauss quipped that Sarah Palin is a member of this last group, as he hit us with these figures.)

Worse, one political party has become distinctly anti-science, and the other doesn't have the guts to make it an issue, likely from fear of being labeled as the "intellectual elite" (the phrase has come to be derogatory, somehow.)

So allow me to make some blunt observations that might not be politically correct, but are nevertheless obvious:

Non-believers tend to be well-educated, scientifically minded, and smarter than average:

93% of the National Academy of Sciences do not believe in a personal God, yet roughly 80-90% of the general public do.

In countries where there is a high standard of living and education, as more than one AAI speaker pointed out, roughly 80% of the population are non-believers (Sweden, Norway, Denmark etc.).

With the state of our education system being what it is, other countries are on a future trajectory to out-compete us in science and technology. Since science and technology have accounted for roughly half of per-capita GDP growth over the last 50 years, it's hugely unpatriotic to do nothing in the face of money-eyed interests pushing superstition into the classroom and public policy. During his talk, [PZ Meyers](#) pointed out that the single most important indicator of scientific ability is math. If I made a habit out of making bad puns, I might say, "Houston, we have a problem..."

[Eugenie Scott](#), who fights to keep creationism and it's reincarnation "intelligent design" out of the classroom, gave a harrowing talk regarding the state of science education. She explained in breathtaking relief, how after many courtroom defeats, lawyers and lawmakers opposed to evolution are becoming increasingly clever at achieving their goal of teaching creationism in the classroom (they are *evolving* to circumvent previous rulings). In some states, this problem is growing discouragingly quickly. What should really frighten us is that, even with the current laws in place, some teachers are intimidated by controversy into simply skipping over evolution, which is the *foundation* for all biology.

Another topic that seemed to arise frequently in my conversations with conference attendees, was the frustration that it has become fashionable to hold completely irrational beliefs *in addition* to the mainstream theologies. After reading the mission statement for the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, I decided to replicate the exercise Dawkins describes: I went to a local bookstore and counted about eight good books on astronomy, but around 25 on astrology.

Watchdog Group Hails Decision Curbing Government Intervention In Religion

A federal court has struck down a North Carolina county's policy of opening board meetings with sectarian prayers.

U.S. District Judge James A. Beaty held that the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners' preference for Christian prayers violates the constitutional separation of church and state.

Observed Beaty, "The prayers offered in the implementation of the Policy here did not reflect diversity and inclusiveness, and instead were divisive and had the effect of affiliating the Government with one particular belief."

Plaintiffs in the *Joyner v. Forsyth County* lawsuit are Janet Joyner and Constance Lynn Blackmon, two county residents and members of the Winston-Salem Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Americans United hailed the judge's ruling.

"Government has an obligation to represent people of all faiths and none," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director. "Forsyth County ran afoul of that standard with its prayer policy, and we're glad the court put a stop to it."

Thursday's decision confirms a finding issued Nov. 9 by U.S. Magistrate Judge P. Trevor Sharp. In his finding, Sharp noted that the government-sponsored invocations at board meetings are overwhelmingly Christian in character, alienating those with non-Christian beliefs and dividing citizens along religious lines.

Sharp pointed out that the record in the case indicates that 26 of the 33 invocations given from May 29, 2007, until Dec. 15, 2008, contained at least one reference to Jesus, Jesus Christ, Christ, Savior or the Trinity.

Americans United Legal Director Ayesha N. Khan said the ruling is an important reminder that government must not meddle in religious matters.

"Government has no business offering sectarian prayers on behalf of a diverse community," Khan said. "This ruling should serve as important reminder to other towns, cities and counties to make sure their policies are in accord with the Constitution."

The Forsyth County litigation was handled by the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina in collaboration with attorneys from Americans United.

Americans United is a religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1947, the organization educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom

For Chuck Colson, it must have been a dream come true.

The Nixon-era Watergate figure turned evangelical Christian and right-wing political activist stood in a packed room at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., Nov. 20 surrounded by nearly two dozen Roman Catholic, evangelical and Orthodox leaders who were joining forces to release a document demanding that the United States pay homage to their religious vision.

Reflecting on the moment later, Colson wrote in a column, "It was a foretaste of what we're all going to see in heaven, when those of us who can truly trust the Bible, who love Christ with all our hearts, minds, and souls, are re-united in the presence of our gracious and loving God."

The problem is, Colson's heaven may look like hell to a lot of other people. Critics say the document Colson and his allies released that day, dubbed the "Manhattan Declaration," is essentially a cry for theocracy in the United States, a demand that Americans defer to conservative religious leaders because they're right – right about the Bible, right about religion and right about the "culture wars."

The Declaration, a joint project of Colson, Princeton University professor Robert P. George and the Rev. Timothy George – the two Georges are not related – of Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala., takes aim at the popular bugbears of the Religious Right: legal abortion, same-sex marriage and efforts to apply civil law to religious institutions and individuals. It also represents perhaps the most far-reaching effort to date to juice up the Religious Right by adding the political power and media respectability of the Catholic and Orthodox hierarchies.

For Colson, it's the culmination of a long-standing goal: to pull together a united front of right-wing religious orthodoxy against modernity and individual freedom. At the same time, the new effort could add some political traction for a Religious Right movement that has found itself largely on the political outs with Democrats in control of Congress and Barack Obama in the White House.

Named for the section of New York City where it was drafted, the Declaration outlines the religious leaders' opposition to legal abortion and same-sex marriage. It also demands that government recognize "conscience clauses," such as the right of devout pharmacists to refuse to dispense medications they find morally objectionable.

The Declaration states that its signers "will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia" and pledges defiance against "any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family."

Humanists Praise President Obama for His Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast

(Washington, DC, February 4, 2010) The American Humanist Association today praised President Obama's comments at the National Prayer Breakfast, expressing gratitude that in his remarks the President included and commended nontheists among those who are leading relief efforts in Haiti. "The compassion and decency of the American people is expressed... by Americans of every faith, and no faith, uniting around a common purpose, a higher purpose," Obama stated at the event this morning.

"By including us in his acknowledgement of the overwhelming and amazing response to the Haitian catastrophe, President Obama echoed what we have claimed all along, that one can be good without God," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association.

"For humanists and others who don't believe in an afterlife, we recognize that this is the only life we have and we have a responsibility to make it the best it can be. That means helping others in need, such as providing relief in times of disaster—which is exactly what our aid organization Humanist Charities is doing right now in Haiti.

Humanist Charities was the first on the ground in Jacmel, a region in Haiti that was devastated by the earthquake but had not received much attention from the media. We have made a big difference for the people there," said Speckhardt.

Humanist Charities is an explicitly secular relief organization administered by the American Humanist Association. It donated over \$50,000 to Haitian relief efforts immediately following the earthquake that devastated Haiti in January.

In addition to including nontheists in his remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast, Humanists were pleased that President Obama used the forum as an opportunity to condemn Uganda's anti-homosexuality bill. The bill, introduced by Ugandan MP David Bahati, would make homosexuality a capital offense in Uganda. Bahati is connected with the fundamentalist religious network, the Fellowship Foundation, which has numerous connections in Washington and, with congressional sponsorship, organizes the National Prayer Breakfast. In condemning the Ugandan bill, Obama said, "We may disagree about gay marriage, but surely we can agree that it is unconscionable to target gays and lesbians for who they are [with] odious laws that are being proposed most recently in Uganda."

"President Obama used this opportunity to not only reiterate his concerns with the Ugandan bill, but to do so in front of an audience that has direct influence on the bill's sponsor," noted Speckhardt. "In doing so, he showed great leadership. We hope it will help stop Bahati's efforts."

Speckhardt expressed some overall concerns with the nature of the National Prayer Breakfast itself, however, noting that it is essentially a religious event: "Despite being pleased with Obama's remarks this morning, it is still troubling that President Obama and other elected officials continue to implicitly sanction this event," he said.

Report: 94 members of the Catholic Church accused of sexual abuse in Germany

BERLIN (AP) - The German news magazine Der Spiegel reports that the number of suspected sexual abuse cases in Germany by Roman Catholic clergy and laymen is much higher than was previously thought.

According to a poll by Spiegel, answered by 27 Catholic dioceses in Germany, more than 94 clerics and laymen have been suspected of sexual abuse since 1995. Only 30 have been prosecuted, due to the statute of limitations.

Ten employees of the Catholic church are currently accused of sexual abuse in Germany.

Germany has been shocked by revelations of serial sex abuse by Catholic priests in recent weeks. More than 20 alumni of Berlin's prestigious Canisius Kolleg have reported abuse by their former Jesuit teachers. Other students have also reported cases in cities across Germany where the priests also taught.

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Feb 15, 2010 A top Vatican official on Monday told Irish bishops in Rome for talks with Pope Benedict on the Irish Church's vast pedophilia scandal that clergy who had sinned must admit blame for "abominable acts."

The message came in the sermon of a mass in St Peter's Basilica shortly before the bishops started two days of crisis talks with the pope to formulate a response to the revelations of abuse by clergy that have shaken devoutly Catholic Ireland.

Published on Friday, February 19, 2010 by [The New Yorker](#) by John Cassidy

In the wake of yesterday's [fascinating report](#) in the *Times* about sixty-something Tea Party activists bracing for a violent counter-revolution, several people have asked me why Americans are so angry. I am tempted to say that that is what age and a steady diet of Fox News does to people, but that can't be the full story. (Roger Ailes and his gang have been on air since 1996.)

One factor that the *Times* article tiptoed around, but which undoubtedly plays some role, is racism. For some white Americans of a certain age and background, the sight of a black man in the Oval Office, even one who went to Harvard Law School and conducts himself in the manner of an aloof WASP aristocrat, is an affront. While President Obama's approval rating has fallen in almost all groups, the biggest slippage has taken place among whites, especially middle- and working-class whites. A [Gallup poll](#) identified this trend last November, and it surely played a role in Scott Brown's victory in Massachusetts.

If you have it banged into your head from the cradle to adolescence that America is the chosen nation—a country built by a rugged and God-fearing band of Anglo-Saxon individualists armed with pikes and long guns—you are less likely to embrace other essential features of the American heritage, such as the church-state divide, mass immigration, and the essential role of the federal government in the country's economic and political development.

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2010/02/19-5>

The Year in Quotes from the State Board of Education

Sadly, 2009 has been an embarrassing year for Texas when it comes to public education. Political extremists on the State Board of Education couldn't stop themselves from saying whatever absurd thoughts burst into their minds. And with the Texas Freedom Network's help, reporters were there to record these gems for posterity. Here's a sampling of the nonsense we heard this year:

"I disagree with these experts! Somebody's gotta stand up to experts that are... I don't know why they're doing it." -- Don McLeroy, in a rambling defense of his efforts to dumb down instruction on evolution in Texas public school science classrooms

"Conservatives like me think the evidence (for human contributions to global warming) is a bunch of hooley." -- Don McLeroy, explaining his support for challenging the existence of global warming/climate change in new science curriculum standards"

"I pray for my three friends, Pat Hardy of Ft. Worth, Bob Craig of Lubbock, and Geraldine 'Tincy' Miller of Dallas. They voted against the Republican Party platform and allowed themselves to be constantly lobbied by prominent atheists and secular humanists. These three Republicans will now have to stand accountable before their constituents." -- SBOE member Ken Mercer, criticizing three fellow Republican board members for opposing efforts to dumb down instruction on evolution in new science curriculum standards

"They [scientists] don't want to talk about the science because they lose that argument continually. The science is overwhelmingly against evolution." -- Terri Leo, talking about the debate over teaching evolution in public school science classrooms

"Understandable concerns may arise that such an address has the potential to open the door to students accepting an unconstitutional level of direct accountability to National Governing Authorities." -- Cynthia Dunbar, recommending in September that school districts not allow students to watch a planned speech by President Obama to schoolchildren across the country

The "education establishment" is "trying to hijack the social studies curriculum and replace the Founding Fathers and American values with freedom-bashing Multiculturalism 101." -- Barbara Cargill, falsely accusing teachers of undermining patriotism in proposed new social studies curriculum standards "Would you consider yourself a conservative when it comes to patriotism, the constitution, the heritage of our forefathers, etc.?" -- Barbara Cargill, in an e-mail to a university education coordinator asking to serve on a team helping write new social studies curriculum standards

"Figures we use to represent those character ideals (citizenship, patriotism and community involvement) and the type of persons we want your students to emulate should be politically neutral." -- Gail Lowe, arguing that civil rights leaders Thurgood Marshall and César Chávez are "not particularly known for their citizenship" and suggesting they should be discussed in a different context in new social studies curriculum standards

SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM REVISION TIMELINE

The process for revisions social studies curriculum standards for Texas public schools began with the appointment of writing teams in late 2008. The State Board of Education then appointed a panel of six so-called "experts" in spring of this year. Those "experts" (which included far-right activists David Barton and the Rev. Peter Marshall, neither of whom has any graduate work in the social sciences) reviewed the current social studies standards and then the first drafts of the proposed new standards from writing teams this summer.

The state board met in September to consider those first drafts. Writing teams then considered comments and directives from the state board and from the "experts" to craft second drafts this fall. The state board will hold its first full public hearing on the proposed standards in January 2010. The board could also hold a second hearing in March, when board members have scheduled a final vote to adopt the new standards. Publishers will use the new curriculum standards to write social studies textbooks for adoption (currently scheduled for 2012).

With eight of 15 seats up for election, the State Board of Education (SBOE) in Texas faces a critical year in 2010. In a board so closely divided between moderates and far-right extremists, every seat counts. And the number of candidates who have already announced their intentions to run demonstrates growing support for change on the board.

Some far-right incumbents up for re-election have tried to strip evolution from science textbooks, censor honest sex education in health classes and rewrite history standards so that they fit a narrow, far-right political agenda. But voters have an opportunity in 2010 to send a message to the board and policy-makers: stop dragging public schools into the nation's divisive culture

Posted from the Texas Freedom Network site

http://www.tfn.org/site/DocServer/TFN_Fall_09_Newsletter.pdf?docID=1401

The reason the Texas Board is controlled by these nut-cases is due to the low turn-out of thinking people and the "fundie" preachers pushing their sheep to vote - We owe it to our children to get out the vote - your editor

Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies

By David Bentley Hart Reviewed by Scott Lohman

Ever since atheist books started selling really well there has been a backlash from various Christian writers who say the authors are wrong about some bit of history or some nuance of theology or are just plain using bad arguments. Into this fray jumps Christian academic David Bentley Hart.

Hart uses overly academic prose to principally point out what he terms errors in how the atheist authors are interpreting Christianity in history.

Though Hart acknowledges that there are a number of Christian sects that he treats with the same contempt as the atheists do, he wants us to note that not all of Christianity is that way.

For example, he also spends over four pages acknowledging the problems with the Inquisition and its approach to enforcing dogma and doctrine.

But then he downplays the control of religious doctrine and dogma during what is usually called the "Dark Ages." Hart also tries to shift blame for the destruction of the library at Alexandria to Roman politics rather than religious fanaticism.

Whatever points Hart gains from having a deeper knowledge of history, he loses by saying that generic Christianity is a good thing. He fails to tell us which of the thousands of Christian sects and denominations practices this "perfect" form of Christianity, so we're left to try and figure that out for ourselves.

Also one would expect a decent definition of belief, delusion and even Christianity from someone trying to set the record straight. However, on that they would be mistaken. At no point does Hart even make an attempt to do so.

As more and more books on atheism and humanism rise on the bestseller lists, we'll see more attempts to 'correct' us on our 'delusions', just don't expect anyone to define them! ■

From the Feb '10 Humanists of Minnesota Newsletter:

Continued from page 2 (Humanist at Harvard)

While I was away, no one was asleep here! You have done amazing work to expand our community, organizing volunteer-led meetings every weekend, getting together to read my book and study Humanism together in many other ways.

Celebrating Science

"Both humanism and science are built on a rational, empirical outlook on the world - and because of that, both place great hope in the human capacity to assimilate past and present experience in order to mold the future." – Hann-Shuin Yew, '10, Darwin Day organizer

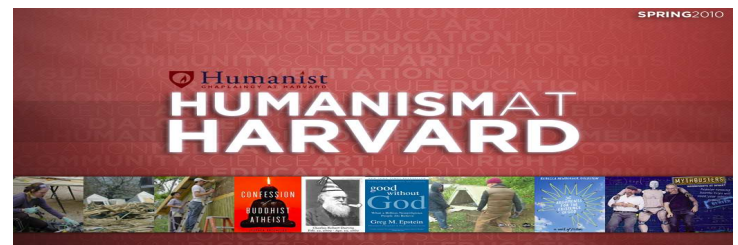
Drawing Inspiration from the Arts

"Many people think of humanism or atheism as an absence or emptiness, and think that the richness and depth of our culture would be somehow diminished if we became less religious. The work of the awardees and nominees we have honored so far has shown me that art can thrive by focusing not on God's greatness but on common human goodness." – Dan Robinson, '10, former HSS president and CHAC committee member

On April 7, novelist Rebecca Goldstein will read from her critically acclaimed and red-hot (dare we say "instant classic?") new novel, *36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction* (Pantheon, January 2010).

Advancing Human Rights

"When we nonbelievers talk about improving the quality of life, a lot of people assume we mean a selfish interest in our own lives, but Humanism is about improving life for everyone, which is why public service is such a cornerstone of our



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