

HUMANISTS

of FORT WORTH

Volume 14, Number 3

Happy



Humanist

March, 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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Meeting

March 13, 2013 7:00 PM

SPEAKER:

William Roche, PhD

TOPIC: "Evidentialism"

See page 4 for more info.

! Thanks !

Many 'thank-yous' to the members and friends who are assisting with the cleanup and rearrangement duties after our meetings. It is much appreciated.

If you are interested in lending a hand please see one of the Board Members.

! Thanks !

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.



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

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Officers and Board Members

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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 MARCH MEETING

Professor William Roche of the Philosophy Department
of TCU will speak to us on the topic of

“Evidentialism”

WILLIAM ROCHE, Associate Professor
Ph.D. (Ohio State University), 2006;
M.S. (University of Utah), 1998;
B.S. (University of Utah), 1997.

Since 2006.

Spec: Epistemology, Philosophy of Science.

! PREVIEW OF FUTURE EVENTS !

April 10

Speaker: Alexis Lohse, Student at TCU

Topic: **The Freethinking Frogs**

Alexis will speak to us about her experiences in forming the Freethinking Frogs and future plans for the group.

From the . . .



. . . Sam Baker

Once You Are Forced to Believe One Absurdity, You Are More Likely to Believe Other Absurdities

At least that's my hypothesis. If you can be convinced that the earth is 6000 years old because an ancient book implies it, you have already jettisoned reason and the requirement of evidence as a prerequisite for belief. Once you are unmoored from reason and the necessity of evidence, it is easy to accept other propositions which have no basis in fact, like all tax cuts pay for themselves or the science of climate change is a plot by scientists to control your life, because the same people who convinced you to believe what the book says now tell you to believe these other things.

We do our children great harm by forcing them to believe things that are counter to reason and evidence. The physicist Lawrence Krauss rightly calls it child abuse.

Teaching kids . . . that the earth is 6,000 years old . . . is like teaching kids that the distance across the United States is 17 feet. That's how big an error it is. . . . We need to encourage our children to question freely and try to think for themselves. Anything we do that counters that is unfair to them. . . . If you're introducing it as reality, if you're telling your kids the world is 6,000 years old, and they shouldn't believe scientists because there is no way humans are related to other animals, and don't believe any of that stuff you learned in school, or you take your kids out of school because they are learning something, then it is like the Taliban at some level, which is an extreme form of child abuse. The Taliban doesn't want girls to be educated or people to be educated because if they [are], they'll understand the myths that they are learning are crap.

Voltaire pointed out an additional danger.

Formerly there were those who said: You believe things that are incomprehensible, inconsistent, impossible because we have commanded you to believe them; go then and do what is unjust because we command it. Such people show admirable reasoning. Truly, whoever is able to make you believe the absurd is able to make you do the unjust. If the God-given understanding of your mind does not resist a demand to believe what is impossible, then you will not resist a demand to do wrong to that God-given sense of justice in your heart. As soon as one faculty of your soul has been dominated, other faculties will follow as well. And from this derives all those crimes of religion which have overrun the world.

Questions sur les miracles (1765)

Here's a modest proposal. Keep children away from the influence of religion until they are 17, the age of Thomas Jefferson's nephew Peter Carr when Jefferson wrote him a letter enumerating various topics and his advice thereon, and then render to them Jefferson's advice on religion (the emphasis below is mine):

4. Religion. Your reason is now mature enough to examine this object. In the first place, **divest yourself of all bias in favor of novelty & singularity of opinion.** Indulge them in any other subject rather than that of religion. It is too important, and the consequences of error may be too serious. On the other hand, **shake off all the fears & servile prejudices, under which weak minds are servilely crouched. 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 more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear.** You will naturally examine first, the religion of your own country. **Read the Bible, then as you would read Livy or Tacitus. The facts which are within the ordinary course of nature, you will believe on the authority of the writer,** as you do those of the same kind in Livy & Tacitus. The testimony of the writer weighs in their favor, in one scale, and their not being against the laws of nature, does not weigh against them. **But those facts in the Bible which contradict the laws of nature, must be examined with more care, and under a variety of faces. Here you must recur to the pretensions of the writer to inspiration from God. Examine upon what evidence his pretensions are founded, and whether that evidence is so strong, as that its falsehood would be more improbable than a change in the laws of nature, in the case he relates. For**

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example, in the book of Joshua, we are told, the sun stood still several hours. Were we to read that fact in Livy or Tacitus, we should class it with their showers of blood, speaking of statues, beasts, &c. But it is said, that the writer of that book was inspired. **Examine, therefore, candidly, what evidence there is of his having been inspired.** The pretension is entitled to your inquiry, because millions believe it. On the other hand, you are astronomer enough to know how contrary it is to the law of nature that a body revolving on its axis, as the earth does, should have stopped, should not, by that sudden stoppage, have prostrated animals, trees, buildings, and should after a certain time have resumed its revolution, & that without a second general prostration. Is this arrest of the earth's motion, or the evidence which affirms it, most within the law of probabilities? You will next read the New Testament. It is the history of a personage called Jesus. Keep in your eye the opposite pretensions: 1, of those who say he was begotten by God, born of a virgin, suspended & reversed the laws of nature at will, & ascended bodily into heaven; and 2, of those who say he was a man of illegitimate birth, of a benevolent heart, enthusiastic mind, who set out without pretensions to divinity, ended in believing them, and was punished capitally for sedition, by being gibbeted, according to the Roman law, which punished the first commission of that offence by whipping, & the second by exile, or death in fureâ. See this law in the Digest Lib. 48. tit. 19. §. 28. 3. & Lipsius Lib 2. de cruce. cap. 2. These questions are examined in the books I have mentioned under the head of religion, & several others. They will assist you in your inquiries, but keep your reason firmly on the watch in reading them all.

Do not be frightened from this inquiry by any fear of its consequences. If it ends in a belief that there is no God, you will find incitements to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness you feel in its exercise, and the love of others which it will procure you. If you find reason to believe there is a God, a consciousness that you are acting under his eye, & that he approves you, will be a vast additional incitement; if that there be a future state, the hope of a happy existence in that increases the appetite to deserve it; if that Jesus was also a God, you will be comforted by a belief of his aid and love. In fine, I repeat, **you must lay aside all prejudice on both sides, and neither believe nor reject anything, because any other persons, or description of persons, have rejected or believed it. Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable, not for the rightness, but uprightness of the decision.** I forgot to observe, when speaking of the New Testament, that you should read all the histories of Christ, as well of those whom a council of ecclesiastics have decided for us, to be Pseudo-evangelists, as those they named Evangelists. Because these Pseudo-evangelists pretended to inspiration, as much as the others, and you are to judge their pretensions by your own reason, and not by the reason of those ecclesiastics. Most of these are lost. There are some, however, still extant, collected by Fabricius, which I will endeavor to get & send you.

Sam Baker

I condemn false prophets, I condemn the effort to take away the power of rational decision, to drain people of their free will - and a hell of a lot of money in the bargain. Religions vary in their degree of idiocy, but I reject them all. For most people, religion is nothing more than a substitute for a malfunctioning brain.

Gene Roddenberry (1921-1991 CE), creator of Star Trek, Truly an American icon.

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Mississippi Maintains Hold as Most Religious U.S. State, Vermont is the least religious.

by Frank Newport

PRINCETON, NJ Mississippi remained the most religious state in the union in 2012, with 58% of its residents classified as very religious. At the other end of the spectrum, Vermont remained the least religious state, with 19% of its residents classified as very religious.

Least Religious States, Based on % Very Religious

State	Very Religious Americans
Vermont	19%
New Hampshire	23%
Maine	24%
Massachusetts	27%
Rhode Island	29%
Oregon	29%
District of Columbia	30%
Nevada	31%
Hawaii	31%
Alaska	31%
Connecticut	31%
Washington	31%

Gallup Daily tracking, January-December 2012

GALLUP

These state-by state results are based on more than 348,000 interviews conducted as part of Gallup Daily tracking in 2012, including more than 1,000 interviews conducted in all but two states and the District of Columbia. Complete results and sample sizes are on Page 2.

Overall, 40% of Americans nationwide were classified as very religious in 2012 - - based on saying religion is an important part of their daily life and that they attend religious services every week or almost every week. Thirty-one percent of Americans were nonreligious, saying religion is not an important part of their daily and that they seldom or never attend religious services. The remaining 29% of Americans were moderately religious, saying religion is important in their lives but that they do not attend services regularly, or that religion is not important but they still attend services.

The 2012 nationwide proportions of very religious, moderately religious, and non-religious Americans are all within one percentage point of where they were in 2011. Underscoring this stability, a comparison of the top 10 religious states in 2012 with those in 2011 shows no change— either in the states that constitute the top 10 or in their rank order. The group of states categorized as least religious was almost as constant between 2011 and 2012. The only change other than minor rank-order differences is the inclusion of Hawaii in the least religious list this year in place of New York.

Continued next page . . .

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Continued from page . . .

Eight of the top ten religious states are in the South -- basically comprising the entire Southern belt from Georgia and the two Carolinas on the Atlantic coast through Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi, to Louisiana and Arkansas in the west. The states outside the Southern belt are Utah -- with its strongly religious majority Mormon population - - and Oklahoma, which straddles the border between the South and the Midwest.

The least 12 religious states comprise the entirety of New England -- Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut -- along with the three most Northwestern states in the union, Alaska, Washington, and Oregon, plus the District of Columbia, Nevada, and Hawaii.

Implications

America remains a religious nation -- with about seven in 10 Americans classified as very or moderately religious -- but these patterns of religion are quite varied across the regions of the country. Southern states and Utah are the most religious areas in the nation, while New England states and those in the far Northwest are the least religious. There has been little change in these patterns over the past year.

There are a number of explanations for the substantial differences in religiousness across the states of the union, but analysis included in the recent book [*God Is Alive and Well*](#) shows that the differences are not accounted for by state demographics such as race and ethnicity, or -- with the exception of Utah -- by the type of religion that predominates in each state. More likely the differences reflect regional cultural traditions.

The posited existence of state cultures of religion suggests that migrants who cross state lines could be socialized into the religious patterns of the states to which they move. In other words, it can be hypothesized that a person moving to Mississippi is more likely to become personally more religious than if that same person moved to Vermont. Some [*evidence*](#) suggests there has been more migration to religious states than to nonreligious states over the past decade or so. If that is the case, and if it continues, it's possible that this will effectively increase the overall level of religiosity in the nation, or at least moderate a decrease in religiousness.

See: Religiosity by State, 2012 Next page > > > >

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*All religions are equally sublime to the
ignorant, useful to the politician, and
ridiculous to the philosopher.*

Lucretius (99-55 BCE)

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>>> Religiosity by State, 2012
Cont'd

	Very religious Americans	Moderately religious Americans	Nonreligious Americans	n
Mississippi	58%	30%	11%	3344
Utah	56%	17%	27%	4537
Alabama	30%	30%	14%	6141
Louisiana	53%	30%	17%	4995
Arkansas	52%	29%	19%	3838
South Carolina	52%	30%	18%	5618
Tennessee	50%	31%	19%	8270
North Carolina	50%	30%	21%	12143
Georgia	48%	32%	20%	10212
Oklahoma	48%	30%	22%	5106
Texas	47%	32%	22%	22441
South Dakota	46%	27%	27%	1211
Kentucky	45%	30%	25%	5765
Kansas	45%	29%	26%	3765
Idaho	45%	21%	34%	2655
Nebraska	44%	27%	29%	2680
New Mexico	43%	27%	30%	3073
Indiana	43%	29%	29%	8277
Missouri	42%	30%	28%	7247
West Virginia	42%	32%	26%	2385
North Dakota	42%	29%	29%	1060
Iowa	41%	27%	32%	4573
Virginia	41%	32%	27%	10539
Pennsylvania	40%	28%	32%	16530
Ohio	38%	31%	31%	12631
Minnesota	38%	28%	34%	7523
Illinois	38%	30%	32%	11815
Florida	38%	32%	31%	19183
Maryland	37%	32%	31%	7009
Wisconsin	37%	29%	34%	7937
Arizona	37%	30%	34%	8293
Michigan	37%	30%	34%	9932
Delaware	35%	31%	34%	1089
New Jersey	35%	31%	35%	8318
California	35%	29%	37%	31704
Montana	34%	29%	37%	2248
Colorado	34%	27%	39%	7337
Wyoming	33%	27%	41%	1212
New York	32%	30%	39%	16855
Nevada	31%	28%	40%	2556
Hawaii	31%	28%	40%	969
Alaska	31%	29%	40%	899
Connecticut	31%	29%	40%	3945
Washington	31%	25%	44%	10306
District of Columbia	30%	29%	41%	814
Rhode Island	29%	27%	44%	1237
Oregon	29%	27%	45%	6041
Massachusetts	27%	27%	47%	7120
Maine	24%	26%	49%	2123
New Hampshire	23%	27%	50%	1701
Vermont	19%	24%	57%	1104

Editorial . . . Know Your Bible? 7

Don Ruhs

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

From: Various sources, including the Holy Bible.

God Loves The Children?!

Genesis 7: (The Great Flood)

19 *And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.*

20 *Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.*

21 *And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:*

22 *All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land died.*

Commentary: One must assume that the guiltless children died also because of the love(?) of God!

Deuteronomy 2:

31 *And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.*

32 *Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz.*

33 *And the Lord our God delivered him before us; and we smote him and his sons, and all his people.*

34 *And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain:*

Deuteronomy 3: (the battle against Og, the king of Bashan)

3 *So the Lord our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining.*

6 *And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city.*

Commentary: Surely, the followers of the Lord can't be held responsible for doing what He ordered them to do! Can they?

2 Kings 2:

23 *And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up thou bald head; go up thou bald head.*

24 *And he turned back, and looked at them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.*

Commentary: So, guys, if you happen to be losing your hair and some little children think it to be funny and laugh at you, just say a prayer to the Lord and maybe He'll have a couple of bears come forth from the wood and get rid of them for you!

Judges 11: (Jephthah going to war against Ammon and makes a vow to the Lord if He helps him win).

30 *And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,*

31 *Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.*

Commentary: To make a long story short, the Lord delivered the Ammonites into Jephthah's hands. And, when he returned home, . . .

34 *. . . behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.*

35-39 Jephthah explained to his daughter the vow he had made with the Lord. She agreed that her father should go through with what he had vowed. However, the daughter asked that, since she was still a virgin, she be allowed to go off up to the mountains to bewail her virginity. Jephthah sent her away for two months and she went with her companions and bewailed her virginity upon the mountain. After the two months passed she returned home and her father proceeded to do according to the vow he had made with the Lord and offered her up for a burnt offering. And, of course, the Lord stood by and didn't stop him.

The world holds two classes of men—intelligent men without religion and religious men without intelligence.

Abu al-Ahmad (973-1057 CE)

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Humanists of Fort Worth

Minutes

February 13, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by the Chair, Sam Baker.

Our speaker was Professor Dave Aftandilian, PhD, who gave a talk, accompanied by a Power Point slide presentation, on “The Role of Animals in Religion.”

There was a break for refreshments, and then Dr. Aftandilian talked informally with members and answered questions.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John Fisher

John Fisher, Secretary

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Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

Treasurer's Report

Report Date: 13-Feb-2013

Beginning Balance 9-Jan-2013 **\$1,048.54**

CREDITS		Date	Amount
Don Ruhs	Pizza for TCU-SSA	1/19/2013	50.00
TOTAL CREDITS			<u>\$50.00</u>

DEBITS	Activity	Ck. #	Date	Amount
Zach Moore	Honorarium	497	1/19/2013	25.00
Thomas Gwin	6 mo. Meet up Dues	498	1/16/2013	72.00
Alexis Lohse	Pizza for TCU-SSA	499	1/21/2013	75.00
D. Aftandilian	Honorarium	500	2/13/2013	25.00
SUB TOTAL CREDITS/DEBITS				<u>\$197.00</u>

TOTAL DEBITS **-\$147.00**

Ending Balance 13-Feb-2013 **\$901.54**

Attest:

Signature: *Dolores M. Ruhs* Date: 13-Feb-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 13-Feb-13



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* February 2013, page 22

AROUND THE  WORLD

Russia Mandates Religion Class in Public Schools

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a bill that creates new requirements for the country's public education system, including a mandate that religion must be taught, the *Moscow Times* reported.

The new law states that all public schools must teach a basic education class, the *Times* said.

Public Radio International's *The World* reported that this plan has been in the works for twenty years thanks to a push by the Russian Orthodox Church, but the new classes aren't exactly what church leaders had in mind. *The World* said that the church only wanted courses on Orthodoxy, but had to settle for a more general approach.

Although 70-80 percent of Russians are Orthodox, not all are happy with the new law.

"We think religion is a really private matter and religious education should start in the family and continue in the church," Natalia Sapruha, an Orthodox Christian and a parent, told *The World*. "That's why we chose this secular ethics course that is aimed at helping our children developing qualities like honesty, kindness and justice."

The law takes effect in September, the *Times* said.



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.

Atheism and the Case Against Christ

Matthew S. McCormick

A novel critique that undermines Christianity and theism at their foundations.

Hundreds of millions of people believe that Jesus came back from the dead. Philosopher Matthew S. McCormick presents a decidedly unpopular view in this cogent, forcefully argued book, namely, that the central tenet of Christianity, the resurrection of Jesus, is false. McCormick asks a number of probing questions:

Is the evidence about Jesus as it has been relayed to us over the centuries of sufficient quantity and quality to justify belief in the resurrection? How can we accept the resurrection but reject magic at the Salem witch trials? What light does contemporary research about human rationality from the fields of behavioral economics, empirical psychology, cognitive science, and philosophy shed on the resurrection and religious belief? Can we use contemporary research about the reliability of people's beliefs in the supernatural, miracles, and the paranormal to shed light on the origins of Christianity and other religions? Does it make sense that the all-powerful creator of the universe would employ miracles to achieve his ends? Can a Christian believe by faith alone and yet reasonably deny the supernatural claims of other religions? Do the arguments against Christianity support atheism?

By carefully answering each of these questions, *Atheism and the Case against Christ* undermines Christianity and theism at their foundations; it gives us a powerful model for better critical reasoning; and it builds a compelling case for atheism. Without stooping to condescension or arrogance, McCormick offers persuasive arguments that are accessible, thoughtful, and new.

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.