



November

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

Hey Tea Party-Republicans: The Founders Are Not Your Guys

by Harvey Wasserman



the

From The Chair

Freethinker friends,

We have another outstanding speaker for November, Dr. Edward Furber. Ed, a recent retiree from the practice of psychiatry in Fort Worth, a long-time member of Westside church and a brilliant freethinker, will speak on "The Cost of Medicine---WHY?" If you are concerned about the cost

As they wrap themselves in the Constitution they mean to shred, that is self-evident Truth the Tea/GOP Party ultimately cannot face. Our legal godfathers---the ones Glenn Beck loves to conjure---were Deistic liberal humanists whose core beliefs he hates.

They dumped that tea because they despised the corporation that owned it and the idea of empire it (and today's corporate-military right) stood for.

The very first phrase of this nation's defining document, the Bill of Rights, says: "Judaeo-Christian? Not a chance."

The grassroots farmers that made the Revolution were free-thinking hemp growers. Their favorite scribe, Tom Paine, was the son of a Quaker whose Age of Reason assaulted the church with unsurpassed fury. Today's Tea/GOP would have it burned.

Our greatest genius, Ben Franklin, was a proud and joyous sexual adventurer. His very presence today would induce howls of (envious) outrage from the religious right.

It was Franklin who most loved Native America. He introduced himself to the French as "an American savage." He stamped the Hodenosaunee (Iroquois) gifts of personal freedom and a democratic confederation into the soul of the new nation.

More formally, our tradition of direct voting, still alive in many New England towns, where the Revolution was born, was conceived in Athens, 508 BC. The Republic ("if you can keep it," as Franklin warned) came from Rome, 509 BC. Long before the "Christian Era."

The federal structure adopted in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787, was---with Franklin's mentoring---based on the Iroquois Confederacy. That union was born at latest 1540 AD. It sustained a functioning democracy for at least 250 years, still longer than the US has been in existence.

The matriarchal Hodenosaunee were defined by a love of nature and communal land stewardship. Open dialog was as easily accepted as abortion and homosexuality. Along with so many other lethal diseases, Original Sin was an unwanted import.

Continued on page 2



of health care---and who is not?---you have the opportunity to learn much from Dr. Furber.

What follows this announcement would normally be a beseeching appeal to come to the meeting. This time, however, I would suggest you think why it's a good idea or not. How much does it mean to you for having a place where freethought is foremost, where discussion is reasonable, where it is possible to share ideas and friendship with like-minded people? You know how easy it is for the devout to find a place of their own. They seldom have to experience loneliness.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. understood this feeling. He wrote, "How on earth can religious people believe in so much arbitrary, clearly invented balderdash?...The acceptance of a creed, any creed, entitles the acceptor to membership in the sort of artificial extended family we call a congregation. It is a way to fight loneliness. Any time I see a person fleeing from reason and into religion, I think to myself, There goes a person who simply cannot stand being so goddamned lonely anymore."

So don't get lonely. Or make others lonely.



Continued from the previous page

It is the humanistic liberalism of America's Founders that STILL enrages today's neo-Puritan Tea/GOP. The Jefferson they love to claim fathered at least five children with his slave Sally Hemings, thirty years his junior. Some were conceived while he lived "alone" in the White House.

He and Franklin and Madison and Paine had no time for the Christian faith. It's by their intelligent design that Jesus appears nowhere in the Constitution. Their liberal Deism said a Creator got the universe going, installed the laws of nature, endowed humans with free will (and inalienable rights), then left.

Franklin's disdain for church services spices his autobiography. Jefferson clipped all references to a divinity for Jesus out of his personal Bible. Paine's Age of Reason still enrages the official church. Madison's First Amendment enshrines disdain for an official religion. Unitarianism in all its liberal diversity was shared by presidents two through six, including two Adamses, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe.

Their system of checks and balances was based on the Socratic proposition that with the freedom to dialog, human reason will prevail. Thus the First Amendment's very first phrase exalts freedom from Religion, ie separation of church and state, a phrase coined by Jefferson, demanded by the new nation as a whole.

Like virtually all other American farmers, Washington and Jefferson raised serious quantities of hemp, and made good money from it. Franklin owned a paper mill that ran on it. All may well have smoked its psycho-active cousin, now known as marijuana. If you told them the nation they founded would make this versatile herb illegal, they would laugh at you.

They'd be equally horrified to hear the Foxist Tea/GOP claiming them as icons in a sectarian crusade for repression and empire.

Today's religious right is an unholy fusion of theocratic authoritarianism---which our Founders hated above all---and corporate tyranny, whose tea they pitched in Boston harbor.

Along with George III, there's nothing they loathed more than the anti-human hypocrisy we hear from the Foxist Legion.

Likewise, Beck, Pailn, Limbaugh, O'Reilly and their ilk would have shrieked with rage at the actual Franklin and Paine, Jefferson and Madison, not to mention the populist farmers and sailors, workers and women who fought and died for the Revolution we all Revere (yes, him too!).

So next time those Tea/GOP phonies gaze off in the distance to claim kinship with the Founders, remind everyone you know who really did win that Revolution and write that Bill of Rights.

Those hemp-growing, tree-hugging, corporate-hating deistic free loving and free thinking present-at-the-creation Americans believed above all that the Truth would keep us free.

Now more than ever, it's our patriotic duty to prove them right.

Humanist Legal Center Files Petition for Writ of Certiorari in Newdow Case

Washington, D.C., Sept. 27, 2010

Today Michael Newdow – a well-known atheist and plaintiff in a legal case that challenges the phrase "So Help Me God" in the presidential oath of office – asked the Supreme Court to consider whether the federal judiciary has the power to halt government-sponsored religious practices at presidential inaugural ceremonies.

Newdow filed a petition for writ of certiorari, challenging a U.S. Court of Appeals ruling that his complaint was not redressable by the courts.

"Our system of government is founded on the rule of law -- that it is sometimes necessary for the judiciary to determine if the executive and judicial branches are abiding by the law," said Bob Ritter, staff attorney of the Appignani Humanist Legal Center, the legal arm of the American Humanist Association, and co-counsel with Newdow. "The court of appeals has essentially reversed this approach."

Newdow's case was originally filed in December 2008 to halt the oath administrator's addition of the phrase "so help me God" to the constitutionally prescribed presidential oath and the inclusion of sectarian prayers in the invocation and benediction of the 2009 inauguration of President Obama and the 2013 and 2017 ceremonies.

U.S. District Court Judge Reggie B. Walton had ruled on March 12, 2009 that all plaintiffs in Newdow v. Roberts lacked standing to pursue such cases. And on May 7, 2010, a three-judge panel issued an order affirming Judge Walton's order dismissing the case for lack of standing.

"The U.S. Supreme Court should grant the request of over 250 injured plaintiffs to hear the case which deals with the fundamental issue of whether the courts have the power to enforce liberties guaranteed by the Constitution," said Ritter. "Mike Newdow and I continue to firmly believe that the religious practices of presidential inaugural ceremonies run afoul of the First Amendment, and the courts have the judicial power to declare these acts unconstitutional and enjoin such practices from occurring at future ceremonies."

The American Humanist Association (www.americanhumanist.org) advocates for the rights and viewpoints of humanists. Founded in 1941 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., its work is extended through more than 100 local chapters and affiliates across America.

Humanism is the idea that you can be good without a belief in God.

Humanist Author George Erickson's latest book 'Eyes Wide Open'

He's done it again! George Erickson pilot, bricklayer, philanthropist, dentist, welder and best-selling author of True North, Back to the Barrens: On the Wing with da Vinci and Friends, and Time Traveling with Science and the Saints returns with Eyes Wide Open, a semi-autobiographical anthology of new and published fiction and non-fiction.

With stories like Working Girl, Crystals Lite, and the Minnesota Trapper, he addresses the human condition, and with op-eds like Glenn Beck Where Were You?, Why Horses Laugh, and Single-Payer Now! he speaks truth to power while drawing on experts from Plato to George Carlin.

Erickson delves into the heart and mind, exploring both with the same curiosity and sense of adventure he brings to his world travels. He navigates the gray waters of social consciousness with the precision of a pilot. Immigration, religion, politics, nature, love nothing is beyond consideration.

From I-35 to the limitless night sky, he observes the quirks of our culture, the hypocrisy of our institutions and our hopes for the future while rejoicing in the beauty of the planet. Eyes Wide Open is an invitation into his home, his childhood and his wilderness, bringing the warmth and familiarity of an old friend - a friend who never fails to make you laugh, allows you to cry and leaves you with the greatest gift of all: thought.

Editor's note: This is not my review I haven't read the book yet!

For decades, the American Humanist Association stood as the voice of humanism in the United States.

We strive to bring about a progressive society where being good without gods is an accepted way to live life. We are accomplishing this through our defense of civil liberties and secular governance, by our outreach to the growing number of people without traditional religious faith, and through a continued refinement and advancement of the humanist worldview.

Humanism encompasses a variety of nontheistic views (atheism, agnosticism, rationalism, naturalism, secularism, and so forth) while adding the important element of a comprehensive worldview and set of ethical values---values that are grounded in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, informed by scientific knowledge, and driven by a desire to meet the needs of people in the here and now.

We count humanists and other nontheists as the core of our movement but are always willing to work with friends and allies on issues of common concern. The positions we hold and the actions we take are not simply for our own benefit, but for the betterment of all of society and the world in which we live.

From The American Humanist Association publication

Secular Leaders Praise New Journalists' Resource October 7, 2010

ReligionLink Offers New Source Guide on U.S.'s 30 Million Nonreligious

Leaders from the secular movement are praising a new resource they say will help them be better understood in the media and in society. To help journalists cover secular Americans, the news service ReligionLink has unveiled a comprehensive source guide focused on American nonbelievers titled "[Freethinkers: A source guide to atheists, humanists and other nontheists.](#)" It is the first comprehensive resource for people interested in learning about nontheists in the country.

The project was initiated by the Stiefel Freethought Foundation, an organization which provides strategic and financial assistance to the freethought movement. It officially marked its launch two weeks ago with a \$50,000 gift to help the Secular Student Alliance support atheist teenagers.

Said Foundation president Todd Steifel, "The American public deserves the chance to get to know their nontheistic neighbors - their fellow Americans - and find that we are a community of loving, moral and joyful people. This resource can give journalists the tools they need to tell our story in full."

The news was hailed as an indication of growing nontheistic influence by the Secular Coalition for America, the national organization that advocates for church-state separation and for the advancement of Secular Americans in national policy.

"Secular Americans will play an increasingly prominent role in the national discourse, and so this new resource is both welcome and necessary. In the media and in Washington we will increasingly speak out for human rights when they are infringed upon by the commingling of church and state," said Sean Faircloth, Executive Director of Secular Coalition for America. "There are at least 30 million nontheistic Americans. That number is growing and the media wants to know more about us."

Earlier this year, the Secular Coalition for America, became the first such organization to engage in a formal briefing with White House officials. All 10 of the Secular Coalition's member organizations are featured in the source guide.

ReligionLink.com, a nonpartisan and nonsectarian service of Religion Newswriters, terms itself "the only religion story idea and source list resource by journalists, for journalists."

The source guide, "[Freethinkers: A source guide to atheists, humanists and other nontheists.](#)" and other information can be found at www.religionlink.com.

From: www.secular.org

Advisory Board includes [Woody Kaplan](#), [Chair](#), [Robert Boston](#), [Daniel Dennett](#), [Bruce Flamm](#), [Sam Harris](#), [Jeff Hawkins](#), [Christopher Hitchens](#), [Susan Jacoby](#), [Wendy Kaminer](#), [Michael Newdow](#), and [Julia Sweeny](#)

Today, I Believe I'm a Humanist by Mark Thoson

Many of my friends over the years have heard me explain my concept of belief this way: "I believe that the sun will rise in the morning. I also believe that in fact, the sun never rises. It is the earth's rotation and my position upon said planet, which I perceive as the rising of the sun. I believe both of these things even though I have only directly experienced one of them, the one I consider false and believe anyway."

How and why we believe the things we do has long been a fascination of mine. In the case of believing that the sun rises, I find that it helps me orient myself into the life I envision and the simple events that make up the coming day. I don't examine this belief very much. I think that the power and effectiveness it has in my life would be lessened by dwelling on it.

I like the belief. It's comforting. The modifications of the reality, things like cloudiness, solar position, radiant heat or relative cool are acceptable variations that I have come to take in stride. Those variations of course completely alter what I can count on in this solar ascension but I don't really care to change that belief. In fact, it may well be hard wired into my brain. More on that in a moment.

As far as the belief that it's really the planet's motion and my relationship to it and the sun; that belief, never directly observed by myself, does nothing at all for my orientation in time or my motivation to continue participating in my own life. I have come to believe it's true because of my exposure to science and an overwhelming number of contemporaries that accept it as truth. Accepting it as truth also provides me with valuable experience, just not comfort.

I'm more likely to be motivated to expand and refine my knowledge because of this belief. Still, it just may be that accepting it without experiencing it, because my peers and teachers tell me it is so, may be far more because I like to cooperate in conventional truths than because it helps me.

This afternoon, I heard a fascinating segment on Minnesota Public Radio. (See the link at the bottom of this article.) Its title was, "Is Believing In God Evolutionarily Advantageous?" I was immediately intrigued because I have been amazed at the massive prevalence of God belief among humans for some time now.

Hearing that happened to also coincide with a book I just finished reading called "*Super sense Why we Believe in the Unbelievable*" by Bruce Hood. Both of these sources are speaking directly to what seems to be a re-emerging study of the nature of belief itself. I am told that "mind design and supernatural beliefs" were written about more than two hundred years ago by the philosopher David Hume, long before brain function had any purchase in science. And to be sure, I've been funneling many a similar book into my brain in the last couple of years.

What I'm taking away from these many sources is that our automatic and evolutionarily advantageous practice of believing the unbelievable is likely responsible for a great measure of our success as a species. Also, as is the case with most beliefs, while providing motivation and comfort, blind belief is particularly Nasty as a creator of division, hatred, Misunderstanding and

many other non-productive habits.

Why I believe I am a Humanist today is because it seems I have found in Humanism a more clearheaded approach to both valuing human experience and examining humanity's flaws. I am, however, pleased to remember that this is very simply a belief I have today. I am probably hard wired to believe stuff anyway. It may well be that the planet's turning will continue, regardless of the prevalence of belief in the supernatural concept of the sun rising, and even if I change my mind.

From the Minnesota Humanist Newsletter Nov 2010

Find the Minnesota Public Radio program mentioned at:
<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/features/npr.php?id=129528196>

Pope outlines latest effort to revive Christianity By NICOLE WINFIELD, Associated Press

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI formally created a new [Vatican office](#) Tuesday to revive Christianity in Europe, his latest attempt to counter secular trends in traditionally Christian countries.

In a decree, Benedict said the new office would promote church doctrine, use the media to get the [church's message](#) out and mobilize missionary-type activities.

But even on its first day of existence, the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization ran into an all-too-typical Vatican snag: The four-page decree instituting the office was issued in only Latin and Italian.

Asked how the pope expected to bring the church's message to the world in such relatively unknown languages, the head of the new office, [Monsignor Rino Fisichella](#) said he hadn't been in charge until Tuesday and wasn't responsible for how the decree was issued.

He stressed that he planned to have language sections in his department to deal with the faithful in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, German and Slavic languages.

Fisichella denied the creation of the office was a mere bureaucratic attempt to fix a complex cultural phenomenon, saying Benedict had made an astute, pastoral decision to focus attention on a growing problem that had preoccupied popes for decades.

Benedict has made reviving Europe's Christian roots a priority. While the decree listed no specific geographical areas of concentration, the evangelization office is expected to also pay attention to Latin America, where evangelical movements are making inroads in traditionally Catholic countries such as Brazil.

In the decree, Benedict lamented that with tremendous scientific, social and cultural progress over the past century, parts of the world that once had strong Christian roots had grown to believe that they can exist without God.

The more enlightened portion of the world certainly can. Ed

Atheists Debate How Pushy to Be

From the NY Times October 15, 2010

LOS ANGELES — Energized by a recent [Pew Research Center](#) poll showing that [atheists](#) are more educated about religion than religious people, 370 atheists, humanists and other skeptics packed a ballroom at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel last weekend to debate the future of their movement.

They agreed on two things: People can be good without religion, and religion has too much influence. But they disagreed about how stridently to make those claims.

The conference, sponsored by the Council for Secular Humanism, drew members from all the major doubters' organizations, including American Atheists and the American Humanist Association. The largely white and male crowd — imagine a [Star Trek](#) convention, but older — came to hear panels that included several best-selling atheist pamphleteers, like [Richard Dawkins](#), author of “The God Delusion,” and [Sam Harris](#), who wrote “The End of Faith” and is a rock star in the atheist world (he traveled with bodyguards because he receives death threats from both Christians and Muslims).

The conference came on the heels of a change in leadership at the council and a rumored rift there, which some described as a standoff between atheists, who focus on God's nonexistence, and humanists, who are also nonbelievers but seek an alternative ethical system, one that does not depend on any deity.

Some of the weekend's speakers alluded to the turmoil at the council, where several longtime employees have resigned or been laid off. But in general they emphasized unity: They shared common enemies, like religious fundamentalism and “Intelligent Design.” And they believed morality was possible without God.

The presenters did differ on where a secular morality might come from. In his new best seller, “The Moral Landscape,” Mr. Harris argues that morality is a product of neuroscience. (The good, he argues, is that which promotes happiness and well-being, and those states are ultimately dependent on brain chemistry.) Others believe morality is bequeathed by evolution, while still others would argue for ethics grounded in secular philosophy, like Immanuel Kant's or John Rawls's. But all agreed that nonbelievers are at least as moral as believers, and for better reasons.

The disagreement was not, then, between atheism and humanism. It was about making the atheist/humanist case in America. A central question was, “How publicly scornful of religion should we be?”

Here even the humanists got less humane, as each side stereotyped the other. Those trying to find common ground with religious people were called accommodationists,” “while

more outspoken atheists were called “confrontationalists” and accused of alienating potential allies, like moderate Christians.

At the liveliest panel, on Friday night, [the science writer Chris Mooney](#) pointed to research that shows that many Christians “are rejecting science because of a perceived conflict with moral values.” Atheists should be mindful of this perception, Mr. Mooney argued. For example, an atheist fighting to keep the theory of evolution in schools should reassure Christians that their faith is compatible with modern science.

“They resist evolution because they think everyone will lose morals,” Mr. Mooney said. “Knowing this, why would you go directly at these deeply held beliefs?”

The panel must have been organized by someone mischievous, because the next speaker was the biologist and blogger PZ Myers — a confrontationalist, to put it mildly. In 2008, to make a stand for freedom of speech, [he publicly desecrated a Communion wafer](#), a Koran and (for good measure) a copy of Mr. Dawkins's book “The God Delusion.” He likes to say that he tries to commit blasphemy every day.

“I have been told that my position won't win the creationist court cases,” Mr. Myers said. “Do you think I care? I didn't become a scientist because I want to impress lawyers.

See: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/16/us/16beliefs.html?ref=us>

Contact Information For Humanists of Ft Worth:

Chair Dick Trice trice932@yahoo.com
3500 Hidden Pines Ct Arlington, TX Tel 817-201-1232

Vice Chair John Huffman john.p.huffman@att.net
3809 Trail Lake Dr. FW 76109 817-9845, cell 817-658-0011

Secretary Suzie Lotven lotven@sbcglobal.net
1727 Hurley Ave Ft Worth 76110 Tel 817-927-7213

Treasurer Dolores Ruhs ruhsdol@sbcglobal.net
1036 Hill Top Pass Benbrook 76126 Tel 817-249-1829

Past Chair Michael Little slittle71@gmail.com

Webmaster Russel Elleven doctorelleven@gmail.com
6120 Comfort Dr Ft Worth 76132 Tel 817-370-2171

Newsletter Editor Ray Weil Cowtown_humanist@yahoo.com
2204 San Ramon Ct Arlington 76013 Tel 817-205-8603

The Humanists of Ft Worth is a member of:

