



October

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



Hi to all members and friends of HOFW! We meet again Wednesday, 10-13, at 7 p.m., at the Westside UU Church. Our speaker is Dr. Paul Boller, professor emeritus of TCU, having held the Lyndon B. Johnson Chair of History and author of 17 books, one a Book-of-the-Month Club winner.

He is keeping his subject a mystery but has titled it "What is the Question?" If you want to know what that important question is and what may be the answer, you'll surely want to come.

You probably know this year is the 100th anniversary of the death of Mark Twain. You may also know that he had written much material that he ordered not to be printed for 100 years. To tweak some interest in what we will learn of the most private thoughts of one of the most famous freethinkers and writers in history here are two brief comments of his.

"I would not interfere with any one's religion, either to strengthen it or to weaken it. I am not able to believe one's religion can affect his hereafter one way or the other, no matter what that religion may be. But it may easily be a great comfort to him in this life--hence it is a valuable possession to him."

"So much blood has been shed by the church because of an omission from the Gospel: 'Ye shall be *indifferent* as to what your neighbor's religion is.' Not merely tolerant of it, but indifferent to it. Divinity is claimed for many religions; but no religion is great enough or divine enough to add that new law to it's code, See you all Wednesday Dick Trice

Purge Thyself, Oh Godless Communist

by Amy Zimet

A Mississippi judge has apparently decided the First Amendment is all well and good, except in his courtroom, where he sent a recalcitrant lawyer to jail for declining to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Judge Talmadge Littlejohn ordered attorney Danny Lampley, who in the '90s worked with the ACLU on a school prayer case, to "purge himself of said criminal contempt" after Lampley stood but remained silent for the pledge.



"I don't have to say it because I'm an American." - Lampley said

What if?

By Shawn Brown



Black atheist! Do these words mean anything? Certainly not if such a person does not exist.

Everyone knows that black people love Jesus. With tears in our eyes and a bittersweet joy in our hearts, we marvel at the wonder of the divine. With hands raised high we sway to our own celestial rhythm. With a look of transcendent torment upon our faces, we sing His praises. Don't we love Jesus? Don't we all love Jesus?

I've heard it said that black people have a "Jesus fixation", a single minded focus on God. From our earliest days we are taught that there is a mysterious and powerful man in the heavens above- enthroned some place between time and space. Omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient - He is God-the-Father. The ethereal embodiment, if you will allow, of benevolence and love. We are taught by parents, grandparents and the preacher that "God is good!"

But, as the lesson of God's goodness is taught with one breath, we are taught that God is awful with the next. He knows our thoughts, He knows our feelings, He knows what we will do next, and He knows our secrets and the hour of our deaths. This God is not to be trifled with. What fool would question Him- even in the quiet of one's own mind?

Respecting the God that black Christians serve means not speaking doubt or even thinking it. How could there ever be such a thing as a black Atheist?

You serve the Lord with fear and trembling. You serve Him in perfect submission. You must love Him always. You must never think ill of Him. He is without fault. He is responsible for everything good in your life- not you. You are responsible for everything bad in your life- not Him. Praise the Lord when things go right; beg His forgiveness when they go wrong.

Now, how did we end up with this particular religious system? Well, that's simple: Slavery. One of the original justifications for slavery was to bring the "heathen" African into contact with Christianity. The earliest enslaved Africans were converted by force before even leaving the slave castles of western Africa. They were now Christian by virtue of the slave trader's power.

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As time passed, many slaveholders ceased to rely on this pre-textual justification for slavery. After all, if you do not free the enslaved once they have become Christians, then providing them salvation seems a flimsy rationale. Continuing to parrot the old justification of Christianizing the African would be too absurd even for a slaveholder. However, Christianity was still useful to them. Logically, the slaveholder continued to teach Christianity in a way beneficial to their more genuine economic motives. From Ephesians they likely taught "slaves obey your masters here on Earth..." From Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the Earth." From Matthew 18:4 "[w]hoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The slaveholders' true intention was not to save souls, but to create a docile workforce. Unfortunately, this strategic impartation of Christianity began to take root.

As time passed, African-Americans began to replicate these religious norms independently. With each passing year our addiction to religion grew more complete, until finally Christianity became synonymous with blackness. The imposing nexus of historical indoctrination and present day hardship conspire to keep African-Americans chained to religion. Christian faith and hardship stand in equipoise within the black community- and understandably so. When people are oppressed there is a hunger for hope that can never fully be satisfied so long as the unjust conditions persist. The desire for justice is transferred to hope for happiness in a time yet to come.

This is why we love the Lord. This is why there are no black atheists. This is why we all love Jesus.

But, what happens if you do not? What happens if you began to doubt Jesus when you stopped believing in Santa Clause? What if you realized early on that there are two creation stories in Genesis, and that they are not the same? What if you realized that no god could be simple minded enough to use either method to create the universe? What if you believe that culture and isolation explain linguistic differences, and not the Tower of Babel? What if you believe it wrong to stone children- even when they disobey? What if you believe that eating an apple, which God intentionally put within Eve's grasp, is not a just reason to thrust the world into suffering? What if you do not believe that a person could survive three days in the belly of a whale? What if you think it silly for an all knowing god to create his own nemesis? What if you think it odd for God to send Himself, to save us- from Himself? Would not it have been easier to simply forgive our sins without the blood soaked spectacle of Calvary? What if you find it inconceivable for an all-loving god to create an unimaginable hell for His own children? What if...

What if we stopped waiting on Jesus and started planning? What if we realized that deferring justice until the next life meant deferring it forever? What if we understood that following a religion which too often perpetuates patriarchy has a chilling effect on the development of millions of our potential leaders? What if we knew that our gay brothers and sisters had just as much right to exist as the rest of us (something that would be obvious to a historically oppressed people but for religious influence)? What if we could drop the inaction of religion, for the urgency that comes with knowing that it is up to us? What if we could drop the divisiveness

Of course this could never happen, not if you are black. No! You see, being a good Christian is never to question aloud. Being a good Christian is never to allow a question to linger in your mind. Being a good Christian means to turn off your rational mind when it becomes bothersome to your faith. Unfortunately, black people are good Christians.

If you are the type of person who believes that love began with Jesus, that morality was created by God, that mercy and justice are religious concepts, then you find my words striking. However, if you have dared to think beyond what you were told, if you prefer enlightenment to conditioning, then you may just see it differently. You will have realized that love, courage, empathy and kindness are all human inventions-not the altruistic inventions of a cosmic overlord. You will have realized that we are not abject by birth, but just as valuable as our ancestors have made us.

If you believe these things as I do, then you know that the justice we have long been denied is within our grasp. We can believe in our own virtue, instead of dismissing any notion of our own human goodness. We can accept the challenges of the present and master them completely. If we are courageous enough to examine our beliefs, we can break the chains placed on our minds so long ago. In so doing, we can, for once, live in a world of our choosing - but only if there exists such a thing as a black atheist.

Shawn Brown is an attorney who has studied law both in the United States and England. He has been a freethinker for several years and currently resides in the southwestern United States.

Ire and Brimstone

Churchgoers, strippers protest one another in Coshocton County

WARSAW, Ohio -- Strip-club owner Tommy George rolled up to the church in his grabber-orange Dodge Challenger, drinking a Mountain Dew at 9 in the morning and smoking a cigarette he had just rolled himself.

Pastor Bill Dunfee stepped out of a tan Nissan Murano, clutching a Bible in one hand and his sermon in the other, a touch of spray holding his perfectly coiffed 'do in place.

Inside the New Beginnings Ministries church, Dunfee's worshippers wore polyester and pearls.

Outside, George's strippers wore bikinis and belly rings.

Both men agree it is classic sinners vs. saints. But George says it is up to America to decide which is which and who is who.

Dunfee says God already has chosen.

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"Tom George is a parasite, a man without judgment," Dunfee said. "The word of Jesus Christ says you cannot share territory with the devil."

The battle that has heretofore played out in the parking lot of George's strip club - the Foxhole, a run-down, garage-like building at a Coshocton County crossroads called Newcastle - has shifted 7 miles east to Church Street.

Every weekend for the last four years, Dunfee and members of his ministry have stood watch over George's joint, taking up residence in the right of way with signs, video cameras and bullhorns in hand. They videotape customers' license plates and post them online, and they try to save the souls of anyone who comes and goes.

Now, the dancers have turned the tables, so to speak. Fed up with the tactics of Dunfee and his flock, they say they have finally accepted his constant invitation to come to church.

It's just that they've come wearing see-through shorts and toting Super Soakers.

They bring lawn chairs and - yesterday, anyway - grilled hamburgers, Monster energy drinks and corn on the cob.

They sat in front of the church and waved at passing cars but largely ignored the congregation behind them.

Likewise, the churchgoers largely ignored the dancers. Except for Stan Braxton. He stopped and held hands with Lola, a 42-year-old dancer who made \$200 on her Saturday night shift, and prayed for her salvation. Lola, who wouldn't give her last name, said she was grateful for Braxton's prayers and his time.

The women don't come here, after all, without their own version of religion. They bring signs with Scriptures written in neon colors:

Matthew 7:15: Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing

Revelations 22:11: He that is unjust, let him be unjust still

Ed note - the strip club is not tax exempt - the church is!



Hi, I'm A Mormon and I'm Totally Normal Even Though I Believe In Spirit Children, Goddess Wives, the Planet Kolob and Endless Celestial Sex by Abby



Zimet

With Mitt Romney considering a presidential run, the Mormon Church has begun an unofficial ad [campaign](#) across the country to show Americans they're just like the rest of us. Then again, a cartoon [video](#) on "what Mormon theology is really all about" - including racism, homophobia, Temple underwear as protection from the evils of the world, "dark-skinned Indian Israelites" and guerrilla posthumous [baptizing](#) of Jewish Holocaust victims - makes us, umm, wonder.

Ed note: This is the "religion" whose members spent over \$10,000,000 to defeat prop 8 (The gay marriage ban) in California

Mormons, Holocaust Survivors Reach Accord By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Mormon Church says it has changed its genealogical database to better prevent the names of Jews killed in Nazi concentration camps from being submitted for posthumous baptism by proxy. In a joint statement on Wednesday, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors said a new computer system and policy changes should resolve a yearslong disagreement over the baptisms. Mormons believe posthumous baptism by proxy provides an opportunity for deceased persons to receive the Gospel in the afterlife. The names used are drawn from a church-run genealogical database. Jews are offended by the idea that Mormons are trying to alter the religion of Holocaust victims.

Wanna bet they are still doing it on the sly!

God did not create the universe, says Hawking *By Michael Holden*

LONDON (Reuters) – God did not create the universe and the "Big Bang" was an inevitable consequence of the laws of physics, the eminent British theoretical physicist Stephen [Hawking](#) argues in a new book.

In "The Grand Design," co-authored with U.S. physicist Leonard Mlodinow, Hawking says a new series of theories made a creator of the universe redundant, according to the Times newspaper which published extracts on Thursday.

"Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist," Hawking writes.

"It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going."

Hawking, 68, who won global recognition with his 1988 book "A Brief History of Time," an account of the origins of the universe, is renowned for his work on black holes, [cosmology and quantum gravity](#).

Since 1974, the scientist has worked on marrying the two cornerstones of modern physics -- Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, which concerns gravity and large-scale phenomena, and quantum theory, which covers subatomic particles.

His latest comments suggest he has broken away from previous views he has expressed on religion. Previously, he wrote that the laws of physics meant it was simply not necessary to believe that God had intervened in the Big Bang.

He wrote in A Brief History ... "If we discover a complete theory, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason -- for then we should know the mind of God."

In his latest book, he said the 1992 discovery of a planet orbiting another star other than the Sun helped deconstruct the view of the father of physics Isaac Newton that the universe could not have arisen out of chaos but was created by God.

"That makes the coincidences of our planetary conditions -- the single Sun, the lucky combination of Earth-Sun distance and solar mass, far less remarkable, and far less compelling evidence that the Earth was carefully designed just to please us human beings," he writes.

Hawking, who is only able to speak through a computer-generated voice synthesizer, has a neuro muscular dystrophy that has progressed over the years and left him almost completely paralyzed.

He began suffering the disease in his early 20s but went on to establish himself as one of the world's leading scientific authorities, and has also made guest appearances in "Star Trek"

Last year he announced he was stepping down as Cambridge University's Lucasian Professor of Mathematics, a position once held by Newton and one he had held since 1979.

Mystery and Evidence by Tom Crane



There is a story about Bertrand Russell giving a public lecture somewhere or other, defending his atheism. A furious woman stood up at the end of the lecture and asked: "And Lord Russell, what will you say when you stand in front of the throne of God on judgment day?" Russell replied: "I will say: 'I'm terribly sorry, but you didn't give us enough evidence.'"

This is a very natural way for atheists to react to religious claims: to ask for evidence, and reject these claims in the absence of it. Many of the several hundred comments that followed two earlier Stone posts "[Philosophy and Faith](#)" and "[On Dawkins's Atheism: A Response](#)," both by Gary Gutting, took this stance. Certainly this is the way that today's "[new atheists](#)" tend to approach religion. According to their view, religions — by this they mean basically Christianity, Judaism and Islam and I will follow them in this — are largely in the business of making claims about the universe that are a bit like scientific hypotheses. In other words, they are claims — like the claim that God created the world — that are supported by evidence, that are proved by arguments and tested against our experience of the world. And against the evidence, these hypotheses do not seem to fare well.

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But is this the right way to think about religion? Here I want to suggest that it is not, and to try and locate what seem to me some significant differences between science and religion.

Religion commands and absorbs the passions and intellects of hundreds of millions of people, many more people than science does. Why is this?

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No Indulgence for Father Bourgeois by G. Fish

Upset that one of their own supports ordination of women, a Catholic missionary order defunds SOA Watch.

In late July, the American Catholic missionary order Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers revealed its decision to end longtime financial support for the anti-military group SOA Watch. Each year the organization hosts a vigil demanding the closing of the U.S. military's School of the Americas (SOA), which for 64 years

has trained Latin American military officers, many of whom have been linked to the murder and torture of dissidents. (In 2001, the school, located at Ft. Benning, Ga., was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.)

SOA Watch's founder and head is 72-year-old Father Roy Bourgeois, a Maryknoll priest. In 1990, following the murder of six Jesuit priests in El Salvador by graduates of the SOA in November 1989, Bourgeois and a small group of supporters founded SOA Watch. Bourgeois has also been an outspoken advocate for the ordination of women into the Catholic priesthood. Because of his participation in the ordination of a woman as a priest in 2008, he is considered automatically excommunicated by the Vatican, which demanded, in an October 2008 letter to Maryknoll headquarters in Ossining, N.Y., that he recant his support of women's ordination. However, Bourgeois considers the denial of priestly ordination of women part of the "sin of sexism" by the Catholic Church, and openly defied the Vatican.

In a terse e-mail sent to the press July 22, the Maryknoll Order said in part: "Given Father Bourgeois' central role as the founder and public face of the SOA Watch, Society leadership has determined that it cannot continue its financial support of that organization without giving the impression that it also supports the actions of its leader concerning the issue of women's ordination." Thus, it denied a 2010 general-use grant of \$17,000 to SOA Watch, a group it has supported since the 1990s. Megan Sweas, writing in *U.S. Catholic*, remarked that the Maryknoll Order "seems to give the impression that women's ordination is worse than torture."

Michael Baney, development coordinator of SOA Watch, noted that the Maryknoll Order had been SOA Watch's biggest financial backer, and the denial of the grant "put an enormous hole" in the organization's \$360,000 budget. However, he says an SOA Watch emergency appeal to the group's supporters has



American priest and founder of the human rights group SOA Watch Roy Bourgeois smiles after being awarded the Aachen Peace Prize on 01 September 2005 in Aachen, Germany. He received the prestigious award for his dedication to peace and human rights

Although considered excommunicated from the Catholic Church, Bourgeois still remains a Maryknoll priest. The Vatican has not acted to make his excommunication official, even though it threatened to do so in 2008.

When the Vatican released its new, more stringent guidelines on handling priest pedophilia on July 15, it linked together as "more grave delicts" possession of child pornography, sexual abuse of the mentally disabled and support for the ordination of women to the Catholic priesthood. (According to a *New York Times*/CBS News poll taken in May 2010, 59 percent of U.S. Catholics favor women's ordination, while only 33 percent oppose it.)

I've never seen such fear in the Catholic Church on this issue [of female ordination]," says Bourgeois. He says many priests have told him that they favor women's ordination, but if they speak out they will be kicked out of their priestly orders and denied pensions. Bourgeois says that retired Detroit auxiliary bishop Thomas Gumbleton, who himself crossed swords with the Vatican for his support of gay rights, warned him that the Holy See would punish him for speaking out against church doctrine. Bourgeois, however, believes the church will eventually be forced to change, and calls on his fellow priests to openly defy the Vatican. "This movement for gender equality in the church is unstoppable," he says.

From "In These Times" <http://www.inthesetimes.org/>

What is the Society For Humanistic Judaism?

Many Jews are humanists, but their philosophy is not recognized or expressed by conventional synagogues and temples whether Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform. It is the time for the real beliefs of thousands of Jewish people to be recognized. This is the reason for the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism was established in 1969.

The Society's mission is to mobilize people to celebrate Jewish identity and culture consistent with a Humanistic philosophy of life.

As the central body for the Humanistic Jewish Movement in North America, the Society assists in organizing and supporting congregations and in providing a worldwide voice for its members. **nial materials for the enrichment of Humanistic Jews. See: <http://www.shj.org/>**



(Continued from previous page)

To begin with, scientific explanation is a very specific and technical kind of knowledge. It requires patience, pedantry, a narrowing of focus and (in the case of the most profound scientific theories) considerable mathematical knowledge and ability. No-one can understand quantum theory — by any account, the most successful physical theory there has ever been — unless they grasp the underlying mathematics. Anyone who says otherwise is fooling themselves.

Religious belief is a very different kind of thing. It is not restricted only to those with a certain education or knowledge, it does not require years of training, it is not specialized and it is not technical. (I'm talking here about the content of what people who regularly attend church, mosque or synagogue take themselves to be thinking; I'm not talking about how theologians interpret this content.)

What is more, while religious belief is widespread, scientific knowledge is not. I would guess that very few people in the world are actually interested in the details of contemporary scientific theories. Why? One obvious reason is that many lack access to this knowledge. Another reason is that even when they have access, these theories require sophisticated knowledge and abilities, which not everyone is capable of getting.

Yet another reason — and the one I am interested in here — is that most people aren't deeply interested in science, even when they have the opportunity and the basic intellectual capacity to learn about it. Of course, educated people who know about science know roughly what Einstein, Newton and Darwin said. Many educated people accept the modern scientific view of the world and understand its main outlines. But this is not the same as being interested in the details of science, or being immersed in scientific thinking.

This lack of interest in science contrasts sharply with the worldwide interest in religion. It's hard to say whether religion is in decline or growing, partly because it's hard to identify only one thing as religion — not a question I can address here. But it's pretty obvious that whatever it is, religion commands and absorbs the passions and intellects of hundreds of millions of people, many more people than science does. Why is this? Is it because — as the new atheists might argue — they want to explain the world in a scientific kind of way, but since they have not been properly educated they haven't quite got there yet? Or is it because so many people are incurably irrational and are incapable of scientific thinking? Or is something else going on?

Taken as hypotheses, religious claims do very badly. Yet the striking fact is that this does not worry Christians.

For the religious, mysteries are accepted as a consequence of what makes the world meaningful.

Tim Crane is Knightbridge Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of two books, "The Mechanical Mind" (1995) and "Elements of Mind" (2001), and several other publications. He is currently working on two books: one on the representation of the non-existent and another on atheism and humanism.

THE END OF THE WORLD IS ALMOST HERE! HOLY GOD WILL BRING JUDGMENT DAY ON MAY 21, 2011

JUDGMENT DAY is feared by the world and is the day that God will destroy the world because of the sins of mankind. The world is correct in believing that Judgment Day will come. The Bible gives us the correct and accurate information about that Day.

The Bible is the Holy Book written by Holy God who is the Creator of this beautiful world. The Holy Bible is without question a very ancient book, having been completed about 1,900 years ago. In its original languages (mostly Hebrew and Greek) it has never been changed, and each and every word in the original languages is from the mouth of God.

Hope you are prepared—You have been warned - Ed

For more of this drivel go to:

<http://www.familyradio.com/portal-en.htm/>

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