



September

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

What a reward for all who attended our last HOFW meeting! Mr. Myron Ice treated his listeners to a moving, fascinating, hilarious, deeply personal and candid talk about his growing up in Texas as a gay and atheist young man. His reputation as a humorist and really bright guy had preceded him for our crowd was the largest I can remember. In addition,

we had 14 visitors, three of whom signed as new members!. Many thanks to Myron.

Visitors we welcomed and hope to see again were Susan Dycus, Dr. Paul Boller, Sally Johnson, Linda Foley, Duke Scott, Berry Bock, Sam Baker, Brenda McKeon, Sandy Olah, and Susan Farris. We were especially pleased to welcome John Fisher, Myrtle and Howard McMahon as new members.

Our group will be treated to another fine program for this coming September. One of our newest members, Dr. Don Jackson, recently retired as head of the Political Science Dept at TCU, will talk about something he is extraordinarily qualified to do, the Constitution of the U. S. The title of his talk promises unusual insight and interest, "One Document, but Four Constitutions--- And Heading for the Fifth."

Don writes that while we still have the principal ingredients of the Constitution of 1787, by interpretation we have had four constitutions, and---depending on election outcomes---we may be on our way toward the fifth.

The first, from 1789 to 1857 was chiefly about establishing the powers of a national government. The second, from 1876 to 1936, about establishing and sustaining the laissez-faire free market. The third, from 1937 to 1980, about saving capitalism and sustaining the regulatory state while enforcing the Bill of Rights and equal protection of the law. The fourth, from 1980 to the present, about trimming the regulatory state and the resources and powers of the national government. And the fifth--for the future--If Obama is not re-elected, revival of the laissez-faire free market. If Obama is re-elected: Difficult to predict, but likely developments will be toward greater economic globalism and transnational institutions and powers.

Don has fought the good fight in our area representing the ACLU in many cases in its support of civil rights. We are indeed fortunate to have him as our speaker. I urge you to take advantage of the opportunity and bring a friend to this meeting. Dick Trice, Chair

## Vatican says women priests a 'crime against faith'

The ordination of women as Roman Catholic priests has been made a "crime against the faith" by the Vatican and subject to discipline by its watchdog.

The new rules issued by the Vatican puts attempts at ordaining women among the "most serious crimes" **alongside pedophilia** and will be handled by investigators from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), considered the successor to the Inquisition., the organization headed by the present pope when he was a cardinal.

## Catholics angry as church puts female ordination on a par with sex abuse

Women attempting to be priests, and those who try to ordain them, already faced automatic excommunication but the new decree goes further and enshrines the action as "a crime against the sacraments".



Three 'bishops' at the ordination of a female French priest in Lyons in 2005. All four women were excommunicated. From left: South African Patricia Fresen, Austrian Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger and German Gisela Forster. Photograph: Jean-Pierre Clatot/AFP

It was meant to be the document that put a lid on the clerical sex abuse scandals that have swept the Roman Catholic world. But instead of quelling fury from within and without the church, the Vatican stoked the anger of liberal Catholics and women's groups by including a provision in its revised decree that made the "attempted ordination" of women one of the gravest crimes in ecclesiastical law.

The change put the "offence" on a par with the sex abuse of minors.

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Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, called the document "one of the most insulting and misogynistic pronouncements that the Vatican has made for a very long time. Why any self-respecting woman would want to remain part of an organisation that regards their full and equal participation as a 'grave sin' is a mystery to me."

## In attack on Christian philosophy, Glenn Beck sides with Nazi propaganda

While an advanced theological argument could potentially be rendered to support this statement, all traces of logic seem missing. By its principle definition, what Beck is describing is victimhood. The word "victim" literally means a living being that is scarified to a deity.



A nearly universal cornerstone of Christian theology holds that Christ's death washed away man's sin in God's eyes, therefore his sacrifice is a key moment in their religious rite. Logically, it would follow that without the fundamental construction of the Christian God, who measures ill-deeds against humanity and threatens impure souls with eternal punishment, there would be no such thing as "sin" -- meaning the sacrifice chosen by Christ was to satisfy a deity. Such is the first definition of the word "victim,"

Instead, the juxtaposition of victim and conqueror is convenient for Beck in that he's trying to refute the intrinsic nature of many Christians' beliefs that the poor and needy should be comforted. Instead, the television talker opines that "redistribution of wealth" is nowhere to be found in the religious tome.

But even this rings hollow. The first generation of Christians, spoken of in the book of Acts, took it upon themselves to sell all their possessions and bring the proceeds to Christ's apostles so they might redistribute the wealth to all believers.

## New Ritual Tool: The Blow-Dryer

**Nonbelievers Adopt Provocative Ceremony to Make a Point About Baptism** By DAN HARRIS, ERIC JOHNSON and MARY FLYNN

Wielding a blow-dryer, a leading atheist conducted a mass "de-baptism" of fellow non-believers and symbolically dried up the offending waters that were sprinkled on their foreheads as young children.

At the [annual American Atheists Convention](#), one of atheism's premier provocateurs, Edwin Kagin, faced the crowd and raised high a hairdryer labeled "Reason and Truth."

Said one woman who travelled from Cincinnati to undergo the de-baptism, "I was baptized Catholic. I don't remember any of it at all." The woman, Cambridge Boxterman, 24, added, "According to my mother I screamed like a banshee, and those are her words, so you can see that even as a young child I didn't want to be baptized.

It's not fair. I was born atheist and they were forcing me to become Catholic."

[Kagin](#), who is [American Atheists'](#) national legal director, firmly believes that regardless of one's religious beliefs, each person has the right to say or do what he or she wants, provided it is within the law. In the past, he has reportedly called out parents who subject their children to strict fundamentalist religious education, referring to it as child abuse.

"It is teaching children that the world works in other ways than it does," he said. "This can be extremely dangerous."

"They are practicing child abuse in teaching that the world operates in ways other than it does," he told the convention crowd. "And in my opinion, they are engaged in terrorism by weakening our nation and our understanding of science and things with which we can defend ourselves and progress. If it had not been for these fools we could have been at the stars 2,000 years ago."

Kagin, author of "Baubles of Blasphemy," has a history of behaving in ways that elicit a rise from God-fearing people. He's known to have asked female atheists to dress in burqas and perform a song, "Back in their Burquas Again," he's referred to Mary Magdalene as a deranged hooker and he's called the Holy Eucharist "Swallow the Leader."

## An Immodest Proposal by Mike Adams

I can't stand atheists. And I plan to do something about them. Thankfully, the U.S. Supreme Court has given me a powerful tool to use in my war against the godless. Earlier this week, the Court ruled that a public university may require all student organizations to admit any student as a voting member or officer. The decision applies even to a student who is openly hostile to the group's fundamental beliefs.

So, when I get back to the secular university in August, I plan to round up the students I know who are most hostile to atheism. Then I'm going to get them to help me find atheist-haters willing to join atheist student groups across the South. I plan to use my young fundamentalist Christian warriors to undermine the mission of every group that disagrees with me on the existence of God.

My friend, and Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) President, Greg Lukianoff has a different take on this recent Supreme Court decision. He says "FIRE will continue to fight for the rights of expressive campus organizations to form around shared beliefs and for the principle that the College Democrats have the right to be Democrats, the College Atheists have the right to be atheists, and the College Christians have the right to be Christians." But I disagree with Greg. As a member of the dominant majority, I recognize the power of *Martinez* to destroy campus dissent. **And I like it. I like it a lot.**

Ed comment—this is a satirical piece (I hope)

## Graduations from God to America

by [Pierre Tristram](#)

In America, words precede reality, literally and beautifully so. Pilgrims hadn't yet touched land on the new continent 400 years ago when John Winthrop imagined for them not only that they'd be building that "city upon a hill," but that "the eyes of all people are upon us."

The Constitution 160 years later was another leap of words into an undiscovered country: a republic built exclusively under the law. After 1500 years of blood-soaked religious tyrannies, God was gone, along with absurd notions of divine right or government without representation.

It took a while for the Constitution's words to apply to anyone not white, not male and not moneyed. But again, the words of Abraham Lincoln, Sojourner Truth, Susan Anthony and Martin Luther King anticipated what lesser men and women more or less fulfilled.

American history is inseparable from American language, and American language is inseparable from the American speech — the sermon from the pulpit, the Chautauqua lecture, political convention speeches, the state of the union message, the commencement address. So it is every year around this time: tens of thousands of speeches across the land in universities, colleges and high schools taking stock of the country in its present state and imagining, sometimes inventing, what's ahead. John Winthrop's speech to the pilgrims was, after all, America's first commencement address.

Most of those are cannonades of Bartlett's quotations and clichés, especially in high schools, where student-speakers are strait-jacketed by assumptions that they should be reverential to those who got them there at precisely the moment when they should break those chains and re-make the world on their own terms. Favorable terms to us all, we hope.

Anthony DeAugustino's valedictory at the [Flagler Palm Coast High School graduation](#) last week had some of that edge. "May we never forget what God has done for us, and may we never cease to be thankful for those things, as long as we are one nation under God, and we declare that it is in god we trust," DeAugustino said to wild, and rather chilling, cheers.

It's encouraging to see students expressing themselves freely, no matter what one may feel about their ideas. I wish more did so, whether it's about religion, politics, education, or whatever else they've been led to believe is "inappropriate" to speak of on graduation. "Inappropriate" according to whose gate-keeping stupidity? That's not to say that the better speeches shouldn't invite responses and reflections of their own. DeAugustino's speech certainly did.

He quoted Jeremiah, but he also quoted [Theodore Roosevelt](#), though not the TR who decried the "narrow bigotry" of those who make their civic decisions based on religious creed. So it was less encouraging to hear a large local crowd go nuts, like a bunch of fanatics at a Taliban pep rally, at the emphasized declaration of "one nation under god." They think they're one nation under god, too, over there where American soldiers are dying every day, and they take it to the final logical level when such beliefs are held to be the national creed: they behead those who disagree, just as Europeans did in centuries of mixing god

and politics before our own Founders and the Constitution showed them the better way.

A week earlier Lisa Kudrow at Vassar remembered her own graduation 25 years ago, when then-New York Gov. Mario Cuomo was the speaker, Ronald Reagan was president and George W. Bush was still a drunk. Cuomo had done one of those things speakers often do at these things: tell the graduating class to look around and take in what the previous four years had meant. But Kudrow had it right when she remembered the moment last week:

"I wasn't in the mood to look back and be sad over what I might miss later. I was ready to be looking forward, like I'm sure a lot of you are." That's assuming there's much to look forward to these days. This year's addresses aren't all in yet. But they're not going to be that different from last year's serial reality checks on an American dream less dreamy than it had been since Ronald Reagan's "morning in America" therapy started the country on its ruinous addiction to fantasy on borrowed money.

### *Book Review*

#### ***"The Case Against the Case for Christ" By Robert M. Price Reviewed by Scott Lohman***

It seems that Christian apologists never seem to learn. A number of years ago, I read Lee Strobel's "The Case for Christ" and was underwhelmed by it. Strobel referred to himself as "an atheist who became a believer." He tells how, in the 80's, he was a journalist in Chicago whose wife became a Christian.

According to Strobel, he wanted to know what changed her, "investigated" Christianity and found it true. This is all quite fine, however his book was not published until 1998, many years later, after Strobel had become a pastor at several churches.

This is important as the subtitle on Strobel's book is "a journalist's personal investigation of the evidence for Jesus." Strobel continues to try and sell himself as a skeptic who investigated the facts, even though, at this point, he's been a pastor for almost 20 years. That should be our first clue that his book may not be the hard hitting investigation that one would expect.

Bob Price is a New Testament scholar and a member of the Jesus Project. He is an expert as well as a former Christian who is now an atheist. Price has a low tolerance for bad apologetics and Strobel's definitely falls under that label. My original characterization of Strobel's book was "evangelical pastor asks questions of other evangelical 'experts' and comes to the shocking conclusion that their religion is correct".

Price has also debated a number of Strobel's experts, so not only does he know their arguments but has the answers to counter them. For those who haven't read Strobel's book, you can just cut to the chase and read Price's book. Best of all, it has his trademark intelligent but snarky answers to stupid arguments.



## "Freedom:" The Right of Religious Fundamentalists to Discriminate Against Everyone Else By Amanda Marcotte

Conscience clauses. They practically have the term "slippery slope" built right into their definition. Anti-choicers started by pushing the idea that pharmacists shouldn't have to sell contraception if it somehow violates their heartfelt repulsion to what they believe is unapologetic sluttiness. But did anyone think it would stop there? Once the idea got loose that you have a right to not do your job if you disapprove of a client's sex life, the doors were thrown wide open to all sorts of discrimination against customers, followed by a bout of acting like a martyr if you were pushed to do your actual job.

Well, the movement towards discrimination based on sexuality took a blow last week, when [a federal judge ruled in favor of a counseling program](#) that ejected a student who refused to do her job if her clients are gay. To no one's great surprise, conservative pundits are telling their followers that this means that students in general are now subject to being expelled for holding bigoted beliefs they excuse through Christianity. This argument is, of course, nonsense. People are allowed to believe whatever bigoted things they want about their fellow human beings. What they aren't allowed to do is act in bigoted ways contrary to their profession and expect to keep their jobs, a much different thing. A counselor who privately believes homosexuality is a sin but who manages to treat gay clients with respect and according to science-based guidelines (i.e. doesn't try to convince clients they can change sexual orientation) would have no problem with these restrictions.

This ruling comes at a time when the "conscience clause" nonsense is being pushed hard by the right. For instance, the [misleadingly named American Center for Law & Justice](#) is suing the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) for firing Edwin Graning because he refused to do his job, which is to take passengers where they want to go. In this case, Graning refused to take passengers to the local Planned Parenthood. Graning's argument is full of self-serving pity---he's claiming discrimination for his religious beliefs---but the only people that were discriminated against were his passengers that he refused to serve because of what he believed about their private sexual choices.

[As Kyle at Right Wing Watch documented](#), Graning's story is full of holes. Graning tried to spin the usual faux-concern-for-women tale, claiming that his wife called the Planned Parenthood in question and received a recorded message directing women with abortion complications to 911. The implication is that he was some hero, saving his passenger from certain death by abortion by refusing to take her to Planned Parenthood. Of course, it was quickly revealed that the actual recording is what you'd expect, some boilerplate about setting an appointment or volunteering time or money---nothing about abortion, and certainly nothing suggesting that their patients routinely end up in E.R. with Planned Parenthood washing their hands of them. Since abortion is relatively safe, and providers work with hospitals in the very rare case of emergencies, this is to be expected.

Of course, there's no reason to think women who requested a ride to Planned Parenthood should be assumed to be wanting an abortion instead of far more common services such as cancer screening or contraception counseling. Unless, of course, you're a self-dramatic right wing fundamentalist looking to mislead people about the realities of women's health care in order to separate women from it.

Despite his struggles with basic honesty, Graning is claiming that he's a Christian and therefore he has a special right not to do his job. This is the right wing argument for religious freedom. It should be immediately obvious that their definition of "religious freedom" doesn't apply to people who don't practice their particular brand of Christianity. For instance, ACLJ believes that women whose religion doesn't forbid abortion, contraception, or basic reproductive health care should not be allowed to use the same government services as everyone else, such as the bus system. Those women deserve to be treated as second-class citizens because they have the wrong religious beliefs.

In case the claims of "religious freedom" don't seem empty enough on the surface, consider the case of [Muslim cab drivers in Minnesota](#) who refused to transport customers carrying bottles of alcohol, in most cases because they picked it up from the duty-free store. The cabbies other complaints of bad working conditions certainly deserve consideration, but as in most cases, the burden of not discriminating based on religious belief falls on those providing the public service. In case, that means that Muslim cab drivers have a duty not to discriminate against those who are behaving peacefully but don't share their anti-alcohol beliefs.

But since conservatives believe that religious freedom means the right to refuse to do your job when you differ with your clients on a matter of religious dogma, they hopped right to defending the Muslim cabbies, right?

Of course not. On the contrary! The case was used to raise alarms about the non-existent threat that "shari'a law" was going to supplant our very Constitution, with its prohibitions against the state favoring religion over non-religion, or favoring one religion over another.

So, if the state enforces the right of fundamentalist Christians to discriminate on the basis of religion against people who don't share their beliefs, that's "freedom." Anyone else who discriminates against clients is a threat to the very same freedom. Basically, the words "religious freedom," the mouths of social conservatives, mean protecting the right of fundamentalist Christians to persecute and discriminate against everyone else.

Let's hope more judges follow the example set by the judge in the East Michigan University case, and see the fundamentalist claims for "religious freedom" as the dishonest attempts to deprive everyone else of rights that they are.

## Glenn Beck Wrong On Darwin: How Evolution Affirms The Oneness Of Humankind Michael Zimmerman, Ph.D. August 24, 2010

The fact that Glenn Beck often doesn't know what he's talking about is certainly not news. But the fact that he has a large audience who believes much of the garbage he spews means that the first point can't simply be ignored.

Beck just accused Charles Darwin of being "the father of modern-day racism." And, in so doing, he mangled every fact imaginable. Not to worry, though; since the facts don't matter to Beck, he was able to support his ongoing dislike of Darwin, a dislike well evidenced by his 2007 statement that "Darwin is the uber-liberals' god. Darwin, I believe actually, to the uber-liberal, is just the way -- he's just the device to erase God."

To many of the rest of us, however, the facts do matter -- and they tell a very different story from what Beck wants us to believe.

Let's look at what Darwin himself had to say. In 1871 in *The Descent of Man*, Darwin wrote the following, hardly the words of a racist:

As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races. If, indeed, such men are separated from him by great differences in appearance or habits, experience unfortunately shews (sic) us how long it is, before we look at them as our fellow creatures.

Long before that, while on the *Beagle*, Darwin wrote the following (the odd grammar is his!) to his sister Catherine:

I have watched how steadily the general feeling, as shown at elections, has been rising against Slavery. What a proud thing for England, if she is the first European nation which utterly abolish it. I was told before leaving England, that after living in slave countries: all my options would be altered; the only alteration I am aware of is forming a much higher estimate of the Negro's character.

And in his autobiography, Darwin noted this heated exchange with Robert FitzRoy, Captain of the *Beagle* -- again, hardly the words of a racist:

Fitz-Roy's temper was a most unfortunate one. ... We had several quarrels; for when out of temper he was utterly unreasonable. For instance, early in the voyage at Bahia in Brazil he defended and praised slavery,

which I abominated, and told me that he had just visited a great slave-owner, who had called up many of his slaves and asked them whether they were happy, and whether they wished to be free, and all answered "No." I then asked him, perhaps with a sneer, whether he thought that the answers of slaves in the presence of their master was worth anything. This made him excessively angry, and he said that as I doubted his word, we could not live any longer together.

The quotations to support Darwin's hatred of slavery and his liberal views on race relations could go on almost endlessly. Beyond that, however, it's worth noting that, regardless of Darwin's personal views, evolution, if anything, would tend to move people away from racism rather than towards it.

Prior to Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species*, most people believed that human races, like species, were created as they were at that time. Human races were considered to be distinct entities and many thought could be hierarchically arranged with Caucasians at the top. Consider what Louis Agassiz, Harvard professor and creationist, had to say in a letter to his mother in 1846:

It was in Philadelphia that I first found myself in prolonged contact with Negroes; all the domestics in my hotel were men of color. I can scarcely express to you the painful impression that I received, especially since the feeling that they inspired in me is contrary to all our ideas about the confraternity of the human type (genre) and the unique origin of our species. But truth before all. Nevertheless, I experienced pity at the sight of this degraded and degenerate race, and their lot inspired compassion in me in thinking that they were really men. Nonetheless, it is impossible for me to repress the feeling that they are not of the same blood as us. In seeing their black faces with their thick lips and grimacing teeth, the wool on their head, their bent knees, their elongated hands, I could not take my eyes off their face in order to tell them to stay far away. And when they advanced that hideous hand towards my plate in order to serve me, I wished I were able to depart in order to eat a piece of bread elsewhere, rather than dine with such service. What unhappiness for the white race -- to have tied their existence so closely with that of Negroes in certain countries! God preserve us from such a contact.

An acceptance of evolutionary theory put an end to the idea that human races represented different species -- and made it clear that all humans were closely related. Additionally, as our knowledge of genetics increased, we learned that the differences between individuals are, in fact, greater than the differences across races.

Evolution, therefore, when fully understood, should help us move beyond racism -- and if credit is being given to Charles Darwin in the area of race relations, perhaps this should be his legacy.

**Many thanks to Marj Bixler for bringing this article to my attention . . . . Ed**

**To read more go to:**  
**<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/religion-science>**

## Troops Punished After Refusing to Attend Evangelical Concert Friday 20 August 2010 **by: Mike Ludwig, t r u t h o u t Report**

*Update: An Army spokesman now says the Pentagon will investigate soldiers' claims that they were punished for refusing to attend the Christian-themed concert.*

Pvt. Anthony Smith is the type of guy who stands up for what he believes in. That's why he decided to hold his commanding officers accountable for punishing him and fellow soldiers after they refused to attend an evangelical Christian rock concert at the Fort Eustis military post in Virginia.

After a day of training at Fort Eustis, Smith and other trainees were normally released to have personal time, but on May 13, Smith and dozens of others were "required" to march in formation to a concert headlined by an evangelical Christian rock band. Smith spent six months training at Fort Eustis before moving to Arizona to serve on active duty with the National Guard.

"No option was presented to us off the bat," Smith told Truthout about the required concert.

The Commanding General's Spiritual Fitness Concert that Smith and others were told to attend was headlined by BarlowGirl, a "band of tender-hearted, beautiful young women who aren't afraid to take an aggressive, almost warrior-like stance when it comes to spreading the gospel and serving God," according to the group's web site.

The group Smith marched with included at least two Muslim soldiers who fell out of rank and stopped marching on their own, according to a first-hand account published by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation ([MRFF](#)).

Once outside the concert, Smith and the other trainees were finally given an option and told to split into two groups: those who wanted to attend, and those who did not. Smith and about 80 others decided not to attend, even though they were obviously being "pressured" to do so. Smith and the others were sent back to their barracks on "lockdown," a punishment that Smith said withholds even basic freedoms like using their own electronics.

Barlow Girl band member Lauren Barlow said if she and the other members of the group knew soldiers were being forced to attend the concert and were then punished for refusing to attend "we would have said something."

The concert was part of a series of "spiritual fitness" music events at Fort Eustis and nearby Fort Lee instituted by born-again Christian Gen. James E. Chambers, according to an article on the Army's [web site](#).

"They call them 'spiritual' events, but the vast majority of spiritual events are Christian-based," Smith said.

Smith said that the events often involve Bible readings and testimonies from evangelicals.

Headlining acts like BarlowGirl cost tens of thousands of dollars, and researchers with the MRFF later discovered that the Department of Defense has awarded multi-million dollar contracts for consultants behind spiritual fitness events.

A spokesperson for Fort Eustis did not have any information or statements prepared regarding the May 13 incident as of Friday afternoon.

"I'm not somebody who just stands down to pressure and gives in," Smith said about choosing not to attend the concert. "But there were so many people who weren't willing to stand up for themselves."

So, Smith and another anonymous soldier decided to take action. They filed an Equal Opportunity (EO) complaint against their commanding officers, but Smith said the complaint fell on deaf ears.

Smith said the first EO officer they spoke with told them that nothing was wrong, and their complaint would simply become another "statistic." Smith and the anonymous soldier sought out other EO officers and took their case up the chain of command.

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