

HUMANISTS

Volume 15, Number 2

This newsletter is presented by the Humanists of Fort Worth (HoFW), Texas for its members.

Happy



Humanist

of FORT WORTH

February, 2014

The “Happy Humanist” symbol is presented by IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union).

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NEXT MEETING

Wed. February 12, 2014 7:00 PM

SPEAKER:

PROF. CHARLES LOCKHART

TOPIC:

How the American Electoral System Steals Citizen’s Votes

More on page 7

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 figures are shocking. Three quarters of the American population literally believe in religious miracles. The numbers who believe in the devil, in resurrection, in God doing this and that—it’s astonishing. These numbers aren’t duplicated anywhere else in the industrial world. You’d have to maybe go to mosques in Iran or do a poll among old ladies in Sicily to get numbers like this. Yet this is the American population.” NOAM CHOMSKY

From: *The Quotable Atheist* - By Jack Huberman (2007)

! 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 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

Chair: Sam Baker

Phone: 817-994-8868

Email: sambaker@hotmail.com

Vice-Chair

Vacant

Secretary: John Fisher

Phone: 682-556-9894

Email: jmfthird@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Dolores Ruhs

Phone: 817-249-1829

Email: ruhsdol@sbcglobal.net

Past Chair: Dick Trice

Phone: 817-446-4696

Email: trice933@att.net

Newsletter Editor/ Past Chair : Don Ruhs

Phone: (M) 817-343-3650

Email: laidback935@sbcglobal.net

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

NOTE:

If you do not have access to the internet, the Newsletter may be mailed to you for an additional annual fee of \$12.00.

**HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH
MONTHLY MEETING
JANUARY 8, 2014**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm. By Chair Sam Baker. There were 26 persons present, including 9 visitors with three new members joining.

This month's speaker was Chair emeritus Dick Trice, who gave a talk entitled "**Who Are These People Who Made it Possible for Us to Think Freely Today?**" that included descriptions of the work and lives of early freethinkers, including Voltaire, Robert G. Ingersoll, and Charles Darwin.

There was a break for refreshments and then a Q & A session followed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Fisher

John Fisher, Secretary

**HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH
TREASURER'S REPORT
JANUARY 8, 2014**

Report Date: 8 January 2014
Beginning Balance: 11 December 2013 **\$882.90**

CREDITS:

Dues:	Date	Amount
Linda McDonnell	Jan. 8, 2014	\$25.00
Cynthia & Clark Brannan	Jan. 8, 2014	\$40.00
Linda & Robert Wilkins	Jan. 8, 2014	\$40.00

TOTAL CREDITS **\$105.00**

DEBITS 00

TOTAL DEBITS **00**

TOTAL CREDITS +/- DEBITS **\$105.00**

ENDING BALANCE: Jan. 8, 2014 **\$987.90**

ATTEST: Dolores M. Ruhs Jan. 8, 2014
Dolores M. Ruhs Treasurer
Don Ruhs Assistant.

Copies:

Chair: Sam Baker
Vice Chair: (Vacant)
Secy.: John Fisher
Board: Dick Trice
Board: Don Ruhs

From the . . .



. . . Sam Baker

THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS MATTERS TO HUMANISTS

Humanism is about a lot more than atheism. The things that matter most to Humanists are nicely summarized in the "The Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles," which are reprinted in every issue of the HoFW Newsletter, usually on the second page. One of these affirmations states that, "We believe in an open and pluralistic society and that democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites" In the modern world, democracy means representative democracy, and to Americans it means representative democracy in the context of a constitutional republic.

What is representative democracy exactly? Is it satisfied merely by an election of some kind?

Let's take an example from the corporate world.

Say you want to produce a revolutionary new product you have invented, but since you have only 40% of the funds to get it into production, you enter into a contract with a venture capitalist to provide the rest of the money. You agree to form a corporation with provision for a ten (10) member board of directors, the venture capitalist receiving 60% of the stock and you receiving 40% of the stock. A hundred shares of stock are authorized and distributed, 60 to the venture capitalist and 40 to you.

Absent special voting rules providing for cumulative voting, the venture capitalist can

use his 60 shares to elect all of his candidates for the entire board of directors: he votes 6 of his shares to your 4 shares for each seat on the board. This is what is called a "winner-take-all" election..

Is it fair that the inventor of the product and the provider of 40% of the corporate capital has no voice at all on the board of directors? Most people would say no, and that's why no publicly traded corporation elects directors this way. All of them have cumulative voting rules which insure that sizeable minority shareholders have representation on the board. Yet we readily accept winner-take-all elections in government, and we don't question their fairness at all.

Winner-take-all elections for the House of Representatives are just as unfair as winner-take-all elections are. The winner may win with only 50.1% of the vote and 49.9% of the voters are then left with no real representative for their views. As in the corporate context, the fair thing to do would be to have elections for multiple seats in the same district with rules insuring that at least some minority candidates are elected.

At our February meeting, Charles Lockhart, Professor of Political Science at TCU, will explain how elections in multi-member districts work and how we could live in a society where everyone has a true representative in the Congress.

I hope to see you there.

Sam

PRESENTATION FOR OUR NEXT MEETING

***** FEBRUARY 12, 2014 *****

CHARLES LOCKHART
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, TCU

HOW THE AMERICAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM STEALS CITIZEN'S VOTES

Professor Lockhart will explain the inherent unfairness in our system of elections.

Whether Municipal, State, or Federal
election, every vote is important!
? ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE ?

Know Your Bible? #16

Don Ruhs

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

From: Various sources, including the Holy Bible.

MYTHICAL ANIMALS OF THE BIBLE

BY DON RUHS (JANUARY 20, 2014)

COCKATRICE, A fabulous serpent supposed to be produced from a cock's egg brooded by a serpent. Is. 11:8 . . . *and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.*

Dragon, A mythical monster usually represented as breathing fire and having a scaly reptilian body, wings, claws, and a long tail. Isa.13:22 - . . . *and dragons in their pleasant palaces: . . .*

GRIFFON, Lev., xi, 13 (whereas Deuteronomy 14:12, we read "grype") - whereby the lammergeyer or bearded vulture, *gypætus barbatus*, the largest and most magnificent of the birds of prey.

LAMIA, Isa.34:14 (Hebrew text).-Is a translation of Hebrew, *lîlîth*; according to the old popular legends, the lamia was a feminine bloodthirsty monster, devouring men and children.

SATYRS, In Greek mythology as a creature composed of a man and a goat, supposed to inhabit wild and desolate regions. Isa. 13:21 . . . *and satyrs shall dance there.*

SIREN, Isa., xiii, 22 (Hebrew text)-a translation for Hebrew *tán*, which, indicates an animal dwelling in ruins, and may generally be rendered by jackal.

UNICORN, In ancient mythological literature, the unicorn was a horse-like animal with a prominent horn protruding from the center of its forehead. Numbers 23:22 - . . . *he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.*; Job 39:9-12 (KJV) "*Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, . . . ?; Psa. 22:21- . . . for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.*; Psa. 29:6 - . . . *like a young unicorn*; Psa. 92:10 . . . *but my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn.*; Isa. 34:7 . . . *And the unicorns shall come down with them, . . .*

TALKING animals:

SERPENT, Gen.3: 1-14 (KJV). Several passages describe a serpent telling Eve it was OK to eat of the "forbidden fruit," then Eve telling Adam about it, then God asking Eve how she learned of the "forbidden fruit", etc., etc.

BALAAMS'S ASS, vs. 28-*And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam . . .*Num. 22:28-30 (KJV).

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Over the centuries, through the advantages of science, the Holy Bible has become more available to more people who

Commentary . . .

Don Ruhs

EPISTEMOLOGY: —The division of philosophy that investigates the nature and origin of *knowledge*.

KNOWLEDGE: —The state or fact of knowing.

FORCE: — A capacity for affecting, influencing, or persuading the mind or behavior.

The American Heritage Dictionary

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One wonders if the "religious evangelists," which includes those of faiths other than Christianity, ever take the time to research the *validity* of the stories in their "holy" books? But then again, if they did this would be a moot question wouldn't it?

But it never ceases to amaze me that here we are, into the twenty-first century, with the advantages we have of the *knowledge* available to us through science, history, and enlightenment, that anyone could still buy into the religious nonsense they want to *force* upon the rest of us. The key word here is *force*.

I think it's fairly obvious that the majority of "evangelists" also find it necessary to *force* their beliefs on their children—a form of *mental enslavement* by the way. The 13th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery and involuntary servitude. But because some of their "holy" books still condone slavery, its believers continue to hold on to it.

This archaic ideology also holds true with regard to freedom of religion and the freedom of women to have the right to vote (19th amendment, 1920), or hold office within their congregations.

have the ability to read and to learn and to, subsequently, have serious doubts about its veracity. In turn, there are also the fundamentalist Bible believers who insist that it is the inerrant "word of God." They continue to "apologize" for the blatant errors of their "holy book" regardless of the obvious truths available to us today.

APOLOGETICS: (circa 1733)

1: systematic argumentative discourse in defense (as of a doctrine);

2: a branch of theology devoted to the defense of the divine origin and authority of Christianity.

Amen



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."

AROUND THE WORLD

From: *Americans United for the Separation of Church & State* November 2013, page 22

Canadian City Council Mulling Role of Public Prayer

Disputes over the proper role of religion in legislative meetings aren't just an American phenomenon; Canada is grappling with them too.

The city of Saskatoon in the province of Saskatchewan is debating the role of prayer at its public events. A new report by a city commission lays out three options for the town: avoid prayer entirely, hold a moment of silence or deliver a non-sectarian inspirational message.

The report comes partially in response to a human-rights complaint lodged after a member of the city council delivered a Christian prayer before a city-sponsored dinner recognizing volunteers, reported the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Some city residents have organized to demand a secular approach, but officials are reluctant to ban the prayer practice, citing public support for it. In a statement to the National Post, council member Randy Donaur called prayer "a very common thing out here."

Donaur added, "What we're trying to do is come up with a policy that, rather banning it, is inclusive and not offensive and celebrates the diversity of where we're living."

From: *Americans United for the Separation of Church & State* December 2013, page 22

Italians Question Catholic Elective Course in Schools

People in Italy are debating whether to keep an elective course on Roman Catholicism in the public school system.

The issue came to public attention recently after an entire class of students at a high school in Genoa declined to take the course.

The class, called the "religion hour" had been mandatory for all students until 1968, when a court ruled that pupils could opt out. Until recently, few chose to do so.

The course focuses exclusively on Catholic history and traditions. Italy has a strong Catholic tradition, with almost 90% of the population professing that faith.

Critics call the class unnecessary and question the state's role in funding such sectarian curriculum, reported Religion News Service.

From: *Americans United for the Separation of Church & State* January 2014, page 22

British B&B Owners Lose Discrimination Fight

The United Kingdom's Supreme Court has ruled that the Christian owners of a bed and breakfast cannot turn away gay couples.

Steven Preddy and Martyn Hall, who are civil partners, brought a lawsuit against Hazelmary and Peter Bull in 2008, after the Bulls refused to let the couple stay in their seven-room guest house in Marazion, a British seaside town.

"There is no question of treating one community different to another," wrote Baroness Hale of Richmond, the court's deputy president. "If a homosexual couple were running a hotel and denied a double room to Christians because of their religious beliefs that would be equally unlawful."

The U.K. top court ruling upholds two lower court rulings against the Bulls. The couple must now pay damages to Preddy and Hall and comply with anti-discrimination laws.

Don Ruhs

Editorial: Don Ruhs

Questions were asked at our January meeting about books available to further one's knowledge of Humanism, Atheism, Agnosticism and Freethought philosophies. Fortunately, there are many more writers on these topics today than there were decades ago. I believe this to be attributed to the fact that there are more authors, and readers, who are now unafraid for their views to be known.

My personal library currently consists of approximately 350 books related to these topics; my proudest possession is, of course, the 12-volume collection of *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll* published by his son-in-law, C.P. Farrell, 1900.

Then there are the writings by *The Four Horsemen of The New Atheism*, notably Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011); Carl Sagan (1934-1996) might also be included in this era. Let us not forget Nick Harding's *How to be a Good Atheist*.

And, a few former Christian preachers and historians: John W. Loftus; Charles Templeton (1915-2001) a cohort of Billy Graham; Jerry Dewitt.

Along with these gentlemen, I'd like to include a few ladies: Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902); Karen Armstrong (former Roman Catholic nun); Susan Jacoby; Madalyn Murray O'Hair (1919-1995);

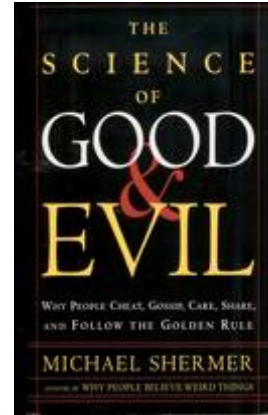
A couple of writers should be noted for writing about Islam: Mark Huband; Irshad Manji.

Needless to say, there are many more than those I've noted here.



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.



The Science of Good & Evil

by Michael Shermer

Times Books, Copyright 2004

Excerpted from the cover:

Michael Shermer, a psychologist and science historian, has written widely on the nature of belief, and this book is a provocative capstone to his work. In these pages, he explores an endlessly fascinating question: How and why did we make the leap from social primate to moral primate? As communities grew from bands and tribes to chiefdoms and states, Shermer explains, humans transformed the moral sentiments displayed in many primate species—shame and trust, for instance—into ethical principles.

As noted on the cover of *this* book: *Why People Believe Weird Things* is another excellent work by Shermer. They both deserve a place in every freethinkers library.

Don