

# HOUSTON HUMANIST ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

THE NEWSLETTER FOR HOUSTON'S HUMANIST AND FREETHOUGHT COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER 2003 ISSUE 49

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## From the Editor's desk:

By Ron Titus

Dear Readers,

[1] *Please note the suggestion made by Al Robison (Letter #5).*

*Many other publications put maximum and minimum limits on submissions. Thus far the HHA NL has not done so. But new situations call for new procedures. If you submitters take this to heart, maybe new "regulations" will not be necessary.*

*The most troubling thing to me in editing this issue was just that: editing. 'Editing other people's work. Editing other people's works of "art", their "masterpieces" is tough on me. I am SOOOO opposed to censorship, in any of its forms.*

[2] *I receive many notices of undelivered emails, due to "unknown" email addresses. People do move, and sometimes do change their email addresses. And sometimes they don't tell me about it. So, unless I get an updated email address, said emailers will not receive this wonderful NL.*

*How do I tell them that they are no longer on the email list? I am reminded of the orators who begin their presentations with: "If anyone cannot hear me, please raise your hand." (Ha!)*

*So to the rest of you readers: If you know of anyone who has been cut off, or of anyone who would like to get this NL, please have them send me an updated and/or working email address. Thanks.*

[3] *Peace!*

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## Essays (#1 of 2:

### The Book of Mormon and Bible prophecy

By Louis W. Cable

The Christian claim of authenticity relies to a large extent on the validity of Old Testament prophecy. It is claimed by Christian apologists that these prophecies, said to have been given by God to selected men long before the birth of Jesus, foretell not only his coming but also many important events which took place during his brief lifetime. So, it's all a part of God's grand plan? But what about the prophecies of other holy books and their fulfillment? Are they legitimate? Do they have any claim on authenticity? In that regard, let us take a brief look at one example in the Book of Mormon.

In the Book of Mormon there is a very interesting prophecy foretelling its coming. The prediction is spelled out in language far more explicit and conclusive than can be found anywhere in Bible prophecies. In 2nd Nephi 11 verse 125 of the Revised Authorized Version\*, it reads as follows:

*And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth to you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them that have slumbered. The book is described in the next seven verses. But, in Nephi 133 we are told: Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered to the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hidden from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it, save it be that three witnesses shall behold it by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.*

Sure enough, in the front of every Book of Mormon in a section appropriately titled "The Testimony of Three Witnesses" is a statement signed by Oliver Cowdery, David

Whitmer, and Martin Harris swearing in the name of God that they had seen the actual plates with the engravings on them from which the book came. Prophecy made; prophecy fulfilled. As if that weren't enough, on the facing page is the testimony of eight additional witnesses who swear, also in the name of God, that they not only saw the golden plates but actually handled them. I understand that at the headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah they still have the official signed affidavits of all of these witnesses. They are there for anyone and everyone to see.

Now, here is an example of a prophecy made and fulfilled with confirming witnesses. Yet I'm sure that most non-Mormons, particularly fundamentalist Christians, will put no credence what so ever in any of it. In fact, they might even scoff at it. When confronted with this evidence they quickly switch their demeanor from that of a true believer to that of a bonafide skeptic. Yet the evidence here is many times more convincing than anything they can come up with from the Bible. In fact, if Bible believers had anything even close to this confirming evidence they would be shouting it from the roof tops.

In reality, however, the Mormon claims of prophecy fulfillment are just as open to question as are any others. The reason is obvious. It is the common sense principal declaring that extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof. In the matter of a prophetic claim like this one, mere human testimony is inadequate. We are going to demand something far more convincing than a few words written in a book, particularly a book of dubious origin like the Bible. We are sensible enough to realize that there are more reasonable explanations than the one offered. We understand that men can be sincere but honestly mistaken. We understand also that men can deliberately lie.

So, I would suggest to those hinging their faith on the claim of Old Testament prophecy fulfillment that they apply the same common sense judgment to their beliefs that they so readily apply to similar claims cited in the holy books of other religions. Just ask yourself, "Why should I believe a thing simply because it is written in a book?"

For further discussion of this question see Examining the Christian Claim of Prophecy Fulfillment on my web site, Skeptics Corner.

\*In the version titled, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, see 2 Nephi, chapter 27, verses. 6-12.

Louis & Maryjane Cable live in Lufkin TX. He invites all to visit his atheist web site "Skeptics Corner": [www.inu.net/skeptic](http://www.inu.net/skeptic)

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## Essays (#2 of 2):

# Ten Humanist Commandments

By Bob Finch

Here are Ten Humanist Commandments, which I promised at the HOH Brunch meeting last month when we were discussing the traditional version. These ones are not carved in stone and people are free to improve on them, and expand them out as necessary. I would be interested to hear comments.

- (1) Always be honest and seek the Truth. Respect the findings of Science. Always keep promises.
- (2) Always try to learn. Be systematic, adaptable and prepared to evolve.
- (3) Be as considerate of others as you would like them to be to you: love the family, to friends be generous, kind and compassionate and approach strangers with goodwill.
- (4) Show fidelity, through respect for time honored practices. Value personal loyalty, organizational support and professional integrity.
- (5) Value beauty and the arts.
- (6) Be fair and support Justice. Obey the law and respect the rights of others.
- (7) Respect and participate in the democratic system.
- (8) Assume responsibility, help other people, show support by teaching and encouraging the young.
- (9) Be tolerant of others in matters of opinion, culture and religion.
- (10) Show gratitude and respect to those who have built the world in which you live.

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**Chronicles (#1 of 2):****Vatican misrepresents evidence results in unnecessary suffering**

AHA News Flash (2003 1010f1509)

By Jende Huang

(Washington, DC) “Is this the Vatican’s way of punishing those that want to engage in sex for pleasure rather than procreation and want to do so without risking pregnancy or disease?” asks Tony Hileman, executive director of the American Humanist Association (AHA). “While the religious leaders are welcome to express their theological opinions, there is no excuse for the Vatican’s misrepresentation of scientific evidence on the effectiveness of condoms. Such irresponsible deception will undoubtedly lead to lowered condom use, further spread of HIV/AIDS, unnecessary suffering, and death.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “The ability of latex condoms to prevent transmission of HIV has been scientifically established in “real life” studies of sexually active couples as well as in laboratory studies.” The World Health Organization and the general scientific community are in agreement that condoms are an effective means of protection against spread of viruses such as AIDS.

“Whether it’s the Vatican pushing pseudoscience or President Bush wasting public funds trying to promote ineffective abstinence-only education, Humanists and other reasoned people of good will must speak out against attempts to manipulate science for religious and political gain,” Hileman said. “These leaders share a regressive fundamentalist perspective that sex and procreation must always be linked. What they fail to recognize is that cultural attitudes have progressed beyond their thinking,” concludes Hileman.

The American Humanist Association is the oldest and largest Humanist organization in the nation. The AHA is dedicated to ensuring a voice for those with a positive nontheistic outlook, based on reason and experience, which embraces all of humanity.

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**Chronicles (#2 of 2):****Pledge violates freedom current form unconstitutional**

AHA News Release (2003 1014tu1556)

Contact: Roy Speckhardt (202) 238-9088

(Washington, D.C.) “The Pledge in its current form violates the American principle of religious freedom. Adding a testimony of religious belief to our statement of national loyalty is an unconstitutional endorsement of religion,” said Tony Hileman, executive director of the American Humanist Association.

AHA leaders respond to the Supreme Court’s choice to review the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision that schools must refrain from leading students in the current version of the Pledge of Allegiance because it includes the words “under God.” Along with the question of standing, the Court has agreed to review “Whether a public school district policy that requires teachers to lead willing students in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, which includes the words ‘under God,’ violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.”

Hileman continued, “It’s both constitutionally and morally wrong for public schools to place students without sectarian faith in the intimidating position of having to either refuse in front of their peers to recite the Pledge or pledge to something they do not believe in.”

AHA president Mel Lipman added, “This is a chance for American principles to shine. We look forward to the possibility of the Court taking the bold step of federalizing the good sense of the Ninth Circuit decision. This case can open the door to better treatment of the growing millions in our increasingly diverse nation who, like Humanists, do not subscribe to a belief in God as the word is intended in the Pledge of Allegiance.”

Hileman concluded, “It’s time for the Court to re-evaluate previous decisions that called instances of public reference to God meaningless ‘ceremonial deism.’ As was made clear to anyone within earshot of last summer’s uproar over the Ninth Circuit Pledge decision, the words ‘under God’ are meaningful words, and they are undeniably religious in meaning.”

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**Letters:**

[1] From (name withheld):

*remove*

[Ed: Another small reminder that the ideas expressed in this NL are not universally appreciated.]

[2] From Paul Sanche:

*Thanks for your HHA newsletter. I found it very interesting.*

[Ed: I opted to edit out a possible commercial reference to his website. 'My apologies if I have misjudged.]

[3] From Ed Uthman MD

*The Newsletter is a superb tour-de-force, but I have a hard time reading it because of the typography [email edition]. Reading from the screen presents additional challenges for those of us in the Age of Bifocals. ;) The problem is that there is no blank space between paragraphs and after headers. This makes everything run together in a massive block of text.*

*As I have done in this letter, I suggest tossing in a blank line after every heading and paragraph. This will cause less eye fatigue and assure that readers will stick with the newsletter to the end.*

*Keep up the good work!*

[Ed: 'Done. Thanks.]

[4] From Ross Hamilton Henry, Humanist Minister & President of The Asimov Humanists.

*Thanks again for an publishing excellent Newsletter that now seems to be getting national attention. Keep up the good work of keeping all us Humanists, Atheists, Freethinkers informed of what is happening in our community and in the larger world that concerns us. I especially enjoyed your Science Fiction review in this issue.*

*A good T.V. program that many people may not realize deals with the Secular Humanist viewpoint is "Judging Amy." I discovered it recently when one of my members noted that Judge "Amy" referred to her Judicial perspective as coming from a secular humanist philosophy.*

*I also noted that our 8 term American Humanist President Isaac Asimov was quoted 3 times a couple of weeks ago on the T.V. program C.S.I. (Crime Scene Investigation). Although It is all too rare, we do occasionally get some exposure in the national media. This is a positive sign in this society that more and more is bowing to the influence of the hyper-*

*religious majority party that now seeks to turn our nation into a theocracy.*

[Ed: As long as *Judging Amy* has been airing, I have not yet watched it. But thanks to you, I will be looking for an opportunity to do so.]

[5] From G Alan Robison:

*I was thinking that the newsletter might be getting a tad too long for most people. I know we can always request to be taken off the mailing list, and presumably every adult knows how to use the delete button, but I was just thinking that more people might actually read it if it were shorter and snappier, i.e., if they were faced with fewer words to have to wade through. Let's at least discuss it the next meeting.*

[Ed: Already I am putting your suggestion to work. See my note heading the following letter.]

[6] From Tony Messina:

Ed: This letter was considerably long, unbeknownst to the preceding letter. I have taken the liberty to risk editing for brevity and clarity. I consider Tony an authority on the "Founding Fathers" (although I no longer believe in ABSOLUTE authorities on ANY thing). I have gained a lot of info & insight from, and appreciation of him.

From informal history classes taught by Messina some years ago, I learned that many (all except Virginia?) state constitutions, unlike the national/federal constitution, did not prohibit the establishment of a government-endorsed religion. My guess is that many state constitutions to this day still have not amended themselves to conform to the national norm.

In this letter, Messina says that the writers of the US Constitution deliberately refrained from imposing a church-state separation prohibition on the individual states.

I retained some of the more provocative, humorous, and biting highlights of his letter.]

*Just thought you'd like an informed observation of the mention from the last newsletter about the first amendment [wherein Leonard Pitts Jr said "(T)his is not a theocracy, not a nation where the rulings of holy men carry official weight. The framers made that impossible when they wrote a First Amendment forbidding the government from endorsing any religion."]*

*Actually, precisely speaking, this is not true. ...*

*... (T)he first amendment of the fed. Const. was a statement of what the federal congress would not do in regards to the states. ...*

*One needs only to refer to the debates on the amendments ... . One also only needs to refer to the exchange of letters from Jefferson to the Danbury association ... . Have you ever read any of these*

letters? Probably not, you're an American. In this country, knowing your history is non-existent. ...

The words "establishment of religion" means something specific and precise, yet everyone, including Jefferson, got it all wrong. (Remember, Jefferson was not there when it was written, nor did he contribute to it's creation ... . In fact, Jefferson contradicts himself on this point ... ). ... It was something that the individual state was to address ... . The state would be allowed the "free exercise" of their "establishments of religion" without interference from the federal government. ...

... Madison offered language for an amendment that would have put the federal government directly in charge of imposing religious equality. Such language as "no state shall violate the equal rights of conscience, or the freedom of the press, or the trial by jury in criminal cases" and another passage that reads "the civil rights of none shall be abridged on account of religious belief or worship, nor shall any national religion be established, nor shall the full and equal rights of conscience be in any manner or on any pretext infringed". ...

I find myself wondering where they got the building permit for that persecution complex. Are we talking about the same federal government whose legislative bodies begin their sessions with prayer? Whose money carries the legend, "In God we trust?" Whose official calendar recognizes neither Yom Kippur nor Ramadan but gives a day off with pay for Christmas?

... (T)he "founding fathers", at the federal level, did not talk about separating the church from the governments at either the federal level or the state level, in fact, the debates prove this point out. They purposely avoided the subject and the result was the lackluster and confusing words that the first amendment is composed of today. The debates on language regarding church and state climax with Madison saying that this was the most important thing that they could do (create language that would separate the church from the state), while a person named Mr. Tucker sums it up by saying:

... "This is offered, I presume, as an amendment to the constitution of the United States, but it goes only to the alteration of the constitutions of particular states; it will be much better, I apprehend, to leave the state governments to themselves, and not to interfere with them more than we already do, and that is thought by many to be rather too much; I therefore move, sir, to strike out these words." (words separating the church from the state)

By now I have either totally lost you and your not interested in anything else, or I have raised more questions than I have answered. Either way, if you have any questions, please let me know, I'd love to

answer them against the historical record, rather than by my own invention like everyone else.

[7] From Che Alvandli:

To an editor and a new friend whose sincere words are as firm as a palm tree and whose 'humanist' heart is as tender as the buttocks of a baby!

I read your sincere (hence brave) confession of re-discovery of Karl Marx with special interest. Special for me, because, not only Karl Marx philosophy has been my interest and subject of study for three decades; and because, not only I've always considered myself a proud Marxist for most of my adult life (I'm now 45); but also because, I was a real cause in your beautiful consciousness on this matter by recommending to study Fromm's book in our fabulous 'Ideas Club'. I also agree with your implied notion that it is never too late to re-discover the truth. Though I found some surprisingly cute (!) naïveté in your assumption that Karl Marx was advocating some kind of (your) capitalism but, as the saying goes, naïveté is usually born of sincerity. Welcome to the vast world of Marxism...the humanism of tomorrow.

[8] From Ron Jones:

At our First Sunday of the Month Luncheon, (9/7) Bob Finch named several essential characteristics of humanism. I added that the Bill of Rights to the Constitution of the United States should be added, i.e. that humanists should respect the bill of rights as moral precepts.

Che responded that at the time the Constitution was written, the individual rights protected in the Bill of Rights were not extended to women and racial minorities. I did not have a chance to comment on his statement.

When I suggested that individual rights be considered humanist ideals, I did not mean that the culture of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century should be considered humanist ideals as well. Individual rights as spelled out in the Bill of Rights still have the same relevance today as they did in 1791. Unfortunately, a false interpretation of the Bill of Rights was held at that time. It is sad that more amendments and laws had to be passed, to apply those rights to women and minorities.

I suspect Che's comments were meant to disparage the freedom to keep the wealth (private property) that one earns as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

**Ron's Ramblings:**

By Ron Titus

In the past I defined humanists as people who aspire, consciously or unconsciously, to become human. That includes everyone, because all people are so wired from their birth (actually since BEFORE their birth).

I thank Bob Finch (again) for his persistence in pushing all of us Humanists to be less AGAINST theism and more FOR a positive humanism.

So, in the vein of promoting a positive humanism, I want to cite the two virtues I believe to be the most useful for becoming human, for becoming better people. They are justice and truth.

**Justice** was defined in yesteryear as the virtue whereby we render to others what is their due. Today I would change it to "render to PEOPLE what is their due". That way, it would include the self as well as others.

I know many people who are not fair to themselves; they treat other people just fine, but treat themselves like s---.

There are still others, of course, who treat OTHER people like excrement. 'But in so doing, they unwittingly do the same to themselves. When we treat other people unfairly, we are not doing ourselves a favor. Kindness begets kindness as much a violence begets violence.

A just transaction / trade occurs when both buyer and seller are content with their deal / agreement. If either buyer or seller is unhappy with the transaction, one can suspect some form of exploitation.

**Truth** used to be divided into ontological and intellectual. Today, we could call them objective and subjective.

Ontological truth is when a thing conforms to itself. Eg, a thing IS what it is.

Unless one is highly philosophical, this is a very impractical concept. 'Impractical until one runs into a Clintonian lawyer who says, "That depends on what you mean by 'is'". 'Or when one runs into people who insist that what they perceive is "fact" (or "objective" truth).

Intellectual truth can be further divided into psychological and sociological.

Psychological truth is had when one's mind / perception conforms to what one perceives (subjective truth). Sociological truth (honesty / veracity) is had when one's words or communications conform to one's perceptions or beliefs.

It is possible for people to be psychologically correct but sociologically dishonest, and to be sociologically honest but ontologically incorrect.

**SUMMARY:**

Sociological truth: One's words / external actions conform to one's mind. Psychological truth: One's mind conforms to a thing. Ontological truth: A thing conforms to itself (a thing).

**CONCLUSIONS:**

I believe justice and truth are useful to people when they pursue their humanness. I believe that both justice and truth are essential for world peace. Exploitation and lying are excellent for initiating disruption, disorder, and violence.

**PS:**

I like the US Army's "Be all you can be!" That can easily be the slogan of humanism. But I believe people can become more, much more than a non-critical-thinking killing machine.

When military recruits refuse to surrender their young naive minds to older more bellicose-conditioned minds (smaller than their own), humanism will have reached another milestone in its path through the evolution of our planet and indeed of the universe.

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**Food for thought and/or thought for indigestion:**

By Ron Titus

[1] Addicts don't "choose." That's what makes them addicts.

[Tim Gorski, HCOF-Talk, 2003 1003, Digest 1349 Message 6]

[2] Government *is* anarchy. Think about it. If all authority were removed society would quickly be terrorized by criminals. The smarter and more capable criminals would see that the ensuing chaos was not to their benefit and would create organized structures to victimize people in a more systematic way. This is what actually exists in some places in the world where tribal "warlords" rule the roost. But the smartest criminals of all realize that getting your victims to supply even more booty takes doing something for them or *appearing* to do something for them. Enter "government" and, ultimately, the welfare state. As with any parasite, the successful strains become less virulent and reach a kind of "accommodation" with their hosts. Political science is, at bottom, not much different than parasitology.

[Tim Gorski, HCOF-Talk, 2003 1003, Digest 1349 Message 4]

[3] The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oaths or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

[Fourth Amendment, US Constitution]

[4] "There are exceptions to every rule." What about the Ten Commandments? Consider ...

I - I am the Lord your God. You shall not have strange gods before you ... unless they are Christian and a trinity approved by the Vatican.

II - You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain ... unless you are praying publicly for good fortune or proselytizing non-Christians or infidels.

III - Remember to keep holy the Lord's day ... unless you have something else to do.

IV - Honor your father and your mother ... unless they are mentally ill.

V - You shall not kill ... unless you are an American and you are killing foreigners with bombs approved by the Pentagon.

VI - You shall not commit adultery ... unless you are sure you can get away with it.

VII - You shall not steal ... unless you are the CEO of a large corporation.

VIII - You shall not bear false witness ... unless you are under oath before a Congressional hearing.

IX - You shall not covet your neighbor's wife ... unless you positively cannot commit adultery with her.

X - You shall not covet your neighbor's goods ... unless you have not already stolen them.

[5] At least for me, the important issue is not whether Saddam was or was not a barbaric dictator. (He was). The fact that the US took down this sadist is also not at issue, for me. (I'm glad he's gone).

The issues are (1) does either lying or 'spinning' facts destroy the bond of trust between a leader and his citizens (it does); (2) can the US government be trusted to act competently (it cannot); (3) should government bureaucrats, hired by the citizens, present themselves as 'leaders' (Americans do not need to be 'led').

I resent the fact that whereas Clinton was attacked as a 'draft dodger' (he was), Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Rumsfeld are not attacked as 'draft dodgers' (they all were).

I don't like 'rosy scenarios' and those who paint them. When options are difficult, and outcomes uncertain, I like to be treated as an adult and told so. Churchill's speeches were nothing if not blunt, realistic, and grim. He promised blood, sweat and tears. The Queen Mother did not go to Ascot when the bombs were falling on the Docks; she went down among the firemen, ruins, and gutted ruins to talk face-to-face with the folks who were under bombardment. The British 'held' because they had leaders who 'walked the walk', and didn't simply 'talk the talk.'

I (and many others) don't trust the slimy characters who win power with dubious tactics and then cast themselves as patriots. (Meanwhile they line the pockets of their friends with government contracts, insuring that they and their families will have million-plus salaries if they or their patrons are defeated in any future election).

The expression 'war rationale' says it all. The attempts are to rationalize the war, and give rationales. When the theory outpaces hard facts and certain knowledge, those who utilize rationales usually end up looking like total idiots. The problem is that - to rely on rationales - one must indeed be one. (The only bigger idiots are those who follow.)

Even today, the reasons presented as 'why we went to war' seem to vary by the week. My general impression is: "Either they don't know themselves why, or they don't trust the American public with the plain facts." Both of these options scare the hell out of me!!!!

[Tom Brucia, HCOF-Talk, 2003 0927, Digest 1338 Message 6]

[6] People love the truth, when it enlightens; people hate the truth, when it reproves.

[St Augustine of Hippo (354-430)]

**Calendar of Events:**

**Sunday, November 2** / 10:00 - 12:00 noon / *Coffee Social* / at Borders Books & Music in Meyerland Plaza (I-610 W Loop S at Beechnut) / Spontaneous informal discussions are held on first & third Sundays monthly / Contact: Art Fay\*

**Sunday, November 2** / 12:30 - 2:00 pm / *Humanists of Houston (HOH) Brunch* / in upstairs facility of Kroger's on 1505 Wirt Rd (across street from Unitarian Fellowship) / Topics chosen by the group are discussed on first Sundays monthly / Contact: Jimmy Dunne\*

**Saturday, November 8** / 1:30 pm / *HAMCIAC Regular Meeting* / Montgomery Co. Library in the Woodlands (2nd floor) [From I-45 go west on Woodland Pkwy to 2nd traffic light; turn north (right) on Six Pines Dr; cross bridge & watch for wavy sculptures in the median; turn west (left) to Lake Robbins Rd; pass Woodlands Pavilion; turn left into Library parking lot] / Regular meetings are held on second Saturdays monthly / Contact: Ross Henry\*

**Sunday, November 9** / 10:30-11:30 am / *Houston Church Of Freethought (HCOF) Service* / in the Ramada Plaza Hotel on 7611 Katy Fwy (I-10 at Silber) / Services (including song, humor, lectures & discussion with children's classes & baby sitting available) are held on second Sundays monthly / Contact: Art Fay\*

**Saturday, November 15** / 12:00 noon / *Newsletter Deadline* / All articles, letters, and submissions of interest are welcome if on editor's desk, postmarks notwithstanding (e-mail format required), / Contact: Ron Titus\*

**Saturday, November 15** / 2:30 - 4:30 pm / *Humanists of Houston (HOH) Regular meeting* / in the Unitarian Fellowship hall, 1504 Wirt Rd / Business meetings followed by presentations are held on third Saturdays monthly / Contact: Jimmy Dunne\*

**Sunday, November 16** / 10:30 am / *Coffee Social* / at Borders Books & Music in Meyerland Plaza (I-610 W Loop S at Beechnut) / Spontaneous informal discussions are held on first & third Sundays monthly / Contact: Art Fay\*

**Sunday, November 23** / 10:30 - 12:00 noon / *Ideas Club* / in Borders Books & Music on 9633 Westheimer (at Gessner) / Book reviews by members are held on fourth Sundays monthly, Contact: Bob Finch\*

**Sunday, November 23** / 3:00 - 4:30 pm / *Houston Atheist Society (HAS)* / at Central Market on the corner of Westheimer & Wesleyan / Meetings are held on fourth Sundays monthly. Contact: Keith McCaffety\*

**Sunday, December 7** / 10:00 - 12:00 noon / *Coffee Social* / at Borders Books & Music in Meyerland Plaza (I-610 W Loop S at Beechnut) / Spontaneous informal discussions are held on first & third Sundays monthly / Contact: Art Fay\*

**Sunday, December 7** / 12:30 - 2:00 pm / *HOH Brunch* / in upstairs facility of Kroger's on 1505 Wirt Rd (across street from Unitarian Fellowship) / Topics chosen by the group are discussed on first Sundays monthly / Contact: Jimmy Dunne\*

**Monday, December 15** / midnight / Deadline for submitting articles to the *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism 2004* / Contact: Marian Hillar\*

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**About the Houston Humanist Alliance:**

The *Houston Humanist Alliance* is a collection of local humanist and freethought organizations in Houston which have come together to provide a wider range of services, information, and activities to their members. While still separated in their membership, leadership, and schedules, member-organizations of the *Alliance* share the same newsletter and mailing lists. This allows our organizations to cooperate effectively and enables individual members to be kept informed of virtually all activities of interests to humanists in the Houston area.

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**Statement of Principles:**

*The following are the core principles upon which our member-organizations are allied. Individual member-organizations may have missions beyond the scope of the Alliance itself, but any Houston-based group whose mission is compatible with these principles is welcome to join our community of organizations.*

We are committed to freedom of thought and expression, as well as human rights and equality.

Our beliefs are based on healthy skepticism, physical evidence, the scientific method, and naturalistic philosophy -- unfettered by faith, mysticism, the supernatural, or any other form of superstition.

We stand for the pursuit of moral excellence, ethical integrity, and social responsibility based on humanity's needs and happiness in *this* world and not in an alleged "after life."

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**Membership and Contact Information:**

*Whether you are a humanist, or seeking to pursue a meaningful life without theism, or simply reexamining your beliefs and exploring the humanist approach to knowledge and moral issues, consider contacting one of our organizations. We will be happy to answer any questions about humanism and/or membership.*

Humanists of Houston (HOH): Houston chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA) / Founded 1978 / jimmydunne@msm.com / 281-584-9707 (1306 W Brooklake Houston TX 77077)

Humanist Association of Montgomery County, Isaac Asimov Chapter (HAMCIAC): Montgomery County chapter of the American Humanist Association / rosshenny@mac.com / 281-288-6064

Houston Atheist Society (HAS): Affiliated with American Atheist Society / Founded 2003 / thinkbolt@yahoo.com / 713-968-6520

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**Publisher:**

[1] The **HOUSTON HUMANIST ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER** (HHA NL) is published monthly by the Houston Humanist Alliance (HHA). Since 2001 05 (Issue #22), it is compiled, edited, printed, photocopied, and circulated by J Ron Titus (713-680-2880 / jront@juno.com / 5202 Viking Houston TX 77092-4236). Staff: Jim Knierien (Page-Layout Editor) and Nancy & Richard Chancey (Circulation Assistants)

[2] The purpose of the HHA NL is (1) publicizing events, i.e., keeping members informed of regularly and specially scheduled meetings, (2) providing for the public at large information about humanism and humanist thought, and (3) providing a platform for members to express their viewpoints and opinions.

[3] "The only free press is the one you own." How true H L Mencken was! The HHA owns this NL. Current editorial policy is: Readers are the board of directors, the advisory board. And since no meetings are set, it is up to readers to make their views known to the editor.

[4] The HHA and the editor do not necessarily agree with nor endorse the views expressed herein. Many humanists and freethinkers pride themselves with being individuals. Consensus among Humanists is therefore difficult to achieve. No one humanist can speak for all other humanists.

[5] The current editor operates personally from two principles: (1) "People do not make mistakes by knowing too much; they make mistakes by not knowing enough!" and (2) "Better than censorship of views is education of viewers."

[6] Anyone may quote from the newsletter but is asked to please give credit where credit is due, i.e., cite author, newsletter issue (number or date), & page.

[7] All articles, letters, and submissions of interest are welcome if on editor's desk by deadline (12:00 noon on the 15th of each month), postmarks notwithstanding. E-mail format required. Name, phone number, & street address required for editorial contact purposes only.

The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions for space or clarity, but never with the intent to alter the thrust of the author.

[8] Snailmail editions are sent gratis to paid members of the HHA. Email editions are sent gratis to anyone else upon request.

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**#13- Explanation of iih symbol:**

The ii of the iih represents two or more people. The h of the iih represents the humanness to which they aspire. A lower case h is used instead of an upper case H to indicate that it is better to become human (as opposed to inhuman) than it is to join a Humanist organization.

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POST MASTER: Please return undelivered issues to sender. Thank you.

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