



HOUSTON HUMANIST ALLIANCE

The Newsletter for Houston's Humanist and Freethought Community

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Calendar of Events:

December | *Houston Atheist Society (HAS)* | Meetings are held monthly. Contact: Keith McCaffety*

Wednesday, December 1 | 6:30 pm | *Drug Policy Forum of Texas* | TV 26 or 95 | Drug policy reform discussed every other Wednesday | Contact: G Alan Robison*

Sunday, December 5 | 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 5 | 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: Tom Brucia*

Saturday, December 11 | 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, December 12 | 10:30-11:30 am | *Houston Church Of Freethought (HCOF) Service* | in the Magnolia Room of the Courtyard by Marriott on 3131 West Loop (northbound just north of Richmond) | Services (including song, humor, lectures & discussion with children's classes & baby sitting available) are held on second Sundays monthly | Contact: Art Fay*

Wednesday, December 15 | 12:00 noon | *Newsletter Deadline* | All articles, letters, and submissions of interest are welcome if on editor's desk, postmarks not withstanding (e-mail format required), | Contact: Jim Knierien*

Wednesday, December 15 | 6:30 pm | *Drug Policy Forum of Texas* | TV 26 or 95 | Drug policy reform discussed every other Wednesday | Contact: G Alan Robison*

Saturday, December 18 | 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm | *Humanists of Houston (HOH) Regular meeting and Solstice party* | at the Houston Museum of Natural Science | Contact: Tom Brucia*

Sunday, December 19 | 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, December 26 | 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*

Wednesday, December 29 | 6:30 pm | *Drug Policy Forum of Texas* | TV 26 or 95 | Drug policy reform discussed every other Wednesday | Contact: G Alan Robison*

Sunday, January 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, January 2 | 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*

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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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Publisher:

[1] The Houston Humanist Alliance Newsletter (HHA NL) is published monthly by the Houston Humanist Alliance (HHA).

[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 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.

[4] 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.

[5] 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. <mailto:Jim.Knierien@thermo.com> Name, phone number, & street address required for editorial contact purposes only.

[6] 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.

[7] Snailmail editions are sent gratis to paid members of the HHA. Email editions are sent gratis to anyone else upon request. Adobe PDF editions are available gratis by sending an email to: <mailto:jim.knierien@thermo.com>.

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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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From the Editors desk:

By Jim Knierien

The election is over – but the comments about it are not. I received several negative comments prior to publication of Edd Doerr's article (pg.5). The comments were that it is too partisan politics for the newsletter. As I have noted before (and the panel at the left states) the contents of this newsletter represent the authors and not the HHA members or me. I feel this is an outlet for opinions that might not otherwise be published as well as the authors have taken the time to express their opinions in writing.

I have also received several comments that we are too negative towards religion. I would hate to have to suppress speech in this newsletter.

Please let me know your thoughts by E-mail.

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Alliance member's reports

HOH

The speaker at the November HOH monthly meeting was Jim Good, who spoke on "The Humanism of John Dewey." Jim, a founding member of the Montgomery County AHA chapter, is an Associate Professor of History at North Harris College. Dr. Good's primary research interest is the history of American philosophy

Marian Hillar wishes to advertise that we are now looking for articles for *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism*, 2005 issue.

This is an annual book published by the HOH and usually contains about 8 essays for a total of about 150 pg. Back issues (at a modest cost of \$8.00) are available from Bob Finch at most HHA functions.

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HCOF

The Houston Church of Freethought held service on Sunday, November 14, 2004

Sharon Joy presented a talk on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She has lived in Israel and presents a unique perspective on conflict. She also has an extensive background in music, and she presented several examples for us.

After the service, many of us gathered for lunch at Jason's Deli, located on Westheimer (north side) west of Chimney Rock (just past Augusta Dr.).

Idea's Club

The Idea's club met Sunday November 28 at 10:30am in Borders Books & Music on 9633 Westheimer (at Gessner). Tom Brucia presented a review of the book *God's Funeral*

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Under the Banner of God

Book Review by Jimmy Dunne

Under the Banner of God, a Story of Violent Faith is an amazingly interesting and informative non-fiction book by Jon Krakauer.

It tells the story of how charismatic Joseph Smith created the Mormon religion by looking at a peep stone in the bottom of a hat and receiving messages from the angel Moroni. He had been earlier charged with fraud for claiming to be able to locate buried treasure. He wrote the Mormon Book, which says that all of the followers can communicate directly with God and allows polygamy.

His followers were run out of Missouri and Nauvoo, Ill and migrated by wagon train to the Great Salt Lake area of Utah. Joseph Smith was murdered by a mob in 1844 after he wanted to replace government law with God's law and make himself a king because God told him so.

This led to the grisly Mountain Meadows Massacre in Utah in 1857 where the Mormons disguised as Indians massacred a wagon train of 140 Arkansans traveling across their state. Some of the children were kept by the Mormons and raised as their own.

Smith decreed that polygamy was God's way and it was followed by the Mormons until declared illegal. Various sects of the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) allow the men (Saints) to have multiple "spiritual" wives and the subsequent children bring in welfare checks, which is called "Bleeding the beast" i.e.: the government. Girls ages 14-16 become spiritual wives of men two, three or four times their age. Some of the men have 20+ wives and 40+ children and live in 12,000 square foot homes collecting hundreds of thousands of dollars in welfare payments.

Some of the sect leaders ban TV, newspapers or magazines for their followers.

The book follows the story of Ron Lafferty who now sits on death row in Utah for murdering his sister-in-law Brenda Lafferty and her 15-month-old daughter Erica with a boning knife because God supposedly told him that they were a bad influence on his brother Allen Lafferty. He has chosen execution by firing squad because the Mormons believe in spilling the blood for transgressions.

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Ron's Ramblings

By Ron Titus

[1] "Bless me, Readers, for I have **erred**. In my November column I said "Alan Bates" when I should have said "Alan Watts". For this and all my other errors, which I leave unmentioned, I herewith apologize.

Did anyone notice?

[2] I thank Jonathan Williams for calling my attention to Lee Salisbury's article "History's Troubling Silence About **Jesus**" (www.axisoflogic.com/religion/worldview).

Before reading the article I believed that Jesus may have indeed existed, but that EVERYTHING I knew ABOUT Jesus was based on pure hearsay!

After reading the article, however, I am now satisfied that Jesus never even existed as a historical person, i.e., there exists no known credible historical evidence for the existence of Jesus.

It's like my being an atheist rather than an agnostic. As an agnostic, I would believe that god MAY OR MAY NOT exist; as an atheist, I believe that god indeed DOES NOT exist, no ands, ors, or maybes about it (outside of the human mind, of course).

I pause here to mourn the loss (sniff, sniff) of Jesus. 'And for god too, because I miss god too. It is quite a challenge to live without these two super companions. (Sigh!)

I suspect that I was also disappointed when I first learned that there wasn't a Santa Claus anymore. The disappointment was lessened when I realized that the "real" Santa clauses were my parents who still remained with me for many a Christmas thereafter.

So also my disappointment with the losses of god and Jesus is lessened with the realization that I still have the natural universe and a whole bunch of weird but fascinating (loveable? no, I'm trying to be honest here) people.

Talk about a "late bloomer"! I am over 70 years old, and I am just now learning this? (Sigh!)

As a replacement for Jesus as the ideal and "perfect" human being, I thought of "creating" my own perfect human being – as a model for humanists, just as Jesus was a model for Christians. I thought of calling him ... hang on to your hat ... **Hugh Mann** (as in hu-man). Ha!

[3] After watching a segment of the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company) on NWI (News World International) TV, I see that George **Dubya** Bush has succeeded in dividing not only the USA but also Canada!

The day before our National Elections Day, I was again somewhat depressed. I was depressed because I awaited three possible outcomes, none of which were politically uplifting: (1) Bush wins; (2) Kerry wins; (3) Neither wins decisively, and the fiasco of four years ago is repeated.

Although I will not be surprised if later on it is proven that the elections were invalid because of substantial voting irregularities, I prefer to believe that Dubya Bush THIS TIME was LEGITIMATELY elected. I do not want to deal with the hassle that would be required to re-do the whole thing right.

Hey! On the plus side, I no longer have to refer to Dubya as the OOO (Oval Office Occupant)! But neither will I say that he was RE-ELECTED; rather, the people finally ELECTED him. And now I can and do take issue with the American voters instead. And I'm including myself here, as part of a democratic society. WE elected him, and WE will have to live with him for "FOUR MORE YEARS"!

See *Ramble continued on pg.4*

Fight Faith-Based Initiatives

By Council for Secular Humanism

When Michigan resident Joseph Raymond Hanas was arrested and convicted for a nonviolent drug offense in January 2003, the court gave him the choice of completing a drug rehabilitation program (which might have led to charges being dropped), or serving jail time. Not surprisingly, Hanas chose the rehabilitation program, administered by the Inner City Christian Outreach Center.

But Hanas, a Catholic, was in for a shock: The program, administered by Pentecostal Christians, had no drug or alcohol counselors on staff; their "treatment" consisted mainly of prolonged bible study and indoctrination in Pentecostal rituals. He was deprived of his Bible and rosary, and he was prevented from seeing his priest and deacon. The rehabilitation staff told him that Catholicism is "witchcraft." He was forced to attend Pentecostal worship services. He was also told he would never overcome his addiction until he proclaimed himself "born again."

When Hanas requested a transfer to a more tolerant program, the judge interpreted his request as a failure to complete the program. The judge then gave Hanas four years' probation (with six months' jail time) and removed any opportunity to have the conviction removed from his record. Hanas has since filed an appeal with the Michigan State Supreme Court, requesting that his conviction be reversed or sent to Appeals Court for review.

"The Michigan case shows just how horribly wrong the merging of the state and religion can go, even with the noblest of intentions," says David Koepsell, executive director of the Council for Secular Humanism. "The Hanas case is a prime example of how the First Amendment's strict separation can be destroyed with such 'faith-based initiatives.' It is time once again to take the wall of separation seriously, and to put an end to the insidious destruction of our secular society by these devices."

Edward Buckner, Southern Director of the Council, says that while faith-based initiatives may sound like a good idea, people shouldn't let sentiment cloud their judgment. And because such programs affect both the government and the religious organization, they should never be funded without proper oversight.

"No self-respecting religious group should consider risking government control and government interference in its affairs by accepting tax dollars," says Buckner. "And no self-respecting taxpayer should consider voting to give up those tax dollars without a full and fair accounting for the funds, clear standards for evaluating whether the money is doing what it is supposed to be doing, and full enforcement of equal protection under the law for employees and clients for whom the tax money is spent."

Joe Hanas's plight demonstrates that the very problems critics of faith-based initiatives predicted would happen. Hanas is Christian; one can only imagine what would happen to a nonbeliever in similar circumstances. Faith-based services are--and will continue to be--used to proselytize by the religious groups that administer them.

Thanks to the the Charity Choice provision of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, many states now include faith-based programs as part of court-ordered drug rehabilitation, and despite some legal challenges, such programs are expanding. Legislation passed last year, for example, includes appropriations from the Healthy Iowans tobacco trust and the tobacco settlement trust fund, (HF 685) which has a line item appropriation of \$310,000 to the Newton Correctional Facility for a "value-based" treatment program. Kansas's legislators passed the "drug abuse treatment fund" (SB 123), which allows for community-based or faith-based programs to provide drug treatment.

Ohio House Bill 95 established the Governor's Office for Faith-Based Nonprofit and Other Nonprofit Organizations. The office will serve as a clearinghouse of information on federal, state, and local funding for charitable services performed by organizations. The bill allocates \$625,000 in TANF funds to support the activities of this office for the 2003-2004 biennium.

On the federal level, the Bush administration has spearheaded faith-based initiatives independent of Congress. According to an August 2004 report published by The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, titled *The Expanding Administrative Presidency: George W. Bush and the Faith-Based Initiative*, "the Bush Administration has made concerted use of its executive powers and has moved aggressively through new regulation, funding, political appointees and active public outreach efforts to expand the federal government's partnerships with faith-based social service providers in ways that don't require Congressional approval."

The White House Office of Faith-based Initiatives and a network of satellite centers in the federal departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and the Small Business Administration "articulate, advance and oversee coordinated efforts to win more federal for faith-based social services."

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[Ramble continued from pg. 3](#)

Another plus in the otherwise disappointing elections outcome is that we will less likely succumb to the slumber of apathy. It remains our advantage to stay awake as in "Vigilance is the price we pay for liberty".

I was hoping to put the elections behind me, put them out of my mind. But no sooner than expressing such a wish, our Newly Elected holds a press conference in which he says, "I earned capital in the campaign, and now I intend to SPEND it." Surely he didn't mean money capital. If he did, I would ask "What capital? Did you not already empty the copious coffers that you inherited from your predecessor in office (Bill Clinton), giving it all away via tax cuts to your rich crony friends?"

If I were in Bush's position, I would continually remind myself that close to 50% of my constituents hate my guts. How can I change that? (And I do not concur with mass murder!)

[See Ramble continued on pg.7](#)

Am I Blue?

By Edd Doerr

Yes, clinically, because on November 2 so many millions of my fellow Americans flunked our quadrennial national intelligence test. They voted for fantasy over fact. They voted against their own economic interests, against their own civil liberties, against protecting the environment and moving toward energy independence and keeping good jobs in this country, against this country's and the world's safety and security. They voted for George II's mistaken adventure in Iraq and for sending more of their children to slaughter and be slaughtered.

Yes, I'm blue, in the political/geographical sense that I was one of the more urban, educated, informed, and "secular" voters who supported and campaigned for John Kerry and John Edwards.

By the time you read this column you will have seen the election analyzed, reanalyzed, picked apart, and despaired over ad nauseam. But in a column dedicated to church-state and religious liberty concerns there is still much to be said.

Among the all too few bright spots on November 2 are these virtually unnoticed items: George Bush's own congressional district reelected Chet Edwards, who has been an outspoken defender of church-state separation. And South Dakotans voted 53% to 47% to defeat a proposed state constitutional amendment to allow the legislature to provide transportation and food service for "sectarian schools." This continues the trend of voter rejection of attempts to divert public funds to faith-based schools in 26 statewide referenda between 1966 and 2004. Interestingly, South Dakotans defeated this measure most heavily in the countries that voted strongest for Bush, according to a county-by-county analysis by my colleague Al Menendez.

Then, too, Californians voted to provide \$3 billion for embryonic and other stem cell research.

It is useful to recap the damage that the second Bush administration will surely try to inflict on church-state separation and religious liberty, the subjects on which this column specializes.

The Supreme Court.

George II has made it abundantly clear that his two favorite justices are Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, the most anti-separation duo ever to serve in the Court. With three or four vacancies expected on the Court in the next four years, expect Bush to nominate clones of these two. On page 4 of Ken Foskett's new biography, *Judging Thomas: The Life and Times of Clarence Thomas*, we read: "Senior aides to President George W. Bush, whose father put Thomas on the Court, have consulted Thomas about succeeding William H. Rehnquist as the nation's next chief justice." Now there's a helluva scary thought! Further, as the lower federal courts are traditionally stepping-stones on the way to the Supreme Court, we can expect Bush to flood the Senate with nominees well to the right.

Congress. Bush's congenial Congress can be expected to continue pushing for the privatization of education and

social services, a drive intended to compel American taxpayers to support "faith-based" operations exempt from most anti-discrimination rules applicable to public institutions. Bush and his myrmidons are flipping the bird at Ben Franklin's wise dictum in his *Poor Richard's Almanac* exactly 250 years ago: "When a religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not care to support it, so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one . . . God helps them that help themselves." Until more Americans wake up, only the courts can halt the worst violations of the spirit and letter of the First Amendment.

Executive Branch.

What Bush cannot get done by Congress he tries to do by executive order. One example is his order to allow tax-funded faith-based charities to discriminate in hiring and to promote sectarian religion. Another is his refusal in 2003 and 2004 to deliver \$34 million approved by Congress to the UN Population Fund, despite his own advisers' approval of the grants. Still another is his ideologically and religiously motivated thumbs-down on federally funded embryonic stem cell research. (R.I.P. Christopher Reeve.)

Reproductive Rights.

Although *Roe v. Wade* may not be in immediate peril, Congress, state legislatures, and federal and state courts have slowly and in diverse ways gradually eroded reproductive rights. In December 2003 I addressed the Women's National Democratic Club in Washington, a few days after Bush signed into law a congressional ban on so-called "partial-birth" abortions (bans ruled unconstitutional in recent months by federal courts in California, Nebraska, and New York) surrounded by a grinning, exclusively male photo-op cheering section. As I noted to the WNDC audience, if women were proportionally represented in Congress, instead of making up only about 15%, such legislation could not pass. November 2 added only five seats for women.

Bush won on November 2 largely because religious fundamentalists - Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish - were harnessed to a political bandwagon and/or rose to great prominence in one of our historic political parties. Led by unscrupulous "pastors" (etymologically, those who herd sheep or other docile creatures), fundamentalist preachers and televangelists put their version of "faith" ahead of science, reason, common sense, and the nation's best interests. More moderate, progressive, and liberal Protestants, Catholics, and Jews resonate to what John Kerry said about religious values that support inclusion, fairness, social justice, peace, and deeds ("faith without works is dead").

In the months and years ahead Humanists and moderate to progressive "people of faith" across the spectrum will need to think, rethink, and strategize to bring our country back on course toward a more egalitarian, free, humane, and progressive path.

Edd Doerr, president of Americans for Religious Liberty and immediate past president of the American Humanist Association.

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Letters:

Dear Time Magazine Letters;

God is not in our genes but the idea of a heaven and a God that looks over us and protects us is an attractive illusion. Children learn about God from their parents and accept the dogma because they trust their parents to tell them the truth.

I am proud to be an atheist because I see NO evidence of a god, heaven, hell, devils, angels or a soul that leaves the body. They are only a figment of our imagination.

As a humanist, I use critical thinking to look for evidence before accepting claims about supernatural beings, paranormal activities or superstitions. Religion and superstition are equals.

Jimmy Dunne

Dear Mr. President:

The media tells us that you have received the largest number of popular votes of any president in America's history. Congratulations!

In your re-election, God has graciously granted America—though she doesn't deserve it—a reprieve from the agenda of paganism. You have been given a mandate. We the people expect your voice to be like the clear and certain sound of a trumpet. Because you seek the Lord daily, we who know the Lord will follow that kind of voice eagerly.

Don't equivocate. Put your agenda on the front burner and let it boil. You owe the liberals nothing. They despise you because they despise your Christ. Honor the Lord, and He will honor you.

Had your opponent won, I would have still given thanks, because the Bible says I must (I Thessalonians 5:18). It would have been hard, but because the Lord lifts up whom He will and pulls down whom He will, I would have done it. It is easy to rejoice today, because Christ has allowed you to be His servant in this nation for another presidential term. Undoubtedly, you will have opportunity to appoint many conservative judges and exercise forceful leadership with the Congress in passing legislation that is defined by biblical norm regarding the family, sexuality,

sanctity of life, religious freedom, freedom of speech, and limited government. You have four years—a brief time only—to leave an imprint for righteousness upon this nation that brings with it the blessings of Almighty God.

Christ said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my father honor" (John 12:26).

The student body, faculty, and staff at Bob Jones University commit ourselves to pray for you—that you would do right and honor the Savior. Pull out all the stops and make a difference. If you have weaklings around you who do not share your biblical values, shed yourself of them. Conservative Americans would love to see one president who doesn't care whether he is liked, but cares infinitely that he does right.

Best wishes.

Sincerely your friend,

Bob Jones III President

BJIII:lw

PS: A few moments ago I read this letter to the students in Chapel. They applauded loudly their approval.

When I told them that Tom Daschle was no longer the minority leader of the Senate, they cheered again.

On occasion, Christians have not agreed with things you said during your first term. Nonetheless, we could not be more thankful that God has given you four more years to serve Him in the White House, never taking off your Christian faith and laying it aside as a man takes off a jacket, but living, speaking, and making decisions as one who knows the Bible to be eternally true.

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This is G o o g l e's cache of <http://www.bju.edu/letter> as retrieved on Nov 14, 2004 04:29:04 GMT.

G o o g l e's cache is the snapshot that we took of the page as we crawled the web.

[Editor note: Bob Jones University had removed this letter from their WEB site before I first learned of it.]

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Ramble continued from pg. 4

At one time I admitted that Bush and I were alike in some ways. I still believe that. We are both strong willed. Where we differ: He doesn't remember ever having made a mistake, and he will not change a course of action even if his closest allies disagree with him. I remember a lot of hindsight mistakes and have changed my mind often in my 70 plus years of living! Ha! It seems that it doesn't bother him one bit that people hate him. It would bother me a great deal to believe that people either hate or fear me.

[4] After reading that actress Renee Zellweger admits to being addicted to current news events (*The Week*, 2004 1029, P 10), I realized that I too am a **news junkie**. At least I was up until the time that I became aware of it. Now I have committed myself to BEGIN working on weaning myself from said sad addiction.

[5] By the time this goes to press, I hope to have weaned myself from the "bad cold" that I am experiencing as I write this.

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Food for thought and/or thought for indigestion

By Ron Titus

[1] "So as we approach this critical election of 2004, my advice, dear readers, is this: Vote for the candidate who embodies the ethos of George H. W. Bush - the old guy. Vote for the man who you think would have the same gut feel for nurturing allies and restoring bipartisanship to foreign policy as him. Vote for the man you think understands the importance of facing up to our fiscal responsibilities for the sake of our children. And vote for the man who has the best instincts for balancing realism and idealism and the man who understands the necessity of using energetic U.S. diplomacy to make Israel more secure - by helping to bring it peace with its Arab neighbors, not just more tours from American Christian fundamentalists."

[Thomas Friedman, quoted by Jonathan Williams in an email dated 2004 1101]

[2] "The most important reason to vote for John Kerry is one that he does not mention. **It is to safeguard democracy in America.** *The Nation* endorses Kerry for President."

[*The Nation*, 2004 1108, front cover]

[3] "How can 59,054,087 people be so dumb?"

[London's *Daily Mirror*, 2004 1104, front cover, reproduced in *The Week*, 2004 1119, p 15]

[4] People prefer believing pleasant lies to believing unpleasant truths.

[5] If the USA is the greatest democracy in the world, how is it that some eligible voters did not have access to a valid ballot?

[6] For the past several years, (Congress has) kept the minimum wage in our country at the paltry poverty level of \$5.15 an hour. ...

... This is the sixth pay hike that our lawmakers have bestowed on themselves in the past six years. This time it's an extra \$4,000 each, boosting their gross to about \$162,000 a year.

Congressional leaders sneak these steady increases through without a vote (a \$25,000 total over those six years) by making them automatic – but Representative Jim Matteson, Democrat of Utah, keeps calling for a vote anyway. This year his colleagues again refused, 235 to 170, to cast a direct public vote on their money grab. [*The (Jim) Hightower Lowdown*, 2004 10, P 3]

[7] (Political candidates) can't spend much time talking to average voters about their concerns because they need to focus on wooing wealthy donors.

[Nick Nyhart, "Presidential fundraising in need of cleanup" (2003 06), enclosed in mailing from Progressive Media Project, 2004 1101]

[8] "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

[President Dwight D Eisenhower (530416), quoted in *Mirabile Dictu* (2004 1115) and requoted in an email from Pete Szafran (2004 1115)]

[9] "Should the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China) be changed? Should France (population 60 million) be included rather than India (1 billion – soon to be the world's most populous nation), Indonesia (238 million, the world's largest Islamic nation), Brazil (184 million, the most populous nation in Latin America) or Japan (127 million, and the world's second largest economy)?"

[George F Will, "Questions the senators might ask of Condoleezza Rice", *Houston Chronicle*, 2004 1117, P B9]

[10] Garry Wills asks: "Can a people that believes more fervently in the Virgin Birth than in evolution still be called an Enlightened nation?" He is referring of course to the poll that indicated 83% of Americans believe in the virgin birth, while only 29% believe in evolution. That statistic indicates, among other things, that the dogma of the virgin birth has become a secular artifact rather than merely a Christian dogma. But it also indicates how scientifically illiterate Americans have become. And it tells us once again how woefully ignorant the general population is of the advances in biblical and theological scholarship since Copernicus.

[Westar Institute Director Robert W. Funk, 2004 1103, quoted in a 2004 1110 email from Pete Szafran]

[11] Never try to reason with an unreasonable person.

[12] "One of the embarrassing problems for the early nineteenth-century champions of the Christian faith was that not one of the first six Presidents of the United States was an orthodox Christian."

[Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968, p 420, quoted in an email from Ariel Thomann, 2004 1107]

[13] If one cannot enforce the First Amendment's "separation of church and state", how then can one hope to enforce an unconstitutional (?) separation of "corporations and state"?

[14] While asbestos caused 170,000 deaths from lung cancer, the EPA was never able to ban it. Lawsuits forced it from the market.

[*The Nation*, 2004 1025, P 18]

[15] "The knowledge that immortality is an illusion ... liberates all our energy and time for the realization and extension of the happy potentialities of this good earth."

[Corliss Lamont, quoted in a brochure of the American Humanist Association]

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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 / rosshenry@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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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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