



# HOUSTON HUMANIST ALLIANCE

## The Newsletter for Houston's Humanist and Freethought Community

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### Calendar of Events:

**Sunday, March 6** |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 March 6** | 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\*

**Wednesday, March 9** | 6:30 pm | *Drug Policy Forum of Texas* | TV 26 or 95 | Drug policy reform discussed every other Wednesday | Contact: G Alan Robison\*

**Saturday, March 12** | 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, March 13** | 10:30-11:30 am | *Houston Church Of Freethought (HCOF) Service* | at 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\*

**Tuesday March 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: Jim Knierien\*

**Saturday, March 19** | 2:30 - 4:30 pm | *Humanists of Houston (HOH) Regular meeting* | in the Unitarian Fellowship hall at 1504 Wirt Rd | Contact: Tom Brucia\*

**Sunday, March 20** | 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\*

**Wednesday, March 23** | 6:30 pm | *Drug Policy Forum of Texas* | TV 26 or 95 | Drug policy reform discussed every other Wednesday | Contact: G Alan Robison\*

**Sunday, March 27** | 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, March 30** | 6:00 pm | *Houston Atheist Society (HAS)* | at Ziggy's, corner of West Alabama and Greenbriar. Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month. | Contact: Keith McCaffety\*

**Sunday, April 3** |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, April 3** | 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: Tom Brucia \*

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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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## Alliance member's reports

### HOH

A piano concert preformed by Charlotte Mueller was held at the UU Fellowship on Wirt Road Sunday February 20. A profit of \$139.79 was made for the Humanists of Houston, which will be used to cover HOH expenses.

Charlotte's performance was outstanding, and Carl Han's food was pretty good, too! We got a lot of positive feedback from those who made it to the event! I sincerely think that those who were unable to make it missed out on a very enjoyable afternoon!

Thanks are due to all those who helped out with ticket printing and sales (Ariel, David, and Burt), decorations (Sheila), food (Carl and Gary), signage (Ariel) – and to the many who forwarded emails, announced the event to friends, and helped "spread the word". And also thanks to Dean Dalton and Bob Stephenson at KUHF-Radio for the on-air promotion.

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### HCOF

The February Houston Church of Freethought service was:

- \* Welcome and Introduction by Jim Ashmore
- \* The Freethinker of the month was; Thomas Huxley presented by Ed Uthman
- \* The lecture "Evolution - Your Family Tree" was by Jim Ashmore
- \* "World News Today" by Nancy/Art Fay
- \* Music: "Moon Song" - Norah Jones presented by Jim Ashmore
- \* A "Pagan Prayer" was presented by Art Fay
- \* And closing Announcements by Anthony Stott

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### Ideas Club

The February meeting was a review of the book *The Agile Gene* (paperback) / *Nature VIA Nurture* (Hard Cover) by Matt Ridley. presented by Cindy Clark.

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## A Church-State Potpourri

by Edd Doerr

There was a time when news of church-state issues could be easily summarized. Not any more! So this column will cover several seemingly disparate items, though they are all linked by a growing trend toward wrecking or eroding the church-state separation arrangement pioneered by the main architects of the American government.

First off, we have President Bush's pathetic inaugural speech in January. In that relatively short spiel he used the words "freedom" and "liberty" 42 times, though his use of the term could be described as Orwellian or Kafkaesque. Bush's idea of freedom clearly excludes the freedom of taxpayers from coerced support of faith-based schools and other institutions, though that freedom is at the heart of what Jefferson and Madison meant when they pioneered the idea in Virginia in the 1770s and 1780s.

Nor does Bush's idea of liberty include every woman's freedom to make her own reproductive decisions free of government interference. As Bush may well be able to name two or more justices to the Supreme Court, we may expect him to nominate people closely resembling his two favorite justices, Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia.

Bush also spoke of democracy in his inaugural address, yet he seems not to care that the citizens dwelling in the city where he lives are not allowed to vote for members of Congress. And ironically, although his administration wants the new Iraqi parliament to be 25% female, the U.S. Congress remains only about 15% female.

\* \* \*

One of the main tactics of the Religious Right (the American Taliban) and their "secular" collaborators in their campaigns to undermine church-state separation is the old "let's rewrite history" ploy. As they put it, this country's constitutional fathers (mothers couldn't vote back then) were conventional conservative Christians, Jefferson's church-state separation metaphor was merely an afterthought tossed to some Connecticut Baptists, and the Supreme Court's church-state rulings since 1878 have all been wrong. Far too many Americans, being poorly informed about history, actually believe this foolishness. Even worse, this point of view has been expressed ad nauseam by Supreme Court justices Rehnquist, Scalia, and Thomas.

Two important new books are excellent, and reasonably priced, antidotes to all this: *The Separation of Church and State: Writings on a Fundamental Freedom by America's Founders*, edited by Forrest Church (Beacon Press, 2004, available for \$16 from Americans for Religious Liberty, PO Box 6656, Silver Spring, MD 20916); and *Jefferson & Madison on Separation of Church and State: Writings on Religion and Secularism*, edited by Lenni Brenner (Barricade Books, 185 Bridge Plaza North, Suite 308-A, Fort Lee, NJ 07024, \$16.95).

Church (whose father, the late Senator Frank Church, was one of the founders of Americans for Religious Liberty) has pulled together in this short, handsome hardcover book, with useful commentary, the more important writings of the Founders that show clearly that they intended our system of government to incorporate the principle of church-state separation. Included in this five-star book are key selections from Sam Adams, Rev. Isaac Backus, George Mason, Jefferson, Madison, Leland, and Washington. Church also includes the relevant portion of our 1796-97 treaty with Tripoli, ratified by the U.S. Senate and signed by President John Adams, which states that "the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion, . . ."

Church's book is a real gem that should be on everyone's bookshelf.

Lenni Brenner's equally important, though much longer, volume is an exhaustive collection of everything that Jefferson and Madison wrote about religion, religious liberty, and church-state separation from their student days to their deaths in 1826 and 1834. These two most important figures in the shaping of American constitutional government spent their entire lives working on the separation principle. This book is an indispensable tool for all who oppose the talibanization of America.

\* \* \*

In his excellent article "Life Everlasting" in the February 2005 Harper's, Garrett Keizer provides a fine defense of physician-assisted suicide (PAS).

As I pointed out in a letter to Harper's, Keizer's argument was made equally persuasively by the eminent German Catholic theologian Hans Küng and literary critic Walter Jens in their 1995 book, *Dying with Dignity* (Continuum).

An even more forceful argument for PAS was made in an amicus curiae brief to the Supreme Court in 1996 in the case of *Vacco v. Quill* by 36 organizations (including the writer's) and religious leaders. The amici argued that the right to PAS is protected by the "due process" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the religious liberty clauses of the First Amendment. On the latter point amici state that "because the common-law's historical bans on suicide are rooted in the incorporation of Roman Catholic canon law into the English common law, laws banning physician-assisted suicide raise serious Establishment Clause concerns. Laws that endorse one religious view over others, and have overtly religious purposes, are irreconcilable with the values underlying the Establishment Clause." Unfortunately, the Court did not accept this argument.

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Edd Doerr, president of Americans for Religious Liberty and immediate past president of the American Humanist Association, is the author, co-author, editor, or translator of 24 books.

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## Where Are the Moral Believers?

By: Guy P. Harrison

The following article is from *Free Inquiry* magazine, Volume 25, Number 1.

<http://www.secularhumanism.org/>

Lucifer exists, say hundreds of millions of Christians around the world. But he is evil, so they reject him as a supernatural being worthy of worship. They do not pray to him for help in landing a new job or overcoming an illness, and they do not follow his instructions. Because of moral failings, this god of sorts is denied their love and obedience. But why do they only judge the devil? Why don't believers scrutinize all gods in this way?

Pointing out examples of the Jewish/Christian god committing, commanding, or condoning slavery, violence, and sexism—as described in the Torah and Bible—is a favorite pastime for many atheists. Yes, it may be no better than a grown-up version of pulling the wings off of flies, but it is undeniably fun to watch a believer squirm trying to explain how slavery and stoning were somehow OK in “Bible times.” It is even more entertaining to watch smoke rise from the ears of the devout as they attempt to defend the “God of love” for his genocidal rampages.

Some atheists ridicule such exchanges, and they have a valid point.

Arguing over a god's moral character is a lot like debating the aerodynamic qualities of Santa's sleigh. Still, there may be a real benefit to enlightening believers about the character of their gods. If pursued, it should be done only to challenge a believer's loyalty to a god, however, not to make the case for nonexistence. After all, a god does not have to be nice in order to be real.

Strangely, this pattern of belief coupled with morally based disobedience is virtually nonexistent when it comes to the popular gods. We just don't see millions of believers in the Jewish/Christian/Islamic god, for example, shunning him solely for his moral crimes. There are no large organizations campaigning against religion from the moral high ground rather than the perspective of disbelief. There are few, if any,

anti-God books written by theologians who still believe in a god. Rebellion need not be tied to disbelief, so where are the righteous rebels who stand against gods who have done great evil? Where are the moral believers?

Fear of hell or some other divine punishment for refusing to follow a god does not seem to be an adequate explanation, not when one considers history's long roll call of courageous heroes. Across cultures and across centuries, good people have suffered banishment, imprisonment, torture, and execution because they refused to bow down before evil human leaders. It seems likely that a significant number of believers would rebel in the same way, if they faced up to the serious faults and crimes attributed to their gods. Fear of torture and execution in the present (in reality) must be at least somewhat comparable to fear of a god's wrath in some vague afterlife to come (in belief).

Most Christians are probably good people with a reasonable grasp of right and wrong. They know, for example, that it is wrong to kill children. (“At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon . . . there was a loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead” [Exodus 12:29, New International Version].) They also are likely to agree that it is wrong to punish children for the crimes of their fathers. (“He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation” [Exodus 34:7, NIV].) But they are loyal to a god who has done these things.

Why aren't millions of believers saying, “Yes, I know there is a God because the universe is intelligently designed, and I believe that the [Bible, Koran, or Torah] describes him accurately. Based on the actions of this god, however, I cannot follow or worship him because I am a decent human being.”

I have long believed that religion will be educated out of humankind eventually. It may take many centuries, but it seems probable. After all, polls show that belief goes down as education goes up. And most of the extremely smart and educated people (such as elite scientists) already don't believe in gods. But what if it never happens? What if educational levels do not continue to rise as they have over the last few thousand years? Or what if the cosmos is just too big, too complex, and too scary for most people to ever accept rational explanations for lingering mysteries? If so,

nudging believers away from their gods and toward greater respect for basic morality may be the way to go.

Militant atheists who are concerned with the proliferation of RMDs (Religions of Mass Destruction) may be missing an important point here. After all, it is not gods who inflict so much ignorance, hate, and violence upon the world. (Gods almost surely do not exist, remember?) The source of trouble, indeed, may be belief itself, but the direct cause of the many problems we are all burdened with is that so many people try to please gods by following their orders and their example.

Consider the fact that millions of people believe in ghosts, but no one worships them in tax-free buildings under the guidance of trained professionals. Ghosts are just not respected in the way gods are. Therefore, the concept of ghosts is not pushing evolution out of classrooms or motivating people to strap bombs around their torsos. With ghosts, it's mostly just a case of gullible people wasting a bit of space in their skulls with nonsense and causing relatively little harm to the world.

Wouldn't it be nice if the gods lost their grip on humankind and fell to the status of mere ghosts, no longer able to command vast armies of fools? Even if millions still believed them to be real, it would be a vast improvement. Imagine if the gods were condemned to roam forever in fantasyland with no one willing to follow them. While this might not make for an atheist's paradise, it would at least be a far better world, one where believers no longer work to please divisive and violent gods at the expense of all humanity.

Guy P. Harrison is an award-winning journalist currently living in the Caribbean.

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## Ron's Ramblings

By Ron Titus

[1] US President George W Bush, when asked whether the US would pull out its troops if requested by the newly elected government, said, "It seems like most of the leadership there (in Iraq) understands that there will be a need for coalition troops at least until Iraqis are able to fight." (*Time*, 2005 0207, P 15)

Note that Dubya didn't say "govern themselves", but simply "fight". (Sigh!)

[See \*Ramble\* continued on pg.6](#)

# Ideology Sadly Trumps Reason

## Humanists Dismayed over Supreme Court Evasion on Gay Adoption:

By: Roy Speckhardt

(Washington, DC, January 10, 2005) "The Supreme Court's refusal to hear a Florida gay adoption case without a single comment puts the welfare of thousands of children in jeopardy," warns American Humanist Association (AHA) executive director Tony Hileman.

The case involved gay foster parents who sought to adopt the children in their care. Under Florida law, gays and lesbians may become foster parents but aren't allowed to adopt. "Refusing Americans the right to adopt based on sexual orientation is inconsistent with individual liberty and freedom from government intrusion," continues Hileman.

Supporters of this ban on gay adoption, such as Florida Governor Jeb Bush, maintain that a child should have a mother and father for optimal growth and development. Yet Florida currently allows divorcees, singles, and even in some cases convicted criminals to adopt children, yet blatantly singles out gays and lesbians as unfit parents—though it entrusts them with "temporary" custody as foster parents.

AHA president Mel Lipman points out that, "Numerous scientific studies have been conducted from 1978 to the present showing that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are indistinguishable from other children in terms of gender identity, gender role behavior, and general psychological health. The right of same-sex couples to adopt enhances individual liberty and does so at no expense to the common good. Same-sex couples should enjoy the right to adopt, as well as the equal protections and benefits of their heterosexual counterparts."

"The arguments in favor of the ban on gay adoption are on the losing side of human rights and civil liberties. Humanists deplore the backward thinking that makes such decisions possible and are saddened by how this will leave so many orphaned children unadopted, probably for the rest of their lives," notes Hileman.

"Now is the time for defenders of equality to stand with Humanists and urge states not to copy the ban on gay adoption. Instead, we must make it clear that this ban is a step backward and there is no room for the creation of second-class citizens in this country—we must not tolerate the withholding of equal rights on the basis of sexual orientation," concludes Lipman.

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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### *Ramble continued from pg.5*

[2] US VP Dick Cheney, speaking at Auschwitz on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp in Poland, said, "The story of the camps reminds us that evil is real and must be called by its name and confronted." (*Time*, 2005 0217, P 15)

It would be useful should Dick Cheney look in the mirror, name what he sees, and confront it.

[3] Q - Does "objective evil" exist?

A - No, if it is true that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder".

"Evil" too is in the eye / mind of the beholder.

When it rains, it is a "bad" day in the minds of picnickers; it is a "good" day in the minds of crop growers in a drought.

Genocides are "bad" in the minds of the victims' relatives and friends and in the minds of the people in most civilized nations; they are "good" in the minds of the victimizers who may be uneducated, misguided, paranoid, and/or uncivilized ethnicity supremacists.

The Nazi Holocaust was evil in the minds of most civilized people; it was "good" in the minds of anti-Semites.

And what about war itself? Is it objectively good or bad? Again, it is bad IN THE MINDS of doves and good in to minds of hawks who explain the loss of people's lives as "collateral damage".

In the minds of different people, war is both bad for women and children and good for the industrial military complex.

While good things (inventions, technological developments) happen during wartime, war itself doesn't produce the good things; PEOPLE (humans) produce good things, by using the creative imaginations of their minds / brains. Lemons do not produce lemonade; PEOPLE produce lemonade from lemons.

Things happen. Those things are neither good nor bad in themselves; they are perceived or interpreted in people's

minds as good or evil. Punch line: It is useful for me to do a better job of humanizing my mind.

It is contrary to my principles to dogmatically say ANY thing is OBJECTIVELY so, so all I can say is that SUBJECTIVELY I believe what I have just said is so. I can only add that I subjectively believe that it is human to love and understand and it is inhuman to be unloving and mindless.

[4] 'Just saw a photo of another GI maimed from the war in Iraq. When maiming wars stop, I'll start crying; but until then, I am too angry to cry.

[5] I am plagued with a broad vision. 'A vision that includes the rise of Nazism in a "Christian" Germany.

I cannot ignore that the political circumstances that allowed an Adolph Hitler to come to power is so similar to what I see is happening in my own good old USA.

I love my USA. I do not want to see it destroyed. But I am CHOOSING to allow it to happen, by my not doing more to prevent it from happening. Therefore, I will suffer the consequences. (Sigh!)

Will this be my Good Friday?

[6] Franz Werfel, in his book *The Song of Bernadette*, concluded his remarks about the "miracles" that allegedly occurred in Lourdes France in the 1800s as a result of the experiences ("apparitions") of the peasant girl Bernadette Soubirous ...

"For those who do not believe in God, no explanation is possible; for those who believe in God, no explanation is necessary."

'Which leads me to add ...

When discussing such "occurrences" (or when discussing evolution with creationists for that matter), it is useful to remember that for those who are irrational, no explanation is possible; for those who are rational, no explanation is necessary.

[7] Bob Hill and his wife Betty were vacationing in Transylvania. Driving in a storm, they had a wreck. Both were hurt, especially Betty. So Bob carried her to a nearby farmhouse. A hunched man, Igor, answered the door, and called to his master, a scientist. The Hills were taken to the lab downstairs, where they were placed on tables. Despite the scientist's best efforts, both died. Disconsolate, the scientist went upstairs to play his piano. Igor, cleaning the lab, noticed that both Bob and Betty were moving. He ran upstairs. "Master, master," he exclaimed, "the Hills are alive with the sound of music!" (stolen from Kim Komando, 2005 0122)

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## Letters

**From:** jimmydunne  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 16, 2005  
**To:** KPRC TV Ch. 2  
**Subject:** Criminal psychic "Mediums"

Dear Steve Wasserman, Ch-2 News Director;  
Re:Your news feature about police depts.  
that use "criminal psychic mediums" to  
solve crimes.

All mediums are fakes. None of them could  
pass a "double blind" test about their so-  
called psychic abilities.

Please let the police depts. know that they  
are wasting public funds on these hoaxers.

Jimmy Dunne 281.584.9707

**From:** jimmydunne  
**Sent:** Monday, February 07, 2005  
**To:** Undisclosed-Recipient;;  
**Subject:** Design for Living, Op-Ed 2-7-05

(my response to OP-ED favoring Intelligent  
Design)

Dear New York Times Letters;

Michael J. Behe is pulling for straws in  
his attempt to replace evolution with  
intelligent design. He gives us no actual  
evidence that there was or is an  
"intelligent creator" who is responsible  
for the evolution of life on mother Earth.

Thousands of scientists recognize that life  
has evolved gradually over the last three  
billion years from the earliest one celled  
life forms, through bacteria, worms,  
amazing under sea creatures, dinosaurs and  
in the last two million years, human  
beings.

Intelligent life theory has NO  
credibility. It is simply wishful thinking  
by those stuck with the Biblical Adam and  
Eve fable. People need to use critical  
thinking by looking for evidence before  
they believe stories about supernatural  
beings or imaginary places such as heaven  
and hell.

Jimmy Dunne, 1306 W. Brooklake, Houston,  
TX 77077 281.584.9707  
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## Food for thought and/or thought for indigestion

By Ron Titus

[1] "As Humanists, we aim to cultivate the good life: one  
guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed  
by experience."

[Tony Hileman, "Engaged Humanism", Free Mind, 2005 02/03, P 3]

[2] To a large extent our social ties define our personal  
identity .... It is a deep fallacy ... to think of human  
interaction as mainly a means to an end, rather than also  
an end in itself.

[Time, 2005 0117, P A66]

[3] Asked if he (US Army Spc Charles Graner Jr) felt any  
remorse (about the torture that he administered at Abu  
Ghraib prison in Iraq), Graner said "There's a war on. Bad  
things happen."

[Houston Chronicle, 2005 0116su, P A-1]

In Graner's defense ... no ... rather ... an EXPLANATION  
of Graner's BEHAVIOR: What can one expect when  
Graner was raised in a country (USA) where a climate of  
the acceptance and even glorification of war and other  
forms of violence saturates the populace?

[4] If "all is fair in love and war", then torture is okay both  
in families and in war.

[5] "Men, in order to do evil, must first believe that what  
they are doing is good."

[Alexander Solzhenitsyn, quoted in an email from Jonathan Williams,  
2005 0210]

[6] Love emerged because flight and confrontation were  
no longer enough to guarantee survival.

[Sherwin T Wine, Staying Sane in a Crazy World, P 186]

[7] There is no justice without freedom.

[US News & World Report, 2005 0131/0207, P 15]

It's just the other way around: There is NO FREEDOM  
WITHOUT JUSTICE!

[8] "The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion  
of freedom in all the world."

[George W Bush, Time, 2005 0131, P 17]

Wrong again! It should be: The best hope for peace in our  
world is the expansion of JUSTICE in all the world.

[9] "When I went to Washington as the pope's envoy just  
before the outbreak of the war, [President Bush] told me,  
"Don't worry, your eminence. We'll be quick and do well in  
Iraq.' Unfortunately, the facts have demonstrated ... Bush  
was wrong."

[10] I'm still waiting for the explanation as to why God Almighty is terrified of brewers yeast.

[Sarah, HCOF-Talk, 2005 0116, Digest 2009 Message 5]

Good question. More generally, why is god so upset with things which he is ostensibly the creator of? Like sex, using your brain, stuff like that.

[Erikc Sadler, HCOF-Talk, 2005 0116, Digest 2009 Message 6]

As for the other stuff, the obsessions with sex, murder, etc, God really was created in Man's own image.

[Sarah, HCOF-Talk, 2005018, Digest 2011 Message7]

Yep, the Ultimate Sociopath.

[Erikc Sadler, HCOF-Talk, 2005 0119, Digest 2012 Message 12]

[11] Tom Brucia wrote: I'm trying to figure out what functions of religion have been replaced by government...

Then Ed Uthman replied: Three big ones: universities, hospitals, and alms to the poor.

(Which I find to be) very interesting. It seems to me these are things the church is trying to return to their control. Let's see;

Universities - Creationism science

Hospitals - Faith healing

Alms to the poor - poor are really god's will (to help would be to interfere with god's will).

Think of all the tax \$ we could devote to the 'war effort' instead if these functions could be returned to the church.

[Jim Knierien, HCOF-Talk, 2005 0119, Digest 2012 Message 16]

[12] (D)rug companies now supply 60 percent of all funding for biomedical research.

[Lawrence Diller, "Bitter Pill", Psychotherapy Networker, 2005 01&02, P 61]

Is this a conflict of interest? The pharmaceutical industry renews funding for research that says "our pills are safe", and discontinues funding for research that says "your pills are not safe".

[13] Some people avoid facing important truths by appealing to unimportant details.

[14] There are two ways to deal with people who disagree with me, and neither of them work. Ha!

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## McManus Feeds at Public Trough

From the March 2005 issue of *Freethought Today* published by "The Freedom From Religion Foundation" <http://www.ffrf.org/>

Among the three columnists who have been exposed, to date, for secretly and unethically taking federal money to promote Administrative policies is religious columnist Mike McManus.

McManus' religious group, Marriage Savers, got \$10,200 from the Department of Health and Human Services to promote Bush's "Healthy Marriage Initiatives" through McManus' column. Ironically, his column, syndicated in about 50 papers, is called "Ethics & Religion."

Marriage Savers openly promotes use of federal funds designated to help the poor to promote its religious ideas about marriage. Marriage Savers has also received (at minimum) \$49,000 from a group funded by HHS to promote marriage to unwed couples having children.

HHS assistant secretary Wade Horn, who managed McManus' contract, is a former member of the Marriage Savers' board of directors. "I was hired because we have an expertise in working with churches," McManus told ILSA Today.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation won a federal lawsuit in Wisconsin in its "Marriage Savers" 2000 case, successfully challenging a budget item McManus had lobbied the state to adopt, to promote his religious standards to church pastors.

Also receiving a federal contract was syndicated columnist Maggie Gallagher, who got \$21,500 from HHS to promote the president's \$300 million initiative to encourage marriage. Gallagher received another \$20,000 from the Justice Department to write a report for the National Fatherhood Initiative, which appeared under the byline of Wade Horn, in *Crisis* (Catholic) magazine.

In January it was also disclosed that rightwing radio commentator Armstrong Williams got \$241,000 through the Education Department to promote the No Child Left Behind law through his cable TV and syndicated radio shows.

Federal law bans the use of public money on propaganda.

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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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