



Humanist Society of New Mexico



November 2007

www.humanists.net/nm/ fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

Important News Regarding the Summit Apartments

The Summit Apartment management is invoking a long-standing requirement that groups meeting there have a resident sponsor. We don't. HSNM has been meeting there for 6 1/2 years and would like to stay. Our November and December meetings [2nd Saturday @ 10:00 a.m.] have been approved.

So, we have until the end of the year to [1] find a resident of the Summit who will become a member of HSNM, or [2] find a member who will move into the Summit, or [3] find an alternative meeting place.

Additionally, due to scheduling conflicts, the Summit will not be able to accommodate our December party. We're open for an invitation to host the December (Winter Solstice, Year End ...) party.

Fred March to Give Oasis Lecture on Bible

Fred March will be lecturing at the OASIS program on Wednesday and Friday November 7 & 9 at 10:30 AM to 12. OASIS lectures are located in the new Macys (formerly Foleys) in Coronado Center, 6600 Manual NE. OASIS is located on the 2nd floor. The average attendance for each class is 65; however, attendance has been as great as 175 members. Please check the OASIS website at www.oasisnet.org and click on "Albuquerque" for details as there may be a charge for attendance. The OASIS group is comprised mostly of younger, newly retired seniors (average age 74) who are bright, ask great questions and are eager to learn. I am hoping that some of them will be attracted to HSNM so it would be good to seed the audience with some of our members. The following description Fred's lectures appears in the OASIS catalogue.

"The Bible Through the Eyes of Its Authors" interprets the Hebrew Bible in the light of the social and political world that confronted

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings are free and open to the public and run from 10:00 to noon (except where noted)

Saturday, November 10, 2007

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

Refreshments: Jean O'Hara

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

Saturday, November 17, 2007

Topical Discussion

Humanism and Ayn Rand

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE (NW corner Edith and Central - parking on the street.)

Saturday, November 24, 2007

Formal Meeting

Pay Day Loans

Sam Brownstein

Refreshments: Randall Wall

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

Santa Fe Humanists
Saturday, November 3, 10:30am

Intelligence

Community Room, LaFarge Branch of the Santa Fe Public Library, 1730 Llano St.

Humanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience, and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

HSNM Book Club

“The God Delusion” by Richard Dawkins
Sunday, December 2nd, 2:00-4:00pm
Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank NE

The Humanist Society of New Mexico (HSNM)

A Membership chapter of the American
Humanist Association.

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical,
naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its
members and within its community.

Officers

President: Frederic March

Vice President/Programs: Harry Willson

Treasurer: Ed Root

Secretary: John Waldrop

Membership: Frederic March

Public Information: Salem Smith

Director of Classes: Ron Herman

Social Activities:xxxxxxxxxxxx

Newsletter Editor: Randall Wall

Website: Phil Smith

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published
monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership
or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$12
annually. Send subscription and membership
request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico,
P.O. Box 13675, Albuquerque, NM 87192.
Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall
Wall at Email paragon2012@comcast.net

The deadline for
Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of
each month.

its authors. There was a world of theocratic
temple-states that began with Egypt and
Sumer circa 2800 BCE. The Hebrew nations
were founded circa 900 BCE. The Hebrew
Bible is their version of history from what
they believed was the ethno-centric history
from the creation of the world in 3761 BCE
to circa 400 BCE when Judah was a Persian
vassal. Thus the Hebrew Bible was the work
of many authors and editors over a period of
four centuries. The lectures will describe
who the principle authors were according to
modern historical scholarship, along with the
political and social conditions at the times
they wrote. We will then illustrate how
conditions in their own world influenced
their version of the pre-historical world
(prior to the Hebrew kingdoms). These
include the exploits of the Patriarchs, Moses,
Joshua, and the colorful heroes and villains
in the book of Judges. The overall intent of
the course is to help us understand how the
theocratic traditions of the Bible's authors
continue to influence the social order of our
modern world, as much as they did in the
ancient world.

October HSNM Meeting in Grants

Leaflets were placed on windshields of cars at the first
meeting of HSNM in Grants. One said “Adam and Eve
were Humanists and look what happened to them.”
Well, they obediently multiplied, didn't they?
Unintended encouragement? See pages 106, 107 in
The Bible Through the Eyes of Its Authors by Frederic
March. We had six Humanists from Albuquerque, two
of Grants and two interested attendees. The presence
and assistance of members from Albuquerque are
greatly appreciated. Thanks also to the AHA for
promptly supplying the certificate of insurance
required by the Grants First Presbyterian Church.
The plan is to meet at the church on the first
Saturday each month for the next five months.
We have high hopes that it will be a fruitful
project.

Dale L. Berry

Who Is Sovereign?

We are in the middle of a serious constitutional crisis, even though most folks don't seem to be aware of it. The question is: "Who is sovereign?"

The dictionary is a good place to start, hopefully. "Sovereign – [1] above or superior to all others. [2] supreme in power, rank, or authority." It looks plain and obvious enough, but actually the usage has been inconsistent for centuries. Many think the sovereign is the ruler, the king, the emperor, some person or small group of persons maybe. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland the queen is called "the sovereign." But she tells only a few what to do – for the most part she is a symbol. And anyway, since way back in 1215, the Magna Charta made sure that the king understood he was only one among equals, meaning the rest of the nobility.

Sovereignty is used to define one nation over against another. Turkey and Greece are sovereign – no one can tell them what to do inside their own territory. Kurdistan is not sovereign. Quebec is not sovereign. The USA is a sovereign nation, that is, independent of others. There are some persons who fear that our involvement with the United Nations is a threat to our sovereignty. I'm beginning to suspect that the concept of sovereignty will be a hindrance to world solidarity and the solutions to serious global problems.

Our founding fathers in 1787 debated the role of the head of the executive branch and the idea of sovereignty. Some wanted to offer kingship, and sovereignty, to George Washington, but he declined. "We don't want a king. We tried that, and didn't like it." So they made clear that the President was not a king. He had limited powers. He had no royal prerogatives. He was not, and is not, sovereign. The people are sovereign.

The framers of the Constitution set up a system of balanced powers. And the 10th amendment made it perfectly clear: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people." And the preamble to the Constitution makes clear that the formation of this government was not by royal edict, but a deliberate act of – "We, the People."

The people are sovereign. And among the separate branches of government, the one which most closely reflects the will of the people is the Congress, not the Chief Executive.

In our time we have more direct ways of measuring or ascertaining the will of the people, more direct than elections. In fact in our time we have stolen elections, and a mostly silent "people," who allow them. But the polls still exist, measuring the fluctuating mood of the

people, giving a rough estimate of the will of the people. Polls are imperfect; the questions can be very cleverly skewed, and the data inaccurately reported. But they are not quite worthless.

Well, here we are with an acting president – I call him that very deliberately because of those stolen elections – who thinks he is sovereign, or would if he could comprehend the concept. Those around him who manage him and really run things have been working very hard to widen "the powers of the presidency." The acting president proudly asserts that he doesn't read the newspapers, or watch TV news, or care one whit about the polls. His scorning of the polls tells us that he does not believe that the people are sovereign.

Sometimes the people behave in ways that make a body wonder. They elected Ronald Reagan, twice. They allowed the selection of the current acting president, in two stolen elections. Do our sovereign people have what it takes to be sovereign? Do they have whatever it is that they seem to have in the Philippines, and the Ukraine, and Myanmar?

The sovereign people falter, for two reasons that I can see from here:

[1] They have been dumbed down deliberately. Schools do not function well. History is not well-taught. A huge percentage of the people think that Hitler was on our side in World War Two, no doubt because of the Cold War and the half-century of hostility and propaganda toward the Soviet Union. The story of the American attack on Vietnam is not retold accurately, or at all, in high school. More and more of the news is fluff, and when it isn't, the historical background of whatever is going on is left out. Only a tiny percentage of Americans remember or know about the CIA involvement in the overthrow of the elected president of Iran in 1953, so the media can ballyhoo a blanket bombardment of Iran, as if the Iranians were all purely evil and we were "the good guys."

[2] The people are being distracted and overworked. We can't have an orange revolution here, when an election is stolen, because the sovereign people have to go to work, at their two or more poorly paid jobs, in order to keep up their extravagant lifestyle – extravagant compared to the rest of the world. The sovereign people are weary and exhausted, and eager to be distracted. And they are bombarded with distraction, very deliberately, as if the media had some fear that an orange-type revolution could break out if they aren't careful.

The exercise of sovereignty will be hard work, when we finally get at it.

Harry Willson

Grants Humanists

Saturday, November 3

10:00am to noon

Restoring the Sense of Wonder

Harry Willson

Grants First Presbyterian Church

400 Nimitz Dr., Grants, NM

Prejudicial Concerns

By AC Grayling, Writer for The Guardian (UK)

http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/ac_grayling/2007/10/prejudicial_concerns.html

Mr Andrew McClintock, Christian and ex-magistrate, is appealing against an employment tribunal decision which went against him earlier this year when he sought redress for having, as he claimed, been forced to resign because he was not granted exemption from sitting in hearings in which children might be given into the care of gay couples, something that offends his religious scruples.

He wished to be allowed to keep his job and his prejudices simultaneously, and to be allowed not to comply with the law of the land, because the sexual morality of shepherds 3,000 years ago, keen on the increase of their flocks, made it taboo for sex ever to be about anything other than reproduction. This principle resulted in the murder of Onan by God, and the Catholic church's long-time view that rape is less bad than masturbation because it can result in pregnancy. It also resulted in the millennia-long oppression and persecution of gays, who were put to death by the devotees of gentle Jesus meek and mild, an oppression and persecution that Mr McClintock wishes to keep alive.

Well: Mr McClintock did exactly the right thing by resigning. If his prejudices interfere with his responsibility to serve the law as one of its officers, he is evidently much better employed elsewhere. Think of a votary of any other religion allowing his personal beliefs to prevent him from carrying out his public duties in the UK: an orthodox Jewish fireman who would not carry a woman down a ladder from a burning house because he is allowed to touch no other woman than his wife and daughters; a devout Muslim in a council education department refusing to let girls into a certain school because there are boys there, or working for an adoption

agency and refusing to countenance applications from gay couples; a doctor of either faith refusing to help a woman at the scene of an accident for the same kind of scruples - odd how all the examples that spring most readily to mind involve prejudices about women and gays.

The point is an entirely general one. When individuals cannot allow their religious loyalties to be trumped by their public responsibilities, they should resign; the alternative is for the public domain to be invaded and disrupted by a Babel of claimed individual religious sensitivities, or even worse, by various religious organisations whose prejudices, taboos, anxieties and antipathies distort the overall public endeavour for a decent and equitable social order which is as inclusive as possible. The McClintock case is another powerful argument for saying: if you are serious about your religion, be consistent and honest and accept the consequences, as Mr McClintock has rightly done by resigning. What he has done wrong (apart from allowing his life to be controlled by ancient superstition and prejudice) is to complain about the rest of us thinking he has done the right thing.

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, November 5, 2007

Open Forum

Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion

Monday, November 19, 2007

So You Think You Know What Will Make You Happy

Dr. Larry Brown, Psychologist

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room. Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group

<http://atheists.meetup.com/75>

Business Meeting on first Sunday, 9am,
Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202
Harvard SE

Special Meeting featuring Doug Long speaking on
"What's an Unbeliever to Do?" on Tuesday,
November 13 at 6pm at the Cooper Canyon
Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite of Lovelace
Hospital)