



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



October 2007

[www.humanists.net/nm/](http://www.humanists.net/nm/) [fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com](mailto:fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com)

## President's Message

I believe that we can become a highly credible and visible exponent of humanism as a rational approach to personal fulfillment and as a strong contributor to a democratic system untainted by sectarian religious controls coded in theocratically motivated laws and implemented by zealous bureaucrats. I believe that our government has in part already been subverted by zealous bureaucrats at varying levels who have seriously eroded freedom of religion for all persons not aligned with their narrow religious doctrines on morality and the truth of biblical claims - thereby posing a threat to our own universal human right to freedom from religious coercion.

I am looking for ideas from our members on how we can communicate our shared concerns in the Albuquerque community and to thereby boost our membership and our effectiveness. We desperately need help in the outreach area including publicity about who we are and what we do. While our efforts to spark plug some actions in this direction have not got the engine running, we are optimistic and will keep trying. So do not hesitate to contact me with your views on these issues.

I am planning to give public lectures on the topic "The Bible Through the Eyes of Its Authors" on November 7&9 at 10:30am as part of the Oasis program. OASIS is a not-for-profit educational organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of seniors. Classes are held at OASIS located in the new Macy's (formerly Foley's) 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.



## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

**Saturday, October 13, 2007**

### Informal Meeting

*General Discussion*

Refreshments: Adela Amador

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

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**Saturday, October 20, 2007**

### Topical Discussion

*Epistemology*

Note: No Food or Drink

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

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**Saturday, October 27, 2007**

### Formal Meeting

*Zoraster*

William Kimbrough

Refreshments: Salem Smith

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

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**Santa Fe Humanists**  
**Saturday, October 6, 10:30am**

*Continuing Consciousness*

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

**H**umanism 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.

My lectures will be based on my book of the above title and will focus on temple-state issues in the minds of the Bible's authors, as contrasted with our humanist values - especially the essentiality of church-state separation. I

plan to distribute a flyer about the HSNM at both lectures and hope to attract some new members. If this effort is successful we could plan to expand it with future lectures at Oasis and other such public venues by me and by other motivated members of the HSNM.

## **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:xxxxxxxxxx*

*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](mailto:paragon2012@comcast.net)

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

*Fred March*

## **The Myth of Moral Superiority**

American policy-makers have been making  
preposterous statements and dreadful decisions for many  
decades, and especially recently, and a thoughtful person  
has to wonder what causes such behavior. This may be a  
helpful clue – they have been believing the myth of  
moral superiority. Andy Rooney cries out, from time to  
time, “Don’t forget, we’re the good guys here!” It seems  
to justify remarkably stupid and remarkably harmful  
policies.

Consider the American arsenal of nuclear weapons. One  
can wonder why we have them and why we have so  
many. Everyone remembers, or has heard of, Albert  
Einstein’s letter to FDR, that Hitler’s scientists may be  
on the track of a nuclear explosion, which could become  
a war weapon. I was just thinking – say it’s 1942, and  
suppose Hitler could have one by 1944. How would the  
overall situation be improved if the U.S. had one, or  
several? It’s a crime and a disaster if any one ever goes  
off, isn’t it? Isn’t it so, even still, more than sixty years  
later? So how did we get fooled into thinking that it  
would be a good and worthwhile thing for us to have  
one, or several, or several thousand? We were tricked  
into such insanity by the myth of our moral superiority.

Hitler was a bad person. But we are not bad. We are  
good people – in fact, the myth says, we are better than  
most people. The problem is this – it isn’t true. We are  
not good people. We are not better than other people. In  
fact a case could be made out that any country founded  
on genocide and slavery, which ours was, must be made  
up of not-good people. Moral superiority, in the light of  
all that, is ridiculous. But the myth persists.

Some fail to see how incongruous it is, that we have  
thousands of nuclear weapons, in gross violation of the  
Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which we have  
ratified, while at the same time we are badly lathered up  
that Iran may be working on getting one, some years

from now. Iranians are bad people, we think. They have no business resenting or even remembering our overthrow and murder of their president, Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953. We are good people, the myth insists. We can be trusted to use the bomb in a good way – [?][!] – but they cannot.

And still the myth persists. Two instances of it surfaced recently.

[a] The winners of a high school competition of some sort were invited to the White House for a recognition ceremony. Two of the winners prepared a letter for the acting president, and by happenstance, found opportunity to hand it to him. He began to read it. It was appealing to him to close Guantanamo and end the practice of torture. He read a few lines, and stopped and looked the young ladies in the face and said, as he handed the letter back, “We don’t torture.”

But we do torture. The evidence is incontrovertible, and piled up in huge quantities. Abu Graib, Guantanamo, Padilla, kidnapping, rendition, the labeling of the Geneva Convention prohibitions as “quaint” – the only way to ignore all that evidence is to believe the myth of U.S. moral superiority, to the point of believing and saying, “Whatever we do is good, so torture is not torture, when we do it.”

[b] A prominent pro-war candidate for president was being interviewed on a television news/talk show. “We should be worried about China,” he said.

“Why should we be worried?”

“They’re thinking of building aircraft carriers?”

“Is that bad?”

“We don’t want Chinese aircraft carriers off the coast of Africa.”

“Why not?”

“They would be intimidating to the people of Africa.”

“What about our aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf?” the newsman asked.

“Oh, we don’t intimidate.” With a straight face, really meaning it, the candidate said that.

Why would anyone build an aircraft carrier, if he didn’t intend to intimidate someone else? The only way a person could make such a ridiculous assertion as, “We don’t intimidate,” after our active participation in government overthrows in Iran, Guatemala, Congo, Chile, Panama and Iraq, just to name a few, is through believing in the myth of U.S. moral superiority. But all those dead people testify to the falsehood.

Renunciation of the myth, and then reparations, could be first steps in rectifying what has become a very serious world crisis. It has become the U.S. versus the rest of the world.

*Harry Willson*

See the library of Harry’s old rants at [www.amadorbooks.com](http://www.amadorbooks.com)

## **Achieving Healthcare for All Results of the New Mexico Healthcare Reform Study**

**Speaker: Dick Mason**

**Date: Sunday, October 7, 2007**

**Time: 9am**

**Location: Peace & Justice Center**

**202 Harvard Dr SE**

**Albuquerque, NM**

**Join members of the community to discuss the results of the study comparing the cost of various models of universal health care, the work of the Governor & Legislature Health Coverage for New Mexicans Committee, and achieving health care for all people living in New Mexico.**

**Sponsored by the Atheists & Freethinkers of New Mexico**

## **Santa Fe Humanists Contact Information**

If any HSNM members are asked by persons interested in the Santa Fe Humanists, the proper person to refer them is Bill Weihofen at (505) 988-1343. It is no longer appropriate to refer inquires to Peter Schanck or Karen Ushman. Thank you.



## **Grants Humanists**

**Saturday, October 6**

**10:00am to noon**

**Get Acquainted**

**Grants First Presbyterian Church**

**400 Nimitz Dr.**

**Grants, NM**

## Evangelical Scholar Calls For 'Watchmen' On The Church-State Wall

From Church & State, September 2007

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

An evangelical Christian scholar gave an impassioned speech recently in which he urged "true Baptists" to rediscover their roots and once again become "watchmen on the wall of separation between church and state."

Randall Balmer, a professor of history at Columbia University, addressed a June 29 event sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC) in Washington, D.C.

Balmer, author of the recent book *Thy Kingdom Come: An Evangelical's Lament*, said too many Baptists in America have "lost their way," and he criticized their support for the Religious Right.

"They have been seduced by leaders of the Religious Right into thinking that the way to advance the gospel in this country is to abandon Baptist principles," Balmer said.

The Associated Baptist Press reported that Balmer listed as an example support for Roy Moore, former Alabama chief justice. Moore lost his spot on the bench after he defied a federal court order to remove a massive Ten Commandments monument from the state judicial building.

"Why not post the Decalogue in public places?" asked Balmer. "Because, quite simply, it trivializes the faith and makes the Ten Commandments into a fetish. What Roy Moore was peddling was idolatry, pure and simple – a conflation of the gospel with the American political order."

Balmer also criticized the Religious Right for its partisanship.

"The identification of the Religious Right with the Republican Party has deprived the faith of its prophetic voice," he said. "Where are the Baptist voices of conscience decrying this administration's immoral war in Iraq, the relentless assault on civil liberties and the abomination of torture?"

"In too many cases," Balmer continued, "the answer is that those voices have been co-opted by the promise – often the mirage – of access to political power. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Religious Right has abandoned the faith for a conference call with Karl Rove

in return."

Baptists worked with Enlightenment-era thinkers like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to build the church-state wall in the post-Revolutionary period. But the Southern Baptist Convention, now under the sway of fundamentalists, has abandoned its support for church-state separation and works with the Religious Right.

Balmer called on Baptists to return to their roots.

"Every true Baptist understands that any attempt to baptize the faith with the imprimatur of the state... ultimately diminishes the integrity of the faith," the scholar said. "I'm asking Baptists to reaffirm their heritage."

Earlier that day, pro-separation Baptists gathered near the U.S. Capitol to commemorate a famous speech on religious liberty delivered in 1920 by Baptist minister George Truett.

Two members of Congress, U.S. Reps. Chet Edwards (D-Texas) and Robert Scott (D-Va.), spoke.

Edwards, remarking that he was greatly influenced by Truett's speech, told the crowd, "Our religious freedom must be protected by each generation. There are politicians in each generation, in the name of religion, who would do it great harm."

### Friendly Philosophers

**Monday, October 1, 2007**

Open Forum

*Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion*

**Monday, October 15, 2007**

*Humanities' Subdivisions*

Walt Kirsch

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

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### Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group

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

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

Social Meeting on third Tuesday at 7pm at Mimi's  
Cafe, 4316 The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25