

FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

MAY

- May 2 Sunday 9 A.M. - 6 P.M. Street Fair Tabling on Broadway between 94 and 95TH Street.
May 6* Thursday 7 P.M. Day of Reason Dinner. (There will be individual checks.)
9 P.M. Michael Shermer. (There will be an Online chat.)
May 9* Sunday 12:30 P.M. NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch.
May 18** Tuesday 7 P.M. NYC Atheists Meetup.
May 27*** Thursday 6:30 P.M. Bob Simon, "End of Life Choices" — Discussion of living wills, health care proxies, caring friends, legality of suicide, and assisted suicide issues. The Book Club Meeting will follow: *Science and Religion* edited by Paul Kurtz. Read pages 83-125.

JUNE

- June 6 Sunday 9 A.M. - 6 P.M. Street Fair Tabling on Columbus between 86 and 96TH Street.
June 13* Sunday 12:30 P.M. NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch.
June 15** Tuesday 7 P.M. NYC Atheists Meetup.
June 27*** Sunday 1 P.M. Gerry Dantone, Long Island Secular Humanists.
"Morality (*Religion versus Humanism*)"

JULY

- July 4 Sunday 12 P.M. - 5 P.M. NYC Atheists Picnic in the country Will be in Chappaqua/Westchester County New York — Details will be in the June newsletter.
July 11* Sunday 12:30 P.M. NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch.
July 18 Sunday 1 P.M. NYC Harbor Cruise at Pier 63. West 24TH Street on the Hudson River.
July 20** Tuesday 7 P.M. NYC Atheists Meetup.

AUGUST

- August 8* Sunday 12:30 P.M. NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch.
August 17** Tuesday 7 P.M. NYC Atheists Meetup.
August 29*** Sunday 1 P.M. Bob Morgan — Forum of Atheist Issues.

SEPTEMBER

- September 12* Sunday 12:30 P.M. NYC Atheists Sunday Brunch.
September 21** Tuesday 7 P.M. NYC Atheists Meetup.
September 26*** Sunday 6 P.M. Ed Stephens. "Psychiatrist's perspective: Why Atheism Is a Tough Sell."

* **Brunch and Dinner Location:** EURO Diner at 126 East 28TH Street. (Between Lexington and Park Avenue.)

Brunch Cost: \$12.50. Tax and Tip are included. No reservations required.

** **Meetup Location:** Call 212-330-6794, 2 Days Before the Event.

*** **Meeting Location:** 352 7TH Avenue (Between 29 and 30TH Street at the *Source of Life Center* on the 16TH Floor.)

NYC Atheists Inc. is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational association. Its meetings and membership are open and all are welcomed (both nonbelievers and believers), *i.e.* atheists, agnostics, humanists, free thinkers, skeptics, humanists, separation-of-church/state advocates, and individuals who are questioning and searching beliefs.



PRESIDENT’S SERMON
Lessons Learned at a Counter Demonstration

On Saturday, April 24, 2004, I participated with members of American Atheists in a counter demonstration at the Union County, New Jersey, Municipal Building against a Knights of Columbus event supporting keeping “under god” in the Pledge of Allegiance. After the demonstration, we met for lunch and critique. We all realized that it is not enough to just show up at the event, both pre-event and post-event activity are necessary. (Pre-event: Recon the location, establish objectives, prepare literature and materials, signs, US flag, equipment/camera/megaphone/designate a spokesperson, issue a press release, dress code, behavior, establish contacts: press, police, etc. Post-event: extend thanks to contacts and participants’ critique.) For a pledge demonstration, the following sign messages are suggested. (The police do not want any sticks or poles on your signs.)

**TOTAL
SEPARATION
CHURCH/STATE**

**UNDER
WHOSE
GOD?**

**ONE NATION INDIVISIBLE
~~UNDER GOD~~
WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL**

I also want to comment on the significant activity and self initiative on the part of one of the American Atheist participants. This person read about the K of C event in the Newark Star Ledger. He immediately informed the American Atheist Headquarters to setup a counter-demonstration. The newspaper article stated that the local high school choir would be singing and junior ROTC would be acting as a color guard. He contacted the school and the local and state teacher unions and informed them that this was an inappropriate (separation of church and state) activity for these groups. These groups did not attend the event.

I would like to establish our own demonstration team — any and all may directly contact me, Ken Bronstein at nycatheists@aol.com or 212-535-7425.

**NYC-A MEMBERS HOLD FIRST
MEMBER FORUM: INITIAL
REPORT**

On April 25, we experimented with a “Forum” style group discussion. The goal is two-fold: to formulate our collective position on an issue, in order to better mutual understanding and to allow us to prepare reasoned descriptions of atheist thinking.

From our votes in the January meeting, we discussed morality. Three speakers presented viewpoints: Harvey Osgood, Ben Forman, and Allen Gardner. After a round-robin of panelists, the floor was opened to the membership.

On behalf of all of us on the panel, thank you for your warm support, as evidenced by the thoughtful and constructive participation of all. The panel is

reviewing the notes and will be issuing drafts as soon as possible.
Report submitted by Bob Morgan, Coordinator, Goal3

**AMERICA’S GREATEST DANGER:
FUNDAMENTALISTS (IN THE
WHITE HOUSE)**
By Ron Widelec

President Bush has stated many times that the greatest danger to the United States is fundamentalist ideologies and the violence that often flows from such beliefs. The fundamentalists he refers to are Islamic terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda. Without a doubt, these Islamic fundamentalists are a threat to America. But while fundamentalists threaten us from without, our own home-bred religious fanatics threaten us from within. They threaten us by using

religion and their belief in ‘god’ as justification for their actions. While this is not uncommon for many Americans, it becomes dangerous when it is done by our government.

At a recent press conference President Bush stated unequivocally that he sees himself as the sword of ‘god.’ After stating that he prayed for ‘god’s’ comfort in the name of the entire nation, he was quoted as saying, “Freedom is the Almighty’s gift to every man...and as the greatest power on the face of the Earth, we have an obligation to help the spread of freedom.” In other words, he feels that we all have an obligation to spread the Almighty’s gift. And of course, he is spreading what he calls “freedom” to the people of Iraq through a war and occupation. Oddly enough, this was not the

justification he gave to the American people and Congress before the war was authorized. Some little thing about weapons of mass destruction was used as justification. Now those appear to have disappeared, and all of a sudden, 130,000 American soldiers are in Iraq on a mission for 'god's' glory under order by the President of the United States.

A world leader who orders wars in order to spread 'god's' gifts, can be called nothing other than a religious fundamentalist. It is clear that the United States has responded to Islamic Fundamentalism with some of our own, and equally potent. Islam, it appears, holds no monopoly on fanaticism. I hope the families of the nearly 700 dead American soldiers take some solace in the idea that their loved ones have died on Bush's Jihad. After the comments of Bush and some other right wingers, is it any wonder that the majority of the Islamic world thinks the U.S is out to get them? If Bush, or anyone else chooses to believe in such outlandish principles, that is their right. But when an entire nation is subject to their actions, and 130,000 soldiers are turned into unwilling Crusaders, it is entirely inappropriate.

If the reasons for upholding Thomas Jefferson's Wall of Separation have escaped anyone (and, amazingly, they have), this latest frightening example of the dangers of the union of State and Religion should prove enlightening.

Questions or comments... Email me at Beowolf88@aol.com

MY PATH TO ATHEISM

by Ken Bronstein

My road to atheism was a three-step discovery process.

Step one occurred when I was about five years old. The Santa Claus myth came crashing down my chimney. The threat of being "good" to receive more from Santa no longer existed. This began my understanding of the difference between real and imaginary threats.

Step two occurred when I was about eight to nine years old. I realized and understood that children were conceived by the sexual union of a man and woman. No more did I believe the "Adult World" — I became a full-time Skeptic.

Step three happened around my thirteen birthday.

About the age of six, I began to attend a Conservative Hebrew School five days a week plus Saturday and holiday religious services.

When I reached my twelfth birthday, I began the intensive preparation for my BAR MITZVAH (age thirteen). This included a review of the Torah (five books) and particular attention to my Torah portion.

At my parents' temple, the Bar Mitzvah boy was assigned a Rabbi to prepare for this event. Not only were you required to sing your Torah portion in Hebrew, but you had to prepare and deliver a speech (in English) about your Torah portion. This required that you thoroughly understood what your Torah portion meant and its significance. As I worked on my speech, I

began to research the events described in my portion. Since I was unable to verify them, I asked my Rabbi for proof. He told me that they were really either myths, symbolic, or partial truths. I then asked, is the whole Torah unproven? He told me to have faith. Before my fourteenth birthday, further research brought me to Galileo, Darwin, Einstein — and then Atheism.

I find that Atheism is a major contributor to my feeling of personal liberty and freedom;

I know this LIFE is not a dress rehearsal and there is no hereafter. This has made me self reliant, self confident and a happy individual.

For example, when I have been faced with dangerous situations,

I know that the reason that I have survived or was not injured is because I knew the outcome was in my hands alone and that prayer would not help.

The characteristics that I have developed as an Atheist I have also extended into my business and financial matters.

I have found that Atheism has also had another major impact—my expanded knowledge base. Atheists are curious individuals, continuously researching and studying ideologies, societies, and faiths. This has also enabled me to develop my own personal moral/ethical code.

My Life Motto: I, alone make Ken happy and my life great; no excuses.

WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW YOUR ROAD TO ATHEISM AND WHY YOU ARE AN ATHEIST. Submit: nycatheist@aol.com

MADALYN MURRAY O’HAIR DAY

On Tuesday, April 13th, we held NYC Atheists’ first Madalyn O’Hair Day (her birthday). We were fortunate to have two of our members: Caroline Gilman (a member of O’Hair’s American Atheists Board) and Margie Wait, who were actively involved with Ms. O’Hair for many years. They described many events of those “war years” (constant government, police and IRS harassment of Atheists) which Ms. O’Hair single-handedly fought.

Only someone of her genius, dedication and style would have lasted so long. They also agreed that today we are in a different phase and Ellen Johnson is the right person to carry the torch now.

We also saw two great TV appearances of Ms. O’Hair — the Johnny Carson Show (it looked to me that Carson is an Atheist) and the Phil Donohue Show. This was the first time that many of us saw and heard Ms. O’Hair. Ms. O’Hair’s TV appearances showed that she was a disciplined and thoughtful individual. Anyone who saw these video(s) would be very impressed with Ms. O’Hair.

AGNOSTIC TWELVE STEPS

For agnostics who would like to work the steps, this version of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous provides slightly different wording of the six steps that make reference to God or a Higher Power.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. We came to believe and to accept that we needed strengths beyond our awareness and resources to restore us to sanity. [Original: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.]

3. We made a decision to entrust our will and our lives to the care of the collective wisdom and resources of those who have searched before us. [Original: Made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.]

4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. We admitted to ourselves, without reservation, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs. [Original: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.]

6. We were ready to accept help in letting go of all our defects of character. [Original: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.]

7. With humility and openness sought to eliminate our shortcomings. [Original: Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.]

8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

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10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

11. We sought through meditation to improve our awareness and our understanding of the AA way of life and to discover the power to carry out that way of life. [Original: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.]

12. Having had an awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

VICTORY! VFW DROPS RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP!

Several months ago, as a response to a consensus opinion among leaders in the community of reason to convince the Veterans of Foreign Wars to stop excluding nontheists from its membership. The VFW has decided to remove the discriminatory attestation of belief from their membership application.

The VFW is to be applauded for listening to reason and ending their practice of de facto discrimination against nontheists.

BIBLE WARNING LABEL

**PARENTAL
ADVISORY**

Contains scenes of
violence, sex, the occult,
immorality, genocide.

NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN