

New York City Atheists Inc.

October 2005

Serving the Tri-State area • An affiliate of American Atheists and Center For Atheism Vol. II Issue No. 10

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NYC Atheists Inc. is a non-profit, non-partisan educational association. Our meetings and membership are open and all are welcome (both non-believers and believers) atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers, skeptics, secularists, separation-of-church/state advocates and individuals who are questioning and searching beliefs.

OCTOBER

Oct.	1*****	Saturday	10 AM – 6 PM	NYCA Street Tabling
Oct.	6*	Thursday	6:00 / 7:30 P.M.	NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite
Oct.	6**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Oct.	8*****	Saturday	10 AM – 6 PM	NYCA Street Tabling
Oct.	9***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Oct.	13**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Oct.	18****	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up
Oct.	20**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Oct.	27**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Oct.	30*****	Sunday	12:30 P.M.	NYCA Monthly Meeting
Oct.	31	Monday	6:00 P.M.	NYCA Halloween Parade (TBA)

NOVEMBER

Nov.	3*	Thursday	6:00 / 7:30 P.M.	NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite
Nov.	3**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Nov.	8	Tuesday	10AM – 6:30PM	B.L.O.O.D. Program (See page 3)
Nov.	10**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Nov.	10/11	Thursday / Friday	Washington D.C. – Atheists in Foxhole Rally (See page 4)	
Nov.	13***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Nov.	15****	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up
Nov.	17**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Nov.	20***	Sunday	12:30 P.M.	<u>NYCA Monthly Meeting (NEW LOCATION)</u>
Nov.	24**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show

* Dinner: Pier 17 – 3rd Floor Food Court – South St. Seaport

* Movie: Southbridge Towers – 66 Frankfort St. - Community Room

** Manhattan Cable Channel 67 / RNN Cable Channel 109

*** Garden Restaurant – 145 East 60th St. (Lexington / Third)

Brunch Cost: Order from Menu — Reservations not required.

**** Manhattan Lounge - 1720 2nd Ave. (89 / 90th St.)

***** 352 7th Avenue / 16th Floor (29 / 30th Street)

***** Columbus circle – Broadway / 60th St. – in front of the Time Warner Bldg.

First shift: 9:45AM – 1:30PM / Second shift: 1:30PM – 6:00PM

PRESIDENT'S SERMON
Code Of Conduct for Responsible Atheism

Last month, I proposed a Code of Conduct based upon RESPECT with six components; yourself, others, those in need, other's property, the planet and other's beliefs.

Harvey Osgood, an NYCA member, suggested reducing it to three respect components: self, humanity and the universe.

Further discussion developed the proposed New York City Atheists Code of Conduct Pyramid:



I would greatly appreciate your comments.

Contact me: Ken Bronstein at NYCATHEISTS@AOL.COM or 212-535-7425.

PAST EVENTS
SEPTEMBER

Sept. 1 NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite
The Crucible was our September Movie.

Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 NYCA Cable Show

Sept. 10, 17, 24 NYCA Street Tabling

Sept. 20 NYCA Meet-Up

Sept. 29 NYCA Monthly Meeting
Subject: Living wills, Health Proxies etc.
Guest: Henry Kalow, an attorney, described these documents and explained why every individual should have them.

Oct. 3, 10, 17, 24 NYCA Cable Show
8:00 PM THURSDAY Manhattan Cable # 67

Oct. 6 NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite

Dinner Info:

Time: 6:00 - 7:15pm
Location: Pier 17 - 3rd floor Food Court. Pier 17 is the building on the East River pier at South Street Seaport. Purchase your meal at one of many food stalls and look for us sitting at the tables that have a harbor view of the Brooklyn Bridge. You'll recognize us by our blue Atheist baseball caps.

Movie Info:

Movie: Penn & Teller Cable Show Subject: *The Bible: Fact or Fiction* They will reveal the many discrepancies and contradictions in the Bible.
Time: 7:30 P.M.

Question & Answers

How long does it take to give blood?

About one hour.

How much blood is taken?

About 1 pint.

How often can I give?

About every 56 days. .

Are there age limits for blood donors?

17 - no upper age limit.

Is it safe to give blood?

Yes. Donating blood is 100 percent safe. You cannot get HIV or any other infection from donating blood.

Is America's Blood Centers affiliated with the Red Cross?

No. Founded in 1962, (ABC) is North America's largest network of community-based blood programs.

Organ Donation Sign Up Program

Date: November 8, 2005

On or before November 8, 2005, please complete your: **Organ Donation Form.**

http://www.donatelife.net/downloadables/pdf/become_donor_card.pdf

FAMILY NOTIFICATION FORM

http://www.donatelife.net/become_notifi_form.pdf

New York State Residents

- Sign up online in the New York State Organ and Tissue Donor Registry at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/donor/index.htm>.
- Sign up in the New York State Organ and Tissue Donor Registry at the Department of Motor Vehicles when you apply for or renew your license or non-driver ID.

Other information <http://www.donatelife.net/>

**Atheists in Foxholes
Banquet and March
November 10-11, 2005
Washington, D.C.**

Nov. 10 Thursday 7:30 P.M.
Welcome Banquet
Contact The Washington Plaza Hotel (202-842-1300) directly to reserve your room(s) and

mention Group #4515 to qualify for special Rates.

Veterans Day

Friday Nov. 11, 2005

The Mall in Washington, DC

We salute and celebrate Atheists in Foxholes as we march down the National Mall!

If you are interested in participating, please contact me, Ken Bronstein 212-535-7425.

ATHEISTS WIN ONE ABC NEWS RETRACTS NEGATIVE STATEMENT ABOUT ATHEISTS

At the end of the September 4, 2005 ABC network program "Good Morning America," segment about Hurricane Katrina, Mr. Bill Weir, a weekend host, remarked that "There are no Atheists in Foxholes or hurricane zones."

American Atheists launched a phone, E-mail and letter-writing campaign encouraging members and supporters to contact Mr. Weir and the ABC network to demand a retraction.

On the evening of September 15, Mr. Bill Weir contacted American Atheists President Ellen Johnson and stated that he regretted the statement made on September 4, 2005 at the close of a program segment about Hurricane Katrina.

Weir's Statement

And before we leave the topic of Katrina, a brief correction. A few weeks ago we did a story on worshippers returning to the shattered churches of the Gulf Coast. I made an offhand comment based upon an old expression that said there are no Atheists in foxholes or hurricane zones. Well, many have since pointed out that there are 30 million Atheists in this country and among them, Katrina victims, first responders and relief donors. I stand corrected.

Eighty Years After Scopes Trial Professor Reflects On Opposition to Evolutionists

NY Times – JUNE 18, 2005

By PETER STEINFELS

In a little over three weeks, on July 10, it will be exactly 80 years since John Scopes went on trial

charged with teaching evolution, as briefly set forth in *A Civic Biology Presented in Problems* by George W. Hunter.

Echoes of this notorious "monkey trial" continue to resound: A school board in Georgia tries to put stickers on biology textbooks advising that evolution is "a theory, not a fact." A Pennsylvania school district wants science teachers to inform students that "intelligent design" is an alternative to Darwinian theory, a notion gaining support in at least 20 states, with Kansas in the lead. These publicized disputes are only the tip of an iceberg of passive resistance. Today, to avoid controversy, many school boards and teachers stop teaching evolution.

Opponents of such resistance can scarcely contain their exasperation. Why won't this conflict just go away? Why must the American Civil Liberties Union, which recruited Scopes so long ago to challenge Tennessee's anti-evolution statute, still be at it? How can it be that almost half the population rejects the idea that humans have evolved, and almost two-thirds want some form of creationism taught in public school science classes?

Michael Ruse has an answer. A professor of philosophy at Florida State University, he is, by his own account, "an ardent Darwinian," who testified for the A.C.L.U. in its successful challenge to a creationist law in Arkansas.

In *The Evolution-Creation Struggle* (Harvard, 2005), Professor Ruse takes a long look at why opponents of evolution feel so threatened and why evolutionists are so surprised and perplexed at the opposition.

"The full story," he writes, "is far more complex than any of us, including (especially) us evolutionists, have realized." In his view, evolutionary thought and the strand of Christianity that rallied to oppose it were two "rival religious responses" to an existing crisis of faith stemming from the rationalism of the Enlightenment and its 19th-century sequel.

Although Darwin's own work was a model of professional science, a great deal of evolutionary thought before and after him, in Professor Ruse's judgment, deserves to be termed evolutionism,

a kind of secular religion built around an ideology of progress.

That ideology was not necessarily wrong, but it threw evolutionary theory into one of the two camps increasingly dividing Christians: the liberal postmillennialists, who believed that the building of Christ's rule on earth was already under way, and the conservative premillennialists, eagerly anticipating Christ's Second Coming.

Indisputable Point

Casting the evolution-creation struggle into the framework of the postmillennial-premillennial struggle does not always make for a tidy fit. But one point becomes indisputable. From the beginning, evolutionary theory has been drenched in religion. The aggressors in the warfare between theology and science were not just religious believers insisting that their ancient Scriptures were the basis of scientific truths but scientific enthusiasts insisting that evolutionary theory was the basis for conclusions about religion.

Many of the latter were of course what Professor Ruse calls proponents of evolutionism and pseudoscience. (The biology text at the center of the Scopes trial, along with useful advice about diet and regular bowel movements, reflected eugenics, then fashionable, in warning that allowing the birth of "parasites" like the mentally and physically handicapped would be "criminal.") But as Professor Ruse notes, as genuine science no less than as pseudoscience, "Darwinian evolutionary theory does impinge on religious thinking."

The challenge to literal readings of the creation stories in Genesis is the least of it. Other elements of Darwinism go right to the heart of any belief in a caring, almighty god.

Is god superfluous ?

The power of strictly natural interactions of random events and reproductive advantage over huge spans of time to explain the emergence of diverse and complex life forms appears to render the guiding role of such a god superfluous. The grim picture of those life forms, including humanity, emerging through a ruthlessly cruel process of natural competition appears to render such a god implausible.

The vigorous arguments made by Darwinians like Richard Dawkins and Daniel C. Dennett to the effect that contemporary evolutionary theory has buried all traditional religious beliefs may not be conclusive, but they cannot be dismissed, nor rebutted simply by the fact that some evolutionists continue to be believers.

Then there is the debate about the "methodological naturalism" that for purposes of scientific investigation restricts explanations to findings about material nature. Does "methodological naturalism" lead inexorably to a "metaphysical naturalism" holding that material nature is in fact the whole of reality? Professor Ruse says no. But he acknowledges that the slippery slope is there. And "though many evolutionists may themselves be willing to make the slide," he writes, "they should not be surprised when others, seeing a slippery slope from methodological naturalism to metaphysical naturalism, stop themselves at the top of the hill."

Evolutionists Unite

In the end, Professor Ruse's new book suggests that the religious resistance to evolutionary theory is a lot more understandable and a lot less unreasonable than its opponents recognize. The neat formula "evolutionary biology is evolutionary biology, religion is religion, and the former belongs in public schools but the latter does not" cannot do justice to the fuzzy reality of the evolution-religion hybrid.

Professor Ruse does not offer an alternative formula or delve into the church-state questions raised by proposals to include creationist or intelligent-design ideas in school curriculums. He entertains hope that Christian and atheistic evolutionists can unite in defense of the "huge overlap" in their scientific positions and in their commitment to a "postmillennial philosophy" of human progress.

But his ultimate appeal is for greater modesty and self-awareness. "Those of us who love science," he writes, "must do more than simply restate our positions or criticize the opposition. We must understand our own assumptions and, equally, find out why others have (often) legitimate concerns. This is not a plea for weak-kneed compromise but a more informed and self-aware approach to the issue." #



Voltaire
Author and Philosopher
1694 – 1778

Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.

So long as the people do not care to exercise their freedom, those who wish to tyrannize will do so; for tyrants are active and ardent, and will devote themselves in the name of any number of gods, religious and otherwise, to put shackles up.

god is a comedian playing to an audience too afraid to laugh.

The safest course is to do nothing against one's conscience. With this secret, we can enjoy life and have no fear from death.

DNA Study Yields Clues
On First Migration of Early Humans
By Nicholas Wade

By studying the DNA of an ancient people in Malaysia, a team of geneticists says it has illuminated many aspects of how modern humans migrated from Africa.

The geneticists say there was only one migration of modern humans out of Africa; that it took a southern route to India, Southeast Asia and Australia; and that it consisted of a single band of hunter-gatherers, probably just a few hundred people strong.

Because these events occurred in the last Ice Age, when Europe was at first too cold for human habitation, the researchers say, it was populated only later, not directly from Africa but as an offshoot of the southern migration. The people of this offshoot would presumably have trekked back through the lands that are now India and Iran to reach the Near East and Europe.

The findings depend on analysis of mitochondrial DNA, a type of genetic material inherited solely

through the female line. They are reported today in *Science Magazine* by a team of geneticists led by Dr. Vincent Macaulay of the University of Glasgow.

Everyone in the world can be placed on a single family tree, in terms of their mitochondrial DNA, because everyone has inherited that piece of DNA from a single woman, the mitochondrial Eve, who lived some 200,000 years ago.

There were, of course, many other women in that ancient population. But over the generations, one mitochondrial DNA replaced all the others through the process known as genetic drift. With the help of mutations that have built up on the one surviving copy, geneticists can arrange people in lineages and estimate the time of origin of each lineage.

With this approach, Dr. Macaulay's team calculates that the emigration from Africa occurred 65,000 years ago, pushed along the coasts of India and Southeast Asia and reached Australia by 50,000 years ago, the date of the earliest known archaeological site there.

The Malaysian people whom the geneticists studied are the Orang Asli. The term means "original men" in Malay. They are probably descended from this first migration, because they have several ancient mitochondrial DNA lineages that are found nowhere else.

These lineages are 42,000 to 63,000 years old, the geneticists say. Subgroups of the Orang Asli, like the Semang, have probably been able to remain intact because they adapted to the harsh existence of living in forests, said Dr. Stephen Oppenheimer, the member of the geneticists' team who collected blood samples in Malaysia. Some archaeologists theorize that Europe was colonized by a second migration that traveled north out of Africa. This fits with the earliest known modern human sites, dating from 45,000 years ago in the Levant and 40,000 years ago in Europe.

Dr. Macaulay's team says there could have been just one migration, not two, because the mitochondrial lineages of everyone outside Africa converge at the same time to the same common ancestors. Therefore, people from the southern migration, probably in India, must have struck inland to reach the Levant and, later, Europe, the geneticists say. Dr. Macaulay said it was not clear why just one group succeeded in leaving Africa. One possibility is that because the migration occurred by continuous population expansion, leaving people in place at each site, the first

emigrants may have blocked others from leaving. Another is that the terrain was so difficult for hunter-gatherers, who carry all their belongings with them, that only one group succeeded in the exodus.

Although there is general but not complete agreement that modern humans emigrated from Africa in recent times, there is still a difference between geneticists and archaeologists about its timing. Archaeologists tend to view the genetic data as providing invaluable information about the interrelationship between groups, but they place less confidence in the dates derived from genetic family trees.

There is no evidence of modern humans outside Africa earlier than 50,000 years ago, said Dr. Richard Klein, an archaeologist at Stanford. Also, if something happened 65,000 years ago to allow people to leave Africa, as Dr. Macaulay's team suggests, there should surely be some record of that in the archaeological record in Africa, Dr. Klein said. Yet signs of modern human behavior do not appear in Africa until 50,000 years ago, the transition between the Middle and Later Stone Ages, he said. "If they want to push such an idea, find me a 65,000-year-old site with evidence of human occupation outside of Africa," Dr. Klein said. Geneticists counter that many of the coastline sites occupied by the first emigrants would now lie under water, because the sea level has risen more than 200 feet since the last Ice Age. Dr. Klein expressed reservations about that argument, noting that people would not wait for the slowly rising sea levels to overwhelm them but would build new sites farther inland.

Dr. Macaulay said genetic dates had improved in recent years, now that it is affordable to decode the whole ring of mitochondrial DNA, and not just a small segment. But he said he agreed "that archaeological dates are much firmer than the genetic ones" and that it was possible his 65,000-year date for the African exodus was too old. Dr. Macaulay's team has been able to estimate the size of the population in Africa from which the founders descended. The calculation indicates a maximum of 550 women. The true size may have been considerably less. This points to a single group of hunter-gatherers, perhaps a couple of hundred strong, as the ancestors of all humans outside of Africa, Dr. Macaulay said. #



August 27, 2005 - NYCA Harbor Cruise



Sept. 10, 2005 NYCA Street Tabling



**September 11, 2005 NYCA Brunch
New Location: Garden Restaurant**



**Sept. 22, 2005 NYCA CABLE SHOW
Guest: Michael Newdow**

**NYC ATHEISTS — 2005
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**
First Name: _____

Last Name _____

Street Address: _____

Apt No.: _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone: (____) _____ - _____

**CHECK PAYABLE TO: NYC ATHEISTS INC.
— SEND APPLICATION TO:
NYC ATHEISTS MEMBERSHIP - COOPER
STA. P.O. Box 93 NY, NY 10276-0093**

NYC Atheists Inc. is a non-profit (501c), non-partisan, and educational association with the purposes and goals:

1. To promote the total and absolute separation of church and state
2. To educate and inform the public about Atheism
3. To provide a forum for examination and discussion about Atheism
4. To develop and engage in educational, cultural, charitable, and social activities that are beneficial to the members of NYC Atheists Inc., the Atheist community, and the community at large.

YOUR 2005 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE
Basic – \$ 25 Supporter – \$ 100 Founder – \$ 250
Patron – \$ 500 Life – \$ 1000
Senior (Age 65 or greater) – \$ 20 Full Time Student – \$ 10
Military (Active) – \$ 15

Signature: _____
Date: _____