

New York City Atheists Inc.

February 2006

Serving the Tri-State area • An affiliate of American Atheists and Center For Atheism Vol. III Issue No. 2

WEB: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG

COOPER STATION - Box 93, NY, NY 10276-0093

212-330-6794

!!! SPECIAL !!!

\$10 – 2006 NYCA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL - \$10
USE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION PAGE 8

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.

FEBRUARY

Feb.	2*	Thursday	6:00 / 7:30 P.M.	NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite
Feb.	2**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Feb.	9**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Feb.	10-12	Fri. – Sun.	8:00 P.M.	Charles Darwin Broadway Show (see page 3)
Feb.	12***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Feb.	16**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Feb.	18	Saturday	8:00 P.M.	“Beyond the Veil” – Off Broadway Show (see page 3)
Feb.	21****	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up
Feb.	23**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Feb.	26***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Monthly Meeting

MARCH

Mar.	2*	Thursday	6:00 / 7:30 P.M.	NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite
Mar.	2**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Mar.	9**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Mar.	12***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Mar.	16**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Mar.	21****	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up
Mar.	23**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show
Mar.	28***	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Monthly Meeting
Mar.	30**	Thursday	8:00 P.M.	NYCA Cable Show

* Dinner: China 99 – 64 Fulton St. (second floor)

* 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.)



KEN BRONSTEIN

PRESIDENT’S SERMON
MY RECENT TRIP TO NEW ORLEANS

I have just returned from New Orleans, where I met with members of New Orleans Secular Humanist Association (NOSHA). Many NOSHA members still have not returned to New Orleans. Most members who have returned are living in FEMA trailers, with family and friends or are renting temporary living quarters. A fortunate few have been able to return to their homes.

NYC Atheists made a significant donation to re-establish the destroyed NOSHA library.

I was taken on a guided tour of New Orleans, where I observed entire neighborhoods that were totally destroyed, huge piles of debris and hundreds of homes and buildings gutted out and abandoned. Everywhere I went, local citizens came up to me pleading that I contact my local Congressperson to get Washington to help them. They said: “The only real help has come from the Church groups’ volunteers.” For example, they pointed out, only three public schools are open in New Orleans, whereas most of the parochial schools are open and accepting any and all students.

I feel that the secular community’s response is unacceptable. We must have an emergency response team. *We stayed dry on the high ground; the religious volunteers got in the trenches and helped.*

I would appreciate your comments. Ken Bronstein at NYCATHEISTS@AOL.COM or 212-535-7425.

PAST JANUARY EVENTS

Jan. 5, 12, 17, 23 Thursday
NYCA Cable Show

Jan. 5 Thursday
NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite
Feature: *Witness for the Prosecution*

Jan. 8 Sunday
NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club

Jan. 17 Tuesday
NYCA Meet-Up

Jan. 21 Saturday
Members had a private tour at the Museum of Natural History’s Darwin exhibit.

Jan. 29 Sunday
NYCA Annual Meeting
2006 Board of Directors elected;
review of 2005 and 2006 objectives and videos of a Charlie Rose program and a Sam Harris presentation.

UPCOMING FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb. 2, 9, 16, 23 8:00 PM Thursday
NYCA Cable Show
Manhattan Cable # 67

Feb. 2 NYCA Dinner & Movie Nite
Dinner Info:

Time: 6:00 - 7:15pm
Location: China 99 – 64 Fulton Street (2nd floor)
Across the street from the Foot Locker store.

Movie Info:
Movie: *Judgment at Nuremberg*
Starring: Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Richard Widmark, Marlene Dietrich, Judy Garland
Time: 7:30 P.M.

Where: Southbridge Tower - 66 Frankfort
Located between Water/Pearl and Fulton Street near the South Street Seaport.

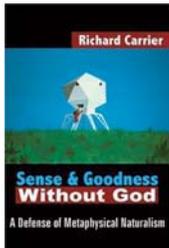
Directions:
Subway: Fulton St. Station – A,C, J, M, Z,3, 4, 5;
City Hall Sta. 6. Buses: B51, M1, M15, M22, M103

Walk east along Fulton Street (towards the South Street Seaport), then through the walkway on Fulton Street by the side of the Foot Locker

store, straight through two courtyards, to 66 Frankfort. The Community Room is located on the first floor.

Feb. 12 Sunday 12:00 P.M.
NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Location: Garden Restaurant @ 145 East 60th St. (Between Lexington and Third)
Reservations: Not Required
Cost: Individual Checks
After brunch, we will go to the NYC Atheists' Library on West 48th Street. You will have an opportunity to borrow and return books, followed by the book club meeting.

February – Book Club Readings
Our NYCA Librarian, Pat Berger, has selected our next book club selection: *Sense & Goodness Without god* by Richard Carrier.



We will be reading and discussing Pages 119-134, *What Everything Is Made Of*.

Feb. 10-12 Friday – Sunday 8:00 P.M.
CHARLES DARWIN SHOW



Anthropologist/songwriter Richard Milner, internationally known Darwin scholar, performs his witty one-man musical *Charles Darwin: Live & In Concert*.

Penn and Teller: "It's sheer magic."
Stephen Jay Gould: "My favorite Darwin show."
Tony Randall: "Performed with skill."
Time Out New York: "Smartest show in NY."

Date: February 10 - 12, 2006 (Friday - Sunday)
Location: Producers Club – Royal Theatre 358 West 44th St. (8th/9th)
DIRECTIONS: Subway: A, C, E to 42nd Street. Exit 44th Street. Walk west to the theatre.
Admission: \$20. (email: rmilner@nyc.rr.com) to reserve seats - \$25 (at the door)

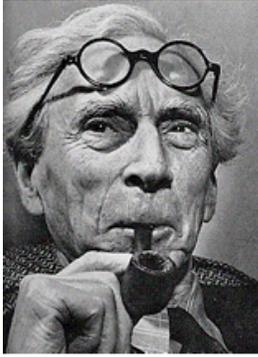
Feb. 18 Saturday 8:00 P.M.
NYCA Off Broadway Nite Out
Play: *Beyond The Veil*
Written by John Chatterton
Location: Where Eagles Dare Theatre
347 W. 36th St. (ground floor)
Cost: \$15

“BEYOND THE VEIL” is loosely based on the life of Sir William Crookes, a famous scientist of his time. Crookes did extensive experiments with a psychic called Florence Cooke. He even took photographs of himself arm-in-arm with Cooke’s spirit control, Katie King. It has been speculated that Crookes concocted the phenomena surrounding the medium so he could keep Cooke under his roof (and his wife’s nose!) in order to have an affair with her.

The play uses many special effects as well as extensive period costumes, designed by Roi Escudero “Bubi.”

Feb. 21 Tuesday 7:00 P.M.
NYCA Meet-Up
Casual conversation and drinks with your fellow freethinkers. Register at <http://atheists.meetup.com>
Location: Manhattan Lounge, 1720 Second Avenue (Between 89 and 90th Street)

Feb. 26 Sunday 12:00 P.M.
Guest: Lori Lipman Brown
Lobbyist: Secular Coalition of America
Ms. Brown is the first lobbyist representing the secular community in Washington, D.C.
Location: Garden Restaurant @ 145 East 60th St (Between Lexington and Third)
Reservations: Not Required
Cost: Individual Checks



Bertram Russell (1872- 1970)

"What really moves people to believe in god is not any intellectual argument at all. Most people believe in god because they have been taught from early infancy to do it, and that is the main reason. Then I think that the next most powerful reason is the wish for safety, a sort of feeling that there is a big brother who will look after you. That plays a very profound part in influencing people's desire for a belief in god." - *Why I Am Not A Christian* by Bertrand Russell

U.S. News and World Report
Washington Whispers
January 16, 2006

Even the Godless Need Lobbyists

Just because they don't believe in a higher authority doesn't mean that atheists aren't itching to fight god politics in Washington. In fact, some atheists say they're charged up about battling church-state issues and have now decided that it is time to do something about it: hire a lobbyist.

Kenneth Bronstein, head of New York City Atheists, tells us that he's setting up a D.C. Office called the Center for Atheism to fight for the godless.

Bronstein explains: "I'm a guy who likes to raise hell, but since there isn't one, we'll lobby."

**STOP
FAITH-BASED SUBSIDIES
THAT WILL BECOME
FAITH-BASED
ENTITLEMENTS!**

Misquoting Jesus
The Story Behind
Who Changed the Bible and Why
by Bart Ehrman



Review by Terry Gross
NPR radio program *Fresh Air*

Scholar Bart Ehrman's new book *Misquoting Jesus* explores how scribes -- through both omission and intention -- changed the Bible. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* is the result of years of reading the texts in their original languages. Ehrman says the modern Bible was shaped by mistakes and intentional alterations that were made by early scribes who copied the texts. In the introduction to *Misquoting Jesus*, Ehrman writes that when he came to understand this process 30 years ago, it shifted his way of thinking about the Bible. He had been raised as an Evangelical Christian.

Ehrman is also the author of *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*, which chronicles the period before Christianity as we know it, when conflicting ideas about the religion were fighting for prominence in the second and third centuries.

The chairman of the religious studies department at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, Ehrman also edited a collection of the early non-canonical texts from the first centuries after Christ, called *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament*.

**ATHEISM
IS A CONCLUSION
NOT A BELIEF**

Popes Who Were Married

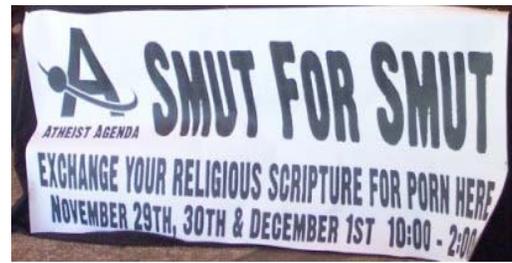
St. Peter, Apostle
St. Felix III 483-492 (2 children)
St. Hormidas 514-523 (1 son)
St. Silverus (Antonia) 536-537
Hadrian II 867-872 (1 daughter)
Clement IV 1265-1268 (2 daughters)
Felix V 1439-1449 (1 son)

Popes Who Were the Sons of Other Popes Or Other Clergy

<u>Name of Pope</u>	<u>Papacy</u>	<u>Son of</u>
St. Damascus I	366-348	St. Lorenzo, priest
St. Innocent I	401-417	Anastasius I
Boniface	418-422	Son of a priest
St. Felix	483-492	Son of a priest
Anastasius II	496-498	Son of a priest
St. Agapitus I	535-536	Gordiaous, priest
St. Silverus	536-537	St. Homidas, pope
Deusdedit	882-884	Son of a priest
Boniface VI	896-896	Hadrian, bishop
John XI	931-935	Pope Sergius III
John XV	989-996	Leo, priest

Popes Who Had Illegitimate Children After 1139

Innocent VIII	1484-1492	Several children
Alexander VI	1492-1503	Several children
Julius	1503-1513	3 daughters
Paul III	1534-1549	3 sons, 1 daughter
Pius IV	1559-1565	3 sons
Gregory XIII	1572-1585	1 son



GUEST COLUMN By TONY CASTALDO
For HumanistNetworkNews.org
Jan. 11, 2006

For a few days before the Christmas break at the University of Texas at San Antonio, our student group, Atheist Agenda, ran a *Smut for Smut* campaign, in which we traded porn magazines for any religious scripture.

Member Adam Flott got the original idea from the Knighthood of Buh. The purpose was to generate shocking controversy to bring attention to the fact that religions are dangerous lies filled with disgusting ideas promoted as protective and the “natural order” ordained by god.

Alternatively, porn magazines just glorify sex. Of the two, religion is definitely the more corrosive to mind and society.

Let’s talk specifics from the Bible: In Leviticus, god lays down many rules for animal sacrifice, but more tellingly defines the *value of a woman as half that of a man*. god is disgusted by *menstruating women*, and says women are *unclean* for months if they suffer the misfortune of giving birth to a girl.

Exodus gives rules for *selling your daughter into slavery and taking a second wife*. The Bible blithely accepts *fathers bedding their daughters or offering them as sexual companions to militant strangers*.

God orders that whoever *kindles a fire on the Sabbath* must be put to death. That’s stupid, but the same text orders *witches* killed, a verse responsible for the screaming death of thousands of women.

Christians argue this is all Old Testament, but so are the Ten Commandments. And don't forget, Jesus said all that Old Testament law is valid to the letter and stroke. Most Christians don't want to stone somebody to death for *cursing* or *working* on Sunday, but Leviticus is where the Bible condemns *homosexuality*, so they cherry-pick their commandments.

Jesus and god endorse slavery and worse. In *Numbers 31*, Moses murders thousands of captive women and children. After slaughtering the men, defenseless boys and non-virgin women, he awards 16,000 virgin girls to his army for their pleasure. But not before *sacrificing* 32 of these young virgins on the altar! (god's "tribute.")

Other religions are just as idiotically harmful, raising children to believe mythology is truth. Those children grow up to be adults that act on it or support those who do. It didn't take 9/11 for atheists to see the dangers of fanatical belief in supernatural rewards. They are the excruciating financial and physical dangers we risk by accepting any fraud.

Whatever harm pornography does pales in comparison to the harm done to innocents by minds infected with religion. Smut for Smut? It's a good deed, replacing dangerous fraud with harmless fantasy.

Humanist Network News writer Jeff Nall thinks our campaign was "spiteful antics" intended to antagonize believers. He's right!

We cannot overcome religion with rationality alone. Religion is ludicrous and collapses instantly under rational analysis. But for most people religion has deep emotional roots – thus, the only way to create any seed of doubt is through strong emotion.

Anger and frustration are underated. Legalized racism in the US was not overcome through rational discourse. Defiance and anger disrupted complacent white supremacy and incited more anger, but eventually forced people to rationally re-examine their values.

Every day, children's undeveloped minds are being poisoned with ideas of supernatural protection, the idea that begging for

supernatural favors works, that karmic justice and a cosmic (secret) grand plan exists, that women are intellectually and morally inferior to men, that homosexuality, sex and masturbation are inherently sinful. These children become adults with lives committed to lies. If we ridicule the lies and sow the seeds of doubt, if we can expose the mythology for what it is (the historicized solar myth) before they are emotionally over-invested, perhaps the children can be saved.

We are plotting to ruin religion. That will incite shock and anger to loosen the emotional roots of religion, and free more young minds in the next generation. It is shameful to pretend our goals are benign, to kow-tow to religious patriarchy, to shrink before outraged religious parents. It implicitly endorses lies, censorship, and the vicious, organized suppression of rational thought.

Tony Castaldo is an atheist member of Atheist Agenda, a student group at UTSA. He holds a Master's degree in mathematics, and is now pursuing a PhD in Computer Science. The above opinion is his own, written without consulting the members of Atheist Agenda.



**HENRY YOUNGMAN - COMIC
1906-1998**

"I once wanted to become an atheist but I gave up . . . they have no holidays."



**GORE VIDAL
"I AM A BORN-AGAIN ATHEIST."**

Florida Court Strikes Down School Voucher Program New York Times January 5, 2006

In a ruling expected to reverberate through legal battles over school choice in many states, the Florida Supreme Court today struck down a voucher program for students attending failing schools, saying the state constitution bars Florida from using taxpayer money to finance a private alternative to the public system.

The 5-to-2 ruling will shut down a program that Gov. Jeb Bush has considered one of his chief accomplishments at the close of this school year. Known as the Opportunity Scholarship Program, it currently channels taxpayer money to 750 students who have left failing public schools to enroll in private schools. But voucher proponents said today's ruling would also endanger a separate Florida voucher program in which some 16,000 disabled students participate, as well as the state's system of more than 300 charter schools, which educate some 82,000 students.

The United States Supreme Court has ruled that the federal Constitution does not prohibit vouchers. But it also held last year that states were not obliged to finance religious education as well as secular education, a ruling that left state courts to decide whether voucher programs are legal and focused national attention on the battle over Florida's voucher program, which the teachers union first challenged in 1999.

The Florida ruling cannot be appealed to the United States Supreme Court because no federal issues are involved, lawyers on both sides of the litigation said.

In its ruling, the Florida Supreme Court cited an article in the state's constitution that says, "Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure and high-quality system of free public schools."

The Opportunity Scholarships Program "violates this language," the Florida court said. "It diverts public dollars into separate private systems parallel to and in competition with the free public schools that are the sole means set out

in the constitution for the state to provide for the education of Florida's children," the ruling said. "This diversion not only reduces money available to the free schools, but also funds private schools that are not 'uniform' when compared with each other or the public system." Governor Bush called the ruling "a blow to educational reform."

"It temporarily removes a critical tool for improving Florida's public schools and it also challenges the power of the Florida Legislature to decide as a matter of public policy the best way to improve our educational system," Mr. Bush said in a statement.

"We will work to protect these programs so important to so many families," he said. "We will explore all legal options and ask the Florida Legislature to enact any available legislative fixes or amend the Florida Constitution."

Voucher proponents across the nation called the ruling a "major setback," just weeks after President Bush had responded to their appeals by instituting the nation's largest federally financed voucher program, which pays for private schools for tens of thousands of students displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

"We ended last year with a major victory and begin this year with a major setback," said Clint Bolick, a lawyer who was a participant in the Florida litigation on behalf of pro-voucher groups and is president of the Alliance for School Choice, an Arizona-based group. Antivoucher groups expressed delight.

"This is an important victory for public education and church-state separation," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, which supported the challenge to the Florida program. "Now the state legislature can devote its attention to improving public education rather than subsidizing religious and other private schools. The children of Florida deserve the very best public schools the state can provide. Taxpayer dollars should be spent in public schools, not private religious academies."

**RENEW YOUR 2006
NYCA MEMBERSHIP**



**NYCA SUNDAY BRUNCH
JANUARY 8, 2006**



**L-R: Ford Vox, Director of
United Universists; Dennis
Horvitz: NYCA Cable Host**



**L-R: Ken Bronstein,
President NYCA, Harry
Greenberger, President New
Orleans Secular Humanist
Association. January 23, 2006**



**L-R: Bobbie Kirkhart:
President Atheists
Alliance International
Ken Bronstein: President
NYCA. January 21, 2006**

NYC ATHEISTS — 2006 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

First Name: _____ Last Name _____
Street Address: _____ Apt No.: _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email: _____@_____ Phone: (____) _____

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 2006 MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE
SPECIAL - \$ 10**

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: _____

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