

New York City Atheists Inc .

FEBRUARY 2007

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

WEB: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG COOPER STATION - Box 93, NY, NY 10276-0093 212-330-6794

ATHEISM IS A CONCLUSION NOT A BELIEF

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

FEBRUARY

Feb. 1	Thursday	Movie Nite	Will resume March 1, 2007
Feb. 11**	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Feb. 20***	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up
Feb. 22****	Thursday	6:30 P.M.	NYCA Monthly Meeting

MARCH

Mar. 1	Thursday	TBA	NYCA Movie Nite - First Thursday of Month
Mar. 11**	Sunday	12:00 P.M.	NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Mar. 20***	Tuesday	7:00 P.M.	NYCA Meet-Up
Mar. 29****	Thursday	6:30 P.M.	NYCA Monthly Meeting

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- ** Garden Restaurant – 145 East 60th St. (Lexington / Third)
Cost: Individual checks plus \$5 suggested donation — Reservations not required
- *** Village Pourhouse – 64 Third Ave. (11th St.)
- **** Editorial Freelancers Association – Room 1910 - 71 West 23rd Street - (6th Ave.)

WEDNESDAYS

THIS WEEK IN ATHEISM CABLE SHOW
6:30PM-CH 57 (MANHATTAN CABLE)
LIVE STREAMING: WWW.MNN.ORG

NEED CABLE SHOW GUESTS

CALL: KEN BRONSTEIN / 212-535-7425

THURSDAYS

NYC ATHEISTS CABLE SHOW
7:00PM-CH 67 (MANHATTAN CABLE)
LIVE STREAMING: WWW.MNN.ORG

ATHEISTS BOOK CLUB CABLE SHOW
7:30PM – CH 67 (MANHATTAN CABLE)
LIVE STREAMING: WWW.MNN.ORG

2007

NEW YORK CITY ATHEISTS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
SEE PAGE 8

NYC Atheists Inc. is a 501-C3, 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.



KENNETH BRONSTEIN

**PRESIDENT'S "SERMON"
ATHEISM: THE POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE**

Page 2

Religion makes assumptions and puts down ground rules which, I decided early in life, could negatively impact my actions, learning and choices. On the other hand, Atheism's positive perspective, unrestricted by delusions and mysticism, seemed to offer me the best opportunity to live to the fullest the only life I knew I would have. I felt, at that point in my life, that I had one of two choices: accepting the restrictions of religion, with the alleged comfort of the belief that some disembodied person in the sky was looking out for me—or opting for the open, unrestrictive, boundary-less adventure of life as an Atheist.

BELIEVERS: THE NEGATIVE PERSPECTIVE.

I weighed the choices and realized that religion has a long history of resisting liberty, self-determination and scientific progress whenever the church's leaders feel their faith is threatened. The church silenced Copernicus and Galileo, supported slavery, impeded scientific research, burned dissenters at the stake, resisted women's rights and, to this day, religion rejects numerous medical advances—all in the name of imposing "morality" on us. Learning? Forget it, if it conflicts with the teachings of the church. Up to the Enlightenment, the Catholic church restricted the ability of its congregants to read (and possibly decipher their faith) by allowing only priests and monks to be educated. Today, the Church has backed down a bit on its policy of keeping the masses ignorant and obedient by establishing some schools, but even now it tries to interject its religious propaganda into the curriculum through insidious strategies like the Intelligent Design myth.

The church, in fact, with its concepts of original sin, predetermination and obedience, keeps the inquisitive child restricted to a hierarchy of god, priest, parent, child, designed to perpetuate the mantras of "Do not question" and "Never lose the faith." Choices? god, priests, rabbis, ministers have pre-chosen for you.

ATHEISM: THE POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE

I totally reject the argument that if you do not believe in a god or the supernatural, you cannot, and will not, be a moral person. There is no substantiation of religion's claim that humans are unable to manage their lives without divine guidance and that only god and religious leaders know what is best for you and society. My atheism is based upon my considered belief that every individual is born essentially good and with limitless potential. My positive Atheistic perspective enables me to view the world as having endless possibilities for achievement: Atheist astronomers can probe the galaxies without fear of bumping into god; Atheist medical scientists can search for the secrets of every human cell without violating the church's dictates on human research; Atheist women can determine their own reproductive schedules—or choose not to reproduce at all—without upsetting some divinity. Atheists are free to read any book they wish, from Henry Miller to Sam Harris, even if it has been Banned in Boston by the church. The world and all of its wonders are open to Atheists. We don't have to look for its perfection in that elusive heaven from which no one has ever returned.

**HOPE DOES NOT MAKE IT HAPPEN
WE CAN ONLY DO IT WITH YOUR PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL INVOLVEMENT**

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

UPCOMING FEBRUARY EVENTS

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Feb. 1 Thursday
NYCA First Thursday of Month Movie Nite

WILL RESUME MARCH 1ST.

Feb. 11 Sunday 12:00 P.M.
NYCA Brunch, Library, Book Club
Celebrating Charles Darwin's Birthday

Location: Garden Restaurant
145 East 60th St. (Lexington and Third)
Reservations: Not required
Cost: Individual checks plus \$5 donation

After brunch, we go to the NYC Atheists Library on West 48th Street for our book club meeting and to celebrate Charles Darwin's birthday.

Darwin-authored books available from the NYCA Library are: *The Origin Of The Species*, (I believe the most important book ever written), *The Descent of Man* and *The Voyage Of The Beagle*.

If you have read all of the scholarly books by and about Darwin, here are some recreational books you might enjoy reading.

Evolution: A novel, Stephen Baxter, 2003.
("A brilliant, grand-scale sampling of sixty-five million years of human evolution....")

Darwin's Radio: A novel, Greg Bear, 1999.
("Scores a high rating on the thrill monitor.")

The Darwin Conspiracy: A novel, John Darnton, 2005. ("Blends fact and the insights of fiction to explore the mysteries that have become attached to the life and work of Charles Darwin.")

Radical Evolution: The Promise and Peril of Enhancing Our Minds, Our Bodies-and What it Means to be Human, Joel Garreau, 2005.

Evolution: The Story of the Origins of Humankind Raymond Hawkey, 1987, pop-up book.

Born Again: A novel, Kelly Kerney, 2006.
("What happens when a Bible Quiz Champion takes on Darwin?")

Mr. Darwin's Shooter: A novel, Roger McDonald, 1998. ("A deeply imagined and stunningly well-executed exploration of natural marvels....")

Darwin for Beginners: Jonathan Miller & Borin Van Loon, 1982.

The Darwin Awards: Evolution in Action, Wendy Northcutt, 2000. (Humor)

Digital Darwinism: 7 Breakthrough Business Strategies for Surviving the Cutthroat Web Economy, Evan I. Schwartz.

The NYCA library includes over 600 books as well as numerous CDs, DVDs, cassettes, videotapes, newsletters and magazines.
Contact: Pat Berger – NYCA Librarian
PGBNYC@AOL.COM / 212-489-5644

Feb. 20 Tuesday 7:00 P.M.
NYCA Meet-Up

Location: Village Pourhouse
64 Third Ave. (11th Street)
Casual conversation and drinks with your fellow freethinkers.
Cost: Free (cash food and bar)
Register at <http://atheists.meetup.com>

Feb. 22 Thursday 6:30 P.M.
NYCA Monthly Meeting

Location: Editorial Freelancers Association
71 West 23rd St. (6th Ave) – Room 1910



Speaker: Lori Lipman Brown
Director – Secular Coalition for America
www.secular.org
Subject: 2006 Secular Coalition for America Report.

Secular Coalition for America

NYC Atheists and the Center For Atheism are significant financial supporters of the Coalition.

On September 2005, Lori Lipman Brown was appointed director of the Secular Coalition For America, a Washington-based lobbying organization for atheists, humanists, freethinkers, and other nontheistic Americans. Its mission is to increase the visibility and respectability of nontheistic viewpoints in the United States and to protect and strengthen the secular character of our government as the best guarantee of freedom for all.

Ms. Brown has been a frequent political commentator on television and radio and a regular columnist in a variety of print media. A former private practice lawyer, she served most recently on the faculty of the University of Phoenix, where she taught constitutional law, American history and education law. She has also taught high school English, speech and drama.

She has facilitated or presented at numerous events, including conferences of the American Humanist Association, the Secular Student Alliance and the Humanist Association of Las Vegas and Southern Nevada. She also served as the National Education Association's diversity trainer from 1996 to 2000.

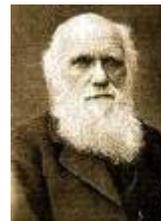
Ms. Brown addresses the interests and concerns of America's atheists, freethinkers, humanists and other secularists, directing the coalition's activities and lobbyings U.S. Congressional representatives on issues arising out of the inappropriate incursion of religion into civil law and issues related to separation of religion and government.

QUESTION FAITH

NO MORE FREE PASS !

MAKE THEM PROVE THEIR CLAIMS

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



Charles Robert Darwin

12 February 1809 – 19 April 1882

From *Wikipedia*, the free web encyclopedia

Darwin was an eminent English naturalist who achieved lasting fame by convincing the scientific community that species develop over time from a common origin. His theories explaining this phenomenon through natural and sexual selection are central to the modern understanding of evolution as the unifying theory of the life sciences, essential in biology and important in other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology and philosophy.

Religious views

Though Charles Darwin's family background was Nonconformist, and his father, grandfather and brother were Freethinkers, at first he did not doubt the literal truth of the Bible. He attended a Church of England school, then at Cambridge studied Anglican theology to become a clergyman He was convinced by William Paley's teleological argument that design in nature proved the existence of god, but during the Beagle voyage he questioned, for example, why beautiful deep-ocean creatures had been created where no one could see them, or how the ichneumon wasp paralyzing caterpillars as live food for its eggs could be reconciled with Paley's vision of beneficent design. He was still quite orthodox and would quote the Bible as an authority on morality, but did not trust the history in the Old Testament.

PROUD TO BE AN ATHEIST!

ASK CASSANDRA

“Ask Cassandra” is a question and answer column presented in these pages from time to time.

Are Fundamentalist Evangelicals Better Lovers?

Dear Cassandra:

The Rev. Ted Haggard, former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, has said that the Fundamentalist Evangelicals have better sex lives than any other group. Do you think this is true?

--Charlotte D.
Bronx, NY

Dear Charlotte,

How can the Rev. Haggard make such an assertion? Has he, or anybody in his sect, done any scientific studies on the sex lives of Evangelicals and compared their experiences to other people's? It would be well nigh impossible to conduct such a study. The scientist, clipboard in hand, would have to go into the bedroom of each couple, observe the couple during coitus and make a judgment about the quality of the experience on a scale of, say, one to 10. But how would the scientist evaluate the quality? By the female's shrieks or the male's vigor? Are there any established criteria that delineate the quality of a coital experience? And how would the scientist know that the couple weren't faking? Even Dr. Alfred Kinsey, the famed 1950s sex researcher, who used interviews of his subjects as the basis of his research, admitted that he had no way of verifying the truthfulness of what his subjects told him. Moreover, to be truly scientific, there needs to be a comparative study done among non-Evangelicals. So the Reverend and his cohorts, armed with their clipboards, would also have to go into the bedrooms of, say, Atheist couples, quantify their sexual pleasure and compare the Evangelicals to the Atheists.

(continued page 6)

When investigating transmutation of species, he knew that his naturalist friends thought this a bestial heresy undermining miraculous justifications for the social order, the kind of radical argument then being used by Dissenters and Atheists to attack the Church of England's privileged position as the established church. Though Darwin even wrote of religion as a tribal survival strategy, he still believed that god was the ultimate lawgiver. His belief dwindled, and with the death of his daughter Annie in 1851 Darwin finally lost all faith in Christianity. He continued to help the local church with parish work, but on Sundays would go for a walk while his family attended church. He now thought it better to look at pain and suffering as the result of general laws rather than direct intervention by god. When asked about his religious views, he wrote that he had never been an Atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a god, and that generally "an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind." The "Lady Hope Story," published in 1915, claimed that Darwin had converted to Christianity on his sickbed. The claims were dismissed as false by historians. His daughter, Henrietta, who was at his deathbed, said that he did not convert to Christianity. His last words were, in fact, directed at Emma: "Remember what a good wife you have been."

PIGS GET THE AX IN CHINA TV ADS
Wall Street Journal – JANUARY 25, 2007

SHANGHAI -- Next month, China will ring in the "Year of the Pig." This week, China Central Television, the national state-run TV network, banned all images and spoken references to the pig in commercials, including those tied to the upcoming Lunar New Year, to show respect to Islam.

"We don't want to cause any problems. The last Year of the Pig, 12 years ago, some newspapers published a tale in which a pig saves the life of Muhammad. That aroused a lot of anger."

STEM CELL RESEARCH IS PRO-LIFE

Religions use a lot of promises to draw people into their fold, few of which they can deliver on, and this one is, in my opinion, one of their more scurrilous—even worse than their promises of heaven or hell after death—because it is being used to sexualize religion, which up to now has burdened sexuality with restrictions and sinfulness. Most religions have restrictions on their followers' sex practices—such as when they may have coitus, with whom and for what reason. For example, Catholics are supposed to engage in sex only for procreative purposes. In some Jewish sects, the rabbi chooses your lifelong partner. But now, evidently there is a move on to modernize religion and make it more “sexy” as a draw for young people.

Frankly, I'd put my money on Atheists having a better sex life. Because we Atheists live in the here and now—in the real world and all it has to

offer—and we are not afraid of heaven or hell or restricted by any untoward rules and regulations in this most natural of human acts, I believe our sexual experiences are more profound and pleasure-filled. Personally, I think a sexual experience with an Evangelical would be like dining in a gourmet restaurant with an anorexic. When you think of, say, a candidate for People Magazine's “Sexiest Man Alive,” the images of Billy Graham or Jerry Falwell do not readily leap into mind. But, of course, the Rev. Haggard may want to try to prove that Evangelicals are indeed sexy by his lengthy—shall we call it “research?”—among the male prostitutes of Colorado.

**Man invented god;
god did not invent man**



Austin Cline

About.com's Guide to Agnosticism / Atheism.
How to Talk to, Debate Atheists: Ways
Religious Theists can Avoid Common Errors

(1) Familiarize yourself with what Atheism is and is not: It doesn't make sense to try to discuss atheism, theism or religion with atheists if you aren't already at least a little familiar with what atheism is. Many churches and apologetic books have misinformed people about how dictionaries and atheists themselves define atheism: it's just the absence of belief in gods, not the positive denial of your god's existence. Some atheists go on to deny some or all gods; others don't. You can't assume you know what any particular atheist does so you'll have to ask. If you at least show familiarity with the arguments, you'll start out on a positive note.

What Is Atheism?

(2) Ask questions, don't make assumptions: You know what happens when you make assumptions, right? A significant problem that

atheists have with theists is how so many make assumptions about atheism, atheists, and anyone who isn't religious. Many of the most common myths about atheism and atheists are derived from people making easily dispelled assumptions rather than just asking simple questions. If you ask genuine (not rhetorical) questions and evince an interest in learning, you'll put others in a positive frame of mind and make them much more inclined to discuss things with you.

Common Mistakes & Assumptions...

(3) Believe us when we say we don't believe in gods and aren't religious: As if making lots of assumptions weren't bad enough, some theists presume to know our minds better than we do — even though they don't know anything about us except for a few exchanged words online!

You can't have a serious conversation with a person if you're going to keep telling them what they "really" think and what they "really" are. That's rude and uncalled for. If an atheist says that they don't believe in any gods and have no religion, you shouldn't try to tell them that they are wrong without very, very good reasons.

(4) Atheists aren't trying to undermine liberty or eat your baby:

One sure way to eliminate any chances of a productive conversation with an atheist is to enter it under the assumption that atheists are evil, are conspiring to ban Christianity, or want to harm your family. If that's your attitude, then you should take a second look at why you are trying to have a conversation with someone you regard as so depraved and evil. What is your real goal and what do you expect to get out of this? Atheists get tired of being told that they are enemies of freedom and America, so please don't bother, OK?

Atheists Aren't Imposing a Religion on America...

(5) Discuss, don't proselytize or preach — discussion is a two-way street:

There's a difference between a discussion and preaching. A discussion is a two-way street where both contribute and what each person says actually reflects something they have taken from what the other says. In a discussion, you have to listen to what the other is saying and respond directly to it. When a person is preaching, though, they aren't really paying attention to what the other says. None of their statements reflect their having noticed or taken anything from others. If you want to have a discussion with an atheist, great, but please don't use the pretense of a discussion as a platform to practice preaching.

Is it possible that you could be wrong? If not, what are you doing?

(6) Ask yourself if it's possible, at least in theory, that you could be mistaken about things you believe (regarding theism and religion). If so, then a discussion or debate with an atheist has the possibility of providing you with something to learn and think about. If not, then what is the point of having a discussion with an atheist? Is it just something you are doing to preach and hopefully convert them? If so, see above. Please take stock of your motives and goals before proceeding because you might find that you aren't going into this with the best of intentions.

Familiarize yourself with common errors in reasoning & logical fallacies:

(7) It would be nice if schools in America merely did a poor job at educating students in logic and arguments, because most do no job at all. Few people even know what a logical fallacy is, much less how to identify one in an argument. Atheists make plenty of mistakes in this, too, but when theists offer arguments in defense of theism to atheists it's common to see the same mistakes over and over. If you're going to talk to or debate atheists, please become familiar with common mistakes and fallacies which people make: you'll be able to avoid them and you'll notice when others commit them.

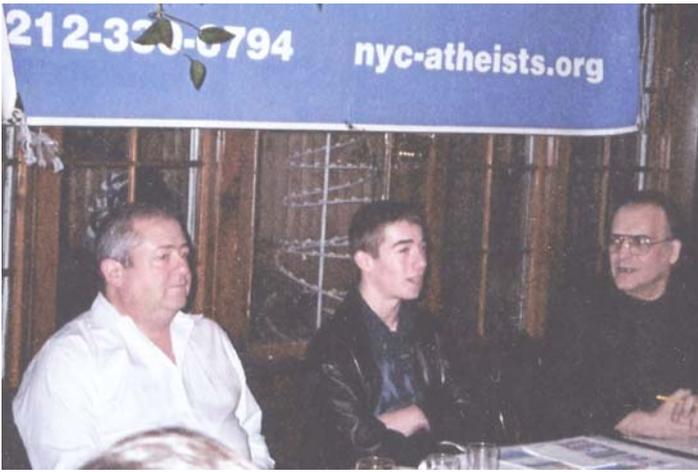
Arguments for god...

(8) Just because the bible says it, doesn't mean that settles it for us:

Many Christians treat the Bible as the first, last, and ultimate authority for everything in their lives. It records instructions from their god and, of course, their god isn't to be disobeyed. Atheists don't believe in the Christians' god, obviously, and therefore also don't believe that the Bible has any special political, moral, social, or religious authority. Christians don't always realize this and as a result sometimes quote the Bible in discussions with atheists as though these passages should settle any disagreements. That just won't work, though, so please try to keep this in mind.

Don't pray for us, or at least don't announce that you're praying for us:

(9) It happens far too often that a theist will tell an atheist "I'll pray for you." Atheists obviously don't believe in the power of prayer, but even the theist who does can't believe that prayer will be more effective for having announced it to the atheist. So what's the purpose? Some say that it's to express well-wishes, but in that context people say that they'll pray for someone when the person is sick or having trouble. One way or another, the theist appears to be expressing superiority over atheists in a passive-aggressive manner that atheists often interpret as rude, arrogant, and condescending.



L-R: Pat LaClair (father), Matt LaClair (son),
Dennis Horvitz.
Jan. 14, 2007– NYC Atheists Brunch

Dennis Horvitz (Host – NYCA Cable show) interviews the LaClairs. Matt LaClair, a junior at Kearny High School in New Jersey, taped his history teacher proselytizing for Christianity in the classroom.

RENEW / JOIN NYC ATHEISTS

Through our programs and activities, we work to bring awareness of our principles, our vision and, above all, of our existence as atheists. We do it through our website, our meetings and events, our cable shows, our library and book club, our street tabling and our newsletters --all of which are funded by your membership.

With the continued growth of our membership, we gather strength in numbers and will more effectively counteract the threat of a looming theocracy.



NYC ATHEISTS — 2007 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

First Name: _____ Last Name _____

Street Address: _____ Apt No.: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email: _____@_____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____

NYC Atheists Inc. is a non-profit (501-C3), non-partisan, educational association with these 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 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

Basic __ \$ 25 Friend __ \$ 100 Sustainer __ \$ 250 Patron __ \$ 500 Benefactor __ \$ 1000

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**