

THE ATHEIST VOICE

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE METROPLEX ATHEISTS
NOVEMBER 2004, VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

9-11 memorial to be inclusive, secular, appropriate

AMERICAN ATHEIST

The final design for a permanent memorial to the victims of the September 11, 2001 destruction of the World Trade Center drew praise today from an Atheist civil rights group which had threatened to file suit if unconstitutional religious symbols were included.

"We are pleased that the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and other officials settled on a design that was inclusive of all Americans and did not seek to exploit the 911 tragedy by featuring unconstitutional religious symbolism," said Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists.

Johnson said that her organization had been urging Atheists and other non-believer to provide input for the design, and was prepared to initiate a legal challenge if any sectarian icons, slogans or other faith-based monuments were included. Religious organizations wanted religious

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Bush off key in singing praises of parochial schools

AMERICAN ATHEIST

President George Bush is wrong in supporting a voucher scheme to aid Washington, DC parochial schools and other religion-affiliated schools the country, an Atheist civil rights groups charged today.

On Saturday, Mr. Bush sang the praises of Catholic education in a White House ceremony that included more than 200 Roman Catholic officials, including members of the National Catholic Education Association. Once again, the President singled out religious belief for adulation noting "Catholic schools carry out a great mission, to serve God by building knowledge and character... By teaching

the word of God, you prepare your students to follow a path of virtue..." Bush added that he is pressuring Congress to pass a \$14 million voucher experiment that would mostly benefit Parochial schools through a Washington, DC voucher scheme.

Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists, said that Mr. Bush has no business using public funds to support religious schools.

"Bush is singling out the Catholic Parochial school system for special treatment while he is busy gutting the secular public school system," Johnson said. She also questioned whether it was appropriate to "reward" the Roman Catholic Church

which has access to millions of young people after the devastating and embarrassing pedophile scandal.

"The church is being held financially accountable for clerics who terrorized and molested young boys over decades; and now the taxpayers are being asked to bail out Roman Catholic schools through a publicly funded voucher program," said Johnson.

Dave Silverman, Communications Director for American Atheists, charged that Bush made false and misleading statements about the Parochial school system. The president, for instance, praised Catholic schools for their high academic

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Religion and the Mouths of Babes

Mary Ellen Sikes
ATHEIST ALLIANCE

“Where do comets come from, anyway?” Aaron, a curious second-grader, demanded. A bevy of seven-year-olds began to cluster around us on the floor. Hale-Bopp had been the “in” topic of conversation in the classroom that week, and no one wanted to be left out.

“What do you think, Kelly?” I asked, challenging one of Aaron’s classmates. Kelly got a serious look on her face. “They come from outer space, I think,” she ventured, a little hesitantly.

“Sounds like a good start,” I allowed. “How about you, Daniel—anything to add?”

“God made comets, just like he made the universe the sun and the planets and us and everything,” Daniel

pronounced. Several children nodded their heads in agreement with Daniel’s explanation.

Every public school teacher has faced the above situation at one time or another. In a minute, I’m going to make a statement that will sound a bit odd coming from a secular humanist. Believe me, it doesn’t come from any wish to see religion enshrined as a sacred monument in public schools. No humanist longs more fervently than I for a larger percentage of rational students. But here’s my story, and

I’m sticking to it: religion, still an American cultural reality, can no more be left behind at the entrance of a public school than can our students’ ethnic or economic backgrounds.

I’ll go one step further: it’s been my observation that discussion of controversial, even divisive topics (like race and religion

them, is a simple reality of their lives, like soccer and sleepovers. I want to encourage children to articulate their opinions, not self-censor any time they fear disagreement or controversy.

Now, I’m not suggesting that ridicule or harassment be allowed in these situations. Those would be out of bounds in any well-run classroom.

And I’m opposed to unconstitutional practices like formal prayers and displays of religious symbols. What I’m talking about is religious speech of the kind that works its inevitable way into any serious study of art, literature, history, or science.

Here’s a surprise to many non-school types: the real issues surrounding religion in the schools—the ones that occur every single day and never make the news—aren’t

about how the football game starts or what happens at graduation. They are about what Johnny blurts out in the classroom when we’re talking about frogs or fractions or the ancient Egyptians. They’re about five-year-old Holly announcing to her classmates that she has the same birthday as the Baby Jesus. They’re about third-grader Ellen, who chooses the pope as her biography subject and then wants to read the finished report aloud to the class. They’re about Dean

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and politics) can lead to the most instructive moments in a classroom, if handled effectively.

And heck, why not take it all the way: I’ve seen this kind of discussion actually further the cause of humanism.

I know some humanists will disagree with me, but that’s okay. We can talk about it. And that’s what I want kids to be able to do as well. No public educator wants to be cast as a speech fascist, grimly silencing unsuspecting children who happen to veer onto a subject that,

Do you know of any Church/State separation violations?

Some things to look for are the posting of the ten commandment in public (government) buildings including public school buildings, city parks, municipal buildings, and libraries.

To voice your concerns, please email the Metroplex Atheist Director:
director@metroplexatheists.org

Book Review: Classic Myths to Read Aloud

William F. Russell, Ed.D.

ATHEIST ALLIANCE

I may, at some point in the unimaginably distant future, forgive the Walt Disney Corporation for what they've done. Who knows, I just may. And Jesus may come back too, but I ain't waitin' up nights.

Disney has done so much so well, a fact I mustn't fail to acknowledge in my rush to condemn them to the lake of fire. They've courageously embraced darkness as a part of human experience, for example – real darkness, not faux darkness – and our children's imaginative landscapes have been all the richer for it. Bambi's mother dies, after all, and Snow White is poisoned by the chillingly evocative evil queen posing as a harmless crone. The dark side is a real threat, not a paper tiger, which makes its eventual defeat a genuine victory, not a foregone conclusion.

Why, then, did these gifted storytellers transform the Pegasus of my boyhood into a

dimwitted klutz, Hades into a wisecracking acetylene torch, and Icarus into a frizzy-haired survivor (yes, survivor) of his hubristic flight? I'm talking about the animated movie *Hercules*, which is too often the first exposure of a new generation of children to classical mythology. It's actually far more clever and imaginative than I'd anticipated, to tell the truth, but it permanently compromised my kids' visions of the epic myths. As a boy I remember holding my breath as Bellerophon caught his first glimpse of the untouchable, legendary Pegasus, gleaming white, muscled shoulders, wings gradually folding after his landing in a sheltered grove...

Good luck recovering that kind of wonder after they see the movie.

And, since part of my interest in the Greek and Roman myths is my kids' ability to see the biblical myths as more of the same, it's important to keep them on the same plane. There is, after all, no Disney movie with a rapping Moses and a goofy-eyed Christ. For

them, it's the 'Prince of Egypt' treatment, allowing those stories to retain their epic luster, their mythic grandeur.

To restore the balance a bit, let's take a look at three good retellings of the classical myths, all geared toward older kids and adults. Russell's *Classic Myths to Read Aloud* is an effort inspired by nothing more than the intention of restoring the nobility and imaginative texture of the classic tales. The author (awkwardly touted as an "educational expert" in the subtitle) makes a point of this in the preface, noting that he has chosen language more formal and at times more demanding than the slangy banter that has become commonplace in recent retellings. He's right: his word choices and sentence structures are reminiscent of Hamilton's *Mythology* and are indeed an improvement in that way. He provides pronunciation guides for names and terms - a tremendous help - but there is often a problem of unfamiliar words coming so thick and fast

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A Bit of Church History

John W. Gunn

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One thousand Years ago, the church (Roman Catholic) claimed and, on the whole, effectually maintained supreme power in the affairs of Europe. The church punished with torture and death those who disagreed with its teachings. The church was the biggest grafting Institution – or, more plainly, robbing institution – in Europe, and it grew tremendously wealthy. The church admitted for itself no obligations. It laid stern commands upon the people. It was a vast machine of exploitation.

With the growth of independent kingdoms and monarchs who ruled genuinely and with no light hands within their own domains, the church still held the major share of its original power. It maintained its “spiritual” rule, which meant, in gigantic effect, that all rival beliefs about religion were crushed and that the masses were compelled to continue in their submission to ecclesiastical robbery. The state and the church were closely united machines of tyranny and exploitation.

When secularism advanced (although it was far from complete) and innumerable protestant sects came forth with new and strange doctrines, established (state) churches were for long upheld both in Protestant and Catholic countries and, frankly enough, these churches were regarded as bulwarks of the oppressive governments that patronized them. The church was not so powerful, but it was still very powerful; and it was as greedy as ever.

When religious toleration (for the various believers in religion but not equally for, opponents of all religion) was won, the church was less powerful, although it con-

tinued to be rich. In countries (both Protestant and Catholic) where there were established churches, those institutions were burdens upon the state – in other words, centers of graft and favoritism. They were



the same, at any rate united in a close conspiracy of oppression.

After the American revolution and the legal separation of church and state, the churches were all on an equal footing and they did not directly control nor participate in the affairs of government. But they were favored by tax exemption, blue laws upholding religious bigotry were enforced (although they could not be enforced regularly and consistently) and preachers retained a very considerable, often a commanding influence upon the opinions of the citizens. There was no strong opposition to the church; religion held sway intellectually; and the argument that church and state were mutually dependent and helpful was not disputed, insofar as it implied special privilege, (though not political power) for the church.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the preachers were very influential, but their actual power of creating or guiding opinion slowly but certainly dwindled, as politicians and newspaper editors grew more powerful and as secular affairs, beyond the control of the church, grew in recognized importance. At the beginning of the twentieth century, preachers still had a great deal of prestige and influence, and the churches held on to their special privileges, chief among these being the privilege of tax exemption.

always taking from the state (which meant from the people) – never contributing to the public good.

In the early days of American colonization, the church maintained its privilege and power as it did in Europe. In Virginia, for example, the Episcopal church (or Church of England) was the ruling ecclesiastical machine, its doctrines absolutely supreme and its financial demands supplied by taxation of the citizens. In Massachusetts the sect of Calvinism held this strong, favored position. In the early colonies, church and state were practically

Science and liberalism have added, in the first decades of the twentieth century, to the brilliancy and power of secular history. The supremacy of religion per se has long since been overthrown: that is to say, there are no professedly religious doctrines in which we must believe and there is no professedly religious control over our lives. However, the churches have turned to operating under the guise of moral reform organizations; and such a group as the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals wields a very alarming, though in many

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Religion – From page 2

telling his friends at the lunch table that his older sister died at birth and became an angel in heaven.

If a child is stating his or her own opinion, if it doesn't target other students or present an untruth as fact, and if it meets the usual requirements of the academic or social situation, then I see no need to put a lid on religious speech. I may, however, see reason to comment upon it publicly – to put it into context, so to speak – so that no one assumes the child's opinion is "official."

As I see it, there were three possible responses to Daniel's theory of the universe:

1. Ignore it and move on.
2. Chastise Daniel for bringing up God in public school.
3. Acknowledge that some people share Daniel's belief about God's role in creation; then introduce the scientific theory of the Big Bang. Promise to check the school library during lunch for a book on that topic.

One of the saddest aspects of our fear of religion in schools, in my opinion, is that administrators do so little to prepare teachers to handle sensitive situations with their best professional judgment. Out of uncertainty, many teachers will go for #1.

And out of fear and misunderstanding, some teachers will feel obligated to choose #2. I know which choice this secular humanist prefers.

Review – From page 3

that the flow of storytelling is interrupted by too-frequent needs for explanation:

"Hades became lord of the Underworld, where the souls of the dead reside; Poseidon took dominion over all the oceans and the seas; while Zeus himself became sovereign over heaven and earth." Not counting the names themselves, there are no fewer than three words in that one sentence that will almost certainly require a stop-and-define: reside, dominion, and sovereign. And this passage is from the section of myths for ages five and up! In no way is a single myth in this collection appropriate for any but the most precocious five-year olds. Seven is a reasonable minimum age, but the collection really holds its value all the way through age fourteen.

There is also a confusing alternation of Greek and Roman names from story to story that necessitates further explanation still.

That said – the book is really a tremendous gem for several reasons: the pronunciation guides; the accurate timing for each; the richness of the imagery and language; a priceless passage at the end of each myth that explains some of the Greek and Latin word roots found in the myth that connect to our own language; the inclusion of several

condensed epics, such as the Golden Fleece narrative and the Aeneid, in chaptered segments; and the accuracy and care of the retellings.

Two other recommended collections of myths:

D'Aulaire's book of Greek and Roman Myths, a bit older in ways good and less so, is a slightly more user-friendly, child-friendly version of the same tales. Less detailed, but it is more readable without Disney-fying and includes adequate illustrations. This volume is also available in an audio version with celebrity readers doing a credible job. A nice middle ground between Russell and Hollywood.

Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* is the ultimate, dazzling classic volume for capturing the sparkle and sensation of the myths in accurate detail for mature readers. There's no way to describe Hamilton's approach better than 'scholarly love.' Though it includes a good number of myths, its greatest value is as an encyclopedia of the gods, goddesses, demigods, heroes and their basic mythic history. An encyclopedia of sorts, yes, but the most readable and engaging encyclopedia you'll ever see. If a child is devoted to the myths but ready to move beyond D'Aulaire and Russell, wrap up a copy of the Hamilton - after reading it yourself.

Attention DFW area Atheists and Agnostics!

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of NORTH TEXAS

Scheduled services are held every third Saturday
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of the Denton Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

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www.humanistchurch.org/



“Have you ever been physically harmed or threatened for your lack of religious beliefs?”

When I had a Darwin fish on my car I had people shoot me the finger and one pickup with three teenage boys made a sign that said "F... Darwin" and held it up to the window. Good christian behavior, but despite how monstrously upsetting it was, nothing has ever been physical.

–C. V.

In November of 2002, I was in the Parker County Courthouse Annex for two errands. First I voted and got into a friendly conversation with an election worker. This conversation turned out to be a piece of good luck later.

My next errand was to pick up an application to put a sign on the courthouse lawn. This sign was to be my Atheist counterbalance in case the Christians put their manger scene propoganda on the lawn of one of the courthouses. The downtown County Courthouse where I usually picked up these application blanks was closed for asbestos removal, so I asked at one of the courthouse desks where to get this application.

A large man standing nearby walked over to me and growled "Dial 666 and ask the devil." This oaf leaned over me, preachifying at me, angry voiced, while the clerk directed me to the down town office where I could get the application. I had to ask her to repeat because the man was so loud and disconcerting. I walked away from the desk followed by the oaf still preachifying. As I approached one of the election workers the oaf dropped back; he knew enough to leave election workers alone. I struck up a conversation with the election worker and watched out of the corner of my eye as the oaf slunk away. I waited until a group of people was leaving the courthouse and walked safely behind them to my car.

–C. H.

Threats, yes, including receiving threatening/nasty letters addressed to The Atheist Bitch at... Most of the threats were veiled or very subtle for instance a map of the 'Holy Land' with arrows drawn all around the Dead Sea and a notation saying YOU SHOULD BE HERE!

This person, however, was indeed insane. She was eventually tried for attempted murder and found not guilty by reason of insanity, but was also ruled to be criminally and incurably insane. So, of course they let her out of the institution a year later.

–S. B.

This incident took place about 1955 in Birmingham, Alabama where I lived with my family at the time. I was in my middle teens and, as was common for young southern white women then, lived such a sheltered life that I was very naive. I attended church mostly out of habits formed earlier in my life, but I silently carried in my mind many questions about religion and the idea of god. The god concept did not seem to me a very good explanation of much of anything. However, nearly everybody I knew seemed to believe unquestioningly that the god concept explained everything, so I thought I was just stupid and ignorant that I did not understand the explanations.

Then the church I attended hired a youth minister. The senior ministers were so proud of themselves – the first Baptist church in the area to hire a youth minister. They enthusiastically introduced their eager young seminarian, to a gathering of all of us who were teenagers, telling us that we were to ask him any question we had. I was delighted; here was a chance to be lifted out of my ignorance and, perhaps, even my stupidity.

Soon afterward I noticed the youth minister in his glass enclosed office. I went in to ask one of my questions. I made sure other people could see us but no one could hear because I knew my question was difficult and I did not want to embarrass him. I did not expect him to know the answer, but I did expect guidance in searching for answers. I had so many questions at the time that I do not remember which one I asked – something about the origin of God, I think.

But I will never forget what happened next!! The youth minister rose up, his face red and contorted with anger and leaned

over his desk and told me that I was sinfully tempting him. I can laugh about that now, but it was definitely not funny then – this man looked ready to do violence. I left his office quietly and tried to hide in plain view in the crowd of people in the church.

For decades I never told anyone about the incident. It seemed such a strange occurrence that I thought no one would believe me or if they did believe me they would think it was my fault. Beside that, I did not want to face this guy again. This incident did harm me because it was socially isolating and, psychologically, it was draining because it caused me to feel that I had to keep a secret – a secret that made me feel like a looser. To this day, I tend to laugh inappropriately when I am around a preacher like person.

For years I wondered why this minister acted the way he did, but I have begun to see how his actions brought advantages to him. He very effectively silenced my inconvenient questions and could be fairly certain I wouldn't tell anybody. If I did tell anybody it would be a "He said... She said..." situation and nobody would believe me. The Baptist Church as a whole won because it made me a docile woman and that church would fall apart without the docile women who support it. No matter what happened, I lost and they won. I wonder how wide spread this sort of thing was and how many other women were made docile by incidents like this. I wonder now if they taught that guy his intimidation techniques in the seminary.

After this intimidation incident, I started looking any where but the church for answers to my questions. I found answers, too, particularly at the library. I began to develop the intellectual self reliance necessary to become an Atheist. For that I am very proud of myself.

–C. H.

I would say that I haven't myself been harmed or threatened but my lil' red pickup truck has.

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911 – From page 1

symbols as part of the memorial, including a cross made of iron beams from one of the towers. Instead, a 13-member jury of artists, architects and civil and cultural leaders opted for a design consisting of reflecting pools and a stone field. More than 5,000 entries were submitted.

“This is a memorial that all Americans can embrace, whether they are religious or non-religious. It speaks a common heritage and set of ideas about freedom, tolerance and diversity that help to define us as a nation,” said Johnson.

Dave Silverman, Communications Director for American Atheists said that the use of government funds to construct and operate the World Trade Center site required that any memorial not promote a specific religion, or religion in general.

“Thousands of people died that day – Christians, Jews, Moslems and people who were Atheists and professed no religious belief,” said Silverman. “A memorial like this is appropriate and constitutional, and honors all the victims of that tragic event.

American Atheists is a nationwide movement which defends the civil rights of non-believer, works for the separation of church and state, and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy.

Schools – From page 1

standards.

“Catholic schools can ‘pick and choose’ students, a luxury the public schools do not have,” said Silverman. “The public schools must educate all students.”

Silverman noted that while Bush praised the Catholic school system for reaching out to minorities, statistics indi-

cate that many Parochial districts have a shoddy record on racial balance. In New Orleans, for instance, only 6% of enrolled students in Catholic schools are African-American.

“We need to spend more money on public education for all,” said Silverman. “It’s unfair to impose a ‘Religion Tax’ in order to support the religious school system of the Roman Catholic Church.”

History – From page 4

ways an indirect and insidious, power in our government. Yet the majority of Americans do not attend church, do not believe in church doctrines and are not interested in supporting the church. Skepticism grows steadily. Secular affairs are foremost. Religion is dying, although the church flourishes as a social and business institution.

And let students of history reflect that, after all these centuries, during which the power and greed of the church have been manifested in every conceivable shape – after all these centuries the church is still an institution of special privilege and it is at its old game of taking money from our pockets. Throughout all its hanging history the church has been distinguished by

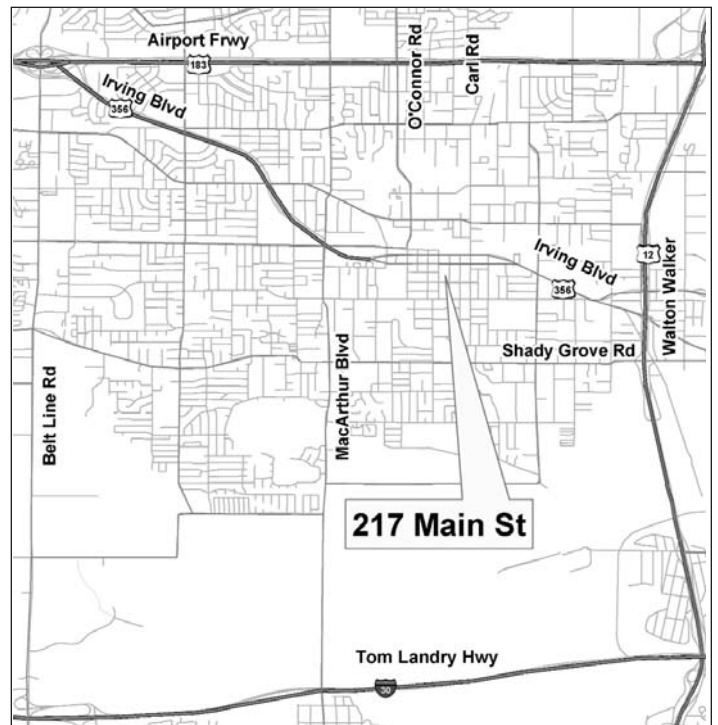
its two ruling motives of bigotry and greed. The church is still demanding laws to enforce its bigotry (though it now commonly calls such bigotry moral rather than religious) and laws to uphold it in its financial privileges.

There has been a series of significant revolutions within ten centuries; mainly within the past two centuries, the world has progressed sensationally. This progress has been secular in character. Our age, in all that is beneficent and hopeful and civilized, is irreligious. But the fact remains – the stern fact – that the necessity of war on clericalism is not ended. It is a serious problem in this modern age and until it is solved, until clericalism is deprived of all its powers and privileges (retaining only its rights of private propagan-da), civilization will not be safe.

METROPLEX ATHEISTS

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ISAAC ASIMOV

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John Hattan

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Isaac Asimov was born in Petrovich, Russia on January 2, 1920, although he always considered himself a native of Brooklyn, where his family emigrated when he was three years old. Brooklyn also considers him a native, electing him to the city's hall of fame in the 1980's.

One stroke of luck Isaac had early on was his father's decision to open a combination candy store and newsstand in the 1930's. Isaac worked behind the counter and catalogued the magazines, many of them the pulp science fiction novels of the time. His favorite was *Astounding Stories*, which later became *Astounding Science Fiction*, and still exists today as the magazine *Analog*. The teenage Asimov was a voracious reader of *Astounding Stories* and had the advantage of knowing the magazine's release schedule.

He read the issues as soon as they arrived, and he often wrote to the publisher with comments on the stories. One day, though, the magazine didn't arrive on-time. Since the publisher was located in Manhattan, Asimov took the train into town to find out what happened. Surprisingly, the secretary ushered Asimov in to meet the publisher, John W. Campbell. They had a long talk and Campbell convinced Asimov to stop writing material for the letter column and to try to write a story.

It took a few submissions before Asimov submitted a story that was accepted, but with each rejection, Campbell would return a letter with a detailed critique of the story. These critiques Asimov considered to be the most useful formative step in his writing career. His first story was published in *Astounding Stories* March 1939, shortly before graduating from Columbia University

with a degree in biochemistry.

Asimov continued writing short stories for the pulp sci-fi magazines and had a short Navy career during WWII working on the new radar technology (coincidentally serving under the command of sci-fi great Robert Heinlein). In 1949 his military career was over and Asimov got his doctorate in biochemistry from Columbia. At that point, he started on two projects,

lect them or expand them into books. After about five years of voracious sci-fi writing, Asimov took a 25 year semi-break from fiction to write science books.

I say "semi-break" because Asimov did work on one of his most famous stories in 1966, *Fantastic Voyage*. He never thought much of *Fantastic Voyage* for a few reasons:

He didn't really write it. The studio already had a completed screenplay and had largely completed filming the very expensive film, but they wanted to ensure that it would appeal to science fiction fans, so they hired Asimov. Asimov considered the novelized screenplay to be an easy paycheck.

Asimov considered the science in *Fantastic Voyage* to be ridiculous. Where Asimov's novel differed from the screenplay was usually Asimov correcting some of the movie's bad science. He enjoyed the fact that his 12 year-old niece, with whom he attended the movie's premiere, commented that a white blood cell could not digest a miniature submarine so completely that they wouldn't need to retrieve it before it grew to normal size

and killed the patient.

Asimov didn't mention this specifically, but the movie made it very clear at the end that the villain was an atheist who was trying to kill the patient because there was no god. I notice that this scene didn't make into the novel.

In any case, from 1959 until his death, Asimov declared himself to be "The Great Explainer" and threw himself into writing about every subject about which he had any interest. He released dozens of books about science and astronomy, some of which were collections of nonfiction articles written for other magazines. He wrote a nine-volume series for kids about the planets, with each volume covering a particular planet. He



his first science fiction novel and a biochemistry textbook written with a couple of colleagues. His sci-fi novel, *A Pebble in the Sky*, was published in 1950 and his textbook in 1953. By 1953, he had also taken to sci-fi writing full-time.

For the next five years, Dr. Asimov wrote about twenty novels and dozens of short stories for the pulp magazines. Some of his early novels, including his acclaimed *Foundation* series and his *Robot* series, were expansions or collections of stories published earlier in the magazines. This eventually became Asimov's signature. While he did write several full-length novels from whole-cloth, he did prefer to "try out" stories in the magazines and later col-

wrote thousand-page commentaries on The Bible and the works of Shakespeare. He released annotated editions of Don Juan, Paradise Lost, Gulliver's Travels, and the works of Gilbert & Sullivan. He wrote two dozen books on physics, a couple dozen on biology, at least fifty general books on space, covering everything from Halley's Comet to UFO's, about twenty books of the histories of various regions of the world, and a dozen more volumes on The Bible, mostly dealing with early Jewish history, about which he had an interest because of his devoutly Jewish father.

He even wrote a book of dirty limericks! All told, Asimov wrote over 300 books. The exact number is hard to say because he did so many books that were collections of stuff in other books or magazines, collections of hand-chosen stories written by other up-and-coming science fiction writers, and a few later books that were "co-authored" (read ghostwritten) expansions of some of his early short stories. In any case, Asimov was one of the most prolific writers ever, and he is the only writer in anyone's memory who has published works in all ten Dewey Decimal categories.

Asimov died in 1992 of kidney and liver failure brought on by HIV that he contracted several years earlier during a heart bypass operation. Indications were that Asimov never regretted the end of his life and considered the extra years he got to be a bonus, as the bypass operation extended his life by several years.

Isaac Asimov was a lifelong atheist, but he also liked to state that he was a staunch humanist, as just saying he was an atheist made it clear what he didn't believe, but not what he did. He was one of the signers of Humanist Manifesto II in the 1970's, and he was the president of the American Humanist Association from 1985 until his death. He was a staunch opponent of all kinds of pseudoscience and his novels contained a welcome absence of any kind of mystical mumbo-jumbo that writers like L. Ron Hubbard were popularizing. He also liked to have fun at the expense of his longtime literary collaborator, John Campbell, who appeared to buy into every piece of pseudoscientific nonsense that crossed his desk. One month he'd be showing Asimov some new nonsense called Dianetics, while the next month, Campbell would be

showing him a plastic sphere with colored lights that was supposed to assess your personality by the way your hand felt when certain colors were glowing.

Asimov was originally reluctant to accept the invitation to be president of AHA, as he'd lost a couple of subscriptions to his new self-published magazine Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine when he wrote some particularly pro-humanist editorials. He figured, though, that the humanist camel's nose was already under the tent, so he became president and never regretted it.

I'll close with a quote from Asimov that has appeared on the Metroplex Atheists website since 1999. It was a response to a question about why he fights superstition with no chance to win:

Because we must. Because we have the call. Because it is nobler to fight for rationality without winning than to give up in the face of continued defeats. Because whatever true progress humanity makes is through the rationality of the occasional individual and because any one individual we may win for the cause may do more for humanity than a hundred thousand who hug superstition to their breasts.

Order your Atheist Textbook Covers for School

Atheism may be defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a lifestyle and ethical outlook verifiable by experience and the scientific method, independent of all arbitrary assumptions of authority and creeds.

Madelyn Murray O'Hair

The study of theology, as it stands on the Christian doctrine, is the study of nothing, it is founded on nothing, it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authority; it has no data; it can draw outside no thing; and it admits of no conclusion.

Thomas Paine, American Patriot

In those parts of the world where it aims and so far have we walked, miracles have ceased, but in the paths of its error barbarous and ignorant, wonders are still in vogue.

Ethan Allen, American Patriot

American Atheists, Inc.
www.atheists.org

An honest god is the noblest work of man.

Revised version, 1986 Century Order

It is not in favor of the government and taking a precept in school because our country was not that in particular religion but would have a reasonable one or a moderate one.

Jiminy Glick, U.S. President

American Atheists, Inc.
www.atheists.org

It is not in favor of the government and taking a precept in school because our country was not that in particular religion but would have a reasonable one or a moderate one.

Benjamin Franklin, Founding Father

I believe in an America where religious intolerance will all stand and... where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice.

John F. Kennedy, U.S. President, 1961-1963

The Bible is not my Book and Christianity is not my religion. I could never give assent to the long complicated statements of Christian dogma.

Abraham Lincoln, U.S. President, 1861-1865

We do not permit any inquisition either within or without the law to apply any religious test to the holding of office. The mind of America must be forever free.

Calvin Coolidge, U.S. President, 1923-1933

The United States have administered upon a great and noble experiment, which is believed to be hazardous in the absence of all previous precedent that of total separation of church and state. Religion established by law is a wrong. Let the conscience of men grow free, all creeds and all sects be permitted to worship his own god, in his own way. Such is the great experiment which we tried, our system of free government would be in perfect without.

John Tyler, U.S. President, 1841-1845

Shake off all the fears of servile prejudices, under which weak minds are servilely crouched. Fix reason firmly in her seat and call on her tribunal for every fact, every opinion. O with boldness even the existence of a God, because, if he be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

Thomas Jefferson, U.S. President, 1801-1809

As I understand the Christian religion, it was, and is, a religion. Such has happened in the world, since the world, have been divided with both Jewish and Christian religion, that the most bloody religion that ever existed?

John Adams, U.S. President, 1797-1801



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30 for \$20 + Shipping

UPCOMING EVENTS

BUSINESS MEETING

Regular Monthly Meeting:

What: Meeting to decide general business of the group and to discuss current events.

Date: Third Sunday of the month

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Place: Heritage Park
217 Main St. at Second St.
Irving, TX 75060

SOCIAL MEETINGS

Atheists Meetup Day:

What: Meet with other local Atheists to talk about your beliefs.

Date: Third Tuesday of the month

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: TBA; For locations near you visit: atheist.meetup.com

Humanist Church of N. TX:

What: All the things you want in a church, without the gods.

Date: Third Saturday of the month

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Place: Denton Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Hall

J. Gilligan's:

What: "My dinner with Atheists," social time with a bunch of heathens.

Date: Every Wednesday

Time: 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Place: J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill
(Meet on the grill side)
400 E. Abram Street
Arlington, TX 76010

MARG:

What: The Metroplex Atheists Reading Group discusses selected books.

For the latest book, visit:

www.metroplexatheists.org/read/

Date: Third Sunday of the month

Time: After the regular meeting

Place: Heritage Park
217 Main St. at Second St.
Irving, TX 75060

UPCOMING EVENT

American Atheists:

What: 30th annual convention

Date: April 9th – 11th

Time: TBA

Place: San Diego, CA; For more information visit:
www.atheists.org/convention/

Do you have a special event?

Submit it to:

editor@metroplexatheists.org

Question – From page 6

The truck had vanity plates, "NO GOD", and "ATHEIST" in 6-inch letters on the tailgate. At different times the bumper has had some magnetic strips with irreligious phrases.

One time a car started messing with me in my pickup on the freeway. The car passed and got in my lane and then started slowing down. When I changed lanes it would too. I managed to move in front and exited the freeway and was held up by a red signal. The occupant of the car got out and came to my side door and was screaming and waving. I didn't acknowledge him, kept the window up and the door locked. When the light changed, I went one way and the screamer went another. I got his license number and looked it up on the 'net. The owner had an arabic surname.

Once at Gilligan's for our weekly social, I came out and found the lil' red pickup vandalized; its wipers broken and some moulding ripped off. At the time it had the big atheist word on the tailgate and some pro-choice bumper stickers.

I noticed one time while I was driving near my home that I was being followed. I turned around on my street and met the

dude. We exchanged some words in the street as both he and I stayed seated in our vehicles. It ended when another car came and wanted to pass.

Once in a supermarket I was wearing a "NOTHING FAILS LIKE PRAYER" t-shirt and a young man came up and said, "you don't mean that."

Another time in a supermarket, with the same t-shirt, the checkout lady read it and said, "that's so sad," and that she'd pray for me.

Once I found a book (title something like the evidence for jesus) by Josh McDowell in my mailbox with a note from a local pentecostal pastor along with a clipping of one of my Star-Telegram letters. It hadn't been mailed so the pastor must have looked up my address and hand delivered his "gift." I donated the book to John Hattan who sold it on ebay with the proceeds going to the pickle jar fund.

–R. G.

My nephew and I had our Darwin fishes removed several times. I will have to get some more for both of us.

–J. N.

About 1990 or 1992, I was volunteering as an escort at an Abortion clinic. My job

was to accompany the clinic's clients past the loud mouth religion "fundies" who demonstrated in front of the clinic and to watch the physician who did the procedures as he got into his car and drove away. This last was to make sure there was a witness if the "fundies" shot the physician. I made no secret to these "fundies" that I was an Atheist. One of them shouted at me, "Bow down! Bow Down! Bow down before God! You will bow down before God if God has to break your knees!!"

–C. H.

I've never been physically harmed, but I've have been threatened, a couple of times. Most recently was from a someone at the National Day of Prayer protest.

–J. H.

In a galaxy far far away, an AK-47 was pointed at me with the objective of re-converting my beliefs.

I got pissed and responded with something along the lines of 'go ahead, but be very sure that your god will save you from my brother.'

I guess their belief system wasn't quite as strong as it needed to be. either that or they were sane, hopefully the latter.

–R. B.

January 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 <i>New Year's Day</i>	2	3
4	5	6	7 J. Gilligan's	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 J. Gilligan's	15	16	17 Humanist
18 Reg. Meeting & MARG	19 MLK	20 Atheist Meetup	21 J. Gilligan's	22	23	24
25	26	27	28 J. Gilligan's	29	30	31

February 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Groundhog Day	3	4 J. Gilligan's	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 J. Gilligan's	12	13	14 Valentine's Day
15 Reg. Meeting & MARG	16	17 Atheist Meetup	18 J. Gilligan's	19	20	21 Humanist
22	23	24	25 J. Gilligan's	26	27	28
29						

March 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 J. Gilligan's	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 J. Gilligan's	11	12	13
14	15	16 Atheist Meetup	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19	20 Humanist
21 Reg. Meeting & MARG	22	23	24 J. Gilligan's	25	26	27
28	29	30	31 J. Gilligan's			

***THE ATHEIST VOICE* is a bi-monthly publication of Metroplex Atheists.**

For more information, please visit our website: www.metroplexatheists.org

To submit an article or letter to the editor, please email us.

The Atheist Voice Editor: editor@metroplexatheists.org

THE ATHEIST VOICE
c/o Metroplex Atheists
Box 48116
Watauga, TX 76148

Deliver to:

“Because we must. Because we have the call. Because it is nobler to fight for rationality without winning than to give up in the face of continued defeats. Because whatever true progress humanity makes is through the rationality of the occasional individual and because any one individual we may win for the cause may do more for humanity than a hundred thousand who hug superstition to their breasts.”
— Isaac Asimov, when asked why he fights religion with no hope for victory

WHY DO WE FIGHT?