

THE ATHEIST

Newsletter of the Atheist Community of Austin, a Nonprophet Organization

P.O. Box 3798, Austin, Texas 78764

512-371-2911

www.atheist-community.org

21 March 1999 CE

Volume 3 No. 3

GODLESS INVADE

**Local economy supported! Antiques purchased! Good food eaten!
More waves of non-believers expected in future Comfort raids!**



Mary Sue Osborne photo by Rodney Florence

We had a successful invasion of Comfort Texas on Saturday the 20th of February. . About forty people and one atheist dog showed up at the ROCK in Comfort Park at 11 am to participate. Some were locals but large groups came from San Antonio, Austin, and A&M. All age groups, several races and ethnic groups, all political parties, and various sexes and sexual preferences were represented. Black ribbons and wreaths were placed on the beautiful limestone cenotaph. A ceremony of sorts was conducted with Catherine Fahringer leading a group in an a cappella version of her song "Rock of Sages" to a familiar tune, Howard Thompson making a poignant statement about freethinker history, and Julie Fisher cracking George Carlin jokes. Don Rhoades, Jason Romero, and a few others spoke briefly of the importance to them of the freethinker settlers cenotaph project.

*A fool says in his heart that there is no god.
A wise person travels about the state meeting other non-believers.*



The cenotaph rock is secured. Photo by Rodney Florence

People wore their Atheist Invasion T-shirts, Darwin fish T-shirts (that say "Don't start the evolution without me" on the front), their "You are not alone" Atheist Community of Austin T-shirts, or "Ten Reasons Why Beer is Better than Jesus" T-shirts. Large posters read "No Gods, No Masters," "Atheists are People Too," "WWID? What Would Ingersoll Do?," and "Our Rock is as good as your Rock." According to the Comfort News, the big ROCK, which local residents consider tainted with atheist cooties, will be replaced with an almost identical limestone marker. The article also notes that the new marker will be paid for by local funds, as the contributions of atheists have been deemed offensive. One poster at the invasion had two dollar bills pinned to it with the question "Can you tell which is the atheist

contribution?"

The group broke up about noon to have lunch in several of Comfort's restaurants. The group I was with ate at Arlene's where we had excellent friendly service and were accosted by several people who were interested and supportive of what we were doing in Comfort. After lunch, we all visited the many antique shops and other stores along High street. A few good buys were made. Late in the afternoon, the remaining invaders congregated at thinker Greg Krauter's Ingenhuit General Store for ice cream and planned to make the invasion an annual event.

~Julie Fisher

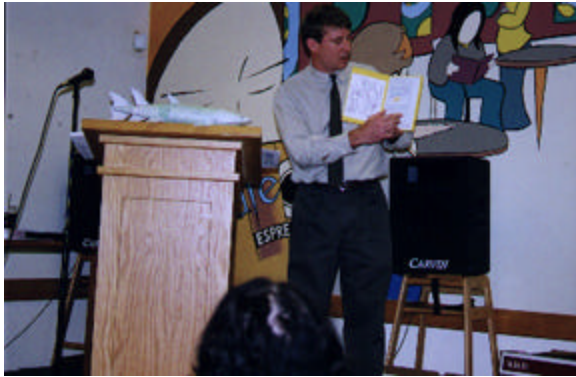
NOT the last supper in Comfort

Photo by Rodney Florence



Atheist Horde Open Second Front Same Day

200 miles to east, the Houstonians for Secular Humanism hosted a Darwin Day celebration at Border's Books in Houston. Elements of the Atheist Community of Austin were involved.



John Koonz evolved from ape-like ancestors

The Houstonians for Secular Humanism are a relatively new group, having formed only last summer. They have about 30 paid members, with another 30 names on their mailing list. Most of the group are atheists, I'm told, with a small number of "very vocal agnostics".

The event was held in the very public, very open cafe section of Border's. There were also bulletin boards with Darwin Day information scattered throughout the store. Seating was limited, but there was still room for passers-by to sit down after buying their tea or coffee and biscuits, and listen to the lectures. There were about two dozen people in attendance at any given time, of which several appeared to be walk-ins.

I saw quite a few of the "walk-ins" walk out with pamphlets for the HfSH group, as well as Darwin related handouts, after listening to the free presentations. This was quite a contrast to the monthly ACA lecture series, which (while nominally open to the public) takes place behind a closed partition. There were three speakers in all. Keith Parsons, professor of philosophy at UH Clear Lake, spoke on "Fossil Records and Evolutionist Theory". I missed all but the tail end of his talk, I'm afraid.

After a short break, Gregory Brown (director of graduate studies for the department of philosophy at U of H) spoke about "Darwin's Anti-Creationist Arguments". He cited 30 different places in *The Origin of Species* where Darwin directly confronts creation science, which he was obliged to do since creation was the prevailing scientific theory of his day. Mr. Brown went into several of these arguments in detail, showing how various pieces of evidence are explained much better by evolution than they are by creation.

After another break, our own John Koonz (head of the science department at Westview Middle School, Pflugerville ISD) spoke on "Getting Involved in Evolution Education in Your Area". He discussed a number of strategies he's employed in bringing an understanding of evolution to his students, what the obstacles are, what worked, and what didn't. Thanks to numerous humorous anecdotes from his experiences in the classroom, I think his presentation was the best received of the three. It certainly got the most chuckles!

There was a little time for socializing during the breaks, but my best opportunity for meeting and chatting with the HfSH members came after the lectures, when about nine of us gathered at an Italian restaurant across the street for pizza and calzone, care of HfSH chairman Daniel Strain. It was raining heavily by that time, but in spite of my eagerness to get on the road I wound up spending about 2 more hours talking science, ethics, philosophy, and current events with these fine folks. I want to especially thank Keith Irish, the director of the HfSH events committee, for organizing a great afternoon of education and fellowship for rationalists throughout central Texas.

~Jeff Dee

Freethought Roundup: 1999 Convention of the Atheist Alliance!

On Easter weekend, (April 2-4, 1999), all atheists and other freethinkers are invited to Austin, Texas for the 1999 Freethought Roundup!, the national convention of the Atheist Alliance. The Atheist Community of Austin, host for the event, is working hard to make this a thoroughly enjoyable and informative gathering of non-theists.

Guest speakers and workshops will include; Dan Barker, Director of the Freedom From Religion Foundation; Douglas E. Krueger, author of a wonderful work entitled What is Atheism; Dr. Arthur F. Ide, author of hundreds of titles including Unzipped : The Popes Bare All : A Frank Study of Sex and Corruption in the Vatican; journalist and author James A Haught will speak on "The Trillion Dollar Fraud"; Ben Akerley, author of The X-Rated Bible, will discuss "The Bible in the Bedroom", a look at how biblical ideas have influenced our current sensibilities. Ray Romano will treat us to another dramatic performance this year. Something by Twain, perhaps? Adam Butler, FFRF's 1998 Student Activist of the Year, will tell us of his experiences as an Alabama Freethinker, and atheist schoolteacher John Koonz will talk about "Teaching Evolution to a Hostile Audience." The folks from OABITAR (Objectivity and Balance in Teaching About Religion) will give a presentation on teaching about atheism in those public schools where overview classes "about religion" are taught. - Richard Russell will teach us about "Parliamentary Procedure for Small Groups", and is also organizing a dramatic reading of a work by noted atheist author Harlan Ellison. A panel discussion on Sunday will cover issues related to "Positive Atheism." A lunch has been planned for Saturday and a banquet for Saturday evening. Both meals will feature the flavorful fare for which Austin is widely known. Plans are also being made for a Friday night visit to Esther's Follies for some irreverent hilarity. .

The 1999 Freethought Roundup will be held at Austin's Downtown OMNI Hotel at 700 San Jacinto. For hotel reservations, please contact the Omni Hotel at (512) 476-3700. If you are with the 1999 Freethought Roundup, please tell them you are with the 1999 Freethought Roundup. Single or double. A fool says in his heart that there is no god.
A wise person registers for the 1999 Atheist Alliance convention

Convention Registration:

___ Regular Registration(s) @ \$50 per person....	\$ _____
(No registration fee for minor children accompanied by a parent or guardian.)	
___ Student Registration(s) @ \$25 per person.....	\$ _____
(Include Photocopy of Student ID)	
___ Saturday luncheon(s) @ \$25 per person.....	\$ _____
___ Saturday night banquet(s) @ \$35 per person.....	\$ _____
___ Vegetarian meals, please!	
___ Friday night "Esther's Follies" @ \$16 per person.	\$ _____
Total.....	\$ _____



Name _____ Address.. _____
City/State/Zip..... _____
Contact Phone Number or E-mail Address..... _____

- Please copy this form, fill it out completely, and send it along with check or money order (no cash please) to:
Roundup Registration P.O. Box 3798 Austin, TX 78764
- Please include the names of all persons in your party so that we may make name tags. Print plainly and use an extra sheet if necessary.
- Make checks payable to "Freethought Roundup Committee".

Roundup Help Needed

There is still a lot that needs to be done. Volunteers are needed to help at the convention. A work party has been planned for the 27th of March at Mary Sue Osbornes house. **Please call her if you can help** (288-5307)

Also, readers are needed for a performance of "The Deathbird" . There are 4 minor parts: The Coil Father, The Fang-Father, The Great Coiled One, and The Mad One. These entail just a line or 2 each , maybe a dozen lines for The Mad One, and can be performed by people with virtually no public-speaking experience. It would be best if The Mad One were capable of sounding whiny and petulant. There are also 2 non-speaking parts: The Letters, and The Numbers. These

involve someone holding up placards for the audience to see. (I will provide the placards.) These would be excellent jobs for young people.

Please contact **Don Rhoades** if you can help be a reader. P.O. Box 3798 , Austin, TX 78764

Secure Your Place In History

How often do we ordinary mortals have a chance to ensure that our names live on as long as the human race survives? Each one of us now has that chance, and not once but twice!

The Atheist Alliance member societies are holding a contest to find the one perfect, universal, symbol that will represent all atheists throughout the world forever after. It will never, unlike the American Atheists' atom orbital, be trademarked or restricted in any way.

The winner of the contest will receive a cash prize of \$100 and have a star named after him or her by the International Star Registry, thereby assuring that his or her name will live on, both in human history and in the universe. When it is chosen, the winning symbol will be publicized by all AAI member societies to their local media, so our new atheist symbol will get nationwide attention. The winner's name will also be publicized, with his or her permission.

Some tips: The winning symbol will be easy to draw and easy to recognize and will lend itself to being made into jewelry, bookends, etc. Rules: Draw your symbol on a sheet of paper no larger than 8 1/2 x 11, using a separate sheet for each symbol you submit. You can draw it by hand or on a computer, but it must be drawn, however roughly, not just described verbally. Write a statement on the page about why you think the design is appropriate and why it should be chosen. Also write your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address on the same page, or staple that information to the drawing. Send all entries to Marie Castle, President, AAI, 5146 Newton Ave. N, Minneapolis, MN 55430.

Deadline: All entries must be received by May 1, 1999. The Atheist Alliance board (made up of representatives of all Alliance member societies) will vote to select several top-ranking symbols. These will be voted on by all members of all AAI member societies. Votes will be tallied by June 30 and the winner will be announced in member societies' newsletters.

Does The Bible Condone Slavery?

There is no morality outside of the Holy Bible! We hear this cliché repeated ad nauseam by Bible believers. But is the Bible itself morally flawed? Take, for example, the institution of human slavery. Could anything be more immoral than the buying and selling of fellow human beings into a life of involuntary servitude? Let us see what the Bible has to say about this cruel and highly immoral institution?

Despite 2 Cor. 3:17, that oft-quoted passage declaring, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," God approves of slavery. In Exodus 21:1-6 he sets forth the guidelines for the buying, selling and treatment of slaves. He says that if a male slave gets married and has children, the slave's wife and children shall remain with the master when the slave departs because, technically speaking, they belong to the master. Now, if the slave is imprudent enough to protest because he happens to love his wife and children, God tells the master to, "Take an awl, and thrust it through his earlobe unto the door." This is all repeated in Deut. 15. In verse 17, however, God adds as an afterthought, "Do likewise to your maid slaves." In Exodus 21:7-9 God even instructs men how they are to go about selling their daughters into slavery.

Concerning family values, in Joel 3:8 God warns that, "I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hands of the Judians, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off." In case you are still unconvinced, try 1 Tim. 6:1-2; "Let slaves regard their masters as worthy of all honor". Matthew 10:24 and John 13:16 remind us that slaves are never better than their masters. Women take note that in Titus 2:9-10 slaves are ordered to, "Be submissive to your master and give satisfaction in every respect". Also check Eph. 6:5 and Col. 3:22 which say, "Slaves obey your master". Of the venerated Ten Commandments, numbers four and ten tacitly condone slavery.

What did Jesus have to say about slavery? Well, in the revered Sermon of the Mount, widely recognized as a prescription for Christian living, the institution of slavery is never mentioned. However, in Matthew 8:5-13, the story of the healing of the Roman centurion's slave, not only does Jesus not condemn slavery, he actually compliments the centurion for his faithfulness. Therefore, we can only conclude that Jesus was aware of slavery and approved of it.



While the Bible may be morally correct in some cases, it is certainly immoral where human slavery is concerned. It is the

secular state, not the Bible, which we have to thank for ending slavery. Also it is the secular state, not the church, which stands as the guarantor of freedom and human rights. The truth is that human rights were (and are being) achieved not through the Bible, but in spite of it.

For more information see my web site, Skeptics Corner, at:<http://www.inu.net/skeptic>

~Louis W. Cable

Ibid; Scholar, Warrior, and Defender of the One True Faith

The following is an excerpt from a letter my younger daughter wrote me ten years ago when she was a grad student at the University of Chicago and lived in the northwest Chicago suburbs

She first complained about having a tomato crop that was too much to handle. "Life is going on much as usual, harvesting tomatoes. This morning the "anti-evolutionists" came to my door. Two women and their children. They asked me if I thought the teaching of evolution in the schools would affect my happiness. There was only one possible response (laughter) so I just stared at them blankly as best I could. After several dozen probing questions about my marital status (if I wasn't married, why were there two cars in the driveway?) they discovered I was a student of anthropology, no less!. That might as well be 'evolutionology' They then proceeded to display their scholarly prowess. One woman whipped out her 'scientific book' on evolution. "Great scholars have written that evolution is false, a theory of the devil." She then proceeded to show me the index:

"Jones, Cecil "MONKEYS AND MAN." "That's a very famous work," she told me.

"Cohan, Geoffrey, "EVOLUTION", " "Another great scholar," said the Jesus lady. Ibid, page 225, and "Ibid," she told me "is a great work."

There was only one possible reply:

"I hear 'Op Cit' is even better," said I. She agreed, saying that she had heard of him.

The Jesus ladies and their children assured me that they'd return. I am sure they will. Maybe, I'll ask them if they could get me a copy of some of Ibid's works. Maybe they'll even take some of the tomatoes.

~Harry Quinlan

Book Review

Some of you may be interested in a book that I came across just recently. It is titled "Religious Schools v. Children's Rights" by James G. Dwyer, and is published by Cornell University, copyright 1998. The author is an assistant professor of law at the University of Wyoming College of Law. I've just started it, but my initial response was one of overwhelming relief and gratitude. As a 'product' of a Catholic parochial school, the Baltimore catechism, the doctrine of absolute papal infallibility, etc., etc., during their 50's heyday, I wish that I could convey to those who were not so abused what the experience was like. I only hope that the public becomes more sensitive to the suffering of millions who were put through that pedagogical madness and its emotionally crippling hell. Dwyer's book and others like it are a solid beginning. The harm done by the Catholic church and its clerical hierarchy consists not only in the horrible instances of outright sexual and physical abuse that were perpetrated against too many, but in its perverse and insidious rituals, teachings and instructional methodology, which insured the destruction of self-esteem, the inculcation of constant fear, shame, guilt and anxiety, and a pervasive attitude of individual insignificance in the face of an always-unattainable but constantly insisted-upon goal of perfection. Dwyer writes primarily as a researcher and attorney, so accordingly his writing focuses more on the few available empirical studies and on the development of applicable legal/ethical standards, but he doesn't neglect to include expressions of the deep emotional/affective aspect of the individual experience. If the church were ever to be made to reimburse not only the victims of its sexual and physical abuses, but also the expenses of thousands who have and are spending years in therapy attempting to undo the psychological and intellectual madness that was inflicted on them as eager, dependent, innocent children, there would be no more church. All the collection baskets in the country couldn't pay for it.

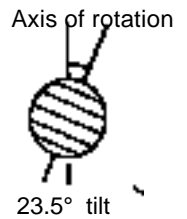
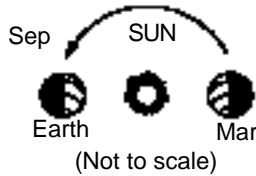
Although Dwyer doesn't mention the therapist Alice Miller (at least she's not listed in the index, though, as I said, I've not finished the book), I would describe her as a passionate child's advocate. Dwyer seems to take her ideas and place them into what he hopes will become a new way of looking at the whole issue of children's rights from a legal perspective. As an attorney, I appreciate his effort.

Needless to say, I have just started my own journey of resolution, so if I seem angry, well for me that's a good sign. This book covers Fundamentalist schools as well.

~Review by R. J. Fields

A Quote to put on your refrigerator

"If abuses are destroyed, man must destroy them. If slaves are freed, man must free them. If new truths are discovered, man must discover them. If the naked are clothed; if the hungry are fed; if justice is done; if labor is rewarded; if superstition is driven from the mind; if the defenseless are protected and if the right finally triumphs, all must be the work of man. The grand victories of the future must be won by man, and by man alone."

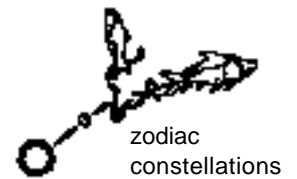



Robert G. Ingersoll, "The

Gods", 1872

The Vernal Equinox

The vernal and autumnal equinoxes occur around March 21st and September 21st respectively. At these times, all parts of the earth's surface receive sunlight for equal lengths of time, namely 12 hours.



As the earth  revolves around the sun, its axis of rotation maintains a 23.5° tilt. This axis, however, also precesses or wobbles like a toy top. It takes 25,800 years for this precession to complete one cycle. An imaginary line, known as the ecliptic, can be drawn across the sky that follows the sun's apparent motion around the earth. The constellations that fall along the ecliptic belong to the zodiac.

Hipparchus of Rhodes, living around 125 BCE, noticed that a constellation lying directly behind the sun, during the vernal equinox, shifts over a long period of time. This shifting is due to the precession of the equinoxes. The vernal equinox was in Pisces when the Christian religion began. To the ancient people, the constellations, and their apparent movements, had serious theological significance. For a fascinating discussion of this idea, see Frank Zindler's column *The Probing Mind* in the June 22 1992 issue of *The American Atheist* magazine.

~ John Koonz

From the Editor



This edition of *The Atheist* very nearly didn't get finished in time. It seems that my computer isn't friendly with the program responsible for the images I planned on using. After spending much time figuring out how to "save" the images from the infidel pc format onto The Atheist, I lost most of the document anyway. Fortunately, with the intercession of St. Norton of the Utility, I was able to resurrect the necessary files. It seems

*A fool says in his heart that there is no god.
A wise person leaves The Atheist where it is sure to be read.*

they had descended into that nameless place in the darkest bowels of the hard drive where unsaved documents go.

Recently, a number of readers have sent me stories, book reviews and essays to include in *The Atheist*. Keep them coming. I can't tell you how much easier it makes my job to have a selection of articles to choose from. Eventually, almost all of it will be included.

~John Koonz, Editor jknz@hotmail.



Your ACA board of directors:

Co-chairs:

Don Rhoades
Kellen Von Houser

Treasurer:

Ray Blevins

Secretary:

Ray Blevins

Board members:

Keith Berka
Sue Osborne
Rodney Florence
Jim Hallamek
John Koonz
Arval Bohn
Arlo Pignotti
Vic Farrow
David Kent

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Cartoon

Paul Koonz © 1998

Announcements

- All atheists are invited to be on The Atheist Experience on March 21. This “**Every Atheist Is On**” episode will be similar to the Winter Solstice show. Come on down to the ACAC studio and be part of the fun!
- ACA members will be participating in the **March for our Families** on Sunday March 21st at the municipal auditorium. This event is in protest of proposed legislation that would prevent homosexuals from adopting children in Texas. The march is endorsed by a number of groups interested in civil liberties. See Rodney Florence for details.
- **ACA Board meetings** are on the second Sunday of the month at 12:00. Board meetings are open to all members.
- Our next **Blood Drive** is on Saturday April 10th at the Texas Regional Blood Center, North Lamar. They're open 8am-2pm. Please consider donating, especially if you have a rare blood type .
- Safe Place's **Walk for Safe Families and Safe Streets** will be on April 18, and ACA will be participating. We will leave from the bagelry to register at 12:00 and march at 2:00. We will be carrying our ACA sign. The walk will be at Wooldridge Park.
- **Products** There are still t-shirts left. Our ACA t-shirts come in two types. One lists a number of famous atheists, the other lists 10 reasons why beer is better than jeezuss. See Don Rhodes for more information. Godless dollars are available now for \$1.50. See Sue Osborne for more information on this and other exciting atheist products.
- Mary Sue Osborne would like very much to hand off the products to another member. If you are interested, please see her as soon as possible.
- **Randalls Donations** Randalls will donate a percentage of the money you spend there to the Atheist Community of Austin. To take advantage of this offer, contact the customer service department of your nearest Randalls. The ACA number is 5158.
- **Weekly Meetings** Sunday Mornings at Hot Jumbo Bagelry, 307 West 5th Street at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings when lectures are not scheduled at Furr's Cafeteria.
- The Atheist is printed on somewhat **recycled** paper!

For more information about any of these coming events, call (512) 371-2911 or e-mail kellenvh@earthlink.net

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR THE ATHEIST COMMUNITY OF AUSTIN, INC.

Last name: _____ First name: _____

Companion's name (if family or couple membership)

Last name: _____ First name: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone : (_____) _____ e-mail address: _____

This is to certify that I am a non-theist, that I have read the "Purpose" of the Atheist Community of Austin, Inc. as stated in the Constitution (below), and that I am in agreement with the principles stated herein. I understand that membership is open only to non-theists.

Purpose

The Atheist Community of Austin is organized as a nonprofit educational corporation to develop and support atheist community; to provide opportunities for socializing and friendship, to promote atheist viewpoints, to encourage positive atheist culture, to defend the First Amendment principle of state/church separation, to oppose discrimination against atheists, and to work with other organizations in pursuit of common goals.

This organization shall operate in an open, democratic manner, without discrimination as to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, nationality, or disability.

The Bylaws to this Constitution are intended to further define and explain the operating procedure of this organization. Changes may be made to the Bylaws when necessary to improve the operation of this organization. Changes to the Bylaws shall not alter the purpose of this organization as set forth in its Constitution.

Check all that apply

I wish to become a member of the Atheist Community of Austin, Inc. Membership fees are \$24.00 per year, but our membership year does not begin until the 1st of March. My prorated membership fee, at \$2.00 per month u n t i l next March, is enclosed.

- I wish to make a tax exempt donation to ACA .
- I only wish to participate in the e-mail group. My e-mail address is above. No fee is required.
- I wish to help ACA save money by receiving The Atheist by e-mail. No fee is required.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to: Atheist Community of Austin, Inc., P.O. Box 3798, Austin, Texas 78764

