

# THE ATHEIST VOICE

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE METROPLEX ATHEISTS  
SEPTEMBER 2007, VOLUME 5, NUMBER 4

SOCAS

## 'State Pledge' rally draws Atheists to Austin



James Hardwick (left) and Randy Word, Metroplex Atheist Vice Chairman (right) joined protesters in Austin. The Texas State/Church Separation Rally was held on Saturday, September 15, 2007 from noon until almost 3pm on the South steps of the Texas State Capitol Building. It was organized by Joe Zamecki, Texas State Director of American Atheists.

The rally had four goals: to speak out for the civil rights of non-religious Americans, to vocally promote the separation of gov-

ernment from religion, to show support for the Croft family in Carrollton who have sued over the moment of silence in their public school and to protest the flurry of religious bills, now religious laws, coming from our current Texas State Legislature.

These goals were certainly met by a wide variety of speakers and their viewpoints expressed from the podium of the rally.

Plans are being made to make as many speeches as possible available on youtube.com.

SOCAS

## Pastor prays for demise of AU staff members following IRS complaint

AMERICAN UNITED

A political pastor in California has urged followers to pray for the demise of staff members of the religious liberty watchdog Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

Americans United asked the Internal Revenue Service to investigate the First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park, Calif., for a potential violation of federal tax law barring electioneering by non-profit groups. Dr. Wiley S. Drake, pastor of the church, issued a press release on church letterhead endorsing Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee and

subsequently offered the endorsement on a church-affiliated radio show.

Instead of responding to Americans United's concern of illegal activity, Drake issued yesterday afternoon a plea to his supporters to join in "imprecatory prayers" (curses) every morning for Americans United and its staff.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, said it is telling that Drake declined to respond to his group's charges of tax law violations.

"Instead of addressing our concerns of illegally melding religion and partisan politics, Dr. Drake has launched an outlandish attack on us," said Lynn. "Call-

ing for curses on us might distract Drake's supporters, but it won't help him with the IRS. I trust the tax agents will investigate Drake's use of church resources to endorse a candidate for public office."

Drake's attack included some florid rhetoric.

"In light of the recent attack from the enemies (sic) of God I ask the children of God to go into action with Imprecatory Prayer," Drake said, in an Aug. 14 press statement issued from the First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park.

*Continued on page 7*

## THE BACKSIDE OF AMERICAN HISTORY

# Why Canada did not get Alaska

ED WALLACE

Looking back on the Civil War, most of us think about the great and horrendous land battles, such as Bull Run or Antietam, Gettysburg or Sherman's march to the sea. But, with the exception of Rhett Butler's admission of being a blockade-runner in the movie *Gone With the Wind*, about the only thing we're taught of maritime warfare is about the battle between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*, both ironclad ships. And even in that case, those sea battles were fought close to shore.

However, most Americans don't realize that our Civil War was fought around the world, or that when it finally drew to a conclusion, we would end up suing other countries for their active participation in our personal, private fight.

Now, most understand that shortly after the start of hostilities, the Union Navy established a blockade around most of the important Southern ports. The idea was that this would block the sale of Confederate cotton overseas, denying the South the funds to purchase consumer goods, medicines and of course, lots of war materiel. But, at the outbreak of the war, the nation's Navy had just a few dozen vessels - not enough to even fight the war, much less fight and blockade the South. So the Union Navy commandeered 600 vessels from our Merchant Marine fleet.

This is interesting: Legally, America believed in the right of the open seas policy, which is fundamentally what we fought the War of 1812 for. But, no matter: In the Civil War, our hard-won standard for the recognition of international waters was thrown out the window.

The South, just to even things out, commissioned warships to raid Northern shipping, and here is where it gets really interesting. Two of the most successful

Southern raiders were the *Florida* and the *Shenandoah*; however, it wasn't our own Southern gentlemen, now in uniform, who commanded or even crewed those ships. No, for the most part, the Confederacy was more than happy to make do with British sailors, who were thrilled with the chance for higher wages and promises of rich rewards if the South won the war.

In July of 1862, the powerful warship the *290*, renamed the *Enrica*, sailed down England's Mersey River, having left Liverpool on its first trial run at sea. At least, that was the public announcement: Once in open waters, the ship sailed to a predetermined point just off the Azores, where it was boarded by Confederate Admiral Raphael Semmes. It also took on English supplied arms, provisions and coal and a new name: Confederate States Ship *Alabama*.

Admiral Semmes took the *Alabama* to the Union Navy and commercial ships, from New York to Java, capturing or sinking no fewer than 82 Union vessels between 1862 and 1864. In fact, British-built ships like the *Alabama* were so successful worldwide that the Union was forced to reflag many of our Merchant Marine ships as foreign vessels to keep them out of harm's way. That also hurt the Union cause in the long run; once the war was over, those reflagged vessels could not be returned to United States registry.

Now, again, the *Alabama* had already done in 82 Union ships, but it didn't meet its end off the coast of North America. No, in 1864, right there in the English Channel,

the *Alabama* met up with the ironclad Union ship, the *Kearsarge*. After a 90-minute battle, Semmes surrendered the *Alabama* to the Union Navy and returned to the South.

The point being made, how many of you knew that Civil War battles were fought worldwide, much less that one took place in the English Channel?

Which brings up the next point, the serious problem between the United States and England over their building these ships for the Confederacy.

It was dealt with by no less than the Assistant Secretary of the Union Navy, Fox. Finally, during the *Alabama's* worldwide reign of terror, Fox ordered the Union Navy to stop at all hazards the Laird ram ships coming out of England.

Now, that in itself would be a violation of international commerce. But the administration felt that England would dread any possibility of a war with the States. So an aide was dispatched to England bearing the message that "Any further fitting out

of ships for the Confederacy would complicate the relations between the two countries in such a manner as to render it difficult to preserve friendship between the two countries."

The threat was unmistakable: Any more ships, and it's war.

Making matters worse, our Congress passed a privateering bill; it actually made piracy legal again on the open seas - as long as the captured goods flowed to the North. Many British ships were boarded and looted by U.S. law.

*Most Americans don't realize that our Civil War was fought around the world, or that when it finally drew to a conclusion, we would end up suing other countries for their active participation in our personal, private fight.*

## 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](mailto:director@metroplexatheists.org)

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## About

Metroplex Atheists is affiliated with both American Atheists and Atheist Alliance International and is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

In this case, with the situation spiraling out of control, the British government on April 5, 1863, ordered the seizure of the *Alexandra*, yet another raider ship destined for the South. Want some more fun stuff? At the time, Great Britain and Russia were involved in what was termed the Great Game, a virtual pre-play of the 20th century's Cold War. That's right, Russia and Britain were playing international political chess, parrying and blocking each other's moves into sovereign countries all over the world.

And in this period, Russia thought, "Well, if England is giving ships to the Confederacy, we'll help out the Union cause." In September of 1863, a number of Russian warships under the command of Rear Admiral Lisovskii arrived in New York Harbor for their new assignment, while a squadron under Rear Admiral Popov put into San Francisco just a month later. And the only thing that kept Russia from becoming a fighting ally with the North in the war was that England, playing the Great Game, got France and Austria to tell the Russians to bug out, or risk a war with them.

Russia took the cue and left in April of 1864. Of course, one day the war ended, as all wars do. And immediately American ship owners, the same ones whose vessels the Union Navy had confiscated and in many cases lost, started screaming for financial restitution, not from our government but from England. One told the New York press, "These raiders were build of English oak in

an English yard, armed with English guns, manned by English crew and sunk in the English Channel."

On April 13, 1869, with tempers no cooler, Senator Sumner of Massachusetts delivered a speech in Congress demanding \$2 billion in compensation for the damages done by British-built ships during the Civil War. This was totally out of the question, and the British Navy and Army were actually stronger than ours in that year, but England decided to go to arbitration on the issue. At the Geneva Tribunal of 1872, Britain agreed to pay us \$15.5 million for its transgression.

And that, my friends, is the story - of how Alaska came to be part of the United States. Remember, England and Russia were in the middle of the 19th century's version of the Cold War. We were mad at England for building ships for the Confederacy. So, when Alaska, then known as Russian America, was up for bids, England would have been the logical choice to purchase the land. After all, it would have completed Canada from coast to coast.

But Russia wasn't about to let England have Alaska. They were in the middle of the Great Game, vying for territory; and so it was logical for Russia to offer Alaska to us, as we in turn were having our own problems with Britain. One of Seward's underlying thoughts in making this purchase was to keep England from packaging it into Canada.

And that's how we came to buy Alaska, because the Civil War was really fought all over the world.

## Metroplex Atheists New Business Meeting Time

**METROPLEX ATHEISTS HAS MOVED THE TIME OF ITS REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING TO 1:00 P.M. THE MEETINGS ARE STILL HELD ON THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH AT HUMANIST HALL.**

**HUMANIST HALL IS CURRENTLY LOCATED AT:  
 7100 BOULEVARD 26 (GRAPEVINE HIGHWAY), SUITE 304,  
 RICHLAND HILLS, TX**

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

## Mother Teresa – Is she one of us?

William McEwen  
METROPLEX ATHEISTS

It's been revealed that Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, better known as the revered holy Mother Teresa, (1910-1997) was not the person we thought she was. The woman known as the goodest of the do-gooders seriously doubted the existence of the god she so diligently served.

Mother Teresa repeatedly lamented the lack of god's presence in her life, and referred to Jesus Christ as "the absent one."

This is all documented in Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light, a collection of her letters to friends, just published by Doubleday.

In one letter, Mother Teresa tells a friend of a speech she gave: "I spoke as if my heart was in love with god - tender personal love. If you were [there], you would have said, 'What hypocrisy.'"

The book's editor, Rev. Brian Kolodiejchukis, is director of the Mother Teresa of Calcutta Center ([www.mohter-teresa.org](http://www.mohter-teresa.org)) and was a longtime friend of Mother Teresa. With friends like Rev. K, who needs enemies? Mother Teresa wanted these letters kept private, and asked that they be destroyed after her death. They weren't.

Rev. K's motivation is confusing, since he is at the front of the line of those pushing for Mother T's sainthood. With spin worthy of American politicians, Rev. Kolodiejchukis told The New York Daily News that Mother Teresa's strong doubts make her an even bigger saint.

It's possible that Rev. Kolodiejchukis wants to jump on a popular bandwagon. With freethinking books breaking out as big time best sellers - atheist authors Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris are often at the top of the charts - perhaps the reverend and the

Catholic Church want to get in on a new trend. Atheist thought makes profits in today's America.

Come Be My Light is blockbuster stuff, containing 40 letters covering 66 years. In a letter addressed to Jesus, Mother Teresa confessed, "I have no faith." (I'm wondering how many stamps were placed on that envelope, and whether it was delivered.)

When I speak to religious groups, they are sometimes surprised when I tell them that disbelief in gods is not a choice. I cannot believe the Christian (or any other) god exists any more than you can believe the family dog will rise from the floor, fly about, and sing Let it Be in Portuguese.

In the book, Mother Teresa covers similar ground: "If there be god - please forgive me - when I try to raise my thoughts to heaven - there is such convicting emptiness."

There's no there there. Like so many other non-religious people, Mother Teresa tried to believe, but couldn't.

With this new information, I'm struggling with who Mother Teresa was. An agnostic? An Atheist? And further, are we non-believers ready to claim her as one of our own? Not easily. We could rule her out by some sort of height restriction (Mother Teresa was 4' 10"), but that would be dishonest.

It is much easier to rule her out by her actions. Though she wasn't filled with Christian spirit, her actions were guided by her interpretations of the scriptures.

We are concerned about Mother Teresa's long list of crimes committed in the name of religion. Yesterday, a Catholic friend told me, "We Catholics

are all about the suffering."

Yes. Problem is, Mother Teresa thought suffering was noble. She demanded no relief whatsoever for the suffering. No pain killers for the dying patients in her musty, dirt-floored clinics. When sick herself, however, she jetted off to the western world, where she was treated in the finest hospitals.

Yes, Mother Teresa was a woman of double standards. She campaigned for Ireland to continue its laws against divorce, yet in the same year, she told The Ladies Home Journal that she was happy her friend Princess Diana had divorced out of an unhappy marriage.

Mother Teresa doubted, yet she continued to live her life in service to the Christian god. Did her doubts disqualify her from an invitation to heaven? She herself wrote, in

1962: "If I ever become a saint - I will surely be one of darkness. I will continually be absent from heaven."

Do the revelations of Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light lead us to conclude that since her death in 1997, the diminutive nun has been burning in the fires of hell, serving the dark master?

Assuming that hell hasn't frozen over since the book was published, probably not. In June, Monsignor Michael Servinsky of Pennsylvania was interviewed by USA Today to defend the Catholic Church practice of keeping men and women on the rolls indefinitely, still counting them as Catholics even after they leave the church. Servinsky said: "You may not practice, you may not believe. You may not belong to a parish. But technically, you're always a Catholic."

*"If there be  
god - please  
forgive me -  
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such convicting  
emptiness."*

**Mother Theresa**

## Are you searching for Atheists on the internet?

Join in the discussions at the DFW Atheist Talk group.  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/DFWatheistTalk/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DFWatheistTalk/)

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

## Chairman addresses crowd at State Capitol Mall

Terry McDonald

METROPLEX ATHEIST

*The following is a transcript of the message I delivered at a SOCAS rally in Austin on September 15th.*

Good afternoon non-believers...and believers...and those who have not yet determined whether they believe or not.

My name is Terry McDonald and I have the distinct honor and profound privilege of being the Chairman of Metroplex Atheists, a grand bunch of men and women atheists, both formal and informal, who each Wednesday evening creates a soothingly stimulating oasis of rationality in a otherwise vast desert wasteland of blind faith. Would those members of Metroplex Atheists representing our membership who couldn't be here today please stand, hold up your hands and be recognized.

We Metroplex Atheists seek to educate ourselves so that we can clear our minds of those persistent bits of phony supernatural culture most of us were indoctrinated with at an early age and with which we have been constantly bombarded throughout our lives. We do this so that we can experience more clearly, and more fully, the wonder and the magnificence of our 100% natural world.

And we work to educate other truth-seekers that visit us or join us, about what it means to be an atheist. Because while people of faith appear to prefer comfort over truth...many atheists know that in seeking truth, comfort comes to us...almost uninvited...and as we reflect on that comfort, other things begin to creep in...joy, wonder, reverence and respect for the natural world...and we begin to experience that world in a way that a believer in the supernatural just can't begin to understand or appreciate.

So we reach out to those believers to educate them about who we are and why we embrace the concept of a natural universe. We want to show them that we are, except for our naturalist worldview, just like them. We lead normal lives as patriotic citizens, workers with families to support, moral people who are as good hearted and generous as any religious population. Oh, and no, we

don't have horns and we don't have pointy tails. And as we seek acceptance from believers, we also extend our acceptance to them. Because this is the United States of America and we are all free to embrace that which we have accepted is true.

These are the things that our noble band of Metroplex Atheists do...and we do all these things under the stealth illusion that we are simply sitting around, sipping beer

And yet at the top of the purposes of our organization, our "to do" list as it were, is to educate ourselves and the general public about the nature and vital importance of separation of governments and religions as required by the first amendment of the United States Constitution.

Because some of our brothers and sisters in this country who are believers in the supernatural (and I hope what I am about to say doesn't apply to anyone here), they won't read history to learn of the truly awful things that happen to governments and to religions and to people when the church begins to control the state. Or perhaps they read the history but won't see past their beliefs to accept the lessons that history teaches. Or perhaps their hearts have become so hardened by the hate their faith has taught them that they don't care who gets hurt, only that their own belief-centered intolerance becomes the law of the land.

What we'd like believers to learn is that, although they see no harm in "under god" in our pledge or "in god we trust" on our coins, we view these things very differently.

Where they see school children saying simple prayers, we see intimidating indoctrination. Where they see an innocuous bow to their alleged creator, we see insidious propaganda moving us slowly towards disaster. Where they see a smooth wall of uniformity, we see the hole in the dyke.

And we know, without someone putting their metaphorical finger in that hole, it will grow, through the ignorance and apathy of the general population, through the error and disrespect of a misguided judiciary and through the active expanding of the hole by those who want the dyke destroyed, so that we will all become inundated with the religiousness that is sup-

posed to, according to Thomas Jefferson, remain on the other side of that wall.

Another thing we would like believers to become aware of is that when religion takes over, the heretic is treated no better than the atheist. It is fortunate for us that many, perhaps most, believers realize and understand this. Many recognize that the question then becomes, whose church will rule the state.

But some say "It can't happen here." When I hear that, I am reminded of a scene in Katherine Anne Porter's book "Ship of Fools". On a German ship before the Second World War, a group of German Jews are discussing their alarm at the rise of Nazis. One of the older, wealthy merchants laughs as he asks, "What can Hitler do, kill us all?" Those of us who read history and take it seriously never say, "It can't happen here".

So we, at Metroplex Atheists, seek to meet with believers who share our concerns, so we can put aside our differences and work together to keep our beloved country free for all, religious or not. And we seek to alert believers, and perhaps even non-believers, who can't see the alarmingly increasing size of the hole in the dyke. And we seek to educate every one about the history of profound suffering experienced by all people when religious law becomes civil law.

And if history is ignored we have but to look in the present to see and hear of the abuses experienced by citizens of those countries where religion is law. The question then becomes, whose church law creates heretics to be persecuted by the state.

Our founding fathers created a document that has served us well for over two hundred years. They were well aware of the dangers of holy wars because the recent history of their own homeland was one of destruction, suffering and death caused by religions sects trying to gain and hold political power. (Sound familiar?)

They joined together to create freedom. Let us join together to maintain that freedom.

Our Metroplex Atheists banner says it all: Religious Freedom for All...Se pa rate church and state.

Thank you for inviting us today and thank you for your attention.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# Commandments run afoul of justice system

John Hattan  
METROPLEX ATHEISTS

*The following appeared as a guest column in the Saginaw (Michigan) News, Aug. 20, 2007.*

The Dallas/Fort Worth-based Metroplex Atheists is watching the antics of Saginaw County Board of Commissioners member Patrick Wurtzel, after being alerted by former Saginaw resident William McEwen.

In your Aug. 9 story, "Religious fight looms," Wurtzel said he wants to post the 10 Commandments at the Saginaw County Governmental Center because they form the historical foundation of the criminal justice system.

We're disappointed that you didn't ask Wurtzel a few obvious questions, such as how each commandment works into our laws.

The first commandment (presuming the most commonly used Protestant set) is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," but the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights clearly state that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion and that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office.

Furthermore, I can find no laws in effect or under discussion that require worship of the Judeo-Christian god. How exactly can a commandment be considered a "foundation of the criminal justice system" if it is clearly contradicted by our own Constitution and cannot be enforced as a law?

The second commandment forbids the creation or worship of any graven images. The freedom to create a graven image would clearly fall under the freedom of

expression clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. And worshipping a graven image is, as I pointed out in my statement about the first commandment, not forbidden but is a right guaranteed to us.

If I purchase a slab of marble at my local rock shop and carve upon it the image of Quetzalcoatl, I have broken no laws, yet the second commandment states that this should be absolutely illegal, what with it being the foundation of the criminal justice system.

The third commandment forbids the taking of the name of the lord thy god in vain, but such a commandment also runs afoul of the First Amendment, specifically the guarantee that Congress shall pass no law abridging the freedom of speech.

Best I can tell, I am free to take the name of the Judeo-Christian god (or any other god or spectral being) in any spirit I choose without running afoul of any law, despite this commandment being foundational.

The fourth commandment forbids working on the Sabbath. While there used to be some laws forbidding the sale of certain products on Sundays, those laws appear to be gone save for a couple of relics regarding liquor and car sales in some states. Even so, I am aware of no law requiring me to rest on Sunday or any other day that should be declared the Sabbath. How exactly can such a commandment be considered to be foundational to our laws if there are no laws that require it to be respected?

The fifth commandment requires us to honor our fathers and mothers. While respect for parents can be considered honorable in the case of good parents who deserve respect, it's certainly not some-

thing that has translated into law. We have laws on our books that require restaurants to post Braille signs outside their bathrooms, but we have no laws requiring us to honor parents despite it being supposedly foundational to our criminal justice system.

The sixth commandment forbids killing. While we certainly have well-enforced laws on our books forbidding the killing of people, we also have laws on our books that detail the methods by which the government itself can kill a person who has committed a heinous crime. This appears to be a double-standard regarding enforcement of the sixth commandment. We forbid it for private citizens, but we allow it to be done by the state. Is the government itself immune from having to uphold the commandments that are claimed to themselves be the foundation of our criminal justice system?

The seventh commandment forbids adultery. While avoidance of adultery, like respecting parents, is a good guideline, it hardly can be considered to be foundational to our laws. Have you ever seen a bill introduced in Saginaw County that forbids adultery? How many citizens charged with adultery are in Saginaw's jail?

The eighth and ninth commandments forbid stealing and perjury. And, finally, I think we can declare that we've found a couple of commandments that are foundational to our laws. Although I really don't think that burglary and armed robbery suddenly would be legalized if we found a really old version of the Bible that showed the "do not steal" clause to be a misprint, and I doubt that stealing and perjury were considered acceptable



*Metroplex Atheists:  
No fire and  
brimstone required*

[www.metroplexatheists.org](http://www.metroplexatheists.org)

behavior before the 10 Commandments were written.

Finally we get to the 10th and most puzzling commandment, the prohibition against coveting. Setting aside the fact that wives and slaves are included in the list of "property," this commandment is not only unconstitutional but it also runs counter to the very principles about which our country is founded.

In December 2006, when President Bush stated "I encourage you all to go shopping" in order to keep our economy strong, he was encouraging us to covet. If my daughter wants a Nintendo Wii, it's because she's played it over at her friend's house and

wants one of our own.

If I covet my neighbor's shiny new Hummer H3, it encourages me to purchase one of my own. If not for coveting, capitalism is an ideology without worth. Societies that view coveting as a vice are societies that embrace the communist ideal where coveting is considered obsolete in favor of people being taken care of according to their needs and not their wants.

Anyone who thinks that coveting a neighbor's goods is some kind of ideal clearly is not in tune with the American dream. And such a commandment can only be considered anathema to the criminal justice system, not a cornerstone of it.

Of the 10 Commandments themselves, only 2-1/2 of them (specifically the prohibitions against killing, theft, and perjury) are in any way enforceable as laws. The rest are divided among the unenforceable (the prohibition of adultery and the requirement that we honor parents and rest on the Sabbath), the unconstitutional (prohibition against worshipping other gods, graven images and using the lord's name in vain) and the ones that run absolutely counter to the capitalistic ideal (the prohibition of coveting).

Historical foundation of the criminal justice system? Best I can tell, they are about the farthest things from it.

**SOCAS**

Archbishop seeks to convert catholic schools to secular charters

**AMERICANS UNITED**

The Catholic Archdiocese of Washington is looking to the District of Columbia to turn eight of its financially draining Catholic schools into public charter schools.

It's a move that, if agreed to by D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty and the city's charter school leaders, would further burden the city's already deeply troubled public school system while helping to ease the Catholic archdiocese's money woes.

The Washington Post reported that Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl was told last year that the archdiocese's inner-city schools were "no longer financially viable." After months of contemplation, he decided to pitch the idea of stripping the most financially troubled schools of their religious identities and turning them over to the city to be operated as charter schools.

"It's heartache to know that we wouldn't have these schools any longer," Wuerl told The Post.

But that heartache is likely to be soothed by the conversion of the schools to taxpayer-supported charters. According to the recommendation, which Wuerl has presented to the mayor and the chair of the D.C. Public School Charter Board, the eight ailing schools would receive operating and facilities funds from the District and the charters would remain in the archdiocese's buildings and pay rent to the

church. Additionally, the archdiocese would select the secular entity to operate the charter schools.

Church officials told the newspaper that although specific religious references would be yanked from the schools' curricula, the schools would still offer "strong values."

The chairman of the D.C. charters board told The Post that the board was "open to the possibility."

D.C. public school officials should proceed with great caution. As noted by the Chicago public schools chief, Arne Duncan, turning religious schools into secular ones "can be difficult." Duncan said there are "church-state issues," but they can be overcome if officials try to be innovative and "think outside the box."

D.C. is not the only city that the Catholic hierarchy has turned to for help. For an array of reasons, the church's parochial schools have seen years of declining enrollments and in a number of cities some of their schools have closed. If Wuerl's recommendation to convert a number of the Washington archdiocese's schools into charter schools proceeds, it's likely that similar recommendations in other cities will be forthcoming.

Before city officials offer to tap public school budgets to help out the Catholic Church's ailing system, they should ensure that church-state separation principles will be followed.

**IRS – From page 1**

"Especially against Americans United for Separation (sic) of Church and State."

"The righteous have dominion," Drake said, "but only through imprecatory prayer against the ungodly."

Drake singled out two Americans United staff members whose names appeared as contacts on the press release. The pastor's missive said the imprecatory prayers should "specifically target" Americans United Communications Director Joe Conn or Communications Associate Jeremy Leaming.

"They are those who lead the attack," Drake said.

In a message left in Lynn's voicemail, Drake said he had been urging his supporters to take similar action against Lynn for many years and would continue to do so.

In a section of his press release called "How To Pray," Drake includes a long list of biblical citations that call on God to smite enemies. For example, the alleged enemies of God "shall be judged," "condemned," and "his days be few..." Additionally, supporters should pray that the enemy's "children be fatherless, and his wife a widow," and "his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek bread also out of their desolate places."

"Let there be none to extend mercy unto him," Drake quoted, "Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children."

## EDUCATION SERIES

# How the calendar got that way

Lee Carter  
ATHEIST ALLIANCE

In the days of the Roman Republic, the calendar was numbered from the founding of the city of Rome-which according to the present calendar, would be 753 BC. And March 15th-the Ides of March, was designated as New Year's Day. However, this was a lunisolar calendar of only ten moons, or 'months'-which totaled 355 days. So unless otherwise corrected, the months would have a tendency to rotate throughout the year and get completely out of sync with the seasons. Consequently, an extra month was inserted from time to time, so the calendar would bear some relation to the position of the sun. Unfortunately, the insertion of these intercalendary days was left up to a committee of politicians, so it was rare for any two years to be exactly the same length. And specific days of the year bore only a tenuous relationship to solar time.

Greece, and all of northern Europe, operated on a solar calendar, with the new year starting on the winter solstice. When the Romans invaded Greece in the 5th century BC, they realized the advantages of a solar calendar. In 153 BE, New Year's Day was moved to January first, since Janus was an important god in the Roman pantheon, and the god of doorways and new beginnings.

Finally, in 46 BC, Julius Caesar switched from a lunar to a solar calendar. He divided the year into 365 days, with

twelve months, which alternatively had 30 or 31 days, except February, which was considered an unlucky month, so it had only 29 days. But every four years it lengthened to a full 30 days. This gave an average year 365 1/4 days. New Years were still left on January first. One of the new months was named July, in honor of

days than necessary. So he shortened February to 28 days and extended August to 31 days. Then to avoid having three months in a row with 31 days, one day was taken from September and November and given to October and December.

The major festival of the year, in ancient Rome, was called the "Saturnalia," and it centered around the winter solstice. According to the Roman Republican calendar, it began on December 17th and lasted eight days (one Roman week). But since the Republican Calendar varied in length, it seems probable that the actual solstice usually fell sometime between the middle of December and the first of January. When Julius instituted his first calendar in 46 BCE, the year had crept as much as 80 days out of step with the sun. So he added a total of 90 days. According to William M. O'Neil (*Time and the Calendars*, 1978), this set December 25 as the winter solstice, March 25 as the vernal equinox, June 24 as the summer solstice, and September 24 as the autumnal equinox.

But the Julian calendar had an error of eleven minutes and a few seconds. The tropical year is actually shorter than the 365 1/4 days he had established - which would cause the four celestial corners of the year to slip backwards by one day every 130 years.

In the third century AD, the Emperor Aurelian established another official holiday called "Sol Invicti" - meaning unconquered sun, in honor of the Syrian



Julius Caesar. But when Julius died, he was succeeded by the superstitious and egocentric Augustus Caesar, who named the extra month after himself, and then ruined the logical arrangement by declaring that his month should have just as many days as Julius' month. And the unlucky month of February had more

## Looking for speakers to discuss Atheism?

To arrange a speaking engagement, please email the Metroplex Atheist Director:  
[director@metroplexatheists.org](mailto:director@metroplexatheists.org)

sun god, "Sol," and also in honor of himself, since the emperors were regarded as the divine incarnation of Apollo. This holiday was held on December 24 and 25, and it more or less established December 25 as the official solstice.

All other religions that worshipped sun gods also accepted December 25 as a fixed date for their celebrations. The earliest Christians assumed that Christ was born and, many years later, was resurrected on the same day - March 25 - which was assumed to be the vernal equinox.

Later Christians celebrated the birth of Christ on January 6, along with the festival of Isis. By the fourth century, many Christians were referring to December 25 as the day of the "unconquered son," in defiance of the emperor, and January 6 was then called "Epiphany," when either the magi were supposed to have visited or Christ was baptized, or maybe both.

In 325 AD, which is when the Catholic church was officially organized, it decreed that the resurrection of Christ should be celebrated at the beginning of

spring, when all life was renewed. And the beginning of spring was determined by the vernal equinox. But they noticed that, by then, the equinox had crept backwards from March 25 to March 21. So they re-established March 21 as the new, official equinox.

That, in turn, would set the date for "Easter" - named after "Oestre", the goddess of fertility. This means that the other four corners of the year would also have crept backwards by four days. And the winter solstice would then have shifted from December 25th to the 21st.

However, it was another 25 years before Christmas was established. In 350 AC, Pope Julius I decreed that the nativity should be celebrated on the same day as all other sun gods, namely, December 25.

Certainly he would have realized that the solstice no longer fell on the 25th. But by then the celebration of the nativity on the 25th had already become a well-established tradition in Rome.

Many other churches, however, did not want to be associated with the pagan

religions; and to this day the Eastern Orthodox church celebrates the birth of Christ on January 7 - the day after Epiphany.

In the fourth century, Emperor Constantine established our seven-day week-based on Jewish tradition.

In the sixth century, Pope John Counted backward to the presumed date of Christ's birth, calculated from the reign of Pontius Pilate, and renumbered all the years in history as BC and AD ("Before Christ" and "Anno Domini," meaning "In the Year of Our Lord"). The year 753 AUC (ab urbe condita, meaning after the founding of Rome) was then called 1 AD. BC and AD are now being replaced, at least by non-Christians with BCE (before the common era) and CE (of the common era).

Throughout the early Middle Ages, most of Europe disregarded Roman practices and continued to start the year with the presumed equinox - March 25. England, however, retained the practice of starting the year on the presumed solstice - December 25.

*WWII & Korea:*  
James Hardwick (Ret), Navy

*Korea:*  
Chris Gregory, Air Force

*Iraq:*  
Brian McIntosh (Ret), Marines  
Shawn Ruzek, Marines  
Deanne Dice

To the 'Atheists in foxholes'  
proudly serving the United States:  
Thank you for your unselfish  
sacrifice so that we may  
all live in a safer world.

*w w w . a t h e i s t f o x h o l e s . o r g*

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

# Will gift from god hold up to a simple test?

John Blanton

NORTH TEXAS SKEPTICS

*This article appeared in the August 2007 issue of the North Texas Skeptic. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of John Blanton and the North Texas Skeptics.*

Skeptics, this isn't fun anymore.

Rosemary Hunter contacted us by e-mail and claimed she could win our \$12,000 Paranormal Challenge award for a demonstration of paranormal abilities. Among other things, she claimed that God spoke to her mind and would enable her to know what words I might write on a piece of paper. Naturally we were skeptical.

Rosemary was eager to come to Dallas for a preliminary test, which we require before we will engage in a formal test for the prize. We do this so we don't have the experience of setting up a carefully-controlled test and writing out a \$12,000 check in advance, only to have a claimant show up empty handed.

This precaution has proved beneficial in the past. Readers will recall that four years ago Russell Shipp told us he could move small objects with his mind.\* Russell lived in New Braunfels, Texas, a 250-mile drive from Dallas, but he was willing to come up to Dallas, twice, to show his stuff. He attended one of our monthly meetings and gave us a quite unconvincing demonstration. A compact disk (CD) suspended by a thread didn't seem to us to obey his mental commands.

We arranged a more controlled test for a later date, and Russell returned for a follow-up. This time the results were more conclusive. A CD suspended by a thread, but also enclosed in a transparent container to allow viewing but to block air currents, did not move at all. If only the stock market were that stable. Based on this test we dismissed Russell from further consideration for the prize.

Evaluating Rosemary promised to be more daunting. She lives in Cleveland, Ohio, more than a 250-mile drive, for sure. Even so, she was eager to come to Dallas and test for the prize. To make matters more challenging, I'm not in Dallas. I'm out in Salt Lake City on an extended business trip, making it problematic for me to meet Rosemary in Dallas.

No problem. Rosemary agreed to come to Salt Lake City for a test. It turns out she already had plans to come this way. She was also scheduling a test with James Underdown of the Center for Inquiry-West in Los Angeles, and we planned to have her stop over for a few hours in Salt Lake City.

Rosemary originally proposed that I write 10 words on paper. She would then speak the words in sentences. Call me skeptical, but this proposal seemed suspicious. If Rosemary spoke the words to me, then she could judge my reaction and possibly home in on the correct choice of words. My counter proposal was for Rosemary to write her guesses on paper outside my view. So, the deal was struck. Rose-

mary's flight would stop over in Salt Lake City, and we would meet at a McDonald's restaurant. Then I had time to consider.

What could possibly go wrong? Maybe this was an elaborate hoax, and "Rosemary" didn't really exist. For a long time following we would endure Rosemary's boasts on the Internet and elsewhere. The headlines would be something like, "Stupid skeptics fall for the old 'Your shoe's untied' scam."

It could be worse. Rosemary could be a skilled magician set to fool an unwary skeptic with a standard mind reading trick. Or she could be completely unhinged and prone to violence against evil skeptics when she does not get her way.

The day of destiny arrived, and I prepared for the worst.

Apparently I have become too cynical in my old age, because Rosemary turned out to be a refreshing surprise. Rather than a scheming sharpie set to scam us of the prize, she is a pleasant, unpretentious woman of 35, and she honestly believes in her powers, which she says come from god. Sitting with Rosemary at a McDonald's booth, I briefly probed her for her beliefs and motivations.

Did she "try this at home" before coming all the way to Utah?

She had, and she had been completely successful. She had no concerns about her abilities. She was 100 percent accurate.

It occurred to me to run a simple test before I got down to writing 10 words on a piece of paper. Rosemary was agreeable,



**TEMPTED?**  
[www.metroplexatheists.org](http://www.metroplexatheists.org)



Rosemary Hunter (left) came from Cleveland, OH to test for the North Texas Skeptics Paranormal Challenge. John Blanton (right) met Ms. Hunter in Salt Lake City, UT for a preliminary interview.

John Blanton

so I got out my pen and cupped my hand over my pad of paper. This would not be an ultimate test, because it provided the greatest opportunity for defeat by a skilled magician. I gave it the college try.

As Rosemary watched, I poised my pen behind my free hand and wrote. Knowing a little about some magicians' tricks, I pretended to write more letters than I actually wrote. That's OK. The rules didn't prohibit it. When I finished I had written "WALK." Then I clapped my hand down on the word and kept it there. For as long as it took.

Rosemary took her on pen and paper pad and concentrated. While she concentrated I fixed my gaze elsewhere-anywhere besides toward where Rosemary was writing.

Skeptics, I have to say I got very familiar with the rental company's sign outside McDonald's window.

Finally, Rosemary was done, and she showed me. She had written "McDonald's."

What made her think of "McDonald's" I will never figure out. Anyhow, she had showed me hers, so I showed her mine.

She was dumfounded. Obviously this was completely unsuspected, and she told me so. She said she had never experienced a failure in this kind of demonstration.

Two times is a charm, so I offered her another chance, and she agreed. I went

through the same process, this time writing "OCEAN." We skeptics like to keep it simple.

Once again Rosemary concentrated and wrote, and I began to fall in love with the rental company sign.

Rosemary finished her word, and I showed her mine. She scratched out her word and wrote on the pad "I Can Not Believe This." I could.

At that point Rosemary conceded defeat completely. No, she did not want to waste my time doing a test with 10 words. She was done and she apologized for wasting my time.

Actually, Rosemary did not waste my time. I reminded her that this is what we do in the NTS. Members, including the Challenge underwriters, readily commit themselves to considerable time and expense exploring issues relating to the "paranormal." She was the one who made the ultimate commitment by flying out to Utah (and California) to work with us skeptics.

We had some time to kill, so I used the opportunity to get behind her story.

She said she had done this test back in Cleveland. And she had 100 percent success.

Who did she work with before? Were these friends or relatives?

Two friends-people she has known for

about a year and a half. No they did not go to the same church. Rosemary attended the Word Church, a "spiritual" church back in Cleveland, and her friends were spiritual, but they did not necessarily attend a church.

Cynic that I am, a concern began to form in my mind. How could she have complete success with her two "friends" but fail equally completely under real-world conditions?

Delicately, I inquired, did her friends see Rosemary's words before they showed her their "responses"? It's possible that's how it went. I envisioned a hoax too cruel for words. Would two otherwise civilized people employ tricks to convince an acquaintance she had paranormal powers? Would two such people be in for a real butt-kicking afterward?

Rosemary and I parted, and she continued on to Los Angeles. I later contacted James Underdown to inquire about her test with him. He finally got back to me. Rosemary went to Los Angeles, but something came up, and she had to skip out on the test. I'm thinking she has gone back to Cleveland to look up some old friends.

See "Mind over matter" in *The North Texas Skeptic*, May 2003:

[www.ntskeptics.org/2003/2003may/may2003.htm#mind](http://www.ntskeptics.org/2003/2003may/may2003.htm#mind)

# Nuts in the news

**Chuck Norris: Too many blows to the head?**

In a June 11 column for World Net Daily, Texas resident and B-actor Chuck Norris said if he were president, he would "tattoo an American flag with the words 'In God We Trust' on the forehead of every atheist." What a classy guy.

**Paine an atheist?**

Michael Medved -- talk show host, movie critic, and wanna-be historian, got it wrong on his Aug. 21 show. While interviewing author David Klinghoffer, Medved claimed that America's founding father Thomas Paine was an atheist. Medved appears to have trouble making the distinction between atheist and deist. In *The Age of Reason*, Paine's scathing book about organized religion, on the first page, Paine wrote: "I believe in one god and no more, and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy." We have e-mailed Medved repeatedly about this error, and at press time, we are still awaiting a response and a correction.

**Ah, isn't it good, Norwegian nut**

In August, Norway's Princess Maertha Louise opened a school for students who want to learn how to get in contact with angels. For \$2,100 per semester, the self-proclaimed clairvoyant's school will teach students how to contact angels, and also allow them to explore alternative medical therapies. Responding to criticism, the princess said, "I'm glad I wasn't born 200 years ago, because I surely would have been burned at the stake long ago."

**Exhibitionist priest**

In June, Father Robert Whipkey was ticketed for jogging nude at a public high school track in Frederick, Colo. The Catholic priest, who also walked home without putting on any clothing, told police that exercising nude is more comfortable since he is overweight.

It has also been revealed that in 1999, the priest was seen naked at summer camp by 11-year-old boys. Catholics claimed it was all an innocent incident, but the archdiocese of Denver said Whipkey "immediately entered therapy regarding his personal issues," and that therapy continued for several years.

**Potty-mouthed priest resigns**

Geoff Baron resigned Aug. 15 as dean of St. Patrick Cathedral in Melbourne, Australia. His resignation follows a fury of controversy after he was caught on tape insulting and swearing at teens who were skating at the cathedral entrance. Baron's resignation does not impact his standing in the Catholic church. He is free to serve at other churches and still perform mass. The popular video of the potty mouthed priest in action can be seen at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQAfalqo340](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQAfalqo340)

**Shoe-bomber expects help from god**

Remember Richard Reid? He's the Moslem to blame for all of us having to remove our shoes at airports. Reid is serving a life sentence in a Colorado prison for trying to blow up an American Airlines jet in 2001 with explosives hidden in his shoes. In August he told the British newspaper *The Daily Mirror*, "I had a couple of good dreams about my situation changing for the better," and that god will set him free.

**Let's ALL pray to Allah?**

Catholic bishop Martinus Muskens wants muslims and Christians to get along. On Aug. 16, Muskens was quoted by the Associated Press, saying, "Shouldn't we all say that from now on we will name god Allah? What does god care what we call him? It is

our problem." We'll keep our eyes on Bishop Muskens. Who knows what he'll suggest next? Sunday Mass at mosques?

**Why didn't god support HomeBanc?**

Atlanta-based HomeBanc Corporation, a mortgage lender, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in August. The company was a 100 percent faith-based operation. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, "executives opened company-wide gatherings and internal meetings with Christian prayers. Every branch office kept a chaplain on call. Most of HomeBanc's 450 loan officers had no prior experience in the business. Many were local church leaders or family members and friends referred by HomeBanc staff."

A day after bankruptcy filing, HomeBanc fired most of its 1,100 employees, closed its 22 branches, and shut down its 129 self-serve kiosks.

Patrick S. Flood, HomeBanc's CEO, left the company in January with a \$5 million severance package. He plans to start a similar business. "When Jesus got on the cross, people at the time thought that he failed because he died and the ministry ended," Flood told *The Wall Street Journal*. "But people around him have cascaded it into the greatest movement in history. The company being a financial failure doesn't mean the work has ended."

**Another minister pilfers offerings**

Round Rock, Texas pastor Donald "Roddy" Clyde, 48, turned himself in to authorities on Aug. 15. According to the *Austin American Statesman*, Clyde confessed to stealing at least \$500,000 from



Fellowship at Forest Creek church. Clyde, who had been senior pastor of the church since 1992, admitted using the church's bank accounts and credit cards to purchase land, horses, and vacations. He resigned from the church on Aug. 13.

### Church deacon charged in bar fight

KXAS-TV in Dallas reported that aggravated assault charges were filed in Oklahoma in August against Allen Beckett. Beckett is a church deacon, and apparently a die-hard University of Oklahoma fan. Beckett didn't take kindly to Brian Thomas, who had the audacity to wear a University of Texas T-shirt in a bar where Beckett was present to, according to his attorney, play darts.

Beckett's attorney, Billy Bock, claimed Beckett "said something in joking fashion to the guy about his Texas T-shirt." Words were exchanged, then Beckett attacked Thomas. Warning: It gets graphic here: According to the police report, Thomas ended up with a torn scrotum with partially exposed testicles.

### Dog killer pulls a Paris Hilton

On Aug. 27, NFL quarterback Michael Vick pleaded guilty to charges he engaged in illegal dog fighting and killing dogs. After the hearing, Vick apologized on live television and added, "Through this situation, I found Jesus, and I asked him for forgiveness and I asked to turn my life over to god and that's the right thing to do as of right now."

(The "as of right now" business is interesting. Once the populace has turned to other things, and forgotten about Vick's crimes, he'll be back on the gridiron, and have dropped Jesus quicker than Tara Ried will be dropped by her next boyfriend. Vick wins football games, and that places him almost as high as Jesus in many people's esteem.)

### Louisiana senator pulls a Paris Hilton

David Vitter first denied being a client of a Washington D.C. area prostitution ring. In July, when the Washington Post revealed Vitter's telephone number appeared in phone records of Deborah Jeane Palfrey, known as the D.C. Madam, Vitter's office issued this statement: "This was a very serious sin in my past for which I am, of course, completely responsible. Several years ago, I asked for and received forgiveness from God and my wife in confession and marriage counseling. Out of respect for my family, I will keep my discussion of the matter there - with God and them. But I certainly offer my deep and sincere apologies to all I have disappointed and let down in any way."

### Is Mother Nature a Catholic nun?

The Catholic Church and the Greenpeace activist organization joined forces for a bizarre project unveiled at the Waveney Greenpeace Fair in Suffolk England in September. Confessional booths made out of recycled doors allow patrons to confess their sins against the environment to priests. Father Anthony Sutch told the Times of London, "It is not, I hope, blasphemous to do this."

Pope Benedict has made it clear he wants his 2,000 year old religion to return to some of its longtime traditions. That's why it is a surprise to see the church embrace the popular "green" fad.

### Nepal airline sacrifice

Nepal Airlines experienced maintenance problems with one of its Boeing 757 airplanes in late August and early September. Local media reported the problem as an electrical fault.

Airline officials were quick to take action. They sacrificed two goats on Sept. 2 in front of the airplane in an effort to

appease Akash Bhairab, the Hindu sky god.

Senior airline executive Raju K.C. told Reuters, "The snag in the plane has now been fixed and the aircraft has resumed its flights."

Let's all praise Akash Bhairab.

### Projectile Christians

Mariposa County (California) supervisor Brad Aborn is scratching his head over the local New Life Christian Church after members requested the use of 15 acres of public land once a month.

According to a Sept. 3 story in the Contra Costa Times, "After church on the third Sunday of every month, a group of teens and adults from New Life cook up a big meal of hot dogs, give testimonies about Jesus in their life, suit up in camouflage, and grab donated paint-shooting guns."

Aborn's reaction: "Maybe I'm missing something. Paintball for Jesus? God help us all."

### Special distinction: Metroplex Christians

Numerous Christians of the Metroplex have recently turned to The Dallas Morning News to express their woefully wacky opinions. Here are a few letters to the editor:

Barbara Miller wrote: "Believing that you were once a monkey whose ancestor was a fish, whose predecessors was slime, well, now that takes faith."

After learning that Ma Teresa had serious doubts about the existence of the Christian god and Jesus Christ, Jim Mersky wrote: "She has strengthened my faith."

Get a load of this one, written by David Calvert: "I just asked NASA to please have one of their scientists send me a quick e-mail showing exactly how you use evolution to calculate the orbit of the space shuttle, or how you use it to build a Mars rover."

## 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](mailto:director@metroplexatheists.org)

## ATHEISTS ARE COMING TO A RESTAURANT NEAR YOU

Since you can't come to a Metroplex Atheist event, why not have Metroplex Atheist events come to you?

We now have a Metroplex Atheists Meet-up Group on [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com). Over the years we've had many folks lament that they couldn't come to a MA social event because of time/location of our normal Wednesday get together.



### Why not start one of your own?

If you have a good meeting place and you're willing to show up to be somewhat of a host, then just contact Metroplex Atheists and we can put an announcement out on the web.

All it takes is for you to say, "Hey, why don't we meet at X?" and show up!

We'd like to have a number of social groups that meet informally (because, let's face it, the business meetings are only just so much fun). The real fun lies in meeting other like minded people.

### So, where do YOU want to meet up?

## 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 – 2:00 PM

**Place:** Humanist Hall

**Date:** 2nd, 3rd, 4th, (& 5th) 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

#### MA ATHEIST MEETUP:

**What:** 'My dinner with Atheists,' social time with a bunch of heathens

**Date:** 1st Wednesday of the Month

**Time:** 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

**Place:** Blue Danube  
2230 West Park Row  
Pantego, TX

### Social Meetings

#### DALLAS / PLANO ATHEIST MEETUP DAY:

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

**Date:** Every Tuesday

**Time:** 7:00 PM

**Place:** TBA; For locations near you visit: [atheists.meetup.com](http://atheists.meetup.com)

#### MA ATHEIST MEETUP:

**What:** 'My dinner with Atheists,' social time with a bunch of heathens

To have your events listed email:

*The Atheist Voice* Editor at  
[editor@metroplexatheists.org](mailto:editor@metroplexatheists.org)

### Free stuff from preachers

Franklin Graham's book "The Name," published in 2002, is available free for the asking.

Here is the publisher's description of the book:

"In days of religious confusion and cultural relativism, Franklin Graham reminds us that there are absolutes in the kingdom of god. The Name explains the significance of names in the Hebrew culture, centering on the meaningfulness of the name Jesus. Chapters focus on the different aspects of power in the Lord's name, such as Healing in the Name and Salvation in the Name."

To that, we add, "Yada yada yada."

When a preacher sends something to an atheist, he is giving up something precious. Perhaps two lobster tails, maybe a drop of cleaning fluid for his Rolex, or possibly a few seconds worth of fuel for his business jet.

If all atheists order this book, we might make Graham's plane have to land early.

It's yours free, just call 800-476-5917.

And if you plan to make a quick killing by eBaying it, forget it. There are quite a few available on eBay, and even at the price of one penny, they aren't selling.

## Are you searching for Atheists in the metroplex?

Join in the discussions at the DFW Atheist Talk group.  
[groups.yahoo.com/group/DFWatheistTalk/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DFWatheistTalk/)

## September 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 DFWEF	3 <i>Labor Day</i>	4 Atheist Meetup Day	5 Blue Danube	6	7	8
9 EF Brunch EF Study	10	11 Atheist Meetup Day	12 J. Gilligan's	13	14	15
16 Reg. Meeting DFWEF	17	18 Atheist Meetup Day	19 J. Gilligan's	20	21	22
23	24	25 Atheist Meetup Day	26 J. Gilligan's	27	28	29

## October 2007

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

## November 2007

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

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

For more information, please visit our website: [www.metroplexatheists.org](http://www.metroplexatheists.org)

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

*The Atheist Voice* Editor: [editor@metroplexatheists.org](mailto:editor@metroplexatheists.org)

*THE ATHEIST VOICE*  
 c/o Metroplex Atheists  
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 Richland Hills, TX 76180

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?*