

Seeing is believing

Victor hammers away at the Beach
Views one more time

To the Editor:

A reply to the letter by Anne Garris where she says that Christianity is a 'relationship with an invisible, but powerful God who is also patient beyond our imaginings.'

This makes as much sense as saying that I, personally, have a relationship with an invisible elephant!

How on earth can you have a relationship with something which is invisible? Its not there! You can't see it!

Come to think of it, I have met people who believed in, and actually talked to invisible beings. They were patients in a State Mental Hospital!

I worked in this hospital as an attendant for 3 years, and I watched the poor wretches

carrying on conversations with General Custer, Jesus Christ, or whoever they believed they were talking to. Sad.

I, personally, do not intend to have a relationship with a mythical God, who has never made an appearance to justify his/her or its existence.

If I were all fired up to worship something, then I would choose to worship the Sun! It keeps you warm - it's there - I can see it - and, it's not invisible!

Victor St. John
Clearwater

Christian manure

Although not a member of Atheists of Florida, we hear frequently from John Marthaler of Mississippi, whose letters are published about once a week in the Mississippi Press

Bring back Epluribus Unum

To the Editor:

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is the natural manure," a Thomas Jefferson quotation.

We must remember that the flag waving Christian is not always the patriot. To refresh liberty, WWII left a pile of manure with 130 million dead people in it. Hitler said, "I go the way that Providence dictates with the assurance

of a sleepwalker."

My dollar bill had the motto, "Epluribus Unum" (out of many, one: motto of the United States) on it in 1941. With the war behind us, my dollar bill still has the motto, "Epluribus Unum," on it in 1946, not the motto, "In God we Trust."

McCarthyism was the bold attack of Christianity to destroy our liberty. They were able to blot out "Epluribus Unum," on our paper money with "In God We Trust" in 1956.

I believe the people of the United States will not let Christianity with George Bush as its leader destroy the liberty we love and will return "Epluribus Unum" on our money.

It will take someone with the intellect with reason and rational judgement to refresh liberty in the U.S. today. We can only hope the manure pile will be small.

John Marthaler
Pascagoula, Miss.

As John Marthaler reminds us: 348,200 churches own much over one trillion dollars of untaxed property in the United States. The preachers and priests are nothing more than eleemosynary parasites. Taxing the church should put 100 billion dollars in the Treasury of the United States under an improved budget.

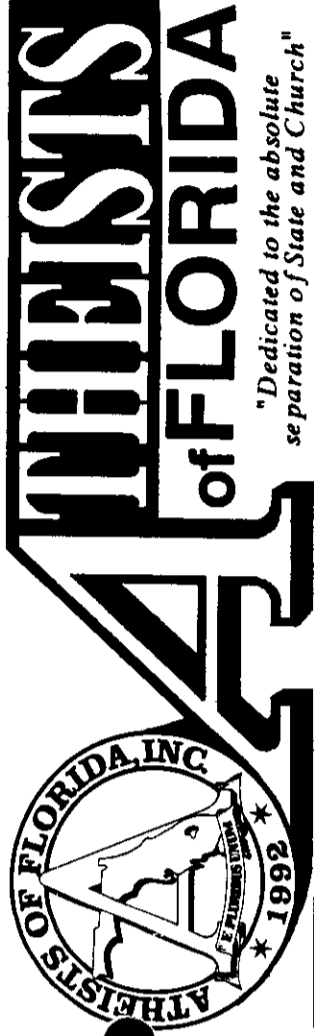
Small wonder people really do believe this is a Christian nation.

January 1993

Atheists of Florida

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Newsletter of Atheists of Florida, Inc.
Volume II
Number 1

Chapters in Miami and Tampa Bay
January, 1993

"Religion is excellent
stuff for keeping
common people quiet."

—Napoleon Bonaparte

So long '92

We did a lot better than the Queen

MIAMI —As 1992 becomes the past we can say it was a good year for Florida Atheism. Not only were we emancipated from the Murrays, but we incorporated our organization with articles and bylaws to be proud of and we also received our tax exempt status in record time.

The Media, although without any advertisement, already started to notice our existence. In November, the Miami Chapter was invited and participated in the taping of a TV program on Atheism. In December, Christos Tzanetakos was invited to be the guest on a radio show scheduled for the second week of December and on the 9th he appeared on a panel at Lynn University of Boca Raton (see following story) examining the role of religion on society.

Beginning 1993, our Scholarship Fund now stands at an even \$1,000. Half of these funds came from: the Max Gottfried Foundation, Celia Glantz, Ed Golly and Maria Richardson. All of these contributions were matched dollar-for-dollar by Alicia and Christos Tzanetakos.

We now have T-Shirts available with our logo on the front and a slogan on the back (see ad within).

For better eyes everywhere

Atheists of Florida and the Atheist Alliance are preparing several pieces of literature you would like to know about.

From the Alliance is an introduction folder which defines the Alliance and outlines its objectives. It continues with the topics "Is Church/State separation really so important?" and "What is an Atheist Education?" and "Civil Rights for Atheists?", concluding with "How can I reach Atheist Alliance?"

At the end, each Alliance member group is listed and the sponsoring group has a place to put its insignia and contact information. Marie Castle of Minnesota is producing the pamphlets, and when completed, these will be excellent mail-outs to inquiries and media.

Also, a piece on Bertrand Russell is written which outlines many of his writings on religion and we have even translated a version into Spanish.

The Tampa Bay Chapter is producing a booklet written by Florence Morgenroth titled *Women: Religion and Power*. Her speech on this subject, given before the Tampa Bay Chapter was so well researched and so thorough that we have decided it would make an excellent introduction piece for prospective members.

A Dissertation on the Effects of Religion

This speech was given by
Atheists of Florida President
C. Tzanetakos at Lynn
University on December 9,
1992

—by Christos Tzanetakos

"Religion and its origin can be historically traced to the early development of the Human mind." Having said that, I would like to define what I mean my "Mind". Mind can be defined as the "State of the brain", which in turn can be

compared to a computer whose capacity and structural complexity is immensely superior to any presently made by our modern technology.

With the development of the human brain and its ability to receive, interpret and store outside data, the "Mind" was born.

Once the mind was born, the need to understand its Cosmos or Universe gave rise to various arbitrary explanations or theories for the natural phenomena, and thus Religion was created along with all its Gods and Goddesses.

By the time the human mind was developed, our species was dispersed in tribes mostly isolated from each other, and with the

advent of language each developed its own religious ideas which explains the variety of religions, each claiming to be the one and true religion.

Now having said all the above, let us examine the effects of religion on our civilization, which is the topic of this discourse. Perhaps it will be futile or unnecessary to deal with the good or bad effects of religion in the past. The religious persecutions, wars, crusades, the inquisition to name but a few, are well documented in the history books.

Therefore, I would like to focus our attention on the effects of religion in our present state on our planet. (See Effects, page 5)

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

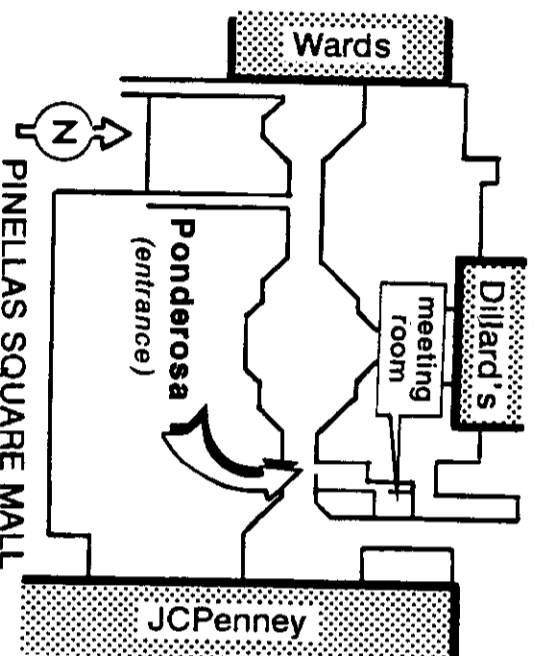
MIAMI

Due to unavailability of meeting space this month, the South Florida Chapter will not meet in January.

TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will meet Sunday, January 24th from 2:45 to 5:00 at the Ponderosa restaurant in Pinellas Square Mall, Park Boulevard at US 19. Enter the mall at the northeast entrance and you will actually pass the private meeting room we have reserved on your way to the entrance to the restaurant. The room requires an extra server for which the restaurant asks a \$1 tip from each participant. As you enter the restaurant you may order and pay for whatever

you'd like to eat. Then find our meeting in the back private dining room.



Why Atheism Isn't "News"

Atheists Of Florida, Inc. is a non-profit, educational organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and atheism, and to provide intellectually stimulating contact for the membership.

Membership dues should be sent to the director of interest. General correspondence should be directed to the Miami Chapter, P.O. Box 530102, Miami, FL 33153-0102. Contact Phone is (305) 936-0210. Annual dues are: \$30.00 - Sustaining; \$30.00 - Couple; \$25.00 - Individual; \$5.00 - Student (under 25 yrs.). Dues are pro-rated quarterly, with annual renewals due by January 1.

Newsletter correspondence and chapter inquiries should be sent to the Tampa Bay Chapter, P.O. Box 130753, Tampa, FL 33681-0753. Deadline for newsletter items is the 15th of each month. The A.O.F. newsletter is provided free of charge to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters are published with guidelines set out in Vol. 1, No. 6.

A general record with guidelines set out in Vol. 1, No. 6.

Atheists Of Florida, Inc., is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

Chairman	Albert E. Lyngzeidean
President	Christine Tranekko
Vice President	Ed Golly
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Newsletter Editor	Ed Golly
Assistant/Letters Editor	Brent Yechiv

have heard and read many comments lately on a supposed "blackout" of atheist news, some almost hinting of a conspiracy to suppress such news. While I'm certain that may be true for some publications, such as the *Conservative Chronicle*, in most cases there is no basis for it.

The simple fact is, Atheists aren't news, from the viewpoint of a publisher. There are several reasons behind this. I'd like to take a look at them, and explain a few things about the industry while I'm at it.

Pick up the front page of nearly any newspaper, and look at the stories. Today, December 18, 1992, in the *St. Petersburg Times*, we have stories about Chile raising taxes, a woman who killed her abusive husband, a vaccine for AIDS, food for Somalia, and Israel expelling Palestinians.

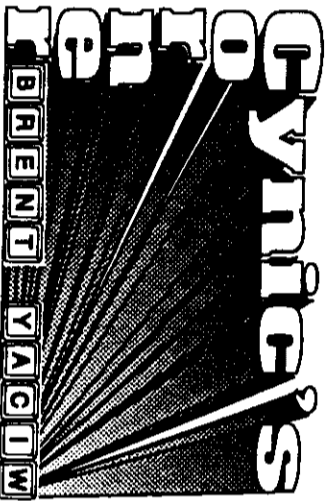
Chiles raising taxes directly affects every person in Florida, regardless of beliefs. Neutral. The AIDS vaccine affects everyone everywhere. Since this was developed through the efforts of

scientists, not religious revelation you could say this was an anti-religious story. Score one for the atheists.

Food for Somalia: "human interest," as well as affecting our tax dollars. Since starvation often results from overpopulation, and overpopulation is often caused by lack of birth control or abortion, this is anti-religious. Score two for atheists.

A woman who killed her abusive husband. Abuse is often, if not always, due to the patriarchal attitudes taught by the church; the concept of "women as property." Anti-religious; score three for the atheists.

Israel expelling Palestinians:



ACLU Challenged

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — It seems the radical right has had just about all it can stand of the ACLU. Chief crackpot Pat Robertson has come up with an organization to combat the concerns of civil liberties in the United States with the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) (read: American Center for Religious Intolerance).

Now two years old, the ACLJ has a \$3-million budget and about 12 lawyers on staff to take on such cases as challenges to no-protest zones around abortion clinics and defending religious pamphleteers in parks.

The group also helped student-run Bible clubs avoid problems in organizing a nationwide prayer day in September.

Response from the ACLU is that ACLJ is misguided. ACLU spokesman Phil Gutis commented: "Some

elements of the Christian Right try to portray the ACLU as anti-religion, when we see ourselves as protecting the freedom of religion."

Third world first
If only we were so progressive...

RIVADH — Two Filipinos were arrested and will be deported for preaching Christianity in Saudi Arabia last October. Their relatives in the Philippines had said the men would be executed. They were accused of trying to build a church and spread Christianity. Saudi law forbids the open practice of all religions except Islam.

Just looking the other way

From The Sun of London

"A man pumped three bullets into a fortune teller because he did not like his predictions. Felice Gullacci, 38, told police that clairvoyant Raffaele Monteburno was 'depressed about my future.' Raffaele was badly wounded. A policeman in Genoa, Italy, said: 'Unfortunately, he did not see it coming.'"

Atheists honored

The Freedom from Religion Foundation held its annual convention in San Antonio, Texas last month. Honored as "Freethinkers of the Year" was the Weisman family of Rhode Island, responsible for winning the recent landmark Supreme Court decisions barring prayers and invocations at public school commencements.

Bias in good health

The FBI announced that racial bias accounted for 60% of the nation's hate crimes in 1991. But it was good old religious bias that accounted for about half of the remaining incidents.

There is certainly no monopoly on religious bias in this country. In New Delhi, India, more than three days of rioting caused nearly 700 deaths in Hindu-Muslim fighting after Hindu extremists demolished an ancient mosque. Dozens of cities and towns became caught up in the rioting, requiring military authority with shoot-on-sight orders to assist police in enforcing a curfew.

Effects from page 1

All major religions promote the idea that our species is a special creation of their gods, and by doing so, give the impression and encourage their believers to place the interest of Man above all other living matter with catastrophic results such as the extinction of many species and the danger of a total annihilation of life on our planet due to this unreasonable religious misconception.

The unreal idea of Heaven and Hell, and the concept of sex as sin plunged humanity in fear and guilt which was and still is the foundation of religion. But the danger today of the effects of religion lays not only in the distorted development of the individual believer, but on its detrimental role in the pursuit of international cooperation and the realization of a unified family of Man on our planet.

As long as humanity is divided by different religions and the individual religions divide its adherents into various sects, I am afraid the implementation of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" as drafted by the commission of the United Nations in 1948 will

remain a Utopia.


Take for example the country of Saudi Arabia, which, although a charter member of the United Nations, violates most of the Articles as manifested during the Gulf War when their government objected to even the driving of vehicles by our female soldiers on the basis of religious grounds.

Today, the means of destruction — Nuclear, Chemical and Bacteriological, are awesome.

Religion has been used before and still remains a cause of conflict.

Is there then any hope of preventing the total annihilation of our species and the others on our planet, at least until our life sustaining Sun eventually loses its energy and explodes to oblivion?

The answer must come not from unfounded religious dogmas but from science which seeks to discover the knowledge of our Universe.

Closing, I wish that you, the young, the future of our species will develop a critical Mind which is our only hope to transcend from the darkness of religious dogmas to the enlightenment of the scientific inquiry. 

Suckers, sham and the Preacher Man

LEAP OF FAITH

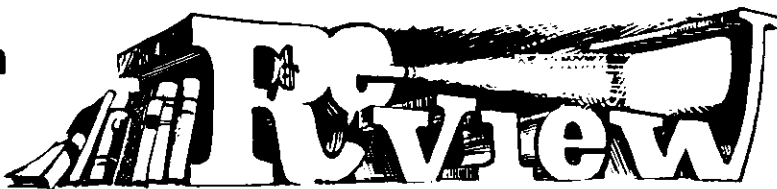
—Ed Golly

You can see the end from the beginning. We've seen it a dozen times before. Drought-stricken town sees the arrival of a preacher (rain-maker) fraud. How else could it end? It starts snowing. Uh, make that raining!

But it's what's in between that forms this picture. Jonas Nightingale (Steve Martin) is the travelling preacher on his way through Kansas with the entire troupe contained in two "rolling office" buses followed by two 18-wheelers hauling the entire circus when one of the Kenworths breaks down in the unlikely town of Rustwater. Facing a four-day lay-over for parts and a \$3,500 a day overhead, Nightingale sets out to turn inconvenience into profits.

It begins to remind us of a 20/20 exposé on the big-money fakirs. One starts to get that queasy feeling in the stomach as we see a well-oiled money-making machine get down to the business end of sucking tax-free cash out of the pockets of the gullible.

The stage is set as a big-top revival tent is erected in a field on the outskirts of town replete with a huge neon cross and towering crucifix. Nightingale sets up his "Circus of Christ", complete with a full choir, electronic band, the evesdropping staff setting up the



"I run a show here. It's a lot of smoke and noise and a lot of suckers."

evenings performance by plucking personal problems from the incoming faithful, and entry-gate hawkers pushing religious propaganda. As the crowd arrives, Nightingale works it like a mountain trout, setting the hook in a thousand mouths. He always manages to turn any potential tragedy into opportunity. The crowd is born to be suckered, and he doesn't miss a trick. So sophisticated is the operation that it's now even computerized. But you already know all the tricks of the trade...you won't really see anything new. It's just both fascinating and sickening to see at the same time...sort of like being mesmerized by a hotel fire.

Martin's performance is legendary emulation of the real thing -- so much so that while performing the almost work-a-day routine of "healing and stealing", we begin to develop a camaraderie with his style and want to return to the tent to watch him work, as long as we're a fly on the wall.

What's any film without a little romance, a little sex and a little gunfire. Actually lacking the latter

two, we start to get ahead of the story and, well, it probably doesn't turn out quite the way you are expecting. But

like all good pictures, it does need an ending. And as I began hoping against hope that it would not end up being a Billy Graham Special developing even the most callous, insensitive fraud into a miracle worker for Christ, my "prayers" were answered as it did not disappoint. We don't leave the theatre ready to find the nearest church and empty our wallets.

"Hey, Boss! This is Jack Newton. Remember me? Got a question for ya! ...Why'd you make so many suckers?"

Do I recommend it to you? Probably yes, in spite of not knowing your taste, if only for some of the classic lines that come out. If you don't want to drop the six clams at the theatre, *do* catch this "Creep of Faith" when it comes on TV. Rating, **+++**

Seen a good flick yourself lately? Or maybe you've read a book that would be of interest to other atheists. Send your own review to the Newsletter at P.O. Box 130753 Tampa, FL 33681-0753



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Believe it or not, the IRS in South Florida actually ceased enforcement action of any kind during the week of December 21, except in flagrant or emergency situations. Issuing of wage levies was ceased until December 28.

Didja ever want that Christmas spirit to last all year long?

another obvious case of religion causing friction between factions. Score four for atheists.

Final tally: 4-1-0, Atheists. So why does it seem like the news is biased against atheism? To start with, none of the articles mentioned the root cause of the events: religion. Science is science, taken for granted nowadays, with nary a mention of the battles scientists fought against religionists who tried to hamper science whenever it brought their beliefs into question. That's history, not news, and newspapers assume (erroneously so) that we all know history. Starving children are nothing new, only the latest efforts to feed them. Abuse is nothing new; again, it's simply the latest case. The same with factional fighting in the Middle East.

What gives these stories their appeal to the average reader is their emotional content. Rising taxes makes people mad, or happy, depending on your viewpoint. An AIDS vaccine would comfort many and allay fears. Starving children evoke sympathy regardless of who caused their starvation; often, it is blamed on one group acting according to the evolutionary principle of survival. Similar sympathy and lack of proper blame is evoked for the abused woman, and for the dead Palestinians. Newspapers aim for the most emotional responses on the front page, hoping to translate that into an impulse purchase and interest in advertising.

Speaking of advertising, there is another reason why newspapers don't delve into the root, religious causes of tragedy. Churches spend thousands of dollars — some of them our dollars, thanks to their tax-free status — on public relations gimmicks and advertising. Did you think those ads in the Religion section or community sections were free? Hardly. Yes, they will list events for free, but a display ad costs big bucks. Ask Victor St. John, who spent a couple hundred on two small ads about two years ago. With all that money flowing in from religious advertising, plus money from business advertisers with strong religious ties, they can't afford to upset them too much.

Arrive in Style



They're ready and waiting...
the official Atheists of Florida
T-Shirts! Fronted with the
logo in beautiful Royal Blue and
backed with the political slogan—

**"SEPARATION OF
CHURCH AND STATE...
MORE THAN A GOOD IDEA
IT'S THE LAW"**

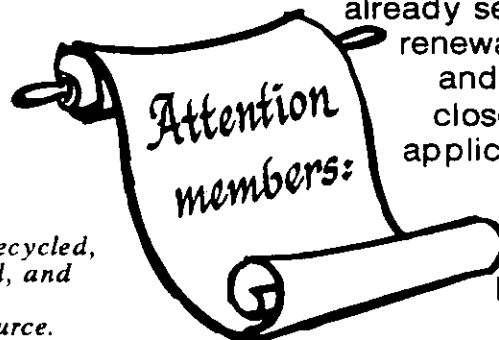
Order yours now from
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\$11 pp, specify L or XL

So they try to write stories with an appearance of neutrality, and end up with shallow factual reporting. Any attempts at interpretation are left to the editorial page, with a similar problem there. Simply put, with around ninety percent of the population clinging to some religion, it's surprising that any of our letters get published. They do; primarily because of the aforementioned emotional responses that are desirable to the paper. If I write a letter that irks the Christians, there is a response aimed at me, not at the paper. The paper receives more letters from other readers, thus keeping the interest alive. Who would ever read the letters section if all the letters agreed?


One more thing: what atheists do, as atheists, seldom evokes those emotional responses the newspaper crave. If a scientist finds a vaccine, he is discussed as a scientist, not an atheist. Same with nearly anyone



*This paper is recycled,
can be recycled, and
is made from a
renewable resource.*



who does not make an issue of their religion or lack thereof. Religious people are often portrayed negatively, but the religion never receives the proper blame, unlike other influences such as alcohol/drugs, music, movies, etc. Part of that is the nature of religion; religions always claim to be doing good and call all negative effects "aberrations." It's a PR strategy that has worked throughout history. The question is, do we as atheists really want the coverage religions get? Do we want to be known as the cause of wars, murders and abuse, and starvation? This is what newspapers show as the results of religion. Our job is to teach the public how to interpret those results through the PR barrage of the churches.

It's an uphill battle,  but someone's got to do it.



Even though you may have already sent in your 1993 renewal, kindly fill out and send in the enclosed membership application to help us construct some statistical information about Florida atheists. Thank you!