

Letters continued

Dear Christos:

I was happy to hear that Atheists of Florida is the former South Florida Chapter of A.A. and that you were the president. When I heard that the new organization existed, I felt that this had to be the case.

I dropped out of A.A. about 4 or 5 years ago. Their dogmatism was hard to swallow and they really got to me when they would belittle R.G. Ingersoll and Thomas Paine on occasion. It rather seemed to me that A.A. were the Bolsheviks of the Atheist movement. Everything had to be their way or not at all.

I have been a member of Atheists United and the Freedom from Religion Foundation for years and hold these democratic institutions in fond regard.

Of course I want to become a member of Atheists of Florida. Your aims and efforts are the same as mine. The idea of a Convention in '93 sounds great.

I am enclosing my membership.

Regards,

Bill Comp
Miami

Miller protests

Atheists of Florida member

Louis Miller speaks out

against Bibles in the military

MIAMI — The Freedom from Religion Foundation, based in Madison, Wisconsin, which is the

group headed by Ann Gaylor, has complained to Fort Carson and the Air Force Academy that their purchase of Bibles with taxpayer monies is unconstitutional.

Using tax dollars to buy Bibles is a "flagrant violation" of church and state separation, according to the group.

The offending books are supplied by the International Bible Society, which sold \$200,000 worth of Bibles to the military last year. They maintain that it is a time-honored tradition begun during the War of 1812. This remains the consistent excuse for any state/church violation tradition.

When the foundation became aware of the practice, it fired off letters to Fort Carson and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, but has not received any responses.

The Bible Society said they have sold and donated Bibles with military insignias to Fort Carson and the Air Force Academy. They claim that the constitutionally guaranteed freedom to worship should apply to military personnel and this somehow justifies tax-dollar expenditures to provide the Bibles.

FFRF claims that even if the bibles were distributed at no cost to the military, it would still oppose Bibles imprinted with military insignia. This generates the appearance that the Bible is the military's book, and if that is the case, this sends the message that if you're in the military, you had

better be a believer.

Unfortunately, the unsound thinking goes all the way to the top. Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, praises the Bible Society's work during the Desert Storm war, reasoning that there is some sort of spiritual need which must be fulfilled on a battlefield.

Miller responded with the following letter of October 12:

Secretary of Defense Dick

Cheney

The Pentagon

Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

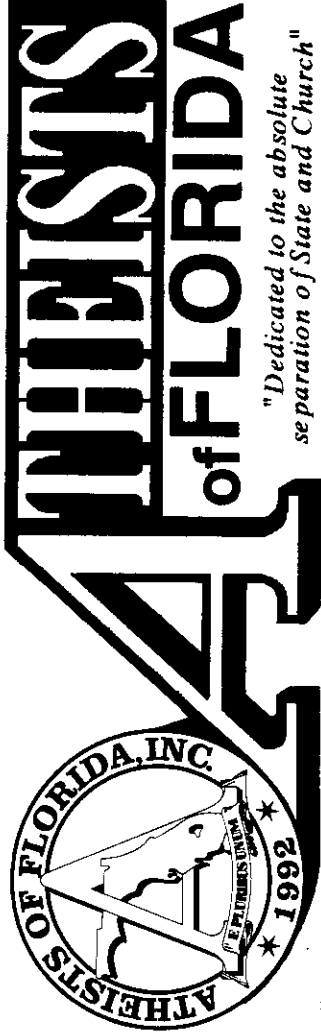
I wish to strongly protest the purchase by the Department of Defense of \$200,000 worth of bibles in Colorado.

Our country is based on the correct principle of separation of church and state. The introduction of bibles appears to be a back-door effort to shove a brand of religion down the throats of our servicemen. I strongly protest both as an ex-serviceman and as a taxpayer.

Yours truly,

Louis Miller

The basis for this story was an article which appeared in the October 9 *Miami Herald*. We should all consider writing to either Cheney or Colin Powell to voice a similar protest. If you do so and receive any response, please forward a copy to the newsletter for publication.



"What good luck for the rulers that men do not think."

— Adolf Hitler

Newsletter of Atheists of Florida, Inc.
Volume I Number 10

Chapters in Miami and Tampa Bay
December, 1992

Scholarship Fund Begins

MIAMI — Atheists of Florida has commenced its scholarship fund with an initial grant from the Max P. Gottfried Foundation. This was immediately bolstered by additional contributions from both Alice and Christos Tzanetakos and Celia Glantz of Miami (see *Letters*) and Ed Golly of Tampa. The following letters tell the story:

Mr. Christos Tzanetakos, President
Atheists of Florida, Inc.
Box 530102

Miami, FL 33153-0102

Dear Chris:

It gives me great pleasure to enclose a Max P. Gottfried Foundation check in the amount of \$200 to be used for the Atheists of Florida Scholarship Fund only. I noticed from the November 1992 issue of the Newsletter that there was no funds in the Scholarship Fund. Now there is.

My Foundation plans to contribute to the Scholarship Fund from time to time as funds become available. Please let me know more about this fund such as how it will be used, who will administer it and who will receive the funds. I can see where a fund like this could be of significant help in advancing enlightenment and overcoming ignorance through educating the young people.

I am proud to be a member of this newly formed organization and I will do everything I can to help it along to succeed.

With kindest personal regards,

Max P. Gottfried

Delray Beach, FL

The Atheists of Florida response was sent by Christos Tzanetakos as follows:

Dear Max,

Thank you for the generous contribution of your Foundation to the Scholarship Fund.

As you must know, the Scholarship Fund was initiated under the former South Florida chapter of American Atheists, whose members had contributed \$2,310.

The above amount, along with the other revenues of the chapter totaling \$6,164.04, were taken by Jon Murray who provided fraudulent statements for the closing of our bank account.

I would like to inform you that your contribution was matched with personal funds, and the \$400 would be allocated as seed money for the reorganized "Atheists of Florida Scholarship Fund".

Also, my wife and I decided to match the next \$300 donations to the scholarship fund which will bring the start-up money to \$1,000.

Again, thank you for your generosity and I will keep you informed on our progress.

Very best regards,

Christos Tzanetakos
President

The exact distribution process of the Fund will be decided at the next meeting of the Board of Directors. Ideally the Fund would generate interest which would be used as scholarship grants. But at today's low interest rates, until the Fund has experienced significant growth such grants would be unacceptably low. We may decide that until interest-generated grants would be sufficient, half of the Fund will be used for grants with the balance remaining to build upon.

It was perhaps the biggest blow to the former Miami chapter when the funds, steadily built over the years, were simply taken from the chapter by American Atheists without ever being used for their intended purpose. To prevent this from ever happening again, we are considering the idea of forming a completely separate corporation for the Scholarship Fund, thereby keeping these funds "locked up" for their intended purpose. It is our sincerest hope that members will contribute to this fund with the secure knowledge that it will never be possible to use the funds for any other purpose whatsoever.

Membership renewals due

January 1st is renewal date for memberships in Atheists of Florida. Most members joined in April, and full membership renewal is due. However, as explained in the publication box on page 2, dues are pro-rated quarterly. So if you joined after October of this year, your renewal is fully paid through 1993.

You can take a tremendous load off the secretary if you take it upon yourself to renew. This alleviates her having to send a reminder out to everyone.

Also remember that this year students may use the \$5 rate only under age 25.

Renewals may be sent to either Miami or Tampa.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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P.O. Box 530102
Miami, FL 33153-0102

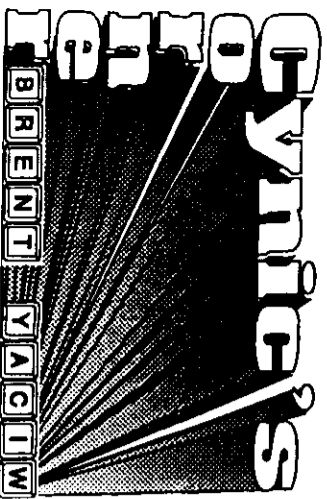
Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will hold no formal meeting the month of December. Our January meeting will probably be held at a restaurant in Pinellas Square Mall. We will have a private room and will not need a head count, nor will any member be required to eat.

MIAMI

For the last meeting of 1992 a Winter Solstice pot-luck picnic is planned for Sunday, December 20th, at TY Park located at Sheridan and North Park Road in Hollywood. We will use pavilion #0 (see map) and begin about noon. Atheist Hotline: (305) 936-0210.



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

Membership dues should be sent to the chapter 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: \$50.00 - 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 from members on a space-available basis, in general accord 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.

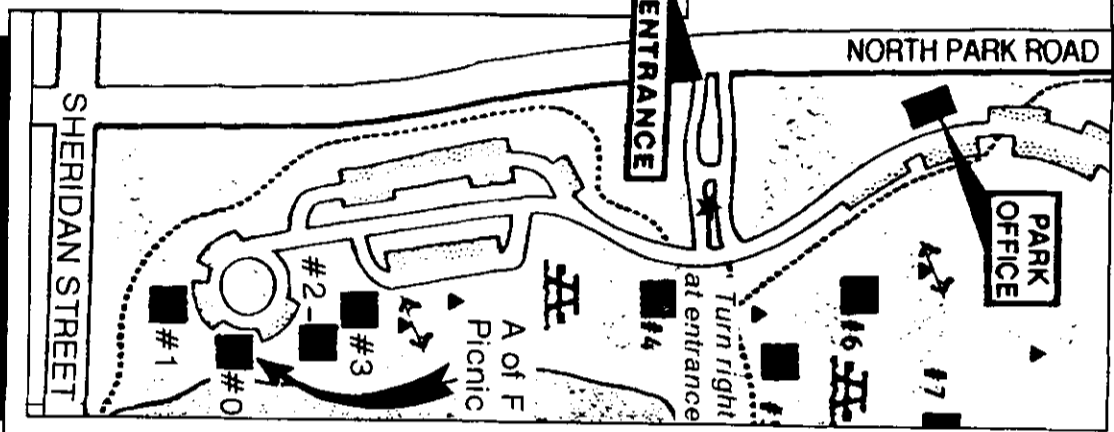
Chairman	Albert E. Lyngzeideleon
President	Christos Tzanetakos
Vice President	Ed Golly
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Sole Board of Directors	Koko Brogdon John J. Diamond Steven Miles Louis Miller Florence Morgenthau Daniel Street Brent Yaacov
Newsletter Editor	Ed Golly
Assistant/Letters Editor	Brent Yaacov

It's that time of year again; the time when the societal pressure to conform to the Christian "traditions" of this country is so great that many of us want to dig a hole and crawl in it until Jan 1. However, since most of us can't do that, I'd suggest making the most of things and turning this into an opportunity to promote atheism.

To begin with, let's examine what a tradition really is. To paraphrase one recent work, a tradition is something we've been doing for so long that we now have absoulutely no clue as to why we do it.

A story to illustrate this was in another article. It mentioned a woman whose little girl asked her why she was cutting the ends off her hair before she put it in the oven. She replied, "Come to think of it, I don't know. It's just the way your Grandma used to do it." Curious, she called Grandma and asked her, "I don't know; my mom did it, so I did it." As it happened, Great Grandma was due for a visit, and when she arrived, the question was posed. She replied, "Well I don't know why you girls do it, but I always did it because my pan was too short!"

This is how tradition really works. It's just like the Christians who every year celebrate Christmas, purportedly Christ's birthday, on December 25th - even though any "well-versed" Bible



scholar will admit that by their own book's record, J.C. was born in late spring or early summer. The exact date is unclear (like so many things in that self-contradictory compilation), but the evidence is overwhelmingly clear that his birthday was definitely not December 25th. Many Christians would be appalled to learn they are actually celebrating the winter solstice, as thousands did for centuries before this Christiansanity was born. Someone the other day in my classroom claimed that they celebrated a "secular Christmas" - they weren't really religious, but they just liked (continued)

lies. "Christianity claims to have preserved the family, although its founder offered life everlasting to those who would desert wife and children.

"What else have these ministers done? They have denounced dancing as the wickedest of sins. They are the enemies of the theatre. They preserve the Sabbath as 'sacred'. They are filled with holy wrath at innocent pleasures and bloomers. They are opposed to divorcees. They want to censor our literature. They have declared most of the literary masterpieces of the world unfit to be read. They hate art - abhor the naked body, although it was made, supposedly, in the image of God! They pretend to believe in moral persuasion, and want everything regulated by law. In short, they want to rule over every act of your life.

"Above all, they insist that everyone believe. Credulity is the greatest of virtues, and doubt the deadliest of sins.

"On every hand they sow the seeds of superstition. They paralyze the minds, and pollute the imagination of children.

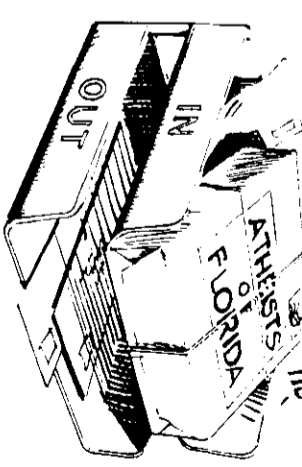
"We should know that all the miracles of the Bible are not allegories, or poems, but just old fashioned lies. There never was a miraculous babe born without a natural father...

"All these mistakes, and illusions and delusions - all these miracles and myths must fade from the minds of intelligent men...

"We are satisfied that all the gods are phantoms and that the supernatural does not exist.

"We know that men and women and children do exist. Our concern must be for them, and not for imaginary gods and demons. Beyond this life, we do not know. Beyond the horizon of the Natural we cannot go. All our obligations must be discharged here, in this world. Let us labor and love. Let us cultivate courage and cheerfulness. Let us hope the future will bring peace and joy to the children of all men."

Letters



Ever-reliable Victor

Published Nov 26 in Beach Views Re: Gleanings from the Scripture "Miser," in which the writer states "let us remember that our time, abilities, and money aren't ours in the first place. We are but caretakers."

"When we abuse, squander or hoard what we are given, then we are rebellious and deserve punishment."

What a lot of drive!! If I choose to abuse, squander or hoard what I have worked for - then that is my business, and is of no concern to other people. What I do with my money is my business. Also, in answer to Gary B. Gould who has placed me on his "daily prayer list," don't waste your time.

This is an exercise in futility because no God ever answered any prayer at any time, nor ever will. When you pray, what you are doing is talking to yourself. The only thing you get from praying on bended knee is sore knees!

Victor St. John,
Clearwater

Uninspired
From our own mailbox:
Dear Editors:

What I see very clear from the recent of the Pope concerning the Galileo affair is a proof that the Bible was not inspired by any god, and that no god has inspired any religion either.

What I don't see at all is that still there are good and bad faith ignorants that uphold that book. They take it as the word of a god without any other "proof" that

what is written on the same book in a few places!
Sincerely,
Mike Perdomo Member,
Miami

Scholarship Fund
Dear Editor:

When Miami was a Chapter of American Atheists of Austin, Texas, a "Scholarship Fund" was established to aid and assist students of Colleges and Universities.

This fund grew to over a few thousand dollars thru the tireless effort of Director Christos Tzanetakos. When the Atheist Chapters were disbanded, Miami's Scholarship Fund was usurped by the Murray O'Hairs of Texas.

Happily a new Florida State Scholarship Fund was established November, 1992 with a generous contribution of \$200.00 by Max P. Gottfried Foundation. As an appreciated and magnanimous offer Director & Mrs. Christos Tzanetakos will match donations to this Fund. A second contribution of \$100.00 by Celia Glantz that will be doubled by our benefactors will enhance our Scholarship balance to over \$600.00.

This is an exciting beginning so we hope that the Atheists of Florida will consider the Scholarship Fund when honoring a family member or friend or in memoriam for a loved one. The Families will receive an acknowledgment of the purpose of the contribution.

"No greater deed than to grant merited education to a deserving individual" as is well known, A Mind is a terrible thing to waste"...God luck Scholarship Fund...

Celia Glantz
Miami

Comp membership
William R. Comp, Jr. sent the following note with his membership application (continued)

Atheism, History, and Freethought

— by John C. Parker

We often come across articles from other newsletters which we feel bear reprinting. This one was resurrected from Connecticut

Robert Ingersoll - the Magnificent

The home of every atheist and freethinker should contain at least one book written by Robert Ingersoll. Joseph Lewis called him "the Magnificent" in recognition of the quality of his oratory and the persuasiveness of his arguments. So that you may judge for yourself, here are some passages from his lecture *The Truth*:

"Through millions of ages, by countless efforts to satisfy his wants, to gratify his passions, his appetites, man slowly developed his brain. Through countless years he has groped and crawled and struggled and climbed toward the light. He has been hindered and delayed and deceived by augurs, and prophets - by popes and priests - he has been betrayed by saints, misled by apostles and Christs, frightened by devils and ghosts—enslaved by chiefs and kings—robbed by altars and thrones. In the name of education his mind has been filled with mistakes, with miracles and lies, with the impossible, the absurd and infamous. In the name of religion he has been taught humility and arrogance, love and hatred, forgiveness and revenge.

"But the world is changing. We are tired of barbarian bibles and savage creeds. Nothing is greater - nothing is more important to find, amid the errors and darkness of this life, than a shining truth.

"How is truth to be found? By investigation, experiment and reason. The literature of the world should be open to him—nothing prohibited, sealed or hidden. No subject can be too sacred to be understood. Each person should be allowed to reach his own conclusions and to speak his honest thought.

"He who threatens the investigator with punishment here or hereafter, is an enemy of the human race [species]. There is no real investigation without freedom—freedom from the fear of gods and men.

"Nothing but falsehood needs the assistance of fame and place, of robes and mitres, of tiaras and crowns.



Robert Ingersoll

"For centuries free speech has been an insult to God. When, however, the popes and priests speak, they say that they have a revelation from God...They say, "No matter how unreasonable the Bible may appear to you you must believe."...That is what the church calls liberty of thought.

"A religion, to command the respect of intelligent men and women, should rest on a foundation of facts. It should appeal not to passion, not to hope and fear, but to the judgement.

"Belief is, and forever must be, the result of evidence. A promised reward is not evidence. It establishes no fact, answers no objection, and dissipates no doubt. The declaration that salvation is the reward for belief is inconsistent with mental freedom.

"In the past, popes and priests have chained unbelievers in prisons, stretched them on racks, crushed their bones, cut out their tongues, branded their bodies, flayed them alive and consumed them in flames.

"There is not a theologian in the world who can produce the slightest, the least particle of evidence tending to show that the Bible is the inspired word of God. Theology is independent of evidence.

"The church has been the enemy of every science, of every independent thinker, and for many centuries has used her power to prevent intellectual progress.

"The church says that it has been the friend of education. I deny it. The church founded colleges not to educate men, but to make proselytes, converts, defenders.

"Ministers say they teach charity. That is natural. They live on alms. All beggars teach that others should give. The church cannot give, because it does not produce. It can only consume.

"They tell us that the church has built hospitals. That is not true. Men have not built hospitals because they were Christians, but because they were men. They have not built them for charity—but in self-defense against infectious diseases.

"It has been claimed that the church has made men and women forgiving. I admit that the church has preached forgiveness, but it has never forgiven an enemy. The soil of the world has run red with the blood of those who crossed the path of those who preached love and brandished a sword. Against the great and brave independent thinkers the church has coined and circulated countless




Cynic *continued*

all the presents and goodies. How sadly typical of our society; any excuse for a party, even if it promotes superstition and has a truly meaningless theme.

Not that I'm against parties, but we should stick to reality and have a Winter Solstice party. Invitations might include a brief explanation of the age-old tradition (there's that word again) of celebrating the change from longer nights to longer days. If you have to give gifts, avoid that red and green wrapping paper - if you're environmentally conscious, avoid wrapping paper period—in favor of something less tied to Christianity. After all, you wouldn't wrap things in swastika-covered paper, would you?

I know the pressure gets rough. Many people like the "pretty lights and decorated trees" associated with the season. In our neighborhood, they bug everyone to put out "Christmas luminaries" - candles in old milk jugs - and light them up on Christmas Eve. It's a heavily coerced "tradition" in our neighborhood, despite the fact that there are Jewish and other non-Christians besides ourselves. My "significant other" has participated in this pseudo-secular tradition for years, and refused to give it up: "they look so pretty." We compromised; last year we put them out with the AA symbol on the jugs, and this year I suppose we'll paste the AOF logo on. It's not ideal, but at least it's an anti-symbolic gesture, and who knows, we might even get a few inquiries from neighbors wondering about it. Worse could happen.

Opportunity is knocking. Go out and open some minds. 

New Members

The following new members have been welcomed to Atheists of Florida within the last quarter of this year:

Mr. Alton R. Pittman	of Bronson, Florida
Dr. Mark Flapan, PhD	of Tamarac, FL
Ms. Monica Madden	of Tampa, FL
Mr. Bill Comp	of West Palm Beach, FL

Atheism on TV

TAMPA —

As if the religious holiday season wasn't enough, we received a call from WTVT to participate in their *Eye on Tampa Bay* audience for a program about "recovering Christians". Although the topic sounds functional, in fact it was just a plug for a book written by priest Leo Booth who appeared as guest to explain how one could break the chains of religious addiction and abuse.

Booth began by using the entire first segment to disclose the myriad of problems caused by religion. But being a priest on the Catholic payroll, he fell short of the obvious answer to religious addiction: simply reject the religion. Inasmuch as this is 20th century America, that option is unacceptable. So Booth can turn a buck telling you how to create a designer religion by taking all the supposed "good" from the religion and simply ignoring its colossal flaws.

Brent Yaciw, Ed Golly, Jacques Musy and Al Brown were all in the



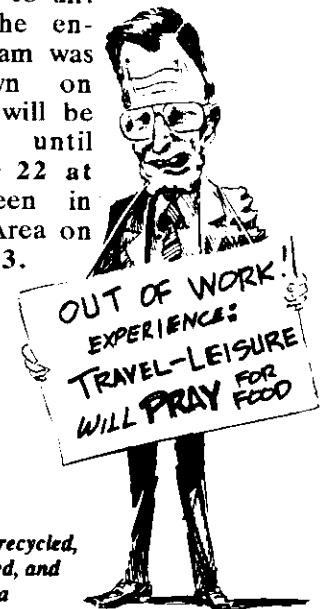
audience and Yaciw was ready. His confrontation with Booth was classic atheism. Submitting that a heroin addict is not cured by simply reducing the frequency of use but only by complete abstinence, Booth countered with the admonition that a chronic over-eater is not told to completely give up food as a cure. Yaciw put him away by pointing out that while one must have some food as a requirement to live, one can live quite well with complete abstinence from heroin and for that matter, religion. "I've been doing it very happily for years," quipped Yaciw. Booth was left without a comeback.

What good fortune for members in the Tampa Bay area that after four years in office, George Bush finally did something right by conducting a news conference at the exact time the program was scheduled to air.

Result: the entire program was laid down on tape and will be delayed until December 22 at 12:30, seen in the Bay Area on Channel 13.



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