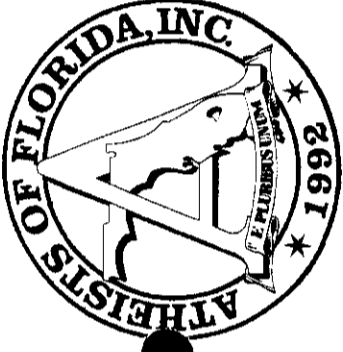




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Volume XII No. 3  
January 2004

## Atheists of Florida

**DADE&BROWARD:** Sunday, February 22, 2:00 pm at the "Polo Norte" Restaurant, 2050 W 56th Street in Hialeah. This will be the inaugural Hispanic meeting combined with the regular Dade&Broward chapter meeting.  
**Third Tuesday** each month, 8:00 am. Breakfast meetings at **Denny's** Restaurant, 16751 NW 67th Ave. Hialeah. Specific meeting information and activities published in **NEWSNOTES**, included in all newsletters, or listen 24/7 to the message on 305/940-0442. [atheist1@bellsouth.net](mailto:atheist1@bellsouth.net)

**Be sure...** we have your e-mail address in our files so you will receive e-mail reminders of all meetings and special events. In the Dade and Broward area, send your e-mail address to [atheist1@bellsouth.net](mailto:atheist1@bellsouth.net). In the Tampa Bay area, send your e-mail address to [AthALFLE@aol.com](mailto:AthALFLE@aol.com)

## CHAPTER EVENTS

**TAMPA BAY: Pinellas County—First Sunday of each odd-numbered month** (Jan., Mar., etc.), 1:30-4:00 at the Pinellas Park Public Library, 78th Ave N & 52nd Street.  
**Tampa—First Sunday of each even-numbered month**, 1:30-4:00, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa. Dinners follow all meetings at nearby cafeterias.  
FMI: Ed Golly, 813/835-1500, [AthALFLE@aol.com](mailto:AthALFLE@aol.com).  
**Big Deal! Free CD**—of an atheist/Christian debate to all first-time attendees of any Tampa Bay chapter meeting.

### Vouchers from page 1

Troxler cited another example of this bad publicity when, in July one of the largest voucher organizations, called PRIDE, cut off about \$350,000 to the Islamic Academy of Florida. The school's co-founder, Sami Arian, is accused in a federal indictment of helping the Islamic Jihad, even using the school for some of his operations.

At the same time, state prosecutors declined to file criminal charges against the operator of several schools around the state accused of mishandling voucher money (that's *your* tax money involuntarily conscripted from you). The reason: The law is too vague and weak.

According to Troxler, laxity is exactly what they intended.

In creating Florida's three major voucher programs, the Legislature explicitly refused to attach any strings. Accounting for the money would be, you know, liberal. Even such seemingly essential requirements like standardized tests or teacher certification are unnecessary in private schools. The party line is that "parents will hold private schools accountable."

Hillsborough County Cable TV subscribers—watch

## Atheist Forum

Live at 10:00 every Tuesday night, Channel 20  
Rerun Saturday night, 11:00 Channel 19

# Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church  
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## Vouching for dollars

ON JAN 22, THE U.S. SENATE APPROVED THE country's first federally funded educational voucher scheme, which will enable some poor public school students in Washington D.C. to attend private schools.

The provision would allow taxpayer funds to subsidize religious schools and other private institutions. While proponents of the program argue that it will give children a choice in education, the choice would only be available to a small segment of the public school students. Religious schools and other private schools are not required to comply with many federal civil rights laws and can exclude students based on their religion, gender and learning or physical disabilities. Consequently this program would funnel taxpayer funds into private schools that can pick and choose which students to accept.

Not only would this pilot program funnel fourteen million dollars towards religious schools, it would also be the first step towards expanding the use of vouchers nationwide.

This fall, a new voucher law in Colorado will provide certain public school students with state funds to attend private schools—most of which are religious. Colorado will become the first state to enact a voucher program since the 2002 Supreme Court decision holding that an Ohio voucher scheme did not violate the First Amendment principle of state/church separation. Although vouchers will be only about 3,200 students in 11 public school districts, that number could grow to nearly 20,000 by 2008, possibly becoming the nation's most expansive voucher program.

### What it means

In the Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling in the *Zelman vs. Simmons-Harris* case, Chief Justice William Rehnquist, writing for the majority, declared that vouchers are legal under the US Constitution as long as the program is "neutral with respect to religion" and the assistance flows to religious schools as a result of parents' private choice.

As in Florida, legal challenge to the Colorado voucher program does not argue that it violates the First Amendment. The lawsuit charges that the law runs afoul of the state constitution. The Colorado Constitution is almost identical to Florida's in its provision that "no person shall be required...to support any ministry or place of worship, religious sect or denomination against his consent." It also prohibits the government from granting funds in support "of any church or sectarian society, of for any sectarian purpose, or to help support or sustain any school...controlled by any church or sectarian denomination."

States are free to provide even greater civil rights protections for citizens than the federal constitution. The Colorado Constitution, like 36 other state constitutions, includes stricter provisions ensuring state/church separation than the First Amendment.

### Accountability be damned

Florida's unconstitutional voucher law was struck down by Circuit Judge P. Kevin Davey

in August 2002. Gov. Jeb Bush, who strongly backed the 1999 voucher law as one of the centerpiece accomplishments of his administration, directed the state to appeal. Seeking ways to circumvent the law, Bush created the corporate tax voucher plan to help pump millions of dollars into the religious schools. Safeguards? Who cares, as long as the churches are passing the collection plate to the taxpayers.

By last summer, Florida's largest school voucher program was giving private groups the job of taking in all the money, up to \$88-million last year, and deciding which schools and students received it. Education Commissioner Jim Horne offered absolutely no oversight of the program.

Take for example the case of Silver Archer Foundation. Certified as one of eight "Scholarship Funding Organizations" empowered to collect money and dispense vouchers, it was neither incorporated nor registered in the state. The foundation was operated by James Isehour, who, according to the *Palm Beach Post*, was once charged and acquitted of 56 counts of racketeering and fraud, once faced cocaine trafficking charges in Hillsborough county that were later dropped, filed for bankruptcy in 1999, and operated a correspondence school that declared bankruptcy. Yet Archer's application was approved so easily that DOE couldn't even produce the documentation.

After being alerted by reporters, Horne yanked the plug on Archer Foundation but apparently not before the company took in as much as \$410,000 without paying out a dime in vouchers. But why not? The corporate tax voucher law, written in 2001, established virtually no standards for these organizations, and DOE had written no rules to guide the process. Silver Archer Foundation, having not responded to Horne, could easily argue that it had broken no laws.

As *St. Petersburg Times* columnist Howard Troxler pointed out last August, the governor and his education czar finally decided to crack down on the schools—by making them fill out a form. Wrote Troxler, "Apparently nobody thought of it until now, several years into the process of handing out taxpayer moolah as fast as possible, as much as \$140-million [last year]."

But there was no plan to actually check the information supplied by the outfits getting the cash. The reality of the situation was that the governor and Horne were trying to jump out in front of bad publicity and fend off anticipated attempts by the Florida Senate to tighten the reins on the cash.

(continued on back page)

"For good reason that has nothing to do with religious prejudice, the nation decided long ago that public funds should not be diverted to private schools."

—Editorial, Miami Herald,  
October 16, 1972



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THERE ARE HUNDREDS of natural history museums around the world that have excellent fossil collections and displays on evolution for the general public. The London Natural History Museum has an "Origin of Species," wing which explains the concept of evolution by using Charles Darwin's approach.

It became evident to scientists around the

**THE SOLUTION IS EVOLUTION  
NO. 24—The Darwin Centre**

—Jim Strayer



world that much of the evidence was not on display in most museums. They understood that there should be a place where scientists could send specimens, borrow specimens, and study all evolutionary collections.

That place is the new Darwin Centre in London. It is an addition to the Natural Science Museum. Visitors can have a tour into the jar-filled rooms, kept at a constant 58

Strayer's series: The Solution is Evolution will continue in the next newsletter.

Strayer is a retired biology teacher living with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea.

**Watery vision of Grand Canyon**

—Duncan Campbell in Los Angeles

NOAH AND HIS ARK have entered the choppy waters of a debate about the age and geological history of the Grand Canyon, one of the world's greatest tourist attractions.

Geologists estimate that the 217-mile-long canyon in Arizona was fashioned by the Colorado river between 5m and 6m years ago and contains some of the oldest exposed rocks on Earth.

But now a book sold in the Grand Canyon park official bookshop suggests that it was created by the flood reported in Genesis.

*Grand Canyon: A Different View*, by local trail guide Tom Vail, claims that years of erosion had nothing to do with the canyon's creation. Rather, its shape should be attributed to the Old Testament flood—meaning that it is only a few thousand years old. The book's presence in the bookshop has created a rumpus between creationists and evolutionists.

degrees, to stop the alcohol from evaporating. White lab coats are provided and the 350 researchers are required to spend 5% of their time interacting with the public.

The goal is to systematically classify all plants and animals living and extinct that have ever lived on earth. This is a tremendous challenge. At present the first phase has been completed. There are 22 million specimens, 450,000 jars, and over 15 miles of shelving. Many of the specimens were collected by Charles Darwin.

There will be video links from the tabs, and from researchers in the field, to the museum and the Web.

Phase two, which will be completed in 2007, will add 28 million insects and 6 million plants.

Imagine what this will mean for the continuing battle with creationists and those who support intelligent design. It is not that we will contact the museum often, but we will have a resource with world wide status supported by scientists and universities everywhere.

Everything available at the Darwin Centre will be available to anyone with a computer. On completion, there will be over 60 million specimens and an unbelievable amount of scientific information to support the theory of evolution. Their live online presentations attract up to half a million viewers, and about 2,000 people each archive presentation per week.

If you are on line just type in Darwin Centre to access and put yourself in the world of evolutionary science.

Mr. Vail writes: "For years, as a Colorado river guide, I told people how the Grand Canyon was formed over the evolutionary timescale of millions of years. Then I met the Lord. Now I have a different view of the canyon, which, according to a biblical timescale, can't possibly be more than a few thousand years old."

The claim has prompted the American Geological Institute and seven scientific bodies to flood the National Park Service with complaints calling for the book to be removed from the shop. The book has sold out but is being reordered, and its display has been moved from the natural sciences section to "inspirational reading."

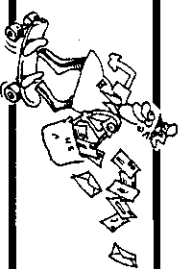
Deanne Adams, the Park Service's chief of interpretation for the Pacific region, told the *Los Angeles Times*: "We struggle. Creationism versus science is a big issue at some places. We like to acknowledge that there are different viewpoints, but we have to stick with the science. That's our training." The Grand Canyon superintendent, Joe Alison, is seeking advice from the National Park Service headquarters in Washington.

**Forum viewer**

I saw your show last night for the first time and I have to say that I thought it was quite interesting. I believe that one would need to be very brave to come on TV to tell everyone that one is an atheist and to talk about the bible the way you do. So, I congratulate you guys for doing so.

I have been a silent atheist all of my adult life. The day that I finally said to myself that I did not believe in

**LETTERS**



**"I laugh**

**when I hear someone say there is no God. These individuals basking in the orderly and perfect creation of Almighty God, . . . and yet not comprehending with their brains that there is a living God who holds the destiny of all of us in his hands."**

**Religion and government don't mix**

This country has no history of the dominance of religion in politics and culture. Other countries are so aware of the injustices and controlling influences of religion through the ages that they have declared separation of church and state and have rewritten their constitutions to ensure they remain secular.

The history of religion in government has always been one of war and bloodshed. Europeans are aware of this, but America's religious majority have never experienced the atrocities and seem to think that they are God's newly chosen. If God wants us to believe this, he will write it across the sky for everyone to see.

—GIORJA JULIUS, St. Petersburg

**Europe leads the way to reason**

I just read the Patrick Bens article with the above title (Nov 2003). While I agree with your sentiments almost entirely, I must point out one vital omission which I believe you made. In discussing "Jewish imperialism," I believe it would be more correct to speak of Israeli expansion. There are Jews all over the world who are not involved in those disputes. Even more important is your failure to mention that the real reasons lying behind Western policies in that area of the world are easy to spell out—oil, profits and greed. With that addition I feel your article would be remarkably accurate.

—BURT G., Texas

**Just what is an atheist?**

We received a phone call from an atheist (sort of) in Maryland who followed up the discussion with this e-mail

Why I don't call myself an atheist: The definition of an atheist is a person who is without god. This places me in the untenable position of being without something that doesn't exist. The word atheist is a religious term, therefore it's ok for a religious person to refer to me as an atheist but it is not ok for me to refer to myself as an atheist. I refer to myself as a non-believer. No belief-system guides my life. As you know, atheist/non-believers do not believe. We think.

Man Worship: The one thing the Jew/Christian/Muslim religions share more than anything else is patriarchy. At the top of their religious structures is a male deity. Genderized religion has done far more harm than good to the human species. The harm manifests itself in the form of sexism, racism and violence. This harm is particularly evident in the believers of the naked, abused, bloody, dead, white male body on the cross.

I enjoyed talking with you earlier this week. I hope to hear more about the good work of the Atheists of Florida. Stay in touch. —DAVE CROCKETT, Maryland

**Greatest minds don't believe**

I usually I refrain from responding to articles or comments by religious modern-day shamans or more appropriate these days, Talbans of any faith or denomination, but your interview of Costantine Chokanis of St. John Chrysostom Orthodox Mission in Stuart in November concerning the brains of atheists and other nonbelievers was too absurd and ludicrous not to be responded to for the sake of your readers.

In the question, what makes him laugh?, Chokanis responded: "I laugh when I hear someone say there is no God. These individuals basking in the orderly and perfect creation of Almighty God, enjoying the splendor of the beauty of things around them, and yet not comprehending with their peanut brains that there is a living God who holds the destiny of all of us in his hands."

Perhaps your readers and especially all the Christian and other faith Talbans of our religiously saturated country should ponder the question of how anyone can reconcile the fact that 93 percent of the members of our National Academy of Science (the greatest minds this country can muster) are atheists or nonbelievers.

In 1998, a survey published in the leading science journal *Nature* conclusively showed that the National Academy of Science is atheistic. The journal stated:

"A survey of all 517 NAS members in biological and physical sciences resulted in just over half responding: 72.2 percent were overtly atheistic, 20.8 percent agnostic, and only 7 percent believed in a personal God. Belief in God and immortality was lowest among biologists. It is likely that those who didn't respond were unbelievers as well, so the study probably underestimates the level of anti-God belief in the NAS. The unbelief is far higher than the percentage among scientists in general, or in the whole population."

Atheists are also in awe with the wonder and the beauty of our cosmos, but we don't attribute this to an imaginary entity "God" in whose name or idea the most hideous crimes have been committed throughout our history. The phenomenon of the suicide bombers would not be possible without this unscientific and irrational idea of a religious god.

It is unfortunate that religious institutions are still holding our country prisoner of the dark ages, in contrast to the enlightened Europe (religion has lost its grip on governments), and they succeeded in elevating Christian Talbans into our White House and the office of our attorney general.

—CHRISTOS TZANETAKOS  
founder, Atheists of Florida Inc., Fort Pierce

**Pledge of Allegiance Case Set for March**  
WASHINGTON—The Supreme Court's most-watched case of the year will be argued March 24, when Californian Michael Newdow tries to convince the justices that the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional because of the reference to God.

Justices have scheduled a one-hour argument and also agreed to accept written arguments from other people and groups, including the mother of the girl in the case.

Newdow, a doctor and lawyer, will argue the case himself, facing off with attorneys from a California school and possibly the Bush administration. The Sacramento atheist filed the case on behalf of his 9-year-old daughter.

The case is being heard without one of the court's most conservative members, Justice Antonin Scalia, who recused himself after making public comments about the case. Scalia did not take part in the decision to allow the mother, Sandra Banning, to file arguments opposing Newdow.

Banning, represented by Washington lawyer Kenneth Starr, maintains that her daughter does not mind saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

"It is not only appropriate but important for the court to hear from both parents, especially since Sandra Banning approves entirely of the Pledge of Allegiance as a patriotic exercise at her daughter's school," said Starr, totally missing the point of the establishment clause.

Dennis Hutchinson, a Supreme Court expert at the University of Chicago Law School, said the case brings drama to the high court. "This symbolically is a big deal. Everybody understands it," he said.

### N.H. abortion law overturned

Concord, NH—On Dec. 29 a federal judge declared unconstitutional a state law that would have required parental notice before a minor could get an abortion. Over the summer, the Florida Supreme Court struck down a version of the same law, saying it violated privacy rights guaranteed by the Florida Constitution.

The judge said the measure does not adequately address cases in which a girl might need an immediate abortion to protect her health. The law would have required abortion providers to notify at least one parent at least 48 hours before performing an abortion on a minor. Approval from the parent would not be necessary.

### Sounds like a hate crime in legislature

Despite laws on the books already barring gay marriage, legislators in at least nine states are pushing for new, more sweeping measures in hopes of preventing any ripple effect from laws and court rulings elsewhere. In all, 37 states and the federal government have Defense of Marriage acts that say marriage can only be between a man and a woman. Supporters say the constitutional amendments are necessary to ensure that legislation and court judgments in other states such as the recent ruling in favor of gay marriage by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court—will not

compel recognition of same-sex unions in their own states.

In most cases, lawmakers in states with existing Defense of Marriage acts seek to go a step further by amending their constitutions to specify that marriage must be heterosexual. State Rep. Bill Graves, a bill sponsor in Oklahoma, wants to stipulate that same-sex unions are "repugnant to the public policy" of the state.

"This is a political attack, motivated by fierce anti-gay opponents who want to slam us again and again," said Evan Wolfson of the group Freedom to Marry.

Pending final resolution of the Massachusetts court ruling, no state allows full-fledged same-sex marriages. Vermont recognizes marriage-like civil unions, while California, Hawaii, and New Jersey grant various rights to same-sex couples registered as domestic partners. Legislators in Maryland and Colorado hope to get civil union legislation considered by their colleagues this session.

### Faith-based Initiative ignores civil rights protections

Dubya touted his "faith-based" initiative in mid-January during a visit to Union Bethel AME Church, a predominantly African-American congregation in New Orleans. The act clearly rolls back vital civil rights protections. Ironically, later in the day, he was scheduled to lay a wreath at the crypt of Dr. Martin Luther King in Atlanta.

"President Bush wants to give religious groups special treatment," said Barry Lynn, Americans United executive director. "He clearly has no understanding of the separation of church and state. The government has no business funding salvation and religious conversion. That's the job of our houses of worship."

Continued Lynn, "Under the president's plan, churches would be allowed to discriminate in hiring with public funds. That's taxpayer-subsidized job discrimination. This initiative would roll back nondiscrimination rules dating back to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration.

"It is hypocritical of President Bush to lay a wreath at the grave of Dr. King on the same day he is pushing a plan to roll back vital civil rights protections," Lynn said. "This is disgraceful."

The Bush initiative is stalled in Congress because of constitutional and civil rights concerns. Meanwhile, however, the administration has pushed for implementation through executive orders. Most religious and civil rights groups continue to oppose the plan.

### Robertson hears from invisible man

Religious broadcaster Pat Robertson said on Jan. 2 he believes god has told him Dubya will be re-elected in a "blowout" in November. "I think Bush is going to win in a walk," Robertson said in his 700 Club program. "I really believe I'm hearing from the Lord it's going to be a blowout election in 2004."

Robertson told viewers he spent several days in prayer at the end of 2003. "The Lord has just blessed him. I mean, he could make terrible mistakes and comes out of it. It doesn't make any difference what he does, good or bad, God picks him up because he's a man of prayer and God's blessing him."

*Numbers of those who claim no religion swell in America*  
THEIR NUMBERS HAVE MORE than doubled in a decade, to almost 30 million. Organized as a religious denomination, they would trail only Catholics and Baptists in members.

They are the "nones," named for their response to a question in public opinion polls: "What is your religion, if any?"

Some nones are atheists, others agnostics, still others self-styled dabblers in a variety of faiths and philosophies.

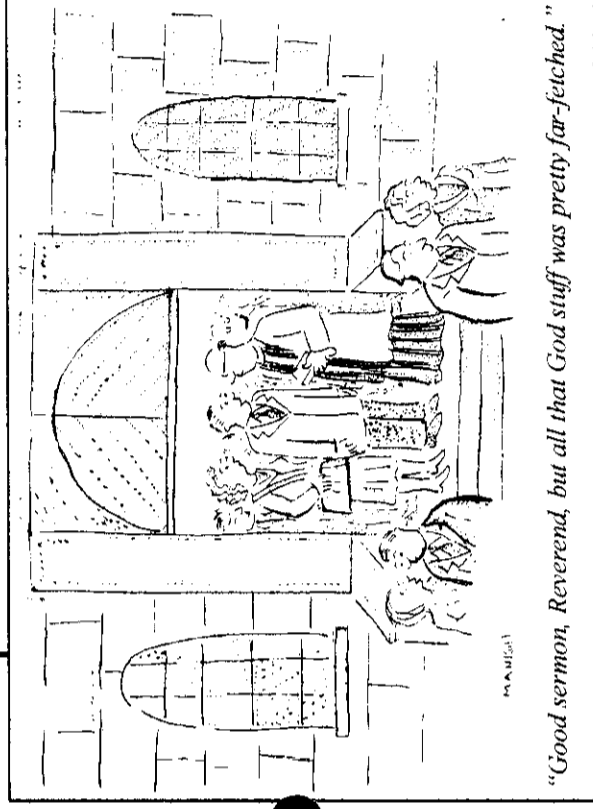
## How many none-believers?

—Mark O'Keefe Religion News Service

Despite their discomfort with organized religion, many consider themselves quite spiritual.

Take, for example, Matt Blevins, 30, a Portland, Ore., environmentalist who, like many nones, is relatively young, liberal and religiously uncommitted. Sunday morning service? Blevins defines that as an attentive waiter at brunch.

"I think I was baptized Episcopalian, but I'm not



"Good sermon, Reverend, but all that God stuff was pretty far-fetched."

quite sure," Blevins said. "I try to put those things out of my mind. I just don't buy most of the stuff from organized religion. For the most part, it provides more problems than solutions."

Blevins' cathedral is the great outdoors. While camping, biking and skiing, he has had experiences that can only be described as transcendent.

"For me, those moments are just as moving as what people may experience when they go to revivals. I'm

### Religion by the numbers

- The number of people who profess to belong to no religion has more than doubled in a decade, to almost 30 million.
- They grew from 8 percent of the U.S. population in 1990 to more than 14 percent in 2001.
- Organized as a religious denomination, they would trail only Catholics and Baptists in members.
- They are especially prevalent in the Pacific Northwest. In Oregon and Washington, where 21 percent and 25 percent, respectively, claim no particular faith, they outnumber any single religious category.

taken to a different place where I have a bigger perspective on life and the universe and everything. If that's a spiritual connection, I'll take it."

Nones are especially prevalent in the Pacific Northwest. In Oregon and Washington, where 21 percent and 25 percent, respectively, claim no particular faith, nones outnumber any single religious category.

"If people are interested in hiking on Sunday morning rather than going to church, that's fine. The culture won't say that's unacceptable. In fact, the culture will say that's perfectly acceptable," said Mark Shibley, a sociologist at Southern Oregon University who has studied and written about nones.

But the religionless might find some parts of the country less tolerant.

Lauren Windle, of Indianapolis, grew up as an atheist in New York City, where most of her friends were Catholic or Jewish. She was exposed to religious ideas when her mother would take her to the library to check out books on Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

"I've been asked my whole life, 'What are you?'" said Windle, 48. "As a child, I would have to say, 'Nothing.' And who wants to say you are nothing? This answer was never, ever accepted."

"If anyone in the Bible Belt learns you're a none," said Betsy Lampe, 46, a none from Lakeland, Fla., "they immediately and mistakenly believe that you're either a Satan worshipper or a communist and treat you as such.

"To them, you must be labeled. This may be why the none category is growing. They're running off any potential new converts with their offensive labeling."

Whatever the reason, nones grew from 8 percent of the U.S. population in 1990 to more than 14 percent in 2001.

That's the conclusion of religion experts who compared results of the National Survey of Religious Identification, conducted in 1990, and the American Religious Identification Survey, which in 2001 sought to update the earlier poll.

"That makes nones the fastest-growing religious group in the United States, if you think about them as a religious group," said Patricia O'Connell Killen, a professor of religious history at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Wash. "We're just coming to grips with the reality that this group even exists."

Nones could form a powerful constituency for marketing or political causes. But few see them that way, and even fewer try to communicate with them.

"Because of their indifference, they're not in one place," said John Green, a professor specializing in religion and politics at the University of Akron in Ohio. "It's hard to put together a mailing list. It's difficult to get them on the phone. You can't call them together for a meeting."

Yet thanks to the American Religious Identification Survey, much is now known about nones.

Young people are more likely to profess no religion. One in three nones is less than 30 years old compared with one in five of all survey respondents. More are single (29 percent) than the adult population as a whole (20 percent). Fifty-nine percent are male. Their education level (23 percent college graduates) is virtually the same as the national average for adults. Seventeen percent are Republicans, 30 percent are Democrats, and 43 percent are independents.

Many nones believe in God. Nearly half "agreed strongly" that God exists. "It is more accurate to describe them as unaffiliated than as non-believers," said Ariela Keysar, study director of the American Religious Identification Survey.

GOV. JEB BUSH IS PROVING TO BE the most relentless foe to the U.S. Constitution in America, and quickly turning the state of Florida into a religious battlefield. In just the past month, watchdog organizations have reported on two separate encroachments on the first amendment, which directly resulted from the Governor's decision making.

Firstly, the governor has eradicated Florida's separation of state and church by creating a "faith-based"

## Florida leads the way in regressive state/church policy

—Jeff Nall

prison, in Bradford County. The prison, Lawley Correctional Institution, offers inmates prayer sessions, choir practice and Bible studies just to name a few activities. Such an endeavor marries the enlightened achievements of our founders, U.S. citizens retain the right to believe or not believe as they wish, and no government, whether it state or federal, has the right to contribute tax payer money to institutions that promote faith.

*Jeff Nall is a freelance journalist, Publisher of the Creative Advocate (music and arts magazine), and a board member on the Space Coast Progressive Alliance. He can be reached at sabelde@yahoo.com.*

## From the Archives of the New York Times

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take control of the government. We should be the ones in charge of the government." Such a line of questioning constitutes a complete disregard for the Constitutional ban on religious tests and on also freedom of religion.

Bush's amalgamating of God and government has been proven a disastrous marriage. While most other religious such groups have not yet experienced large scale persecution, James Madison put it best when he said: "distant as it may be in its present form from the Inquisition, it differs from it only in degree. The one is the first step, the other the last in the career of intolerance."

Christians, too, should feel threatened by Bush's behavior. Thomas Jefferson's "wall of separation" protects the virtue of Christianity as much as it protects the rights of non-believers and other religious groups. In 1785 James Madison said, "Who does not see the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects."

Even faithful men like Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. realized the dangers of combining state and church. He even endorsed the Supreme Court's ruling that school prayer is unconstitutional saying, "Contrary to what many have said, it sought to outlaw neither prayer nor belief in God. In a pluralistic society such as ours, who is to determine what prayer shall be spoken, and by whom? Legally, constitutionally or otherwise, the state certainly has no such right."

Supreme Court Justice Stewart put it best when he said, "What our Constitution indisputably protects is the freedom of each of us, be he Jew or Agnostic, Christian or Atheist, Buddhist or Freethinker, to believe or disbelieve, to worship or not worship, to pray or keep silent, according to his own conscience, uncoerced and unrestrained by government."

I AM A SCIENTIST actively engaged in cancer research for over 40 years who has trained young M.D.s and Ph.D.s from all over the world.

In *The New York Times'* November 11th article, "Does Science Matter," it neglected to ask why the evils of ignorance and superstition continue to rule the world. It is because organized religion and tribalism are a most lucrative business, which sustains these evils by using psychological conditioning of children and the suppression of basic human rights for women.

In fact, one of the greatest dangers to the civilized world today is posed by a 7th Century tribalism that terrorizes and enslaves much of the world. Why is the United States a world power which is more scientifically advanced? Because the two pillars of our unique democracy are human rights—the core of which is women's rights—and the separation of state and church.

The twin dangers of corruption and demagoguery, coupled with an ignorance of science, could bring down our democratic society from within. If the public schools teach children that the creation of mythology must be given credence over evolution, then we undermine the value of respect for scientific truth and reverse any progress toward a scientifically-informed population which is so vital to keeping us free.

—Prof. Ralph A. Reisfeld

Radiation Biology and Cancer

Department of Immunology

The Scripps Research Institute / La Jolla, California 92037



AUTHOR-PRODUCER ANN DRUYAN will receive the prestigious Richard Dawkins award as one of the world's outstanding atheists at the AAI convention, April 9-11 in Colorado Springs. Druyan, perhaps best known for her collaboration with her late husband Carl Sagan in such works as the *Cosmos* television series and the movie *Contact*, is highly accomplished in her own right. She is the founder of Cosmos Studios, sole author of many articles and the novel *Famous Broken Heart*, director of the New York Children's Health Fund, which provides mobile pediatric care to homeless and disadvantaged children, and vice chair of the board of directors for the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws.

## Atheist Alliance Report Ann Druyan joins Stars of Freethought to focus on the real family

—Bobbie Kirkhart

Infidels Public Relations Director **Clark Adams**, and anthropologist **David Eller**. Likely to participate, but not confirmed at press time, are Bengali writer **Tashma Nasrin** and, to present the award to Ann Druyan, the world's most renowned atheist, **Richard Dawkins**.

The theme, Focus on the *Real Family*, refers to one of many religious organizations based in Colorado Springs, Focus on the Family. In their version of family, homosexuals can be "cured," "the rod and reproof give wisdom" to the difficult child, as the Old Testament explains, and bringing an unwanted child into the world is preferable to abortion. Though not every talk will concentrate on family issues, many will. In keeping with the theme, there are programs for all ages.

Convention site will be the Wyndham Hotel in the shadow of Pike's Peak. Make your reservations, for \$59 a night, single or double, when you tell them you are part of the Atheist Alliance. Call toll free 719-260-1800 or go to the web site at: [www.wyndham.com/hotels/COSCO/main.wmt](http://www.wyndham.com/hotels/COSCO/main.wmt).

## New Web site for AAI

Dave Feroe, working with consultation from Joe Zemel, has given the Atheist Alliance Web site a complete overhaul ([www.atheistalliance.org](http://www.atheistalliance.org)).

The first thing one will notice is the convention information right at the top of the opening page. The new format now makes it easier to add new pages with the links on the side (Education page, etc.). The locations of the graphics boxes allow for a variety of things of immediate concern to Alliance members. The others could have ads.

Please take a look, and provide any feedback you have to Joe at [joe@zemel.org](mailto:joe@zemel.org). He and Dave will use this information to help guide the direction of the Web site.

## Interviews

TAMPA—At the Humanists of Florida conference held in Tampa over the Jan. 23-25 weekend, Atheists of Florida Chairman Jim Young had arranged for us to interview Americans United Executive Director Barry W. Lynn. Lynn is probably the most visible state/church separation proponent in the nation, appearing regularly on national TV talk shows defending the establishment clause.

With broadcast quality recording equipment provided by Tampa Bay Chapter Co-director Joe Reinhardt, A of F President Ed Golly conducted a 45-minute comprehensive interview of Lynn and a 30-minute interview of Matt Cherry, Executive Director of the Institute for Humanist Studies in Albany, NY. Primarily for use on the *Atheist Forum*, these programs will also be shown at upcoming meetings for all chapters and available for sale at the AAI convention.

The Atheists of Florida Board of Directors will hold its annual meeting Sunday, February 8. Results in our next newsletter.

## The Atheist Alliance International Convention in Colorado Springs April 9-11, 2004

Check your reservations for the following programs:

- Adults, full program @ \$175 each (if paid before February 15—after Feb. 15, \$185 each)\*
- Adult, program only (meals not included) no cost for full-time students under 25 (Student ID and proof of age will be required at registration desk)
- High school, program only (meals not included) no cost for kids 13-18
- Meals with group for high school and adult students\*
- Camp Quest, for children 4-12, at \$75 each\*
- Children under four, child care at our cost to be determined (checking this box does not obligate you, but will help us plan)

☼ Includes all meals—Two dinners, two breakfasts, one lunch

Enclosed is my check for \_\_\_\_\_ to cover above stated costs

Name(s) of Participant(s)

Street address

Apt. #

City

State

Zip

Phone with Area Code

E-mail

Mail to: AAI, P.O. Box 6261, Minneapolis, MN 55406

For credit card registration, go to [Atheistalliance.org](http://Atheistalliance.org)

## Chosen on Faith

Edited by Patrick Bens

Julie Kay of the MIAMI DAILY BUSINESS REVIEW, a very respected local news organ, this week comes out with a list of inappropriate questions that are asked to future Broward judges by the Judicial Nomination Committee (JNC), whose members are appointees of our most beloved governor Jeb Bush. In Florida, the governor has the power to shape the judiciary. A GOP-dominated Legislature gave his office the right to appoint all nine members of each JNC. Is this one of "W's" tentacles? To hell with democracy in Florida.

The 15th Judicial Circuit Judicial Nomination Commission in Fort Lauderdale asks questions like this:

- Are you "god-fearing"?
  - Are you active in your church?
  - How do you feel about the Ten Commandments being posted in your courtroom?
  - Is it a fitmus test, these questions posed by JNC member O'Neal Dozier, pastor of the fundamentalist Worldwide Christian Center in Pompano Beach, that upset everyone except Bush inamoratos?
- JNC co-member Richard Zaden, a lawyer from Wilton Manors, came to the defense of Dozier's intolerant interrogation, saying he "had heard no prejudicial comments made by anyone." After the session, the Rev. Dozier, an attorney, confirmed asking these sick questions: "I want to know the applicants' spiritual makeup. I think a judge should be God-fearing."

Consequently, criticism is forming to find out if issues have been raised in other JNCs around the state in the not-so-liberal counties. The chair of the Broward JNC, Georgina Pozzuoli, made herself unavailable for comment when representatives of the Review pressed for an explanation. Her spokesperson said complaints should be filed with the Judicial Nominating Procedures Committee against the JNC members who asked those questions. Miami-Dade Circuit Court JNC members recalled none such witch hunting questions asked during their interviews.

Will such questions be asked by Jeb Bush himself when JNC finalists are interviewed in Tallahassee? It would be highly hypocritical of him not to do so.

There are 26 state nominating commissions. There is one for each judicial circuit and one for each district court, and also one for the Supreme Court. They are in charge for screening and interviewing prospective judges. Once chosen, they send to Jeb the names of the finalists.

## NewsAlert

JNC members attend a one day training session organized by the governor in cooperation with the Florida Bar. JNC members are indoctrinated on the Bush brand of morality and told with which types of questions to intimidate the candidates. Thanks to a majority of Banana Republican legislative leaders, Jeb Bush was ready, willing and able to take firm control and appoint the JNC members. His complaint was, at that moment, that the state judiciary was blocking his legislative agenda. The Bar's role critically reduced, it now merely recommends four candidates to the governor's office. A dictatorial Bush insists that he wants a judiciary that represents his narrow-minded philosophy of government. His sub-jectivism is reflected in the appointment of mainly fundies to the JNCs. In the Review, Jeb is quoted as saying at a JNC training seminar in Orlando: "I'm looking for people who share my philosophy: respect the separation of powers and recognize the judiciary has an important role." With other words, there is no need for them to be legislating. Bush will not compromise.

The reverend Dozier, a black Right Winger, was appointed by Bush to the Broward JNC for a two-year term in 2001. He was re-appointed to a four-year term last year. Unbelievably, Dozier admits he doesn't want the job at JNC. He was picked by a group of African-American religious leaders. He admits further in the same newspaper: "I'm not qualified for the JNC; I don't practice law."

This golden opportunity, given on a silver plate to be on the JNC and advance a Right Wing ideology, he is eager to force his views on judicial candidates. "This country is founded on the principles of Christianity, not the principles of Buddhism, not the principles of Judaism," the *Sun-Sentinel* quoted him. "I don't believe the developers of the Constitution would want us to compromise our Christian values." The fundamentalist preacher has received complaints from atheists who object to his religiously tainted questioning. Dozier argues that religion belongs in the courts: "There is no such animal as separation of church and state in the Constitution," he maintains.

Maria Schneider is one such candidate who objected to Dozier's interrogating technique. She is chief of the juvenile division of the Broward State Attorney's Office. Interviewed for a Broward judicial seat, she was offended by Dozier's demanding if she is a god-fearing woman.

When she answered that "I'm not particularly religious," she was tacketed by another JNC member, a Walter Blake, whether she would post the Ten Commandments in her courtroom. Her courageous reply was: "Because of the separation of church and state, it probably did not belong there." That answer undoubtedly sealed her fate.

# Oddly godly

A sampling of interesting internet news blurbs from the last few weeks. If you do not receive them yet, send your email address to atheist1@BELLSOUTH.net.

## Nudist Christians

HUDSON, FL—Bill Martin has purchased about 240 acres of land about 30 miles outside Tampa for a little more than \$1.6 million, much of it on the site of an old nudist colony that had fallen into disrepair, which he and his business partners hope to transform into a modern-day Garden of Eden, creating a Christian-themed nudist community.

"The Bible very clearly states that when Adam and Eve were in right with God, they were naked," said David Blood, executive director of the project. "When people are in right with God, they

do not have to fear nudity."

This Christian naturist marriage retreat is to be called Natura. The renovated park would feature an open church, a giant water park for the kids and classes in family building with nude baptism ceremonies.

## Boy Scouts lose

SAN DIEGO—The city agreed to pay nearly \$1 million to settle a lawsuit with the American Civil Liberties Union over land in two public parks the city leases to the Boy Scouts free.

San Diego will pay the group \$950,000 in court costs and attorney's fees and will ask a

federal judge to void the lease the Scouts have held for too long.

The ACLU contends the Scouts should be evicted from the parks because the organization discriminates on the grounds of religion.

The Boy Scouts said they will continue to fight. But the group added in a statement that they were "staggered by the amount of the settlement, which provides funding to the ACLU lawyers to continue their attack on the Boy Scouts."

The ACLU sued the city and the Boy Scouts local council on behalf of two boys, one raised by a lesbian couple and the other by

## Diocese to mortgage seminary, cathedral

The Catholic Archdiocese of Boston has agreed to mortgage St. John's Seminary and the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, and has also dipped into funds for retired clergy and cemeteries as part of an elaborate plan to finance the estimated \$90 million the church has promised to pay to victims of clergy sexual abuse, showing "how sure the archbishop is that this loan will be paid off within two years time."

an atheist pair. The lawsuit sought to terminate two leases between the city and the Scouts for land.

The City Council had given city attorneys authority to reach the settlement. City officials said continuing the legal battle could have left the city with an even bigger bill. "It's more of a burden to the taxpayers and the budget the longer we remain in a case that I believe we're ultimately going to lose," said Councilwoman Toni Atkins.

# NEWSNOTES

EXPOSING THE DANGERS OF RELIGION

## BORNE IN HAITI

By Patrick Bens, Chapter Director

BORN IN HAITI, Roseline Lavillaine, a 25-year-old student nurse from Fort Lauderdale, FL, states proudly:

"Voodoo is our family faith."

Together with dozens of other Haitian-Americans she flew to her native country to attend an annual four-day pilgrimage at a remote village in the north of Haiti, traveling with candles and a heavy spiritual debt.

Josephine Grosoul, (names have been changed to protect identity) who still lives in Haiti but dreams to one day reach U.S. shores, walked for 17 hours to be in this small farming town, swollen by thousands of people coming from as far as Paris, France, Montreal, Canada and Mainland USA. The pilgrims seek help for money problems, sick children or sad love affairs.

## VOODOO IS KING

This pilgrimage is the most important in the Voodoo religion. Rituals to Ogou, the god of war, and rites to the goddess of love, Erzulie are offered by the faithful, who had a problem and saw it solved, and now are here to pay their debt, wearing blue and red, the traditional colors of Ogou. Ogou's colors are represented in the Haitian national flag as well, for your information.

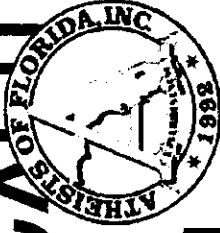
Millions of Haitians practice Voodoo full time. Because it is now the state religion, fewer are turning their backs on this religion brought from Africa and most have started to detest other faiths as their Caribbean nation grapples with growing political instability and humiliating poverty.

Seventy percent of Haiti's 9 million people practice Voodoo as their primary faith. This includes many professional nurses and doctors who claim to be Catholic or another religion. Only a small number identify themselves as Protestant.

(Continued on page 2)

Monthly Bulletin for the members of  
ATHEISTS of FLORIDA Inc. Chapter DADE&BROWARD

# Our next meeting is planned for



Sunday, February 22, 2004

2 pm at the

"Polo Norte"

Restaurant

2050 W 56th Street—Hialeah

\*\*\*\*\*

This will be the inaugural Hispanic meeting combined with the regular Dade&Broward Chapter Meeting

## THE CREATIONIST DIET

How Intelligent Design reduces your calorie intake in twelve easy steps.

1. Always drink church wine: it has no calories.
2. Always eat blessed food: it too contains no calories.
3. Avoid fat people; they are possessed by calories.
4. Food eaten from somebody else's plate has no calories because the calories rightfully belong to the owner of the plate.
5. If you eat something and nobody sees you eat it, it has no calories.
6. When you overindulge, go confess and your calories will be forgiven with three Hail Bloody Marys.
7. If you drink beer with health food, the calories in the beer are cancelled out by the health food.
8. If you drink beer and smoke, you burn all the calories of the beer into smoke.
9. Always pour beer in a tall glass slowly. The longer you pour, the more calories evaporate.
10. Drink Vodka instead of beer, you will consume less calories because Vodka is clear like water and all clear drinks are clear of calories.
11. Always burp while drinking beer, to exorcize the calories before they can enter the digestive system.
12. Always fart while eating fatty foods, to effectively pass unwanted calories.

# QUESTIONS

An atheist's profile

Carolyn Kaba

ckaba2001@yahoo.com

1. **Where did you attend school?**  
Panama, Costa Rica and Miami Florida (12 years of All-Girl Catholic School) then UM for undergrad studies.
2. **What is your occupation?**  
Marketing Analyst for a Software Company.
3. **What influenced you to choose that occupation?**  
I always loved the psychology of Marketing. Used to be in marketing for a fast food company (Burger King) and Disney.
4. **In your choice of career, were there any obstacles you had to conquer?** Being too outspoken, getting bored easily, finding it difficult to respect people who were less smart than I.
5. **If you ever wanted another occupation, what would it be?**  
Are you kidding? I'd be traveling or home in bed eating non-horns!
6. **What are your hobbies?**  
Reading, reading, reading. Dining—all sorts of ethnic food. Travel. Shopping.
7. **What is your all time favorite book and why?**  
*Harriet The Spy*—ignited my love of books in the 6th grade.
8. **What is your all time favorite movie and why?**  
*Defending Your Life* (a very comical look at the Afterlife) and *The Apartment*—so sad and so romantic.
9. **When did you become aware you were an Atheist?**  
The first moment I was aware of Religion (3rd grade?). I thought "Yeah, riiiiiiiiight. What a crock."
10. **Was there an event or person in your life that influenced your choice of wanting to be an Atheist?**  
I don't want to be an Atheist, I just am. My parents were ambivalent, at best, about religion. I did a lot of research, read as much as I could. Explored different religions, but I always innately knew that I could not force myself to believe in something. I either did or didn't.
11. **If you were a teacher, what lesson would you teach religious kids?**  
I would teach them everything. Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity—as a matter of interest. But I would teach them to go with their instinct. That it is not what they are told, but what they believe.
12. **How do you see the future of the Separation of State and Church?**  
With Dubya in the White House? Scary.
13. **If you were to be quoted, what would be your quote?**  
"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent" (Eleanor Roosevelt)

Email Interviews with atheists across the Internet by **NEWSNOTES** teen reporter **Pabola Bens**

(Continued from page 1)

And only this smaller Christian group adamantly opposes Voodoo, a bastard word deriving from the French and transfixied into the Creole language spoken in Haiti.

With the thousands of roaming missionaries seen proselytizing everyday in Haiti, violent troubles lie in wait behind the horizon. Voodoo priests demand costly offerings to a pantheon of gods. In a country where most people survive on less than \$1 a day, the threat of a foreign religion is shunned with strong opposition, marked by the terror of reprisal poisonings. The lure to evangelical Christian churches instead of Voodoo temples, is seen by local voodoo priests as hamstringing their enduring control.

## THE PAST

Since the 1940's the Catholic Church has waged a bloody campaign to eradicate Voodoo and has only been successful in driving the religion underground for these many, many years and dark decades. Disparaged by foreigners as a hodge-podge of beliefs, voodoo has rejuvenated recently and grown into the nation's most popular faith.

**Last April, the Haitian government officially sanctioned voodoo, allowing priests for the first time to legally perform marriages.**

With communities like Miami Shores and North Miami doubling their Haitian populace every year, Dade authorities have expressed their concern that this tolerance will eventually influence Dade's policy making. Already there are allegations that local elections are "blessed" or "cursed" by voodoo practitioners.

President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former Roman Catholic pastor, whose popularity is waning with hard times, is seen as a symbol of the weakness of the Roman Catholic saints—and influence of the Vatican strong arm.  
Farmer Joseph Saint Couilles, 45, who used to pray at the town's

Apartment—so sad and so romantic.

9. **When did you become aware you were an Atheist?**

The first moment I was aware of Religion (3rd grade?).

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With Dubya in the White House? Scary.

13. **If you were to be quoted, what would be your quote?**

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent" (Eleanor Roosevelt)

Catholic church, is making the pilgrimage. "You serve God or the Devil as you like," he told a visiting reporter from the *Miami Herald*, evidencing the change of religious climate in Haiti. Not far from the church where Joseph and others used to attend mass, men and women strip down to their shorts, and plunge into a shallow mud basin. They emerge in a trance and claim to be transformed.

"When I come out of the basin, I tremble. I feel the might of Ogun, who empowers me all year long," says Jean Lachepet, 31, a native Voodoo priest who inspires many South-Floridian visitors.

Around the basin, Voodoo priests, priestesses, and witchdoctors visiting from America congregate, eager to learn more as to how they can cure with the latest verbal spells and new-found herbal remedies. With suspicion, leading Catholic observers in Haiti warn South Floridians that some of those magic potions may end up in the food processed in Miami; even in drug prescriptions. Something to chew on.

Before her return to her adopted U.S., Roseline spends her last U.S. dollars on everything from religious items like candles and perfumes to amulets and images of the bewitching saints, to cover tupperware containers with the latest botanic hexerei.

## THE FUTURE

The future of voodoo may well be determined in the counties of Dade, Broward and Palm Beach, where a growing population of Haitian-Americans is establishing a strong niche for this religion to flourish.

Not-so-Christian religions like Voodoo and Santeria are spreading faster than Islam in our tri-counties—as indeed in the entire nation, and receive from the Supreme Court and the President equal respect.

Nurses and doctors constitute a threat to the reputation of science, if they are encouraged by government to rely on their primitive beliefs to make judgments in their profession. The faith-based sciences in our future will return to the demon-fearing societies of our past.

## NO CHURCH LEFT BEHIND

By Patrick Bens

VOODOO-BASED ECONO-MIX

**W**HEN IN THE EARLY 1980s, Bush Sr. was calling Ronald Reagan's economic plan "voodoo economics," Bush Jr. must have been listening. With his god-driven initiatives, George W. is getting mighty close.

Just the other day, a truck pulls up and out jumps a man handing me an oversized business card that states his church can fix my roof for less. I turn the card around and it lists an array of services the church can also provide, from building fences to laying drain fields and everything in between that a home needs.

Just think of the state of this type of economy for a moment. If I can get my roof fixed for less by a church, why would I call the company, which has done a good job a decade ago? If that company is still around ten years after, it must be reliable. But cost rules the market so I go for the lowest bid. The Church has been around for 2000 years so it too must be reliable. Its workforce is plentiful and that means the job will be finished on time. Through coercion, the materials are donated up of volunteers, through blackmail, the materials are donated by large suppliers, and at the bottom line the Church adds no taxes. The cost should be rock bottom.

Imagine this scenario for every possible service business. Maybe even manufacturing. Yeah of course, a factory can be run by volunteers. So can a police department and City Hall. Even doctors. The Guatemalan twins weren't charged a dime. The Catholic church has prospered for thousands of years on the sweat and sway of unpaid nuns.

If a church is helping the needy, it can also help the greedy. It should not matter if there is a rabbi on the board or a cross or a crescent painted on the truck or a religious commitment in the charter, to say it with W's own words.

He wants to "clear away a legacy of discrimination" against such organizations, even those that refuse to hire people of a different faith. You can therefore choose between a Roman Catholic roof, a Jewish roof or a Mormon roof. The president believes groups with religious affiliations can be as or more effective than others.

A Bush government must recognize the power and unique contribution of god-driven groups in every part of the economy. Workers can be circulated and work can go on to the beat of their "Amen's" around the clock. It would be reminiscent of the 1800s when slaves sang songs to sweat and sway by. A roof could be finished in less time than it takes Bush to spell the word "alleluia"—if he can spell it at all.

But wait: Housing and Urban Development offers qualified churches with an opportunity to purchase HUD Real Estate owned properties and foreclosures at a substantial discount (up to 30% in HUD revitalization zones). After rehabilitation, participating churches can turn it into a rental, which, according to a recent *Miami Herald* editorial, often leads to extortion—or they can sell the property at an exorbitant mark-up tax-free! Learn about the Compassion Capital Fund's \$30 million available for leveling the playing field for faith and community based organizations by going on [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov). This is the president's No-Church-Left-Behind economic plan.

By starting an underground industry of faith-based services, the Bush government is in fact creating a sub-economy that, as it oozes to the surface to become a tradition, will progressively foil the competition of established businesses, which have traditionally provided better service with highly skilled union workers.

## TALISMAN

The god-driven economy's only reliance is on faith and prayer. So the Bush people have come up with a new talisman to help the god-driven initiatives look professional: the faith-liason. Some states and counties and some for-profit workforce contractors have created the position of Faith Liaison. Faith Liasons are officials or consultants who serve as a bridge between government and faith-based and grassroots groups. It is difficult for mediocre bible thumpers to learn how government operates, who to go to for information, how to get confusions and barriers cleared away. Faith Liasons help educate government officials and the public about Charitable Choice and about other new collaboration initiatives. They help backwoods ministers study the procurement process and procurement opportunities. They may provide help, or steer people to others who can provide help, with grant writing (applications for government funds or for foundation or corporate funding). They may organize conferences that promote networking, share information, and highlight good models of ministry and collaboration. They may even be corrupt sharks or lobbyists in another life.

## COMPASSIONATE FASCISM

Hitler ruled by decree, Bush by Executive Order. Effective immediately, each of the following Cabinet agencies creates its own Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to work in tandem with the White House: Department of Health and Human Services; Department of Housing and Urban Development; Department of Labor; Department of Justice; and Department of Education. You can call it a god-gutted administration if you like. The overall problem is with the lack of public understanding: people assume that a promise is a reality. While wiping out poverty looks promising, now that terrorism is such a big issue, no effective method has been developed in the past. People assume that churches hold that promise, but in reality churches have exploited, not eliminated poverty, illiteracy and crime. Officially, in welfare and social policy, Bush wants the Federal Government to play a new role as supporter, enabler, catalyst and collaborator with faith-based and community organizations. Unofficially, churches can go ahead and hagger-mugger an aging Uncle Sam. Here is another example. In a new twist on dialing for dollars, the Christian Coalition of America and several other pro-family lobbies are raising money by encouraging members to sign up with an anti-abortion phone company that gives its profits to the groups.

The fund raising through Pro Life Communications is the latest example of religion delving into commerce to boost finances, especially with tough economic times putting a squeeze on donations. The coalition, a tax-exempt group registered with the IRS as a social welfare organization, plans to use the money to reach out to political candidates. Businessman Clyde Cleveland, a candidate for Iowa governor last year, is one who raised money through the company for his campaign, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives was established to make Federal programs easier to be accessed by under-educated church leaders and to make federal dollars easier to be accessed by political buddies: via the churches. One word for god-driven government is *theocracy*, and by means of executive orders, Bush is amassing that power unconstitutionally. Don't call it a democracy if only half of the population votes, because that means that the other half lets itself be dictated. This is no longer a free-market democracy with a first amendment separation of government and religion. This is a doctrinarian dictatorship. This is Christian-American bolshevism.