

## Atheists of Florida

**DADE&BROWARD:** Third Sunday of each month, 2:00 on the eighth floor of the Broward County Main Library, 100 S. Andrews Ave. Ft. Lauderdale.

**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 2477 to the message on 305/940-0442. patceil@bellsouth.net

### 2003 Meeting Schedule

Library	Denny's
JAN 19	JAN 21
FEB 16	FEB 18
MAR 16	MAR 18
APR 20	APR 15
MAY 18	MAY 20
JUN 15	JUN 17
AUG 17	AUG 19
OCT 19	OCT 21
NOV 21-23 Miami Book Fair	NOV 18
DEC 21 French Place 2pm	DEC 16

**T**HE ATHEIST ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL is proud to be a founding member of the Secular Coalition for America, a new political partnership of national freethought groups. Founding organizations with AAI are the Insti-

## AAI founding member of new political coalition —Bobbie Kirkhart

tute for Humanist Studies, the Internet Infidels and the Secular Student Alliance.

The group's Website (<http://www.secular.org>)

### Newsletter from page 1

each issue of the full newsletter plus **NEWSNOTES** on the page. The primary difference will be that most photos will appear in color.

Our Web site also posts meeting information for all chapters, applications for the scholarship fund competition, membership applications for A of F, and up-to-date information about the upcoming Atheist Alliance International Convention. Visit the site at [www.atheistalliance.org/florida](http://www.atheistalliance.org/florida).

## CHAPTER EVENTS

**TAMPA BAY: Pinellas County—First Sunday of each odd-numbered month (Jan., Mar., etc.), 1:00-3:30 at the Pinellas Park Public Library, 78th Ave N & 52nd Street.**

**Tampa—First Sunday of each even-numbered month, 1:00-3:30, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa.** Optional dinners follow all meetings at nearby cafeterias. FMI: Ed Golly, 813/835-1500, [AthALFIE@aol.com](mailto:AthALFIE@aol.com).

### 2003 Meeting Schedule

Pinellas Park	Tampa
JAN 5	FEB 5
MAR 2	APR 4
MAY 4	JUN 1
JUL 6	AUG 3
SEP 7	OCT 5
NOV 2	DEC 7

org) brags of "refreshingly bold freethought activism" and offers links to sites which locate your congressional representatives or the media of a given area. The site publishes a position statement, which says, in part, "Informed by experience and inspired by compassion, we encourage the pursuit of knowledge, meaning, and responsible ethical codes without reference to supernatural forces. We affirm the secular form of government as a necessary condition for the interdependent rights of religious freedom and religious dissent."

In order to move beyond the lobbying restrictions placed on educational non-profits, the SCA has incorporated as a 501(c)(4) organization. This tax status will enable the Coalition to engage in organized political activism to an extent previously unknown in the nontheistic community.

Unfortunately, this status and the fact that it does grass-roots lobbying also restricts the amount of money tax-exempt organizations, such as the AAI and most of your local groups, can give to support it to five percent of your annual expenditures. The Coalition hopes to buy a very effective on-line lobbying service, which will cost about \$10,000 for the first year, but to do that it will need the support of local groups and individuals. Soon the Web site will be set up to take contributions. Until then, checks made out to the Secular Coalition for America can be mailed to its treasurer, Larry Jones: Secular Coalition for America, c/o the Humanist Institute, 18 Corporate Woods Blvd., Albany, NY, 12211.

*Atheists of Florida*

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8 December 2002

## Outreach activities

**MIAMI/TAMPA—THE END OF THE** calendar year is always a busy time for Atheists of Florida outreach projects.

The last Saturday of October finds our table at the Circus McGurkis every year. We picked up about 25 sign-ups at the table and sold the usual T-shirts, bumper stickers, and books.

Jim Young has been steadily setting up the table at the Elm Street Flea Market on the USF campus every Wednesday.

Our biggest annual event is the Miami Book Fair International. This may have been the best year ever. For three days, the table seemed to never lack visitors either inspecting the literature, chuckling at the bumper stickers, or engaging us in argument. Often all four attendants at the table were separately engaged with passersby. Sales grossed nearly \$500 including everything from books to novelties. As usual, we signed up nearly 100 people for our newsletter.

Atheists of Florida was a sponsor organization of the November 2nd Godless Americans March on Washington (*see page 4*).

Our next focus will be the Atheist Alliance International Convention which we are hosting at the Tampa Hilton Airport Westshore on April 17-20, 2003 (*see page 2 and insert*).

### Board Meeting

The Atheists of Florida annual board meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 9 beginning at 10:00 am. It will be held at the convention hotel to give the board members an opportunity to inspect the convention site.

Members are welcome to attend.

### Atheist Forum

**TAMPA—The Atheist Forum** Cable TV show will begin production of its fourth season on Hillsborough County Public Access. The probable schedule will be the live production seen on Tuesday night from 10:00 to 11:00 on Time Warner channel 20. That program is then rerun later in the week on channel 19 seen in Tampa City limits only.

This season we are making some minor changes. Rather than have the same two co-hosts each week, we will draw from a pool of about six hosts, pairing them in different combinations each week. We have a lot of talent within A of F, and their differing appraisals of religion, their own experiences, and state/church issues add a greater variety to the show. It also demonstrates to our viewing audience that there are a lot of intelligent, aware atheists in the community, not just a few.

In our previous newsletter we reported that the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners had voted to cut their annual \$355,000 appropriation to Speak Up Tampa

Bay, the public access cable operator. In November, a U.S. District judge ruled that the cable operator will likely prevail in its lawsuit against the Board of it goes to trial.

The judge understood that the Board's objection to funding was based on their objection to program content equating to censorship. Although there is no mandate for government to create public access, once in place, it may only be eliminated in a manner consistent with the First Amendment.

### Twain Scholarship Fund

**MIAMI—January 1, 2002** was a very happy new year for Florida atheists. That was when an article in the *Miami Herald* announced that Louis Appignani of Coconut Grove was forming a foundation to help educate the nation about atheism.

The Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, sponsored by Atheists of Florida, Inc., has received a grant of \$5,000 from the Louis J. Appignani Foundation. However, there is a caveat.

Although we will control the grant and may use any interest income from it to add to our base requirement each year, we must raise a minimum of \$4,000 during 2003 before we can use any of the donation for grants. Any excess we raise over the \$4,000 will then be matched dollar-for-dollar from the grant.

For example, if we raise \$5,500 from other sources in 2003, we may add \$1,500 from the Appignani grant giving us a grant total of \$7,000 for the year. Any unused amount will be carried over to succeeding years.

"You have the beginnings of an excellent program and I am pleased to participate in it," says Appignani. "Let's promote it more and raise additional funds. My plan should serve as an incentive to potential donors, since every dollar they donate will result in an additional dollar added to the fund."

The Scholarship Fund conducts one fundraising drive each year from among the membership of Atheists of Florida. We have also received grants from the United Way in past years, and are listed on charitable lists for donations by state employees.

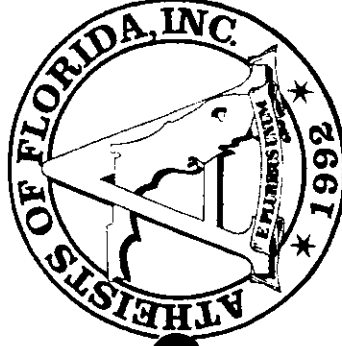
For the 2002 essay competition, we are offering awards of \$500 for first and second place, \$300 for third and fourth. Appignani's grant and come creative fund-raising can substantially increase both the awards and the amounts granted.

### Newsletter on Web page

**EARTH—**The time has finally arrived for us to put our newsletter on our Web page. Webmaster Jim Peterson will now post (*back page*)

*"Civilization will thrive when the last stone from the last church falls on the last priest."*  
—Emile Zola

**Atheists of Florida**  
*Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church*  
Sponsor of the MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, Incorporated  
A Member Society of Atheist Alliance International, the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies  
[www.atheistalliance.org/florida](http://www.atheistalliance.org/florida)



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Membership dues

Life Member \$ 500.00

Sustaining 60.00 yr

Couple 50.00 yr

Individual 40.00 yr

Student (under 25 yrs) 10.00 yr

Limited Income (over 65) 10.00 yr

Newsletter (out of state) 10.00 yr

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SOON AFTER THE INVENTION of good microscopes, scientists began to trace the development from embryo to adult to see where each tissue came from.

It was obvious that the four buds that formed on the vertebrate embryos were going to develop into fins, wings or limbs. We could also see that an elephant's trunk and a

### THE SOLUTION IS EVOLUTION No. 19 Comparative Embryology

—Jim Strayer



dog's nose came from the same tissue, or that the tissue in every animal that makes an ovary also may turn out to be a testicle given the right hormones.

In the beginning of any animal's development, it is difficult to see what it is going to become. Later on in embryo development things happen that anyone can see without the aid of a microscope. It is now possible with many animals to trace back to the very cells that produced the organs that adults have. When the egg and sperm unite to form a complete cell, the Zygote, it begins to divide: two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four etc. Soon some of these cells, because of their location on the zygote, will become different from others. They are about to form an embryo with different tissues. The cells, that produce the tissue that becomes organs, are referred to as Stem Cells.

### A "Spring Break" AAI Convention

—Myrta Furrell

FLORIDA SUNSHINE AND THE BEACHES close by. Busch Gardens in full bloom. Balmly breezes. A museum of science and industry at hand. And, best of all—a dynamic freethought gathering with a diverse program. Might Tampa in April be just the lift in life you need? Plan now to attend the 2003 Atheist Alliance convention to be held April 18-20. This convention takes place at the Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore (close to the airport and less than fifteen minutes from downtown metro center).

This year's premier Alliance event is hosted by Atheists of Florida, which has obtained for us the excellent hotel rate of \$69

Stem Cells in a frog, a turtle, a bird, or a bat that produce, as an example the liver, come from the same place. The adult liver is slightly different in each animal because the egg and sperm that created them was slightly different. The reason that medical science is so interested in Stem Cells is that they have the ability to become tissues that may help in the cure of an illness or deformity.

What this shows is that animals all have the same ancestor. They are all related to some creature in the past that evolved into many different forms. Most of these forms died out and became extinct, but a few survived to become the life we are familiar with on this planet Earth.

The same can be said about plants. They have Stem Cells too. The Stem Cells that produce the leaf of an orange tree are the same that produce a leaf of a corn plant. The difference is caused by the difference in the sperm and egg that united to produce the plant embryo (remember that pollen produces sperm). This shows that the orange tree and the corn plant are related by some distant ancestor.

When embryo development of different plants or animals are compared it is quite easy to see that they go through roughly the same stages. The journey from fertilized egg to adult is almost the same in all living things.

This series will continue in the next newsletter. Jim Strayer is a retired biology teacher living with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea. Jim has compiled the articles of this series into a book available through Atheists of Florida.

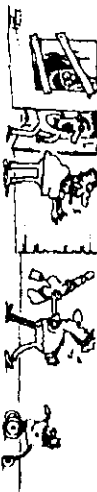
per night! (You will find no better in the Tampa area during spring break.) Bring friends along to enjoy together the scenic area and its many delights in addition to the first-rate presentations and workshops planned for the weekend. Or, if you have youngsters, then why not treat the entire family to a fun vacation? (Epcot Center and other Orlando ventures are proximate.) For a peek at the hotel accommodations, go to <http://www.hilton.com/> and type in Tampa, FL, making sure to select the "Airport Westshore" Hotel (2225 Lots Ave.). The Web site also links you to many of the area's sights and conveniences. You will find there many reasons to mark your calendar and get started on your planning!

### More on the Pledge

This letter appeared in the Ft. Pierce Tribune in August. Re: The 9th Court of Appeals Ruling on the Pledge of Allegiance

The ruling by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals finding the pledge of allegiance with the wording "under God" unconstitutional, generated a plethora of letters to the Editor as well as editorials in the nation's media. As

## LETTERS



expected, the letters ranging from vitriolic to absurd and ludicrous clearly reflect the dismal understanding of our laws. The issue though was sidetracked from the legal interpretation of the First Amendment to the philosophical question of the existence of the supernatural, God, Allah, Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, leprechauns, etc. The main argument by the religious majority is that the nation was founded by the blessings and guidance of their God.

Thomas Jefferson, a Deist, wrote that "All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." To the religious mind, the "Creator" in the above statement represents an imaginary anthropomorphic God. To an atheist or a true scientist, though, the word "Creator" represents nothing more than the dual form of the universal essence, matter and energy, and the laws that govern them. Incidentally the words "God" or "Creator" are nowhere in the Constitution. Nevertheless, let us accept for a moment that the "Creator" under



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whose benevolence our country was allegedly founded, is the omnipotent, omniscient, etc. God of religion. If all Men were created equal, why did we have slavery for seventy six years since 1789 when the Bill of Rights came into effect?

Why were our black people still segregated as recently as 38 years ago? Why were Women considered second class citizens until 1920? Perhaps, now is the time to amend the wording in the Declaration of Independence to read: We collectively, the members of the species Homo Sapiens, should regard all individual members of our species with

the same Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

Unless and until we realize that there are no Gods, Humankind will suffer the insanity of wars fueled by religious fanaticism as exhibited on September 11, 2001, and continues to plague the middle East, Ireland, India-Pakistan, and numerous other spots on our beautiful and unique Blue Planet.

In closing, perhaps the most profound (and if I may use the word "prophetic") statement applying to our turbulent times is that of Emile Zola who metaphorically said: "Civilization will thrive when the last stone from the last church falls on the last priest."

Sincerely,

—CHRISTOS TZANETAKOS,

Founder, Atheists of Florida, Inc.

Founder, The Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, Inc.

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### Pitts'd off!

Another response to the Leonard Pitts column described in the article on page 3

Mr. Pitts,

Just finished reading your editorial of Nov. 29. I hope it makes you proud to be a bigot. It would indeed be difficult to find a more bigoted piece of trash in the works of George Lincoln Rockwell. In the first place, if the citizens of Nigeria were atheists, there wouldn't have been any riots for the simple reason that atheists couldn't care less what Mohammed would have done. In the second place, the notion that the atrocities committed in Nigeria would have been worse if the rioters were atheists is exactly as admirable as the notion that the atrocities occurred because the participants were niggers. Frankly, any decent person holds both those ideas in equal disdain. Apparently you do not.

—JOE REINHARDT

St. Petersburg

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### Watching the Forum

Please send me your newsletter and any other related information about Atheists of Florida.

I was real interested in the list of contradictions to the Bible you listed on the 26th Nov. [Forum program]. I only knew of a couple.

—WILLARD STANTON

Tampa

Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ

Hey, guys, like the show and can really relate. It's nice to listen to people with the same views. Ninety percent of my peers are somewhat religious. I'm totally against organized religion. It actually pisses me off the way I have to live the religious life. For example, I like to have a beer or two on the weekends, but if I want a cold frosty brew on a Sunday, it better not be before 1:00, or NO SALE!! Anyways, I would LOVE to be more involved, so please send me more info. Here is my address. Thanks for keeping the open minded people alive!

—DAVID ADLER

Tampa

## Citizenship before birth?

WASHINGTON—Shades of the old Vaughn Meader spoof of the Ronald Reagan press conference when he was asked, "Sir, when should a fetus be considered a living human?" Answer: "When it can vote." —*Patricia Benz*

But this time it's no joke. Starting in November, "unborn children" qualify for government health benefits under a new rule the Dubya administration established in September.

The change, designed to pander to the religious right under the guise of promoting prenatal care, represents the first time a federal policy has defined childhood as beginning at conception.

Although states will not be compelled to cover developing fetuses, any state that chooses to may pay for such care through a health insurance program for low-income children that is a shared responsibility of the federal government and states.

Under the rule, the fetuses of women who are illegal immigrants will be eligible for the program.

Why not simply provide health care for the expectant mother given the impossibility of separating fetus from carrier? The apparent contradictory policy from a conservative administration is designed to give fetuses legal status—and thus lay the grounds for outlawing abortion once and for all.

While the administration denies the plan has anything to do with abortion, an agency news release actually stated that the change would provide coverage for "unborn children" and—at one point—"babies."

Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, said the change would raise medical and legal dilemmas. "If the pregnant mother [as opposed to her fetus] is ill and must be treated, who is the patient?" she asked.

## Moore is less...

MONTGOMERY, AL.—After listening to Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore testify that removing his Ten Commandments monument would force him to violate his oath of office, U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson issued a permanent injunction last month ordering the monument removed by Jan. 3.

Thompson has stayed his injunction and allowed the monument to remain in the rotunda of the state Judicial Building while Moore takes his case to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. Moore testified that he has not voluntarily removed the monument as Thompson had asked because doing so would require him to go against both Alabama and United States constitutions. Both of those documents acknowledge the Judeo-Christian God and require elected officials to do the same, Moore said, and federal courts don't have the authority to require him to violate his sworn duties to stand up for them.

Thompson agreed that the plaintiffs—three attorneys who are exposed to the monument when they use the Judicial Building—were "severely offended" by the display. Thompson said, however, that allowing the monument to remain until the appellate court ultimately decides the case might be the best way to avoid a confrontation between Moore and Thompson's court.

After presiding over a week-long trial, Thompson ruled last month that the monument is unconstitutional because it violates First Amendment provisions that separate church and government. Thompson called the display "extreme" in its religious nature ordered Moore to remove it on his own.

Moore argued during the trial that the Ten Commandments are America's "moral foundation of law" and that the country's founding fathers paid tribute to the Christian God as the source of the new nation's legal and moral systems.

## Ireland nudging out of Dark Ages

DUBLIN, IRELAND—It's estimated that some 7,000 women travel overseas from Ireland to obtain abortions each year.

In a defeat for the pro-abortion side, the Roman Catholic Church, Ireland's voters finally, although narrowly, rejected a measure that would have further tightened the country's already primitive abortion laws. The defeated amendment would have overturned a 1992 Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortions for women whose pregnancies threatened their lives, including from suicide.

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern had promised at the beginning of his term in 1997 to resolve legal loopholes created by a series of court rulings in the past decade that permitted abortions for two young rape victims who had threatened suicide.

## Atheist Eagle Scout axed

PORT ORCHARD, WASHINGTON—Eagle Scout Darrell Lambert has earned 37 merit badges, worked more than 1,000 hours of community service and helps lead a Boy Scout troop in his hometown.

Or should we say "helped." The Scouts have deemed Lambert unable to meet the standards of membership which mandate being superstitious. According to the Scouts, this is more important than being honest.

A Scout since he was 9, Lambert said refused to profess a belief he doesn't feel, saying it amounts to a lie. "I wouldn't be a good Scout then, would I?"

The Scouts kicked him out. Lambert will tell his story at the Atheist Alliance convention in Tampa next April.

## Newdow on warpath again

WASHINGTON—A suit filed by California atheist Michael Newdow to abolish the positions of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives Chaplains would end mandatory financing of religion on Capitol Hill, and eliminate squabbles over "religious correctness."

Newdow successfully challenged the inclusion of the phrase "under God" in the Prayer of Allegiance. In a new lawsuit, he is opposing the use of public funds to provide Senators and Congressional representatives with chaplains. The House chaplain earns \$148,500 per year, and the Senate chaplain makes \$130,000.

## College for home-schooled unreal

PURCELLVILLE, VA.—Patrick Henry College, the Christian college founded two years ago primarily for formerly home-schooled students, has been denied accreditation by a national group because it requires professors to sign a statement of faith including that they will teach creationism.

The college of about 150 students, which graduated its first class in May, is appealing the decision by the American Academy for Liberal Education, a private group approved by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit liberal arts colleges.

## Is Leonard Pitts a Falwellian?

—*by Patrick Benz*  
"LIKE ARE DAYS when I think religion is the best argument for atheism. This, unfortunately, is one of them." So starts *Unborn Citizens*, Leonard Pitts' launchpad in the *Miami Herald* about the Moslem vs Christian slaughter in Nigeria for the sake of the Miss World pageant debacle about Mohammed taking or not taking one or all of the contestants as wife or wives. We'll never know.

## Ungodly slaughter in God's name

But Miss Nigeria herself has already expressed her opinion on the bloody matter on a BBC interview that the religious riots were not in the least a reaction to the question whether or not Mohammed or Jerry Falwell for that matter, would have fallen in love with her and/or her competitors but would have started anyway, maybe after a lost soccer game.

Pitts, a bigot of African American descent, who reminds me of Archie Bunker (or rather his neighbor George Jefferson) therefore, is not at all sorry for what Christians did in Kaduna, but simply wants to spit at atheists like der Beobachter in the 1930s spat at Jews.

If you're wondering where the pessimism is coming from, look to Nazi-Deutschland, which started with street fighting between Christians and Jews.

As you may be aware, the trouble with the Jews in Europe grew out of a young demented Jew who shot a Nazi pen licker in Paris. German business and political leaders feared that atheist communists would ruin the image of a nation renowned for official corruption and epidemic poverty. By seizing power, Hitler would put a stop to all this. His thugs ripped through the streets of Germany breaking all Jewish store windows and burned all major synagogues.

Germans were morally offended by the notion of poorly clad Jewish immigrants sauntering up and down the city streets.

I compare the similarities between the troubles in Nigeria and the history of Nazism while using much of Pitts' own words. With a computer that's easy to do, very efficient and fun.

"Next thing you know, the nation is burning. The newspaper, too. *ThisDay's* office in the city of Kaduna was torched. Then one of its editors was arrested by police. All this while the newspaper was issuing multiple apologies and the beauty queens, whose presence was supposed to spotlight all that is good about Nigeria, were fleeing to London. Eyewitness reports of the carnage they escaped were horrific—bodies lying in the street, bands of Christians and Muslims stoning one another, people chopping other people with machetes, bystanders set afire and burned alive. The death toll: over 200!

All because of a perceived affront to Mohammed." Change a few words and you get the picture. It could be 1930s Berlin instead of Kaduna. My point is, the carnage was not set off by atheists as Pitts' title suggests. Who were present though in both cases? Pitts's beloved Christians.

He wails a bit further with: "Pardon me for saying, but that's not exactly the most effective advertisement for the goodness of Islam. More to the point, it's not the most effective advertisement for the goodness of God." He doesn't say he is ashamed of the Christian reaction, which was no less violent or hate-filled.

"That bothers me, because I believe in God's goodness. When it comes to people, though, I am not so sure." Aha, he wants you to know that Christians do not have the moral means to create a carnage, doesn't he? What about the 300 years of Inquisition—isn't

that comparable to the fundamentalist Islamic laws now imposed by extremist Moslems? If freedom minded allied forces had not invaded Normandy, wouldn't we have seen a Nazi Inquisition in place today? You would recall what happened to Calvary

Kushdie, who wrote that stupid book, *Satanic Verses*. Some of the people in the Western world thought the Muslims went too far by pronouncing a death sentence on him, but you see, they did not appreciate the gravity of what he had done. And I am sorry that we almost had a kind of situation like this in Nigeria with this newspaper publication." To call any best-seller a stupid book is Falwellian, so I'll call Pitts a Falwellian. "From where I sit, though, the problem is not religion." Proves I'm right. Pitts is a Falwellian, Falwell is a bigot, so Pitts is one too. After so many dumb remarks against atheists, the *Miami Herald* ought to curb this man's dogmatic and inflammatory rhetoric, reminiscent of the ignorance posted on Web sites of white supremacists and anti-Islam Christians. In its editorials, *El Nuevo Herald* shows far more open mindedness where Pitts can learn.

"It's extremism and intolerance, no matter what creed they purport to serve. It's people who use God as hammer, battering ram, *weapon*, against those who don't believe as they do." Pitts is not just a bigot, he is a hypocrite too, just read his very last sentence and compare it to this previous one.

"They can quote you chapter and verse, those passages in the holy books that seem to justify their cruelty, their bigotry, their violence or their hatred. But they seem to be strangers to passages in the same books that require charity, compassion, humility, service, sacrifice, forbearance, mercy.

"So there's something sadly familiar about the carnage unfolding in Africa, something seen before in the inability or the flat unwillingness of the avowedly pious to be as big as the faith they profess." Well buddy, that works in reverse too. You got all these Falwellians quoting the good stuff but hoping the bad stuff will go on under the cover of darkness. That's how innocent doctors get shot in their own home by Falwellian adherents who go hide in the woods with the help of more Falwellians. So you better weigh your bigoted words, Leonard Pitts, before they harm some real people, because these ending words of your editorial are downright as stupid as any of Falwell, Robertson or Graham: "Instead, they storm the streets, chopping people to pieces, setting other human beings on fire, all in the name of God. And it strikes me that it's a good thing the rioters are so religious. Can you imagine the atrocities they'd commit if they were not?"

## How to send letters to the editor:

The *Miami Herald* values its readers' letters. They receive far more than they can print, so they try to publish the most representative and provocative. They condense letters and do not publish letter writers more often than once per 60 days. **Letters must bear the writer's name, full address, and daytime phone.** <http://www.miami.com/mid/miamiherald/news/editorial/letters/2598828.htm>

WASHINGTON—ON A DAY THAT WAS CLEAR and cold, atheists from all over the nation converged on its capitol for a show of atheist pride.

With an increasing infringement of religion in government over 2,000 atheist and other godless voices assembled near the Washington Monument on Saturday, November 2, 2002 to march along the mall toward the Capitol. It was the first Godless Americans March on Washington, demonstrating that Americans who are not

## About two thousand strong Godless Americans March on Washington

superstitious comprise a significant part of the population that needs to be acknowledged. Along the way they ran a gauntlet of about 50 Christians who carried huge signs trumpeting their superstitions.

The march was the brainchild of American Atheists and hosted by President Hilten Johnson. Marchers assembled in front of a stage with jumbotron aside to hear



August Berkshire—W W of A

**Above: Marchers proceed along the mall toward the capitol and staging area. Left: A of F vice president Steve Miles (l) and president Ed Golly flank Steve Peterson of Minnesota.**

Ed Golly—Wide World of Atheism

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about 25 speakers, including Bobbie Kirkhart, President of Atheist Alliance; Michael Newdow, plaintiff in the suit which found the Prayer of Alliance unconstitutional; Jim Strayer of Atheists of Florida; Eddie Tabash; Margaret Downey; Edwin Kagin, founder of Camp Quest; Larry Darby; Ed Buckner, Exec Director, Council for Secular Humanism; and Norm Allen, Exec Director of African Americans



Ed Golly—Wide World of Atheism

**No atheists in foxholes? A seemingly endless stream of veterans flock to the stage.**

For Humanism.

### How many atheists?

Speakers cited the 2001 American Religious Identification Survey done by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York showing that 14% of the population identifies with no religion. That translates to about 30-million Americans. This is a larger group than many faith denominations, including Jews (3%) and Episcopalians, and matches the black population. But because so many of us are in the closet, views of the nonreligious are not respected.

But according to Stephanie Innes of the *Arizona Daily Star*, Sept. 11 resulted in a brief surge of spirituality, but did not result in long-term religious membership gains.

While researchers invited 285 religious bodies to be part of a study, they got data on only 149. Among the larger religious groups not included in the tallies are Jehovah's Witnesses, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Baptist Bible Fellowship and the Christian Brethren. Pagans were also not included in the report.

The study concludes that 50.2 percent of Americans—about 140 million people—are part of a religious body. The figure does not indicate church attendance, about 20 to 25 percent of Americans on any given Sunday, religion experts say.

C-Span III taped the entire rally and it was seen several times around the nation. Signs remained visible throughout the event, with slogans such as "God is a Fairy Tale," "Keep your Gods out of our Schools," and "Al Qaeda is a Faith-Based Initiative."

Many in the crowd said they hoped to dismiss the myth that nonbelievers are unpatriotic. Against the backdrop of a huge sign that read "Atheists Bless America," about 100 military veterans were called to the stage to receive a round of applause.

Shelly Hatton of Metroplex Atheists in Texas exposed the Faith-Based Initiative begun by Dubya when he was governor. The program has resulted in a tremendous waste of money and plenty of corruption, now to be expanded to a national scale. All in all a very worthwhile march and rally with an excellent turnout.

THEIR FUTURE IS IN HOLISTIC TEACHING, their mission the total liberation, economically, socially and politically of their flock. That is the plan clergy has spread wide open on the altar to survive a

every Sunday in Miami-Dade.

Sunday mornings in South Florida, says the *Miami Herald*, reflect the increased pluralism brought by immigration. As 2005 approaches—the year when the

## 2005—Patrick Bens

US Census projects Hispanics to outnumber blacks in the United States—historically black neighborhoods are diversifying; Diversity or die. In South Florida, with its high percentage of Hispanics, the future is now.

While the children in Dade schools are getting failing grades in math and science and skipping school altogether, many never learning to read properly, preachers, a few with Ph.D.s, many others with a "no ID," are learning Spanish and Creole. Some churches are translating their services and written materials into those languages, and many more are offering simplified messages in English that everyone can understand and believe in.

With the middle class growing, the core support of any congregation—more pocket money enters the church and also presents a sweet seed challenge. Many professionals have moved from the old neighborhoods to the suburbs. To go after their savings, some newer churches have opened in the suburbs, while others in cities have launched satellite services with jubilant entertaining.

### materialism with the worshippers harming its essentially universal to toy with its mission broadening church is traditional black

**Patrick Bens is Director of the Miami/Dade Chapter of A of F. He is editor of NEWSNOTES.**

New Birth Baptist Church in North Miami, for example, opened a smaller sanctuary in Hallandale Beach three years ago, a necessary business move. In the newest suburbs, you are seeing growth, particularly with the trend of mega-churches that are a threat to the survival of older traditional shafts of worship. As for older churches, black churches especially, the struggle is to attract and maintain younger worshippers. Today, the black church has evolved to more than 400 denominations. From the African Methodist Episcopal Church to the Church of God in Christ, there are about 45,000 predominantly black Christian congregations across the nation. Membership, however, has ebbed and flowed.

## Heaven is hotter than Hell?

The temperature of Heaven can be rather accurately computed. Our authority is Isaiah 30:26:

"Moreover, the light of the Moon shall be as the light of the Sun and the light of the Sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days."

Thus Heaven receives from the Moon as much radiation as we do from the Sun, and in addition 7X7 (49) times as much as the Earth does from the Sun, or

Therefore a new mission: an expanded and perhaps more urgent one, for both church and congregation. With the faith-led core members moving to the suburbs, the traditional black church is broadening its

harming its worshippers with the tools of materialism: economic development, political savvy and social responsibility; big projects in which no preacher has a Ph.D.

The black church is the single most important entity in the black community. It is the one place that brings people together. It is also the institution with one of the greatest concentrations of wealth. This is not lost on the preachers. That's why the church is pushing finance, from offering credit counseling to selling bonds to sophisticated investment schemes that will shave the sheep and fleece the flock. Is this what President Bush is teaching the preachers during prayer breakfasts?

The churches in South Florida are also taking a more political stance thanks to the increasingly faith-based system. They cannot afford to not be visible because of the racial and political climate of Miami. Staying out of politics means a dual suicide: religious and local governmental leaders have been together in bed scratching each others back since the first church opened here. That is not likely to change.

Who will be on the loosing end? The child who's sitting in the pews "watching the clock move forward with all the speed of a man trading through hip-deep snow," as Leonard Pitts, a *Miami Herald* syndicated columnist sat through it himself. Pitts, about a year ago, wrote a piece that totally ignored the rights of atheists. This prompted an angry letter to the *Herald's* editor, by none other than our former chapter director Rebecca Porto, M.D. This letter was published in the *Herald* and resulted in several readers joining Atheists of Florida. Pitts, now, is ignoring the rights of the young black man who is entitled to *not* attend the boredom of a holistic mass. He could be spending that precious time working on an education that will form him to attack life's challenges alone, instead of having to be preyed upon by a "no D." With 2005 looming in his future, it will be that much more important for this kid to have a diploma in hand in order to compete, armed with total intellectual freedom and social independence, for economical survival after 2005.

50 times in all. Using the Stefan-Boltzmann law for radiation we find the temperature of Heaven to be 525C.

The temperature of Hell can be deduced from Revelations 21:8 which says: "But the fearful, and unbelieving...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

A lake of molten brimstone means that its temperature may be as low as brimstone's boiling point of 445C. So according to the Bible, Heaven at 525C, may very well be hotter than Hell at 445C.

# Ateos de la Florida presenta Joe McCabe

## FICCIÓN RELIGIOSA

Estamos ahora en posición de estimar la sinceridad de los que piden que se conserve la Biblia en las escuelas modernas. A veces lo piden porque es "gran literatura." Abra su Biblia en la primera página, y vea hasta dónde tiene que leer --cuántos días tiene que leer-- antes de que llegue a una página que usted honradamente llamaría gran literatura. Está, desde luego, muy bien presentada, en buen inglés poético antiguo; pero solamente ciertas partes, mayormente en los Profetas y los Salmos, se prestan realmente para desarrollar un gusto literario, y esas partes son propias para adultos, no para niños. Ese alegato no es sincero.

Pero se dice a menudo que la Biblia es muy valiosa como único registro de la evolución de un pueblo y de su religión. Ahora nos damos cuenta de lo insincero de eso. Los que tal cosa alegan son precisamente los que rechazan la "inspiración" de la Biblia --o no la defenderían de esa manera-- y conocen los resultados de la crítica textual. Saben bien que el orden de los libros de la Biblia está muy lejos, tan lejos como es posible, del orden cronológico, y que la historia de la evolución religiosa de los judíos que presenta el Antiguo Testamento en su forma actual, es una falsificación sacerdotal. Los hechos fueron totalmente diferentes.

*Eclesiastés* es uno de los libros más extraños jamás incluidos en una colección sagrada. El autor es un filósofo epicúreo [o sea, que sigue la doctrina de Epicuro, filósofo griego que enseñaba que el placer es el fin supremo del hombre]. Creía en Dios, pero era Agnóstico en cuanto a la vida futura. Una y otra vez expresa su escepticismo, de modo que el único verso en que sí expresa su creencia en una vida futura es probablemente parte del retoque que el libro sufrió a manos ortodoxas (según sabemos). El escritor desdén los sacrificios en el templo (V; 1) y constantemente apremia a sus lectores que coman y beban y gocen mientras brilla el sol. Era probablemente un judío que vivía en la nueva ciudad greco-egipcia de Alejandría alrededor del 200 AC. No lo llamaremos falsificador, puesto que su usurpación del nombre de Salomón no engaña a nadie.

Proverbios es mucho más temprano, probablemente remonándose al siglo IV, cuando comenzó la influencia griega, pero la "Sabiduría de Salomón" o "Eclesiástico" es un libro escrito en griego el siglo primero antes de Cristo, probablemente por otro judío de Alejandría. Significativamente, no muestra esperanzas de un mesías, pero contiene plétora de filosofía griega que no había nacido sino hasta cinco siglos después de Salomón.

Pero el libro más curioso y distraente de toda la Biblia y una de las más finas y verdaderas piezas literarias de ella es el Cantar de Salomón [Cantar de los Cantares]. Yo me ruborizaba cuando, siendo un joven estudiante para el sacerdocio, cantábamos solemnemente sus voluptuosos versos acerca de los muslos, los pechos, y los vientres, de las damas. No decían que todo era un símbolo elevadísimo de la unión de Cristo con su Iglesia, o por lo menos de la unión de Jehová y la sinagoga. Aún en la prudente traducción que tenemos en la Biblia, es lo que llamaríamos, si no se encontrase en la Biblia, una obra extremadamente licenciosa.

No estamos seguros de que no hay un elemento mitológico en algunas de sus partes, que parecen celebrar la unión del dios del Sol con la diosa de la Luna (Shelamith) [como sabemos, en la mitología griega la diosa de la luna es Selene; si algún lector conoce la ortografía castellana de esta "Shelamith", sírvase informarla al traductor, para tenerla presente en edición posterior]. Pero en conjunto, es claramente una colección de cantos matrimoniales orientales. En el Oriente, un festival matrimonial dura una semana, y las canciones acerca de los encantos de la novia, y el interés particular del novio en ella son aspectos importantes de la celebración. Algunos de estos cantos pueden ser bastante antiguos, pero otros incluyen palabras persas y hasta griegas, de modo que la colección debe pertenecer al siglo cuarto, aproximadamente. Para esa época, las falsas obras históricas había hecho a Salomón y toda su gloria y sus esposas muy populares entre los judíos, y nada mejor podía hacer un aspirante a autor que adoptar su nombre.

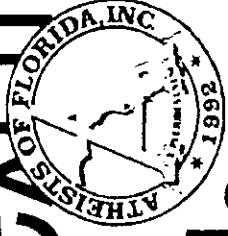
Hasta donde podemos recuperar huellas de Salomón a través de las tinieblas del tiempo --un reyezuelo que moraba en una vivienda oriental de tercera categoría-- era completamente capacitado para escribir eso (aunque no en tan elevado lenguaje) acerca del "ombigo" y el "vientre" y otras partes, de una joven mujer. Mutilamos la parte de "Hamlet" donde el príncipe habla a Ofelia; pero leemos solemnemente de los "cantares" a nuestros niños: "Él descansará toda la noche entre mis pechos," etc.

La Historia de la Controversia Religiosa  
de Joseph McCabe

# NEWSNOTES

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

## Our next meeting is planned for



January 19, 2003

at the Broward County Main Library  
100 S Andrews Ave.  
Fort Lauderdale

2pm--8th floor

### Topic:

**Our participation at the  
Miami Book Fair International,  
as seen on C-Span2.**

Mark your calendar:  
January 21, 2003 at 8am and every third Tuesday of each month,  
our chapter holds a **NON-PRAYER BREAKFAST** at the

*Denny's Restaurant*

1675 N W 67th Ave / Hialeah

(entrance, New Testament Boulevard) For directions call 305-821-7032.

*Come and enjoy breakfast with camaraderie.*



PERSONAL ADS FOR ATHEISTS ONLY

Check out a friend, a pen-pal, an e-mate - or a companion for our next convention in TAMPA:

[www.freethinkermatch.com](http://www.freethinkermatch.com)

# NOOSENOTES

EXPOSING THE DANGERS OF RELIGION

## WHAT WITH HUMANISTS?

"RELIGIOUS NON-BELIEVERS"  
OR "ATHEISTIC BELIEVERS?"

By Patrick Bens, Chapter Director

When Beethoven's Egmont overture rolled into our living room like a warm storm, my dad turned the volume of the radio up. For as long as I had lived, that ritual was tradition in our household. Egmont's overture announced the weekly hour of the Humanist Voice. Usually delivered by a well versed University professor with the rare gift for speaking in a language that everybody identified with, my dad received his weekly dose of free-thought, and me, I got like clockwork, my first inklings that we were humanists.

When I hear that romantic tune half a century later and halfway around the world, I still rake my memory in trying to remember who Egmont was for whom Beethoven has written such a brilliant corkscrew overture, which was adopted as the inspiring opening theme for the Humanist Hour.

Egmont was a Flemish general and governor of Brabant with Brussels as its capital. He lived from 1522 until 1568. He belonged to one of the noblest families of the Netherlands, then under autocratic Spanish rule with its Inquisition in full swing. While in the service of Philip II of Spain he helped defeat the French. Although a devout Catholic, Egmont protested against the persecution of the Protestants in the Low Countries. In 1565 he traveled to Madrid to try to talk Philip II into changing his mind but Egmont's pleas fell on deaf ears. Instead, a couple of years later, the bloodthirsty duke of Alba was sent to

(Continued on page 3)

# QUESTIONS

An atheist's profile

Reginald V. Finley, Sr.  
Host: Live with  
The Infidel Guy

1. Where did you attend school?  
St. Leo College, Fort McPherson Atlanta, GA
2. What is your occupation?  
Internet Radio Show Host
3. What influenced you to choose that occupation?  
Activism
4. In your choice of career, were there any obstacles you had to conquer? Prejudice and technological constraints.
5. If you ever wanted another occupation, what would it be?  
A teacher.
6. What are your hobbies?  
Debating, music, pc repair, website management, conducting radio show, reading, singing and exercising.
7. What is your all time favorite book and why?  
George H. Smith's book *Atheism, the Case against God*
8. What is your all time favorite movie and why?

Mail Interviews with atheists across the Internet by *NEWSNOTES*'s teen reporter Fabiola Bens

"Saving Private Ryan." This was one of the first movies that ever made me cry. Genuine, excellent, beautifully done (camera angles etc) and great actors.

9. When did you become aware you were an Atheist?  
After reading George H Smith's book, *The Case Against God*
10. Was there a person in your life who influenced your choice of wanting to be an Atheist?  
George H. Smith.
11. If you were a teacher, what lesson would you teach religious kids? How to be as objective as possible, to question everything, and be tolerant of people that think differently than they.
12. How do you see the future of the Separation of State and Church?  
Despite Bush's attempts I think that we will still remain pretty much a secular nation.
13. If you were to be quoted, what would be your quote?  
"To be truly open-minded, one must accept the possibility that they may be wrong."

Inspired by a dear friend's sudden death

## WILL I BE

### REMEMBERED?

By Patrick Bens

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Will I be forgotten fast<br>When my life runs out of breath?<br>While I pulverize at last<br>Who will care about my death?                | Will they bury all my verses<br>Or destine them to burn?<br>Will they stult the good ones versus<br>The bad ones in the same cold urn? | Will they donate all my art<br>To the nearest goodwill store?<br>So that after I depart<br>There's no trace of me no more.                |
| Will anyone remember me<br>Beyond my final sigh?<br>And take note of my poetry<br>The day after I die?                                    | Will they toss me in my grave<br>With the lovely things I learned?<br>Will never no one save<br>All the accolades I earned?            | My accomplishments must<br>Not end six foot deep<br>Where they'll turn to ash and dust,<br>When I start my endless sleep.                 |
| Will the wind erase my footprints?<br>Will I soon be written off?<br>Will I waste away without friends?<br>Will I die without their love? | Will they homage me for such<br>I had to suffer and strive<br>To reach out and touch<br>The ones now still alive?                      | Will the wind erase my footprints?<br>Will I soon be written off?<br>Will I waste away without friends?<br>Will I die without their love? |

"I, for one, am waiting to see what they think and do when Muslims start collecting vouchers and form their own schools and madrassas around the country."

Richard Reeves

(Continued from page 1)

Brussels to eyewitness. Immediately, he had Egmont arrested. Although Egmont sympathized with the king and never entertained the thought of treason against him, maintained that Philip was the rightful ruler of the Netherlands and believed he would agree to a compromise with his subjects. Alba, hell-bent on spreading terror among the population, secured Egmont's death sentence without any delay.

A knight of the Golden Fleece, Egmont sought to be tried by a court of his own order. He desperately tried to obtain a fair trial by the judges Alba himself had appointed. All in vain. In 1568, Egmont was publicly beheaded in Brussels. His death plunged the Low Countries into a bloody state of unrest and upheaval and is generally considered the immediate cause of the outbreak of open rebellion against the Spanish crown, which resulted in the independence for protestant Holland.

Two centuries later, during the Romanticist dig into history, Goethe wrote this story into a tragedy. Beethoven composed the whirling overture.

### REASON OR EMOTION

Unquestionably the dramatic emotion of the tragedy is deeply grooved into the passionate music. What I question today though, is not whether the symbolism of the injustice is well written into the tune, but if the romantic composer's sturm-und-drang approach is per se the perfect choice to accompany an hour of rational debate. Then again, what with humanists? Is Humanism a rational or emotional movement? Humanism speaks primarily of peace and compassion: traits that indicate a sentimental passive ism. Atheism speaks of justice and equality, connoting a legal active ism.

The latest issue of *International Humanist News* left some of its readers in a philosophical dilemma. A report about the UN Conference on School and Education in relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief in Madrid informs that the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) participated

"on behalf of the community of religious non-believers". The IHEU has been able to influence the final declaration in history - the rights of "religious non-believers" were explicitly recognized. Fruit of such efforts is the following sentence: "Freedom of religion or belief includes theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religious belief." Humanist success? Yes, asserts *International Humanist News*.

This paragraph, borrowed from the Rationalists International's website, theorizes that humanism does not seem to know where it stands, what it is and what it's made of: reason or emotion. Clearly humanists want to profess a belief system that is acceptable by all and applicable to all. My question remains, what with humanists?

### ALL ABOARD!

We are either theists or atheists. I borrow this train of thought from the Jews, who classify the world into Jews and Gentiles. With other words, you are either a Jew or a Gentile, right? You can't be both or neither.

When recently I asked a humanist who claimed to be an agnostic, whether he was a theist or an atheist, he answered: "Neither."

"Well," I said with my simple rule of thumb "you are either on the train or on the platform. Which one are you on? Since you can't fly, you cannot be on 'neither.'" And you can't be on both, 'cause you'd loose a leg."

With this primitive test, I catch many who are afraid to identify themselves. There is no such thing as a believing non-believer, an irrational rationalist, a theistic atheist.

When my father turned the radio up to get his fix of reason, he was listening with the intent to hear secular thought. He wasn't wanting to hear that some of the speeches might be tainted with faith-based philosophy.

Fabiola, his granddaughter, told me this conversation that she overheard at her high school today. Two kids were talking about atheism: an atheist and a catholic. The catholic asked why the other was atheist. The atheist answered that it was because of 9/11 and the Middle East. He said that both these conflicts show that religion tears people apart. My daughter said she listened attentively because she too was often asked why she was an atheist and she had never been able to give any good answer. Now she says, she is armed with a good generic reply ready without any fear for the next assault.

In times like these, when governments are seeking partnerships with religion, - reminding us of the good old Spanish Inquisition, we must stand firm and be counted as what we are: **atheists: free FROM religion.**

Giving in to be regarded as *believers in humanism*, only leads the Christian officials to make the decisions for the humanists, who, wrapped in doubt while facing an awesome universe, are, to fundamentalist Christians, the real deal true blue Judeo-Christians, because they believe that as humanists they must worship *themselves* as the equal of the peaceful, compassionate, all knowing, all powerful, ever present super dupe in whose image they were (fancifully) created.

Isn't atheism the best shield against this fancy? Isn't atheism the best protection against theocracy? Isn't atheism the best weapon to defend freedom of thought with? Atheism doesn't need a sentimental apology under the morn of *humanism!*

### Atheism is it!

5 Atheists of Florida came to the Belgian Branch at the French Place in Pompano recently and enjoyed the movie CHOCO-LAT, in which the main character is referred to as an atheist. I'd like to thank Paul Cuyppers for inviting us to confere. Paul Cuyppers, the president of the 280 families large Belgian Club of Florida, of which 60 attended (from the very young to the very old - with lots of sore soccer players in between: we had played a tourna-

ment a few days before), welcomed all atheists with a free Belgian beer and spoke briefly about Aof. To know, Paul is a graduate of the Catholic University of Louvain (founded 13th Century). He twice mentioned that The Belgian Club is open to those who believe and those who don't. A far cry from the first president who, as a retired priest, held morning mass in the pavilion in TV-park, while families were arriving for their annual picnic....

# Tampa!



*means springtime!*

It means meeting old friends and finding new.  
It means educational experiences, fabulous food, provocative programs,  
and exciting excursions.\*

***In other words, a spring break for grown-ups!***

## **It's the Atheist Alliance International Ninth Annual Convention April 18-20, 2003**

(Yes, it's the holiday weekend named after the Roman Goddess Easter)  
Meet us at the Tampa Hilton Airport Westshore. For special convention rates of \$69 a  
night, with free airport transfer, call 800-445-8667, before March 27, and tell them you're  
with the AAI convention. This deal is a *real steal* at the top of the season!

\*These are group add-ons or on-your-own activities to be announced later. Florida is  
known for Disney World, Epcot Center and wonderful beaches. Tampa itself boasts Busch  
Gardens and several great museums...and is just minutes from sparkling Gulf beaches.

**Yes!**

*I'll be there!*  Enclosed is my check - or --  Bill my credit card below

Please register me/us for \_\_\_\_\_ people @

\$199\*\* per person for full program, includes all meals—2 banquets, 2 breakfasts, 1 lunch

--or--  \$100\*\* per person, meetings only—no meals

*Student Fees: for full-time students with Student ID only:*

\$150 program and meals - or --  \$75 program only

Names [as you want them to appear on your name tags]

Address (Street, City, State, Zip)

(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address

My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed, payable to Atheists of Florida

Visa  MasterCard # \_\_\_\_\_ Expires \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL TO: AAI CONVENTION  
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*For further information:*  
e-mail [nanowens@ix.netcom.com](mailto:nanowens@ix.netcom.com)  
--or-- call 813-662-6612

\*\*Special bonus gift with registration by February 28.