

Atheists of Florida

DADE&BROWARD: Sunday, September 16th, 2:00-5:00 pm 8th floor Boardroom, Broward County Main Library 100 S Andrews Ave. Ft. Lauderdale. See **NEWSNOTES** inserted in this newsletter for details. FMI, Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441 atheist1@beisouth.net

PALM BEACH: Meetings are held the third Sunday of each month at 2:30pm. Members notified by postcard. For driving directions or more information, call Charles Schister 561/627-6340 or 561/624-9359

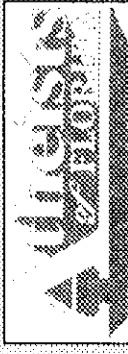
From the Internet—

Here's a great way to get the word out and (believe it or not) make money!

At www.themestream.com, you can currently go on the Web to find writing by Brent Yaciw, James A. Young, Patrick Bens, and others in freethought and humanist organizations. Log on and search by name, or search by topic. It's FREE to you, but each author gets paid a very small fee for every person who reads their work. You can also choose to be an author yourself—details are on the site.

Being Me ©Andreas Pohlmann

With death liking at my heels and everyone swaying me to believe, When morality becomes a dog and pony show, Dogma is all I can say
Scripted thoughts and deceptive lies
I can only look to the skies of the many worlds where all the gods reside,
be they alien, dead or living icons,
With social conquest steering blind ambition's ship,
I look to myself and say I just want to be me,
Feel what I feel and see what I see,
There is only one me until I will no longer be.



P.O. Box 130753
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ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED

CHAPTER EVENTS

TAMPA BAY: Pinellas County—First Wednesday of each month at the Pinellas Park Library, 78th Ave N & 52nd Street, 7-9pm, with dinner preceding at 6 p.m. at the King Buffet Chinese Restaurant, Park Blvd & 49th St. (Publix Mall).

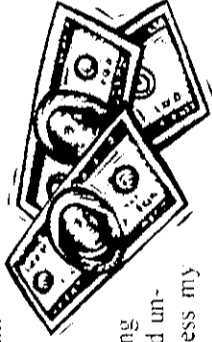
Tampa—Third Wednesday of each month, 7-9pm, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa. Community Room with dinner preceding at 5:30pm. Picadilly Restaurant, S. Dale Mabry, just north of Henderson, in the front room.
FMI: Ed Golly, 813/839-7567, AthALFLE@aol.com

It's not illegal

United States Code, Title 18 (crimes) Sec. 333 states the law regarding mutilation of paper money as follows:

Whoever mutilates, cuts, defaces, disfigures, or perforates, or unites or cements together, or does any other thing to any bank bill, draft, note, or other evidence of debt issued by any national banking association, or Federal Reserve bank, or the Federal Reserve System, with intent to render such bank bill, draft, note, or other evidence of debt unfit to be reissued, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than six months, or both.

The key here is that any marking must be done "with intent to render . . . (it) unfit to be reissued." The "intent" in scratching god out is to remove an illegal and unconstitutional phrase and to express my dissatisfaction to and with all of those responsible for it being there. Moreover, such a marking does not render the bill "unfit" to be reissued. We often get bills with all sorts of notations on them and banks are not bothered in reissuing them. You get names, phone numbers, etc., and you will also find some coded notations placed on them by banks.



Don't let it!

CIRCUS McCULLIS

The People's Fair
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20th Street & 28th Avenue South / St. Petersburg

Atheists of Florida

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News around the state

Coalition for Religious Freedom in Secular Hospitals, UPDATE

ST. PETERSBURG 8/23/01—Atheists of Florida is a participating member of the Coalition and received this follow-up report from Sandy Oestreich:

In case you didn't see the front page of the *St. Petersburg Times* on 8/22, we've won a nearly effortless coup:

"Pediatric Care Plan Canceled over Costs" says that the proposal to have All Children's Hospital hook up with BayCare Health System (with all the attendant risks to reproductive and end of life freedoms) has collapsed due to financial risks! So, All Children's Hospital will remain secular! One may assume that all the important care will continue in ACH's Adolescent Clinic: in depth contraceptive counseling and distribution, and so forth—all but abortions are done there.

Maybe, just maybe our pointed meeting with the CEO's of both ACH and BayCare in January and press releases and follow-up letters and newspaper articles put a little damper on the plans.

Not to be complacent, though, there are still four secular hospitals in BayCare that are under the Roman Catholic Ethical and Religious Directives! Let me hear from you about your ideas and thoughts. I would appreciate it.

Thank you for your continued support. It WORKS!

Sandy can be reached at: Sandyjoestreich@cs.com

Action Alert! "In God We Trust" poster efforts in FLA.

We need your activism on yet another threat to state/church separation.

In late August, school boards in two different counties of Florida voted on whether or not to hang "In God We Trust" posters in public school buildings.

In Pasco County, the posters were endorsed by Concerned Women for America. In Collier County, they were supported by the Christian Coalition. Though backing came from different groups, the effort to put "In God We Trust" in classrooms is spearheaded by The American Family Association of Tupelo, Mississippi. This Religious Right group wants the slogan to hang in a million classrooms across the country. It succeeded in passing a law in the Mississippi 2001 legislative session that requires all public schools to hang the motto in each classroom.

Given that two Florida counties that we are aware of have already faced the issue, it's likely similar efforts will be made in additional counties. We all need to stay informed about proposals at our local school boards. If a proposal to hang the national motto is mentioned, NOTIFY US IMMEDIATELY.

Atheists of Florida can work with Americans United to confront this issue. With some time to organize a response, we can succeed in deflecting

these Religious Right efforts. The Pasco County school board voted to accept the poster donations, but in Collier County the board voted 3-1 against hanging the posters. What made the difference? Americans United was not alerted to the situation in Pasco County until the day of the vote. By contrast, in Collier County we had two weeks to organize and respond. Concerted activity by AU members, other state-church separatists, and allied organizations forced the school board to recognize this effort for what it truly is—a veiled effort to reinsert prayer into our public schools and to destroy the wall of separation between government and religion!

Remember, support for posting "In God We Trust" and poster donation offers can come from a variety of right-wing religious groups at any time. Please be alert, stay involved, and let us know if any proposals come up in your area.

More religious instruction in Florida jails

Training ground for the future Henry Lyons?

Florida State Officials showcased a religious program for young offenders in prison and are expanding it with more faith-based dorms.

Faith-based dorms are part of an increased emphasis towards "transitioning" young inmates more successfully back into society.

These dorms are going to be overseen by more (yes, more) paid (yes, paid) prison chaplains. This spring the state Legislature approved more than \$5 million to expand the program. There are presently two programs in the state—Fomoka Correctional Institution in Daytona Beach, and Hillsborough Correctional Institution in Riverview. Five more dormitories are planned for Polk, Gulf, Marion, Wakulla and Miami-Dade counties.

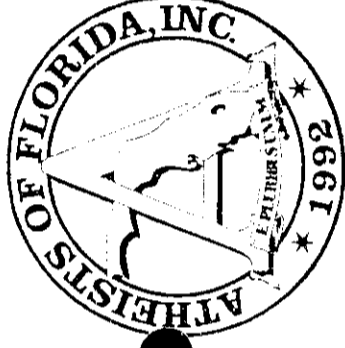
State endorsement of religion?

The current trend in removing blocks from the state-church separation wall seems to be establishing the endorsement of religion, but not specifying a particular religion or god. A Moment of silence, "In God We Trust" mottoes in public facilities, the cry to protect freedom of religious expression, all placate this agenda.

Now we have the state spending our money, in direct violation of the state constitution, to promote religion. But if religion eliminates conflict, what's going on in Ireland or the Middle East? Suppose an ex-con becomes an abortion clinic bomber or another Tim McVeigh. Who would be responsible?

How will parole boards maintain objectivity? Would an acknowledged atheist receive the same consideration as a born-again Xian? This should not even be an issue.

Atheists of Florida Inc. recognizes the fact that young prisoners need to be helped. A of F urges these State Officials to drop the bad idea of housing inmates in any type of faith-based dorm: keep jails secular. If the State of Florida wants to help an inmate through a "transitioning" program let it be with education in mind, not superstition. **A**



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Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church
Sponsor of the MARK TWIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, Incorporated
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www.atheistalliance.org/florida

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- Sustaining 60.00 yr
- Grade 50.00 yr
- Individual 40.00 yr
- Student 10.00 yr
- Limited Income 10.00 yr
- Newsletter 10.00 yr

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DIGESTION IS THE CHEMICAL process of getting food ready for cell use. Almost all digestion takes place outside of the cell and usually involves turning large chemicals, like proteins, into smaller chemicals such as amino acids, so they can be used by the cell.

Plants must digest the sugars and

THE SOLUTION IS EVOLUTION No. 11—Digestion

—Jim Strayer



starches that they store before they can be used by the cells. Animals evolved a different way when it comes to digestion. As the

food enters the animal's mouth it brings with it many useless and often times chemicals dangerous to cell survival. As animals evolved and became more complicated, with many types of tissues and organs, a gut evolved to carry on digestion. At the same time, the gut protects the cells that make up the animal. Animals have a protective outer layer of cells (skin) to protect the living cells from the external environment and they also have a layer of cells lining the gut to protect cells from the substances in the gut.

Although it may seem like the food we eat is inside of us, it is not. It is in a tube that starts with our mouth and ends with our anus. In order for food to get into our body it must enter the blood. Almost everything we put into our mouths would be poison to our cells if it went directly into the blood. Meat, milk and eggs are

just a few things that must be digested before they enter the blood stream or they would kill us.

Because evolution is an ever changing process, some animals evolved digestive juices to digest only certain foods. Many insects live off of only one type of plant. Some animals, like owls, evolved a method of regurgitating undigestible materials. Snakes have very strong digestive juices and can break down almost anything they eat. This information is important in the study of evolution because some bacteria and worms have evolved that not only can survive in a gut, but in many cases must survive in a gut. Almost every animal from insects to humans has these parasites.

An understanding of how our digestive system works and the parasites that invade it has been, and will continue to be, significant in medicine and healthful living. It is possible to follow the branches of the evolutionary tree back to the first digestive systems. Remember that these first systems are very successful because many of the animals that have them have been on earth long before animals evolved to live on land. There are many similarities between your digestive system and that of a shark.

There are many interesting side issues in the digestive process that are very meaningful to people around the world. Animal "waste" (feces) is still one of the main sources of fertilizer. In many countries, intestinal "waste" is dried and used as fuel. And, of course, there are thousands of insects, worms, fungi, and bacteria that survive because of what we term as "waste."

Mark your calendar and start spreading the word...

If you are not already aware of this, PBS will present an 8-hour program on Evolution that will run on local PBS stations on Sept. 24, 25, 26, and 27 (Mon.—Thurs.). Anyone who is concerned about the far and religious right efforts to introduce creationism into the public schools should try to promote this program as widely as possible. For more details on the program see: www.pbs.org/evolution.

VETERANS FOR PEACE

Vets Working Against the Priests
in Military Culture

For info call Geo Boone 813/782-5428

Contributors

From our appeal in the previous newsletter

Norman LeClair	\$ 10	Book Fair
Ed Corl	50	Book Fair
Ed Corl	50	Camp Quest
Herbert Williams	10	Camp Quest
Irvine Yablon	40	Book Fair
Christos Zarnetos	50	Camp Quest
Dr. Michael Brannon	50	Camp Quest

For a look at how things are shaping up in some of the world's actual theocracies...

TEHRAN, Iran—Social vices threaten to undermine President Mohammad Khatami's efforts to ease Islamic regulations on public dress and behavior. In response, police have been directed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to issue orders forbidding restaurants from serving women wearing makeup, stores from selling T-shirts emblazoned with movie stars and men from going to work in neckties—a symbol of Western decadence.

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil—After 26 years of debate, amendments, delays and parliamentary maneuvering, the Brazilian Congress approved a legal code in early August that for the first time in the country's history makes women equal to men in the eyes of the law.

Until now, a husband could obtain an annulment if he learned that his wife was not a virgin at the time of their marriage. Another restriction prevented anyone determined to have engaged in adultery, which is a criminal offense, from remarriage. Sound like laws derived straight out of the Bible, don't they?

As feminist groups see it the most significant advance is the abolition of the traditional concept of "parental power," which gives fathers unrestricted legal rights to make all decisions on behalf of their families. Under the new legislation, they will need to divide that authority with their wives. Single mothers will be regarded as heads of households. We seem to be trying to back into the space they just vacated.

KABUL, Afghanistan—It's a nation under God—without faces. Postage stamps show landscapes, currency is engraved with mosques. Government ministry walls are adorned with calligraphy, hotel rooms hung with floral designs. In the bazaars, there are posters and caendards for sale depicting Mecca in 100 styles, but none showing people. Afghanistan is ruled by the Taliban, which enforces its strict interpretation of the Islamic ban on idols and human images—viewed as an insult to God. You remember the Taliban demolished those two 1,500-year-old stone statues of Buddha.

The ban starts with the Taliban's religious hierarchy. Mohammad Omar, its supreme leader, is a reclusive cleric who is rarely seen and never photographed. The prophet Muhammad is never depicted in any form. The town of Lourdes in France is regularly inundated with people suffering from terrible diseases. They come to be cured. Our best medical experts should investigate Lourdes. It should determine clearly once and for all whether or not people who are paralyzed can walk after they visit Lourdes. If science determines that a visit to Lourdes can indeed cure the sick, it would be a great revelation and might even be the answer to all our health care problems. If the smartest people alive come to the conclusion that Lourdes works, I'd listen. On the other hand, if they conclude it does not, it should be labeled a fraud and people going there should be warned that it won't help.

There are people who believe prayer is an effective way of gaining an objective. Several serious studies have concluded that there are some beneficial effects for the person praying, but another study indicated prayer was not effective for a second party who was prayed for by someone else. The study was inconclusive about whether prayer's beneficial effect was in the body or the mind. A study done by a psychiatrist at Dartmouth Med School in

form. A few Taliban officials allow foreign journalists to take their pictures at news conferences, but visitors are ordered not to photograph "any living thing."

Don't these sound remarkably similar to "Ten Commandments" laws? The Taliban says that if a man views a strange woman's face, he may be tempted to impure thoughts or acts; consequently, women are forbidden to leave their homes without wearing a head-to-toe cape called a burqa. If a woman needs a passport photo, it must have only her eyes showing.

Men, too, are partly hidden, with covered heads and long beards required for males past puberty. Men whose beards are too short may be jailed until they grow.

The ban has a sentimental cost. Couples marry without wedding portraits. Parents die without leaving their children any likeness. Family snapshots may be confiscated at the Kabul airport, especially if they depict men and women together.

At any of the few camera shops, the religious police can enter at any time. If they find pinphotos of people larger than a passport mug shot, they tear them to pieces. Beneath its faceless veneer, Kabul is full of photographs. Treasured family portraits are hidden in trunks. Shopkeepers hide postcards of Afghan women in traditional costumes behind shelves of books. Others offer prohibited photos of the destroyed Buddhas. Two American women and six other foreigners have been jailed for more than three weeks on charges of preaching Christianity and will be put on trial.

According to Taliban law, foreigners convicted of preaching Christianity face jail time and expulsion, while the penalty for an Afghan who converts to Christianity is death. The Taliban are constantly revising their interpretation of how to carry out punishments under Islamic law. This is a true example of religious law, "God's laws," in practice. Could it happen here?

1995 concluded that elderly patients who did not pray before undergoing heart surgery had three times the death rate of those who did pray. I am willing to believe that prayer does or does not work, but the medical community ought to undertake a series of studies and tests to determine once and for all whether or not prayer does anything. If it was determined that prayer is effective, it ought to be compulsory in school and at work. If science could prove conclusively that it does not work, millions of people could save endless hours not praying.

The problem is, no matter what experts say, there are going to be people who don't believe them. There is a great deal of incontrovertible evidence in the form of fossils that the Earth and many of the creatures on it have lived here for billions of years. There's even evidence beyond question that creatures evolved from one form to another over those years, but no matter how sound the evidence is, there are people who think the planet and every living thing were created in a flash by God just a few thousand years ago. The problem needs work.

Efforts to shove the Ten Commandments at us from all directions seem to be expanding. Where could it all lead?

MONTGOMERY, AL.—Remember Judge Roy Moore, the circuit court judge who became known as “the Ten Commandments judge” when in 1997 he posted the document in his Gadsden, Ala. courtroom? The people of Alabama actually elected Moore to the position of chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court! So was it any surprise when he upstaged himself by making good on his promise to bring back the Ten Commandments that helped catapult him to the state’s highest judicial office?

Late one night, after his fellow jurists were long gone, Moore and a few helpers carted a 5,280-pound, four-foot-tall granite monument into the lobby of the state Judicial Building. Commissioned by Moore and financed with private subscriptions, the rock has a square base inscribed with quotations from Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and other Founding Fathers who would probably roll over in their graves at the sight of the stone in a public courthouse. The top of the monument displays two tablets chiseled with the Ten Commandments.

The confused Moore, (R-obviously) thinks U.S. law is based on the Bible and that the Constitution was meant to promote some god. “I would not begin to tell anyone how to worship God,” said Moore. “But in my capacity as chief justice, it was my responsibility to show the moral foundation of law and the legal basis upon which this country was founded.”

Clearly, this cretin is clueless.

Conflict history

During the previous decade, the ACLU and other

groups have filed dozens of lawsuits against Ten Commandments postings in public buildings. The ACLU lost its lawsuit against Moore in '97 on a technicality and has not decided whether to file a suit about his latest offense.

“The whole idea of this country is that we are governed by the laws of man,” said Alabama ACLU attorney Bob Varley. “When you start to govern by the laws of God, that leaves it open to interpretation by whoever is governing at that point in time.”

And literal interpretations can result in capital punishment for such “crimes” as working on Sunday, showing disrespect for a parent, or worshipping a different god.

In a 1980 Kentucky case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled posting the Ten Commandments in classrooms violated the constitutional prohibition against government establishment of religion. But legal experts say Moore may have bolstered his monument’s chance of survival by including the quotations of Jefferson and other historic figures. Justice William Rehnquist demonstrated his confusion of the issue when he wrote a dissenting opinion in the '80 case that the Ten Commandments could be displayed legitimately with historical documents to trace the foundations of Western legal thought. A remarkable conclusion in view of the fact that fewer than half of the Commandments are incorporated into any U.S. law.

“If the chief justice is there to represent all the people of Alabama, then he should create a legal environment where everyone feels welcome and no citizen feels like an outsider before the court of law,” said Charles Haynes, senior scholar for religious freedom at the Freedom Forum’s First Amendment Center in Arlington, Va. “Even if it is constitutional and legal to put the Ten Commandments up in the courthouse, the real question is: Is it the right thing to do?”

We spotted a commentary last year which seems timeless. Rooney correctly answers all his own questions at the end of the piece. Evidence, which most believers never examine anyway, is irrelevant and discounted exclusively on belief.

Intellectuals should explain or disprove power of prayer

—Andy Rooney

CONSIDERING THE HIGH ESTEEM in which intellectuals of all kinds—scientists, mathematicians, doctors, philosophers—are held by most Americans, most Americans don’t pay much attention to intellectuals



Sarcastically in sync with Dubya’s goofy stammerings, the Miami Herald of June 6, 2001 hid-den, on page 5B, in between the obituaries and an article on the Democratic challengers to his brother’s bid for a second term as Governor Jeb, the story that would be front page news—the Senate Republicans had stayed in power—President George W. Bush doing hard labor for faith-biased Habitat for Humanity.

Devoted to the devout

—Patrick Benz

It should not go unnoticed to atheists who are World War II veterans that, on D-Day, President George W. Bush could not match his father’s dedication to those who

Kagin’s Column

Ode to the Butterfly

Mind

—Edwina Kagan

The Parliament of Butterflies
Was racked by deep divisions
Questions of what to teach the young
Demanded their decision

It had been known and taught and thought
Since butterfly life began
That butterflies in glory rose

From their creator’s mighty hand
Now some few who this truth mocked
Had attacked faith’s very pillars
“All butterflies,” these scientists claimed,
“Came from caterpillars.”

This indecent theory spread
Into butterfly education,
Until this “caterpillar cult”
Threatened creation’s revelation.

The faithful sought to restore the truth
About the origins of butterflies,
And to build an absolute moral base,
To stop the metamorphic lies.

“Believe you descended from some worm
And wormlike you will be!”

Reasoned those who’d seen faith’s light
And knew there was nothing left to see.

“We see no proof,” some butterflies said
“That we are all come from cocoons—
Unbelievers who would teach this tale
Are all immoral loons.”

Some said the metamorphous lie
Was laid by “the enemy,” they believed,
Set, like candle flames and windshields,
To destroy all who were deceived.

The matter was at last resolved—
Both theories must be taught—how fine!
Now all youth can simply decide the truth,
Each in their own simple butterfly mind.

served to secure our freedom. Instead, he was advised to go and volunteer building a home for a family of six, headed by a single mom, a Miss Johanna Rodriguez.

The article by Phil Long is in typical *Herald* style: critical of the motive of an oil tycoon coming down from his ivory tower to photo-op with the needy Puerto Rican native. The leader of the poor family of six, holding an inexpensive gift: a welcome mat. Shows a genuine embarrassment when fatherly hugged by the leader of the free world, who clenches a hammer under his arm.

Also holding a hammer is H4H founder Millard Fuller whose bottom line may prove that he is the only one in the picture in a winner-take-all position. Here is his triple whopper.

Firstly, his greedy Christian faith-based org. gets an undeserved publicity boost every time a celebrity or a U.S. president shows up at his work site. Secondly, the house is being built with materials donated (that spells “free of charge” in English) by suppliers like Home Depot. Thirdly, the home being built for Johanna Rodriguez will be sold to a higher bidder when Johanna Rodriguez falls behind in paying the mortgage if, due to a downturn in the economy—which Bush controls—she loses her job at the clinic where she is employed at minimum wage. Advertising free, labor free, materials free, tax-free. With such earnings, how much of Millard Fuller’s H4H profits are ending up in the political pockets of puppets like Dubya?

In the article, Dubya is quoted as vowing to triple the funds for the ambitious H4H and other Christian dar-devils during the next calendar year. Does this mean that we will see more pictures of “W” hammering away for the Christian Right while screwing the First Amendment?

From now on, Ms. Rodriguez can be expected to appear to be a devout Christian. Her children, Joel, Nataly and Elena will be monitored to see if they mumble their humble daily prayers and come to church, show up for Sunday bible school and follow the evangelical lifestyle indoctrinated by the minister. He may visit the house regularly to make sure Ms. Rodriguez remembers who provided (and can take away) her American Dream.

According to CNN, every year 25% of H4H households fall behind on their mortgage payments and are

evicted. This statistical data will undoubtedly grow to 50% during the next 12 months. The economy is predicted to worsen, due to increased fuel prices. When inflation seeps in because fuel prices ooze up, the poor at the bottom of the pyramid are soaked first. Like Quill in Charles Dickens’ *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Habitat For Humanity collects their equity with arrogant ease. This exploitation is compounded around the globe: H4H has erected cheap housing south of the border, in the jungles of the Andes and lately in the immigrant ghettos of Eastern Europe.

Initiatives based on religion hold false promises, intimidate their prospects and have demonstrated repeatedly in the past that the first thing they intend to do is discriminate. The best historic example is the Boy Scouts. A close second is H4H. Candidates are selected from interviews probing for allegiance to Jay Cee. A distant third are the documented cases of non-run hospitals. They can refuse non-religious patients as well as doctors of a different creed. Jewish physicians have been routinely denied positions at Catholic hospitals to a point that Medical Centers like Mount Sinai were founded and funded by Jewish philanthropy to offset the discrimination.

In the U.S., the escalation towards Catholicism is certain to continue to aggregate into the next generation. Non-run tax-exempt initiatives will easily suck up the secular hospitals now operating in the red. (No pun intended).

As for Habitat For Humanity, it’s a bad habit humanity can well live without. If an organization like H4H can do what it does for Christians only, then so can the mighty U.S. government for everyone in need. More effective interest rates and efficient education are better policies than delusions and discrimination. Christian faith-based enterprises with huge bottom lines are nothing more than bogus businesses who cater their covert profits illegally to Christian politicians who continue to vote to keep it that way. Christian entities like H4H, which compete with commercial businesses ought to be taxed. In order to eliminate poverty and ignorance, Christian-based initiatives are not the remedies but the tse-tse flies we must net.

Dilulio to resign as head of White House faith-based office

Marginalized academic gives up after initiative draws fire from all sides

WASHINGTON—John Dilulio has announced that he will be stepping down as head of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, the controversial agency President George W. Bush created to direct greater public funding to religion.

In an interview with Cox Newspapers, Dilulio indicated that he was unhappy in Washington and grew frustrated by intense pressure from across the ideological spectrum. "We had every possible criticism from every possible side," he complained. "Left, right, all sides." He blasted the "nonsense" that he feels dominated Washington debates.

"It's our argument that the Ten Commandments do not establish any religion,"

—Lynn

—Lynn

—Lynn

Dilulio's comments are revealing.

"Most people whose ideas are criticized by 'all sides' would probably think their ideas are the problem, not that everyone else is wrong," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "Dilulio prefers to condemn honest disagreement as 'nonsense' and then head out of town."

Lynn noted that Dilulio, a Democrat, has been increasingly marginalized in a Bush administration dominated by far-right conservatives.

Dilulio was left out of the loop in recent weeks as Bush operatives manipulated the faith-based initiative to make the plan more palatable to the Religious Right. "I can't blame him for leaving," Lynn concluded. "I wish he'd take the faith-based initiative with him."

10-Cs from Congress

WASHINGTON—An Alabama congressman is preparing to unveil federal legislation that would allow government posting of the Ten Commandments in public buildings and bar federal courts from hearing cases challenging the religious displays.

Rep. Robert B. Aderholt (R-Ala.) says he will reintroduce the legislation, which he has labeled the "Ten Commandments Defense Act," shortly after Labor Day.

Aderholt's bill is reckless and radical in its approach to the law. It flies in the face of legal precedent and constitutional principles. The only thing the "Ten Commandments Defense Act" actually defends is the Religious Right's goal of forcing its views on the rest of us.

While official support for the Decalogue continues to be a hot-button issue, the "court stripping" provisions of Aderholt's bill—which would prohibit federal courts from even *hearing* a challenge to a Commandments display—may be even more controversial.

During a July 27 interview with TV preacher Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, Aderholt said the 10th Amendment gives the states powers not reserved to the federal government, and thus, if the jurisdiction of the federal courts were removed, states and communities would be free to erect the Ten Commandments.

"It's our argument that the Ten Commandments do not establish any religion," said Aderholt, who regularly receives 100 percent ratings from the Christian Coalition on its legislative scorecards.

Aderholt went on to assert that, "We would make the argument, the Supreme Court does not always have the final authority over the interpretation of the Constitution."

This will be Aderholt's second attempt to pass this proposal. He introduced it in 1998, but it failed to become law.

Nationally, government-endorsed Ten Commandments displays continue to spark political controversy. In July, the North Carolina legislature became the latest state to pass a law allowing officially sponsored display of the Commandments in public schools. (The measure was introduced and championed by State Rep. Don Davis, who ignited conflict by distributing an e-mail to fellow lawmakers claiming, "Two things made this country great: White men & Christianity.")

Yawah Ben Yawah

From The Miami Herald 8/24/01

MIAMI—Christians and Jews call him the Devil. Moslems call him the son of gee-o-dee. Downtown Miami knows him as the notorious white-robed cult leader who hated white people and terrorized the neighborhood with a strong-arm religion, acquiring block after block of movers and apartment buildings in a very dubious way that landed him in jail for 14 murders.

YBY, a.k.a. Hulon Mitchell Jr., 65, oldest of 15 children and son of a fundamentalist Christian minister, split from Louis Farrakhan's *Vision Of Islam* to build his own religious empire.

He is reported to be set free soon under stern conditions. The *Herald* says he is running a web page to clean up his image and start anew with koshered ideas. The newspaper did not reveal however the url.

Pay up

Orlando—Remember that Xian theme park which opened earlier this year? The Holy Land Experience was created just to promote Christianity. Organizers applied for a property tax exemption, claiming that the park is an educational institution.

Bill Donegan, Orange County's property appraiser, disagreed. He determined it was an attraction...a business. Taxes could total nearly \$350,000.

Lawsuit Kudos

Kudos to Richard Suhre for suing his county for posting the Ten Commandments in its courthouse.

As a born-again atheist (and hard-core libertarian), I am deeply offended by any government's endorsement/establishment of religion. Posting of The Ten Commandments, mandatory prayer at city council and county commissioners meetings, U.S. Senate and House Chaplain-led prayers, etc., have no place in the public arena.

The implication is that atheists, agnostics and secular humanists are not moral.

Indeed, then-Vice President George Bush in 1984, when asked by a reporter if he believed that atheists can be good citizens, replied, "No. I don't think nonbelievers are citizens of this country, which was founded on Judeo-Christianity." Oblivious to the fact that many of the founding fathers were deists, Bush nonetheless insulted millions of non-religious, honest, hard-working, tax-paying voting Americans. Frankly, I'd put my morals up against any theocrat's.

One of the reasons (and there were many) that I joined the LP was because of the party's position to support and maintain a strict separation of state and church.

Our founding fathers understood what problems are inherent with church/state entanglement.

Wisconsin's Supreme Court in 1890 stated: "There is no such source and cause of strife, quarrel, fights, malignant opposition, persecution, and war, and all evil in the state, as religion. Let it once enter into our civil

affairs, our government soon would be destroyed. Let it once enter our common schools, they would be destroyed."

—Barry Rowe
Melbourne

Excellent article

Editor,

Your June-July 2000 issue contained No. 3 article, *The Solution is Evolution*, by Jim Strayer. It was a beautifully written explanation of the significance of sugar production in plants. After my many years away from the study of botany, it was a thoroughly refreshing review.

In connection with the topic of evolution, I personally, no longer consider it to be a theory. With the practice of crossbreeding and hybridizing, scientists have been in the process of creating variation in species. An early and simple change in living things on our planet occurred when the accidental mating of a lion with a tiger produced a liger. I could continue listing virtually hundreds of instances in which we have initiated change/evolution in living things and, not all ways, for the betterment of us.

Thanks for the chance to further confirm my prejudices.

Final questions: Who were God's parents: Did He have a childhood?

In Cordial Disbelief,
Earl Johnson

Also, what designates God as a male?—Ed

Atheist Alliance Report The AAI Connection

—Marie Alena Castle

SECULAR NATION

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MAIL CHECK TO:
Atheist Alliance
5146 Newton Ave. N., Minneapolis MN 55430

ATHEIST ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL has just welcomed a new member—Humanists of Canada. This is an 800-member organization with chapters throughout the country. Their president, Robert Buckman, visited our convention in Atlanta and gave a brief presentation. He also sat in on our annual board meeting was impressed by our democratic structure. The result was an application for membership. We are delighted to have Humanists of Canada among the ranks of the AAI member societies.

We thank August Berkshire, AAI's international liaison, for creating the welcoming ambience that is attracting new international collaborators almost daily. Besides La Libre Pensée, with whom AAI will be cosponsoring an international conference in Paris next year, relationships are forming with groups in Germany, Iceland, and Russia. The impetus is the need for coordinated global action in the face of the mounting fundamentalist threat. The attraction of AAI is our focus on assertive action and grassroots empowerment.

About Secular Nation

Secular Nation is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. We invite articles that express positive atheist viewpoints. Personal experiences related to being atheist are welcome, as are letters, essays, historical reports, poetry, book/play/movie reviews, and original cartoons. Essays on biblical errancy are best left to other publications.

Atheists of Florida is a charter Member Society of the Atheist Alliance International.

NEWSSTILES

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La Nueva Era

LA NOCHE QUE VI LA LUZ

Gina Allen.

es consejera profesional en la ciudad de San Francisco (California), y autora de varios libros y artículos para adolescentes y adultos, incluyendo "INTIMIDAD": uno de los más vendidos.

La primera vez que vi la luz fue una noche cuando tenía 16 años de edad. Al principio fue una luz muy pequeña - el rayo de una linterna que me hizo posible leer bajo las sábanas cuando se suponía que estaba durmiendo. Esa noche estaba leyendo un Pequeño Libro Azul que mi enamorado me había dado. Era "La Necesidad del Ateísmo" de Percy Bysshe Shelley.*

Yo generalmente digo que era una joven muy religiosa hasta el momento en que abrí ese libro, pero supongo que realmente ya había algún tiempo que había estado creciendo demasiado para seguir creyendo. Para empezar, mi enamorado, un librepensador, me había estado dando libros como éste y me había obligado a defender mis creencias religiosas, cosa que difícilmente podía hacer para satisfacción de él y mía.

Así, pues, ya estaba preparada para Shelley y su ateísmo, aun sin saberlo. Y, según leía, la luz se hacía más y más potente. No la de la linterna que me ayudaba a leer, sino la de mi mente, que iba asimilando lo que leía. La lógica de Shelley destruyó en una noche memorable todas las lecciones de la escuela dominical, los estudios bíblicos y los sermones a que estuve sometida durante años.

Mi primera reacción fue de furia, una furia tan grande, que me atravesó a mi padre durante el desayuno la mañana siguiente: "¿No es posible que tú creas todos esos cuentos sobre dios? ¿Qué me dices? Eres un hombre inteligente, educado. Dios es una patraña como la de los Reyes Magos, solamente que no es tan divertida ni con mucho. Y solamente los niños creen en los Reyes". (1)

Lo que me contestó me puso todavía más furiosa. Ese pilar de la comunidad religiosa, ese administrador de la Iglesia Presbiteriana local, ese hombre que contribuía al sostén de la iglesia con su dinero, y que asistía todos los domingos al servicio eclesástico, me dijo con la mayor tranquilidad que no, que él tampoco creía en lo que la iglesia enseñaba. Pero creía que sin la iglesia no habría moral en el mundo, que los niños aprendían sobre el bien y el mal en la iglesia, y que los adultos vivían vidas virtuosas gracias a la creencia en Dios y, en un cielo y un infierno.

Desde entonces he aprendido que esa actitud no es inusitada entre muchos que parecen ser religiosos. Están más preocupados por la conducta de los demás que por la propia espiritualidad. Se consideran a sí mismos seres superiores, capaces de llevar una vida moral a pesar de comprender que su religión es mitológica. Pero no creen que las personas ordinarias pueden hacer lo mismo, así que cuentan con la religión para mantener a las masas bajo control. Y realmente, a través de la historia, tales hombres "superiores" han utilizado la religión para controlar a sus esclavos y subyugar a la mujer.

En el primer instante de mi temeraria liberación de la religión, también yo pensé que ella había sido lo único que me había conservado "buena". Mi vida iba a cambiar; ahora podría pecar. Como adolescente que era, para mí los tres grandes pecados eran fumar, beber y hacer vida sexual antes de casarme.

Le dije a mi amigo que había visto la luz. Se alegró. Me dijo que ya había pensado que yo era demasiado inteligente para permanecer apresada por la religión para siempre. Entonces le dije que podríamos pecar juntos. Podríamos beber, fumar, fornicar. Me miró como si yo estuviese loca. Si yo quería hacer todo eso, que lo hiciera, me dijo, pero él estaba en entrenamiento. Como capitán del equipo de fútbol de la escuela superior, estrella de baloncesto y boxeador de los Cuantes de Oro, siempre estaba en entrenamiento.

¡Así que él no era "bueno" por creer en dios, sino porque quería ser un buen atleta! Lentamente me fui percatando de que yo tampoco había sido "buena" por haber creído en un dios, sino por amor a mi familia y a mis amigos, porque me gustaban mis estudios y mi música, y porque quería prepararme para todas las oportunidades que la vida pudiera presentar en mi camino.

Nunca jamás he lamentado haber visto la luz aquella noche. Estaré para siempre agradecida al joven atleta que me dio aquel Pequeño Libro Azul (y a los editores de los Pequeños Libros Azules). Ya se ha calimado mi furia contra la religión cristiana que me embauco durante la niñez, pero sigo alarmándome cuando la religión hace daño a la gente, atrofia su desarrollo y practica la discriminación sexual y racial.

Cuando visito a mi familia voy con ellos a la iglesia. Me enojo de sufrimiento mientras dura el Credo de los Apóstoles. ¡Cuán estrocho y confiante es! Sufro también durante los himnos. Soy pacifista, así que "Onward Christian Soldiers" (Adelante, Soldados Cristianos) me causa repugnancia. Y "Amazing Grace" (Gracia Admirable) -que pide a Dios que "salve a un ser tan despreciable como yo"- muestra cuán destructora del concepto de la dignidad propia puede ser la Iglesia. Esparce culpabilidad en vez de alegría. Niega la naturaleza y cierra las mentes al conocimiento científico.

Así que a excepción de mi jornada anual cuando regreso a mis raíces en la familia y la Iglesia Presbiteriana, no he vuelto a la religión. ni la echo de menos. Mis relaciones desde la noche que vi la luz han sido con gente con quienes comparto intereses y aspiraciones comunes, gente que trata de mejorar este mundo, que no cifra sus esperanzas en un cielo. Como **Abou Ben Adhem** en el sabio poema de **Leigh Hunt** (2), son morales porque aman este planeta y a aquellos con quienes lo comparten. Espero que ellos puedan decir lo mismo de mí.

(1) En el original inglés, Santa Claus (de la tradición germánica, en que no se acostumbra observar la epifanía y se desconocen los Reyes Magos)

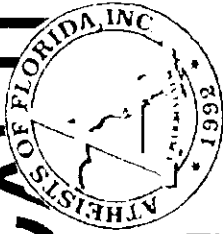
(2) **Leigh HUNT** (1784-1859). Poeta inglés y editor de una revista muy progresista; amigo de Percy y Mary **SHELLEY**.

* La traducción por Leandro PERDOMO de esta obra clásica, será presentada aquí en La Nueva Era, a partir del próximo mes.

NEWSNOTES

Monthly Bulletin for the members of
ATHEISTS of FLORIDA Inc. Chapter DAD1 & BROWARD

Our next meeting is planned for



September 16, 2001

at 2 pm

on the 8th Floor of the

BROWARD COUNTY

MAIN LIBRARY,

100 S. Andrews Ave.

Fort Lauderdale

CHARLES DARWIN, Genius

Video presentation

(This is a brand new production)

Seating is limited

Be first!

October 21, 2001

Tasty get-2-getter

At 2 pm

AT BISCAYNE CAFE/TERIA

147 Miracle Mile

Coral Gables

NOOSENOTES

EXPOSING THE DANGERS OF RELIGION

By Patrick Bens
Chapter Director

H4H

(Habitat for Humanitit)

Initiatives based on religion hold false promises.

FROM THE MIAMI-HERALD

SARCASTICALLY IN SYNC with Dubya's goofy stammerings, the *Miami-Herald* of June 6, 2001 hid, on page 5B, in between the Obituaries and an article on the democratic challengers to his brother's bid for a second term as Governor Jeb, the story that would be front page news—if the Senate Republicans had stayed in power—: President George W. Bush doing hard labor for

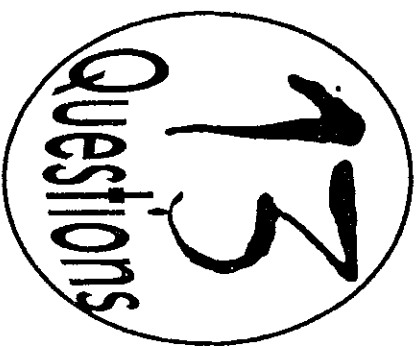
fate-biased

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY.

It should not go unnoticed to World War II veterans that, on D-Day, President George W. Bush could not match his father's dedication to those who served to secure our freedom. Instead he volunteered building a home for a family of six, headed by a single mom, a Miss Johanna Rodriguez.

The article by Phil Long (plong@herald.com) is in typical *Herald* style: critical of the motive of an oil tycoon coming down from his ivory tower to photo-op with the needy Puerto Rican native. The leader of the poor family of six, holding an inexpensive gift: a WELCOME mat, shows

Continued on page 3



DEBBIE LANCE

Lance was a sign-up at our booth during last year's Miami Book Fair International.

1. **Where did you attend school?**
I attended school at Miami-Dade Community College and F.L.U.
2. **What is your occupation?**
I work in the field of child care.
3. **What influenced you to choose that occupation?**
I chose this occupation because of its physical nature and because I very much enjoy working with children.
4. **In your choice of career, were there any obstacles you had to conquer?**
No, no serious obstacles.
5. **If you ever wanted another occupation, what would it be?**
If I had to choose another occupation, it would probably be organic farming, because it allows for ample physical activity, the chance to breathe fresh clean air, is very natural, and is healthy for body and mind.
6. **What are your hobbies?**
My hobbies include dancing, board games, and occasional writing.
7. **What is your all time favorite book and why?**
City of Glass, a mystery novel by Paul Oster, is one of my all-time favorite books, because as each piece of the mystery is solved, another one develops and you are taken completely by surprise.
8. **What is your all time favorite movie and why?**
You may have never heard of the movie before, but *f*'s one of my absolute favorites. Made in England in 1968, the movie depicts the lives of two young male drifters from Liverpool who align themselves with London underground culture. The movie is interesting to me because of its enigmatic qualities—a gray, overcast general setting, random long camera shots, relatively quiet dialogue, and an apathy in the two main characters which evoke feelings of empathy and a desire to find out more about them.
9. **When did you become aware you were an Atheist?**
My beliefs actually fall somewhere between atheism and agnosticism and I can never seem to exclude either one.
10. **Was there an event or person in your life that influenced your choice of wanting to be an Atheist?**
I am an atheist, however, over the problem of animal cruelty and suffering.
11. **If you were a teacher, what lesson would you teach religious kids?**
If I were a teacher (which in many respects I am) the lesson I would teach religious kids would be to be friendly and to accept kids of other religions, races, and those who are different in any way. Treat them as you would want to be treated.
12. **How do you see the future of the Separation of State and Church?**
I believe that the separation of State and church will continue to be upheld.
13. **If you were to be quoted, what would be your quote?**
If I were to be quoted, I would say:

"WE MUST BE KIND TO ANIMALS AND CHILDREN—THEY ARE THE MOST INNOCENT BEINGS OF US ALL," and "WE REALLY NEED TO START TAKING BETTER CARE OF THIS PLANET—NOW!"

eMail Interviews with members of ATHEISTS of FLORIDA
by **NEWSNOTES** teen reporter Fabiola Bens.

September

Birthdays

1. Edgar Rice Burroughs
2. Jacques Lang
3. Jeffrey Goldstone
4. Chateaubriand
5. Louis XIV
6. Jane Adams
7. QH
8. Peter Sellers
9. Tolstoy
10. Jose Feliciano
11. D.H. Lawrence
12. Jesse Owens
13. Walter Reed
14. Margaret Sanger
15. Oliver Stone, Ted Golly
16. Henry V
17. James S. Brady
18. Frankie Avalon
19. Brian Epstein
20. Sophia Loren
21. Stephen King
22. Wilhelm Kofel
23. Ray Charles
24. Linda McCartney
25. Barbara Walters
26. I.S. Elton
27. Sam Adams
28. Ed Sullivan
29. Jerry Lee Lewis
30. Lili Wiesel

e-Quote of the month:

"No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body"

—Margaret H. Singer

a genuine embarrassment when fatherly hugged by the leader of the free world, who clenches a hammer under his arm.

POURING CRUDE OIL ON HELLFIRE

Also holding a hammer is H4H founder Millard Fuller whose bottom line may prove that he is the only one in the picture in a winner-take-all position. Here is his triple whopper. Firstly, his greedy Christian faith-based org. gets an undeserved publicity boost every time a celebrity or a U.S. president shows up at his work site. Secondly, the house is being built with materials donated (that spells "free of charge" in English) by suppliers like Home Depot. Thirdly, the home being built for Johanna Rodriguez will be sold to a higher bidder when Johanna Rodriguez falls behind in paying the mortgage if, due to a downturn in the economy—which Bush controls—she loses her job at the Clinic where she is employed at the minimum wage. Advertising free, labor free, materials free, tax-free. With such earnings, how much of Millard Fuller's H4H profits are ending up in the political pockets of puppets like Dubya?

QUID PRO QUO

In the article, Dubya is quoted as vowing to triple the funds for the ambitious H4H and other Christian daredevils during the next calendar year. Does this mean that we will see more pictures of "W" hammering away for the Christian Right while screwing the First Amendment? From now on, Ms. Rodriguez can be expected to appear to be a devout Christian. Her children, Joel, Nataly and Elena will be monitored to see if they mumble their humble daily prayers and come to church, show up for Sunday bible school and follow the evangelical lifestyle indoctrinated by the minister. He may visit the house regularly to make sure Ms. Rodriguez remembers who provided (and can take away) her American Dream.

FALSE PROMISES

According to CNN, every year, 25% of H4H households fall behind on their mortgage payments and are evicted. This statistical data will undoubtedly grow to 50% during the next 12 months. The economy is predicted to worsen, due to increased fuel prices. When inflation seeps in because fuel prices ooze up, the poor at the bottom of the pyramid are soaked first.

Like Quill in Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*, HABITAT FOR HUMANITY collects their equity with arrogant ease. This exploitation is compounded around the globe: H4H has erected cheap housing south of the border, in the jungles of the Andes and lately in the immigrant ghettos of Eastern Europe.

Initiatives based on religion hold false promises, intimidate their prospects and have demonstrated repeatedly in the past that the first thing they intend to do is discriminate. The best historic example is the Boy Scouts. A close second is H4H. Candidates are selected from interviews probing for allegiance to JayCee. A distant third are the documented cases of nun-run hospitals. They can refuse non-religious patients as well as doctors of a different creed. Jewish physicians have been routinely denied positions at Catholic hospitals to a point that Medical Centers like Mount Sinai were founded and funded by Jewish philanthropy to offset the discrimination.

In the U.S., the escalation towards Catholicism is certain to continue to aggregate into the next generation. Nun-run tax-exempt initiatives will easily suck up the secular hospitals now operating in the red. (No pun intended).

FOR CHRISTIANS ONLY

AS FOR HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, it's a bad habit humanity can well live without. If an organization like H4H can do what it does for Christians only, than so can the mighty U.S. government for everyone in need. More effective interest rates and efficient education are better policies than delusions and discrimination. Christian faith-based enterprises with huge bottom lines are nothing more than bogus businesses who cater their covert profits illegally to Christian politicians who continue to vote to keep it that way. Christian entities like H4H, which compete with commercial businesses, ought to be taxed. In order to eliminate poverty and ignorance, Christian-based initiatives are not the remedies but the tsetse flies we must net.

Reactions to this editorial can be read online
www.writtenbyme.com/content/57804