

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

TAMPA BAY: Last Saturday of each month except October, Noon—1:30, Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Meeting Room A.
Third Wednesday of each month, 7—8:30 pm, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa, Community Room.
 FMI: Ed Golly, 813/839-7567, AthALFLE@aol.com.

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

Board *continued from front page*

cents will mostly be crowded out. These plans allow the legislators simultaneously to fund religion (which keeps the populace "rabble" ignorant and obedient), help to pay for fancy private schools for their own children, and give further corporate tax breaks by withholding appropriations from public schools—all while "tip-synching" that they care about education for all children.

In addition to tax dollars for religious education (some-what of an oxymoron), the Florida legislature's most recent budget bill holds a "proviso" (which is a hidden clause having little or nothing to do with the actual subject of the act) that would not only dramatically broaden the number of religious groups receiving tax dollars to provide needed services, but would require that every state agency develop plans to actually seek out and recruit more religious groups for their contracting pools!

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Jefferson *continued from page 3*

to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say that there are twenty Gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.

"I never will, by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance, or admit a right of enquiry into the religious opinions of others. On the contrary, we are bound, you, I, and every one, to make common cause even with error itself, to maintain the common right of freedom of conscience."
 —Letter to Edward Dowse, April 19, 1803 **A**

DADE&BROWARD: Third Sunday of each month, 2:00 alternating between Broward County Main Library, 100 S. Andrews Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, or Biscayne Cafeteria, 147 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables. Meeting notifications and activities available in **NEWSNOTES**, a monthly publication mailed to all active Dade&Broward chapter members.
 FMI: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441.

ORLANDO: Meetings scheduled for the first Sunday of each month at the Orange County Public Library, 101 E Central Blvd, 3rd Floor, Downtown Orlando, 1:00pm. FMI: Nan Owens, (813) 662-6612, nanowens@ix.netcom.com.

Turning back to the Atheists of Florida board meeting by late spring, the board plans to provide a guidelines packet on how to make a will to include Atheists of Florida in its bequests. It is estimated that for many volunteer organizations, up to 90% of their members' planned giving comes from bequests. It's a relatively simple and painless way to help a mission that you care about continue its work.

A most able Chair has been appointed to the Publications Committee—James Young (who is also Secretary of the Board of Directors). In addition to being a productive writer himself, I have found Jim Young to be quite astute about organizational and effective management procedures. We are looking forward to excellent, well-thought-out results from this important commission. Please stay involved—in fact, increase your involvement and impact—and let us know your suggestions and ideas for moving our quest for reason and freedom forward.

10 April 2001

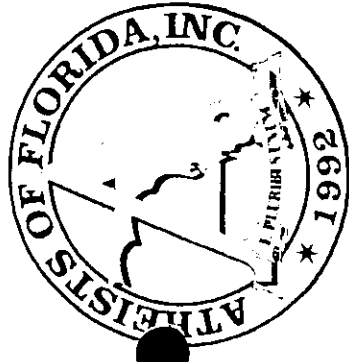


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Atheists of Florida



Volume IX No. 8
 April, 2001

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

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 A Member Society of Atheist Alliance International, The Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies
 www.atheistalliance.org/florida

Atheists of Florida Board of Directors meeting

A Message From Your President
TAMPA—On February 25, 2001, your Atheists of Florida Board of Directors ignored the beautiful sunshine and balmy breezes and holed up in a meeting room near Tampa International Airport for the Atheists of Florida annual meeting. It was an orderly, productive meeting.

Christos Tranetakos explained that the Twain Scholarship Fund, sponsored by Atheists of Florida, had filed suit against the Florida State Employees Charitable Contributions (FSECC) seeking inclusion in their listing of Florida non-profit corporations. The case had been dismissed because the Fund had not been able to provide audited financial statements for the year as required by the FSECC. We now have a source available to produce the necessary audit for this year's application which, by now, has already been submitted.

The Fund is attempting to increase its listing with the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) into all 19 regions covered by Florida.

The Twain Scholarship Fund annual report had been completed and was distributed to the board. It ended the year with net assets of \$6,943 after distributions of \$1,600 in awards for the 2000 competition.

A few ideas for amendments to the bylaws were addressed. Since board members are scattered all over the state, it is sometimes difficult to get things accomplished. The board voted to give the president the power to fully manage the business affairs of the organization limited to the framework of the bylaws. The president may now authorize expenditures of up to \$500 before requiring board approval.

Nan Owens was elected to a second term as president. Steven Miles of Gainesville was elected our new vice president with the three other officers positions remaining unchanged.

The board decided we should attempt to expand our involvement in coalitions with other freethought groups in Florida. We will send two representatives to the Humanists of Florida conference April 20—22 in Tampa to get A of F involved in a coalition they are building.

The emphasis of the meeting was on the forward movement of Atheists of Florida. Considering that we are a young organization (just eight years old) with a not-very-popular concept (the "A" word is scary to some, to others downright depraved). Atheists of Florida is stable and growing. Despite a shoe-string budget, Atheists of Florida has laid down strong roots of structure, volunteers and mission. Now it's time to progress and grow! Which, in turn, requires funding.

To meet that need, the Board of Directors

authorized a modest increase of \$10 per year in three basic membership dues categories namely, for Individual, Couple and Sustaining Members Effective April 1, 2001, the annual dues for these memberships, respectively, will be \$40, \$50 and \$60. This is the first dues increase in many years, despite escalating costs and needs (occasioned by rising religious bigotry).

Look at it this way. Your religion tax bill—which has been creeping upward steadily—will be taking a sharp upswing to gobble up ever more of the monies you pay to our governments. In light of these dramatic increases in religion taxes, we should be glad to give an additional 83 cents a month to fight these unconstitutional and un-American religious levies.

For example, both the Florida legislature and the federal government are planning to vastly increase the religion tax that we are paying. Yes, all of us already pay a religion tax—locally through larger property taxes because



Atheists of Florida Officers, from left, Steve Miles, Nan Owens, Ed Golly, Jim Young

religious institutions do not pay their share (even though many of them have multi-million dollar holdings)—and on into larger venues where our tax monies directly fund religious organizations and programs through vouchers, "charitable choice" grants, etc.

Just in Florida alone, the 2001 legislature seeks to escalate the voucher program through corporate-sponsored vouchers and through lifetime SCRIPT scholarships for many students from so-called "overcrowded" schools. These vouchers will be available to rich and poor alike, although chances are the poor stu-

(continued on back page)

"A believer is a bird in a cage, a Freethinker is an eagle parting the clouds with tireless wing."

— Robert Ingersoll



www.atheistalliance.org/florida

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Mark Twain Scholarship Fund

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34943 Phone/Fax: 561-465-6402

Membership dues

- Life Member \$ 500.00
- Sustaining 50.00
- Couple 40.00
- Individual 30.00
- Student 10.00
- Unret. Nonmember 10.00
- Newsletter 10.00

Published eight times a year by Atheists of Florida, Inc., a nonprofit organization reported founded to enlighten public awareness about freethought and nonprofit status on separation issues. The newsletter is provided free to our members. Letters are published on a space-available basis. Send newsletter correspondence to Tampa Bay Chapter address above. Articles may be added for clarity or length. Atheists of Florida, Inc. is a Member Society of the Atheist Alliance International.

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YOU AND I STARTED OUT as one complete cell, as did most plants and animals. That one cell produced other cells that carried on different functions. Scientists are still not sure exactly how the DNA of a cell works, but they have found out enough so that we can understand much of how evolution works.

The Solution is Evolution

No. 7—The stuff of evolution

—Jim Strayer



As an example, suppose there is a cell which has the capacity to produce a hard substance. Let's suppose that that substance becomes specialized and serves as a claw. This is good, and there may be many kinds of claws serving slightly different functions. Some may be used to kill, or climb, or to scratch, or even to dig. But if there is a change in the DNA and the cell produces something very different it may lead to something that better suits another creature's survival. The claw could become a finger nail and aid in dexterity, or a hoof and aid in running. The cells that produce finger nails, claws, and hooves are all basically the same.

In the same way scales, feathers, and hair are the same. The cells that at one time only produced scales changed and some gained the ability to produce feathers. This change was necessary in order to have birds evolve. Some changed and produced hair. This change was necessary in order to have mammals evolve.

During the evolutionary process some DNA within the cells have changed a great deal while others have changed very little. There seems to be a big difference between a tooth and a tusk or fang, but the way they are formed by cell is much the same. But the difference between a hair and a feather is dramatic even though the way they are formed is much the same.

Keep in mind that most of the chemical changed in DNA (mutations) would be harmful and would not aid in the survival of the plant or animal. The change would not be passed on to future generations. In a few instances, however, these changes would aid in the survival of individuals who could then pass the better characteristic on to future generations. This is what evolution is all about. That is, random change by chance in DNA and natural selection by the survivors of that change.

This explains why not every species evolved into something else. Not all animals that had cells that produce scales had a mutation in DNA in order to begin to produce feathers and hair. Only a few did. They then were in competition with the creatures who still had scales.

Survival means a struggle for space and food. The animals that had control of the space and food usually have some survivors even though the new feathered and hairy creatures are becoming better suited to the environment by evolving lots of types of feathers and many kinds of fur.

This should make you wonder about other substances that cells produce. The cells that produce the bones in a mouse are the same as the cells that produce bones in a elephant. They have the same bones. So why the big difference in size? The answer is that other cells are producing chemicals that effect how much bone gets produced. Producing a lot results in a big animal, producing a little and results in a little animal.

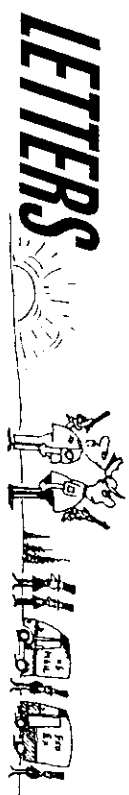


This series will continue in the next newsletter. Jim Strayer is a retired biology teacher. He lives with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea, Florida.

Clueless calamity

Yaciv's pen was published twice in February. This one appeared in the Pasco edition of the St. Petersburg Times.

Editor: You quoted one man complaining about the Rick Pinette presentation [Note for Aof readers: this was in a column about a motivational speaker giving a presentation to the PTA at the school] as saying he was



disappointed about the lack of religion-pushing in it, claiming, "you need faith in God, too." It's clueless people like this that keep me busy writing letters, along with reaffirming my commitment to groups such as the Atheists of Florida, Inc.

To begin with, last time I checked, Sand Pine Elementary is a public school, which means that the Constitution forbids preaching at the kids by anyone officially sanctioned by the school. If more people would actually read the Constitution, it would make a lot less work for me.

Of course, there's also the question of inclusion. Not everyone believes in a being called God, by whatever definition, and despite the claim above, there's no "need" for such belief. The late Madalyn Murray-O'Hair was oft quoted as saying, "A man without religion is like a fish without a bicycle."

O'Hair was oft quoted as saying, "A man without religion is like a fish without a bicycle." I've lived most of my life without religion, or gods of any sort, and find it much better for the lack. No groveling every weekend to some imaginary deity, no shelling out cash to people dressed in funny clothes chanting special status with sad imagined entity, no need to check some ancient novel to figure out what to do when I sneeze.

Of course, it's not as easy in some ways. I have to take responsibility for my actions, not just ask some third party to forgive me. I have to think for myself, and saying that undoubtedly is enough to cause shivers in many believers. But still, I have no plans nor desire to fill my life with whatever religion has to offer, and I certainly wouldn't wish it on children!

The man obviously hates them, and wants them to suffer as he has. Take pity on them, good sir, it's not their fault your parents made you suffer. Leave them alone. If there's an all-powerful deity out there, surely it can make itself known without your help!

—Brent Yaciv
Wesley Chapel

It's not your pot

Published in the St. Petersburg Times

Boy, am I sick of hearing conservative fanatics whine "not with my tax dollars!" For a perfect example, take letter writer Liz Hagam, who is worried about funding for abortions in foreign countries. Well Liz, let me tell you about a few of the things I don't want my tax dollars spent on, beginning with the military spending that will be required to keep out the hordes of people created because you are so worried about making sure women give birth, but nothing after that. While we're at it, let's take away the tax breaks given to the businesses spreading this anti-abortion nonsense, those so-called churches that are really PACs for the right wing. Of course, I don't want to pay for the increased financial aid we'll need to give those countries that don't try invading us, the ones we doomed to poverty because we wouldn't help control their population.

My list goes on, but maybe I've made my point, just whining about tax dollars as if you're the only ones who pay them or should decide how they're spent!

—Brent Yaciv
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Jacques Musy

As we go to press with this issue, we must report the regrettable news that while attending the Atheist Alliance convention in Atlanta, Jacques Musy died during Saturday night. Musy was a very well-known freethinker in the Tampa Bay area and supported many atheist and humanist groups. Those of you who knew him may send comments to Brent Yaciv at AthALFL@aol.com. He will compile an obituary for our next newsletter.

Now we know they're mad

Don't buy any calendars yet...

This bizarre tidbit was spotted on the Internet. It may be a fraud, but then what more ideal target than the already-proven gullible?

The Second Coming Project is a not-for-profit organization devoted to bringing about the Second Coming of



Our Lord, Jesus Christ, as prophesied in the Bible, in time for the 2000th anniversary of his birth.

Our intention is to clone Jesus utilizing techniques pioneered at the Roslin Institute in Scotland, by taking an intact cell from one of the many Holy Relics of Jesus' blood and body that are preserved in churches throughout the world, extracting its DNA, and inserting into an unfertilized human egg (oocyte), through the now-proven biological process called nuclear transfer. The fertilized egg, now the *zygote* of Jesus Christ, will be implanted into the womb of a young virgin woman (who has volunteered of her own accord) who will then bring the baby Jesus to term in a second Virgin Birth.

If all goes according to plan, the birth will take place on December 25, 2001, thus making Anno Domini 2001 into Anno Domini Nov 1, and all calendrical calculations will begin anew.

How Can This Be Possible?

Modern cloning technology enables us to clone any large mammal—including humans—using just a single cell from an adult specimen. Throughout the Christian world, are churches that contain Holy Relics of Jesus' body his blood, his hair, his foreskin. Unless every single one of these relics is a fake, this means that cells from Jesus' body still survive to this day.

We are already making preparations to obtain a portion of one of these relics, extract the DNA from one of

Searching For the God Within

The way our brains are wired may explain the origin and power of religious beliefs

Sharon Begley

NEWSWEEK <http://www.msmbc.com/news/512130.asp>

An excerpt: The tension between science and religion is about to get tenser, for some scientists have decided that religious experience is just too intriguing not to study. Neurologists jumped in first, finding a connection between temporal lobe epilepsy and a sudden interest in religion. As V. S. Ramachandran of the University of California, San Diego, told a 1997 meeting, these patients during seizures "say they see God" or feel "a sudden sense of enlightenment." Now researchers are looking at more common varieties of religious experience. Newberg and the late Dr. Eugene d'Aquili, both of the University of Pennsylvania, have a name for this field: neuro-theology.

its cells, and use it to clone Jesus. No longer can we rely on hope and prayer, waiting around futilely for Jesus to return. We have the technology to bring him back right now: there is no reason, moral, legal or Biblical, not to take advantage of it.

IN ORDER TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM SIN WE MUST CLONE JESUS TO INITIATE THE SECOND COMING OF THE CHRIST.

The e-mail goes on to solicit funds for the project. Sounds like someone saw *The Boys from Brazil*.

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Theocracy approaches

"Prayer should be taught in the home, but it should be practiced everywhere. The practice enables individuals to recognize there is a supreme being, and if we believe in such, we will respect all that has been created."

This is the convoluted opinion of Rep. Wilbert Holaway, Democrat from Miami. It's bad enough that he is not cognizant of the fact that our government is constitutionally mandated to be secular and that it is never the onus of any government official to specify to the citizenry that they should embrace religion. But worse, he has employed this philosophy to introduce **House Bill 1199** which would allow prayer at graduations, athletic events and voluntary student gatherings at secondary schools. According to the bill, school boards could provide the option, but students would decide whether they want blessings at their events.

If it sounds like *déjà-vu*, you're right. The concept is almost identical to the school-sanctioned prayer the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional in a Texas case just last year. But the bipartisan sponsors of the bill claim, apparently with a straight face, that the bill focused only on student-led prayer at football games and was not meant to cover all student assemblies. We've also had the issue surface here in Florida. In 1996, Gov. Lawton Chiles vetoed a similar bill.

"The bill wastes time," said ACLU Executive Director Howard Simon, "because the court has ruled on the underlying principle. Government-backed 'voluntary' prayer forces those in the minority to accept the majority's view or leave."

The sponsors are pandering to increasing school violence by convincing supporters that an instant fix-all solution is to just throw religion at the problem and it will simply disappear. Shove the Ten Commandments in everyone's face, get all their heads bowed in subservient prayer to Jesus and all will have impeccable morals. Sure. But somehow there is a contorted logic that concludes that this is *not* an establishment of religion.

Education Commissioner Charlie Crist backs the bill. As a state senator in 1996, he voted for the school prayer bill.

The other lead sponsors are Frank Peterman, D-St. Petersburg, (850) 488-0925; Rafael Arza, R-Hialeah, (850) 488-1683; and Edward Butland, D-Miami (850)

April 13 marks Thomas Jefferson's 258th birthday. In honor of this occasion, Americans United has pulled together some of Jefferson's best statements on church and state. Jefferson, along with James Madison, was a key architect of the religious liberty guarantees we

WWJD: What Would Jefferson Do?

enjoy today. What better way to honor the memory of this visionary founder than spending a few moments reading and reflecting on his timeless wisdom? With issues such as voucher aid to religious schools and government-sponsored prayer in public schools pending in Congress and the state legislatures, Jefferson's comments are just as relevant today as they were then.

RIGHTS ACTIVISTS claim the framers never intended to separate state and church. Christian Coalition president Pat Robertson says separation is a "lie of the left." TV preacher Jerry Falwell calls it "a modern fabrication." Here are Jefferson's own words on the subject:

Separation of Church and State

"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship than the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions. I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between Church and State."

Letter to the Danbury (Conn.) Baptist Association, January 1, 1802

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Taxation for Religion

"[T]o compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical; that even the forcing of him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness. Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion; and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."

—Excerpts from Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, 1786
Government-Sponsored Prayer and Other Religious Worship

"I do not believe it is for the interest of religion to invite the civil magistrate to direct its exercises, its discipline, or its doctrines, nor of the religious societies, that the General Government should be invested with the power of effecting any uniformity of time or matter among them. Fasting and prayer are religious exercises, the enjoining them an act of discipline. Every religious society has a right to determine for itself the times for these exercises, and the objects proper for them, according to their own particular tenets, and the right can never be safer than in their hands, where the Constitution has deposited it."

—Letter to Samuel Miller, January 23, 1808

On Religious Leaders Who Oppose Church-State Separation

"[T]hey believe that any portion of power confided to me, will be exerted in opposition to their schemes. And they believe rightly, for I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man. But this is all they have to fear from me: and enough too in their opinion. And this is

the cause of their printing lying pamphlets against me."

—Letter to Benjamin Rush, Sept. 23, 1800, on opposition to Jefferson's candidacy for the presidency from anti-separationist clergy.

"The clergy, by getting themselves established by law and ingrafted into the machinery of government, have been a very formidable engine against the civil and religious rights of man."

—Letter to Jeremiah Moor, Aug. 14, 1800

Religious Tolerance

"Our particular principles of religion are a subject of accountability to our God alone. I inquire after no man's, and trouble none with mine, nor is it given to us in this life to know whether yours or mine, our friends or our foes, are exactly the right. Nay, we have heard it said that there is not a Quaker or a Baptist, a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian, a Catholic or a Protestant in heaven, that on entering that gate we leave those badges of schism behind, and find ourselves united in those principles only in which God has united us all."

—Letter to Miles King, Sept. 26, 1814

"I never told my own religion, nor scrutinized that of another. I never attempted to make a convert, nor wished to change another's creed. I have ever judged of the religion of others by their lives, and by this test, my dear Madam, I have been satisfied yours must be an excellent one, to have produced a life of such exemplary virtue and correctness. For it is in our lives, and not from our words, that our religion must be read."

—Letter to Mrs. Harrison Smith, August 6, 1816

"Your sect, by its sufferings, has furnished a remarkable proof of the universal spirit of religious intolerance inherent in every sect, disclaimed by all while feeble, and practiced by all when in power. Our laws have applied the only antidote to the vice, protecting our religions as they do our civil rights, by putting all men on an equal footing."

—Letter to Rabbi Mordecai M. Noah, May 28, 1818

Religious Liberty

"The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious

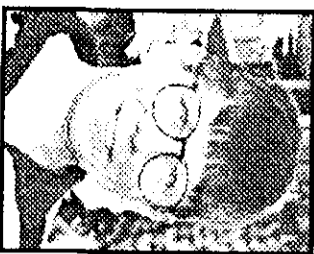
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A book review of *William J. Murray's Living Without God*

THE ATROCIOUS MURDERS of Madalyn O'Hair, her son, Jon Garth Murray, and her granddaughter, Robin Murray, make me so uneasy. I have to do my share of investigation to look for the inspiration and admissibility of the motive.

book & film REVIEW

Is it Matricide? —Patrick Bens



Where else can I start my research than on my bookshelf? Among my many books that over the years have given me clues on the reasons why people cling to religion is one that I always read with pleasure for its witty sarcasm. It's a kiss and tell story of a dysfunctional family before, during and after one of America's

Patrick Bens is a native of Belgium and director of the Dade&Broward chapter. A real estate investor and businessman, he lives in North Dade with his wife, Ceina and two daughters. He edits NEWSNOTES, the monthly chapter bulletin.

room. This time though, I'm not scanning

But what happened to the money?

BY NOW WE'VE ALL HEARD that the remains of Madalyn O'Hair, 77, her son Jon Garth Murray, 40, and granddaughter (adopted daughter and biological daughter of William Murray /see above/) Robin, 30, have been positively identified. Authorities were led to a 5,000 acre ranch west of San Antonio by David R. Waters, 53, who had been indicted on five charges of kidnapping and extortion in the O'Hair case.

Waters is already serving 60 years for stealing \$54,000 from American Atheists while he was employed as the office manager. He led cops to the site after a plea agreement was made. Although it will keep him out of the chair, Waters will spend the rest of his life in the federal pen.

The O'Hairs mysteriously disappeared from their Austin home in August 1995. They were spotted in San Antonio,

the pages for the many remarks that poke fun at the vulgar domestic arguments that Madalyn O'Hair allegedly conducted but for ideas that inadvertently may have inspired the murderer to allow himself to opt for the motive he chose. Bill Murray knows how to get a laugh out of describing his overweight mother and insecure brother, but he no longer gets our sympathy for his years on the run from the law, either because of his adventurous involvement in drug peddling, weapons smuggling, bad checks, bribery or the transport across state lines of stolen property (expensive printing equipment bought but never paid for, claiming bankruptcy).

Reading this story, after the gruesome murders of his mother, brother and daughter have been solved, Murray no longer comes out of the book as an author able to lighten up his chronicle with self-deflating humor but instead as a man intended to frighten the reader with sinister violence that seems not just real and in the plans but as literal as described by the police in its reports. Is it any solace that the murderer, David R. Waters, of identical age as Murray, was equally involved in drugs, guns, bad checks, forgery, transport of stolen property and ultimately murder? Did Waters sympathize with Murray? Did Murray sympathize with Waters? Did Waters read Murray's *My Life Without God*? If he did, this is what his eyes absorbed and what fermented in his lime filled brain.

p79: "We ought to get rid of him..." "How, by killing him?" "I'll bet there is some drug... if he'd took it, he'd die and it'd look like he had a heart attack..."

p133: "You mean, kill Castro? We could both retire, boy..." p191: "I really wanted to kill her and then leave the country..." p197: "When I saw it I had an intense desire to kill both of them..."

p235: "I wanted to kill Tom Evans... I asked myself, Why not Tom Evans? Why not my mother?"

If you read this and then the sequence of events and facts surrounding the murder you immediately see the many similarities originating in this book. Is it likely that Waters and Murray had contact? Was Murray's *My Life Without God* the inspiration that tolerated the murder motive? Were Murray's newfound Christian principles the leitmotif for the gruesome helter-skelter quartering of a heretic?

but dropped from sight after converting \$500,000 of the Sustaining Trust Fund into gold coins. That fund had been established years ago to create a \$1-million trust fund from donations of AA members. The trust would generate enough annual interest to pay staff salaries to run American Atheists. It had reached a value of around \$620,000!

Was the cash converted in a conspiracy to get it out of the country, or did Waters plan to bury it for a few years until the heat was off? Coins would not deteriorate like cash could. Either way, we've seen nothing in the press about what ever became of the half-million dollars.

But then again, why would the cops care? If located, it would need to be returned to American Atheists and thus enrich an atheist organization. Why ever would they want to do that?

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BEING MYSELF AN OBSERVER of nature for most of my life, my observations of life in general on earth have led me to the conclusion that "You are right if you have the power to enforce it..."

A few years ago I went looking for shells during low tide (I enjoy looking at sea life) and I found a King Crown shell-

Natural right / Constitutional right

—Donato A. Natale

fish eating a Whelk shellfish, they are both uninvites. Next day, I found a Whelk eating a King Crown. They eat each other. Of course, the victim is always of smaller size. Herons and Egrets land in my back yard every day; they fight each other for the domain of the territory, and always the stronger wins. Some time ago I found a spread of feathers. Some bear had caught a poor dove. Trees live together. Underground their roots are interwoven but the stronger one grows taller and spreads its shade over the others which struggle for their life. In the Amazon forest, I found a tree with nothing growing under it. I was told that it shed a kind of dust that is poisonous to other plants. I could go on with my observations but I think I need not.

Now let us talk about humans. Are we basically different from all the other living beings? Let us start looking at our history. In all the wars ever fought each side was convinced it was "right". The stronger used his "natural right" to conquer, destroy and impose his will on the weaker. We know of powerful civilizations falling under the pressure of hunger hordes. They too used their "natural right". Christianity conquered the Roman empire by a different method. They used "psychological warfare". They converted the masses from lions to sheep and became very powerful and still are. They too think they are "naturally right"...

Talking about natural rights means that kind of right that comes naturally, in other words, it is the use of our instinct and feeling without the regrets of the conscience. Did you ever experience getting really angry and wanting to destroy whatever or whom ever caused that feeling? Do you feel any regrets after you satisfy your

hunger thinking about that piece of meat that yesterday was part of a living being? There are vegetarians saying that they do not eat anything that is killed. Well, vegetables are living things, too. If I am hungry, and I grab the steak from your dish and eat it, it would be my "natural right" and would be in accordance with the natural law of this planet.

Religionists say that God created everything that exists, therefore He gave the earthly living beings the "right" to survive in any way they can. This means that the "natural right" is definitely the "God-given right" and in no way can be what they try to make us believe. The commandments and other religious teachings are man made. On this planet, created or evolved, the rules have been set from the beginning and cannot be changed.

Humans learned, maybe from other living creatures like ants and bees, that if they stuck together they would have a better chance of surviving. But in order to live together they found it necessary to make some rules, meaning that the member of that society had to give up some of his "natural right". This was the beginning of civilization.

Today we have completely abandoned our "natural rights" and replaced them with man-made "Constitutional rights". Whoever today uses his/her natural right is regarded as a criminal.

From birth we are educated to believe according to the man-made rules. That goes for believers and non-believers alike. All the change that is occurring on our planet, good or bad, is the result of the evolution of the human mind.

Groups of people, throughout history, have become bigger and bigger. We are now trying to organize the humans on the entire planet, as exemplified by the United Nations. This means we are collectivizing our "natural rights" against all other species. We are using our power to subjugate every living being on earth. Eventually we will become slaves of our own rules.

Atheists of Florida member Don Natale is a retired electrical engineer who has been an atheist since a very young age. He lives in Anna Maria, Florida. Mr. Natale would like to hear your comments on this subject.