

WE MUST ADMIT it is highly unusual for any preacher, priest or prayer monger to invite an atheist to offer an opposing opinion about their superstitions. But that's exactly what Bill Keller did one evening last month.

Through an e-mail contact with us, his producer asked us to send a representative to appear on one of his nightly Web cast programs. A of F president Joe Reinhardt gladly answered the request, and was joined by Ed Golly. Keller ended up inviting both to appear on camera.

Atheists appear on liveprayer

Bill Keller defined

Just who is Bill Keller? He was born in Dayton, Ohio and raised in the United Methodist Church. He attended Ohio State University for 3 years with the goal of becoming a Christian minister. While at Ohio State however, Keller began a successful computer sales business. After earning millions of dollars, Keller was convicted of insider trading and spent nearly three years in prison. During his stay in prison, Keller decided to rededicate his life to God and attended Jerry Falwell's Liberty Baptist University upon his release.

Live Prayer began as a Web site in 1999, later expanding into a daily TV show in 2003 telecast in the Tampa Bay Area as well as on the internet. It had a short stint on national exposure in 2006 on ION Television, but the ministry was financially unable to continue purchasing time. Keller's depiction of the Muslim religion was too controversial for the local stations and they dropped

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*Gents:
I viewed the show last night. The both of you represented the group and Atheism, in general, very well. You were lucid, on point, non-combative, matter-of-fact, personable, witty, and charming.
Great job!*

the show last year, leaving the internet as the program's sole exposure.

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The one-hour program consisted of Keller's brief introduction referencing the rising awareness of atheism in the culture boosted by sales of the books by Dawkins, Harris and Hitchens last year. He turned quickly to Reinhardt and the discussion revolved around why atheists reject belief systems and the warped "morality" advanced by Christianity. Keller was actually cordial and never interrupted or condemned. He did not adopt a debate format with him countering the arguments and he had no other Christian in the studio.

Keller's interest in Golly revolved around his upbringing in an atheist household and his lifelong rejection of faith-based ideologies. Although normally a call-in show, Keller took no callers, instead devoting the entire hour to hearing out the atheists.

Atheist Forum next on the Internet?

Liveprayer operates out of a warehouse with a crew of three, two cameras, and a large, attractive set. Atheists of Florida can easily accomplish the same. We don't even need a warehouse. Two rooms can do the job, and with advances in technology, a single person could run the entire studio while a single atheist hosts the show. Then, like Keller, the *Forum* can be Web cast on the Internet to the entire world answering live telephone calls or instant e-mails. We would no longer be encumbered by restrictions on promoting our Web site, selling merchandise or memberships, or simply asking for donations, none of which we can do on Public Access TV. In addition, all the programs we have produced for Public Access, most of which are archived on DVD, can be rerun on the site or offered for downloading and later viewing. The breaks in those programs can be replaced with ads for A of F.

Get together with other freethinkers at the St. Pete Atheist / Freethought every third Tuesday of each month for good food, good drink, good conversation, and lotto tickets!

meetup

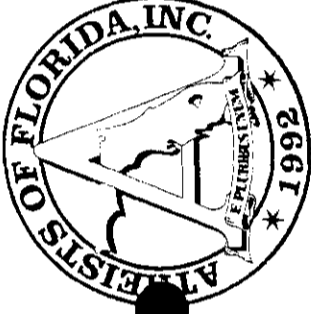
St. Pete-Atheists // Free-Thought Group

IN REASON WE TRUST

GARY THOMPSON, Organizer
Monthly Meetup Day: Third Tuesday @ 7:00 PM
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Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

A Founding Member Society of the Atheist Alliance International
(The Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies)

Volume XIV No. 2 February 2008

The SECOND ANNUAL ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA DINNER BANQUET

will be held

Sunday, February 24, 2008

at the

Radisson Hotel

US 19 at Gulf-To-Bay Blvd., Clearwater, Florida

The hotel is on the US19 access road (east side) just north of Gulf-To-Bay

Reception 5:00 PM ❖ Dinner 7:00 PM

Active Members of Atheists of Florida may attend

FREE OF CHARGE.

Guests \$40.00 which includes a one year free membership in

Atheists of Florida!

Please send your RSVP at your earliest convenience, but no later than February 18th, including name of guest(s) and dinner selections for yourself and any guests. Payment may be made in advance by sending check payable to Atheists of Florida at:

ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA

PO BOX 130753

TAMPA FL 33681

or you may bring payment to the function.

Dinner Selections

Please select from the following entrees:

- Filet Mignon** char-broiled with roasted shallots, and Cabernet wine sauce with oven roasted potatoes.
 - Grilled Salmon** with balsamic and mango sauce with saffron rice.
- All entrees include fresh vegetable medley.
- Pasta Primavera**
Tossed salad with dressing, rolls & butter.
Chocolate on chocolate dessert.
Coffee or tea.
- Wine or beer may be purchased from the hotel bar.

New format for newsletter

We're into the electronic age

NOW THAT MOST OF OUR NEWSLETTERS ARE distributed electronically, the editor decided to lay out the pages in a format more compatible with a computer screen.

Since a screen is wider than it is high (landscape format) and a newsletter page is a vertical configuration (portrait), readers of a newsletter on computer must scroll down the column of a typical page, then scroll back to the top to read the adjoining column.

To alleviate all this extra scrolling, the pages are now laid out "top-half," "bottom half," divided by a light horizontal bar that should obviate the linking of the text columns. We hope our readers find the change more comfortable to read.

Banquet to honor activist members

TAMPA—FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL board of directors meeting on Sunday, February 24, 2008, Atheists of Florida will host the second annual A of F Dinner Banquet.

The Banquet was created last year as a means to recognize members who have invested time and effort, not necessarily money, in the projects that forward the causes of Atheists of Florida. All active members are invited and will receive a free dinner. Members are encouraged to invite guests at \$40 apiece, and all guests receive a complimentary one-year membership in Atheists of Florida along with their dinner.

The new board of directors has been established to serve for a three-year term. New officers will be elected from the Board at the Feb. 24th meeting. Board members are: Ed Golly (current Chairman & Treasurer), Joe Reinhardt (current president), Rob Curry (current vice president), Julia Scott (current secretary), Steve Brown, Gloria Julius, Jackie Jordan, Jim Peterson, Steve Miles, Anita Garcia, John Kieffer, Jerry Moore, and A of F founder Christos Tzanetakos.

One of the significant agenda items this year will be to determine whether to continue production of our Public Access TV program, the *Atheist Forum*, or convert the show to a Web cast and broadcast to the world. A committee will the present a proposal to the Board and we expect to announce the conclusion at the banquet, along with the new officers for the year and a recap of the board meeting.

We will also present a great video of A of F activities at the banquet.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has."

—Margaret Mead

Sunday, January 27, 2008

I AM SITTING WITH AN ABORTIONIST IN A COUNSELING room in a central London clinic. Downstairs, on a padded surgical bed covered with blue paper, 5,000 pregnancies a year are ended. In the waiting room sit women and their male lovers. None of them is leafing through the magazines provided, but some are clutching Kleenex. All look haunted.

On the abortion front line

The London Times —Rachel Johnson

I'm here because it's the 35th anniversary of *Roe v Wade* in the US, a country

where a woman's right to choose is far from constitutional and remains under constant attack from the pro-life, evangelical Christian Bible Belt and the Catholic church; a country where schoolchildren are encouraged to adopt, name and pray for the souls of blastocysts destined for termination, and where a bill signed by Governor Mike Rounds, in South Dakota almost two years ago, made abortion illegal in most cases, including rape or incest.

I'm here because the pro-life lobby is also making hay in Britain. Anti-abortion lobby groups are attempting to hijack the Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill currently going through the Lords, in the hope of introducing an amendment that would chop the time limit on legal abortion from the current 24 weeks down to 20 weeks. To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Abortion Act last year, there was a rally in Westminster and a ghoulis "service of remembrance" for the estimated 6.7m fetuses destroyed since 1967.

And as for late-term abortions, there is no evidence that these are being sought for trifles such as webbed toes alone. There were 136 terminations beyond 24 weeks in 2006. All of them were for what is called a "ground E" case—meaning if the child was born, it would be seriously handicapped.

Meanwhile, about 1,100 women had an abortion between 22 and 24 weeks: teenagers who panicked and hid their pregnancy; women who had no idea they were pregnant because they were on the contraceptive pill. One wonders what on earth these girls and women would have done if safe, legal procedures weren't available for them.

"If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament."

Rachel Johnson has written for among others, the Daily Telegraph, the Spectator, the Evening Standard and Easy Living, and is author of The Mummy Diaries. She is married with three children and lives in London. Her column appears weekly in The Sun.

There are also upsetting stories around that women are airily opting to abort for abnormalities as minor as cleft palates, webbed toes and club feet, stories that do not stand up on examination, but are designed to add to the impression that our abortion rate is immorally high; that women are treating abortion, even at advanced stages of pregnancy, as a form of contraception; and that women are choosing to kill their own babies because of some minor, indeed cosmetic, defect.

But I am here, above all, because there has been a war of attrition between the pro-life and the pro-choice campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic for decades, and if I am going to discover what is really going on, I need to report from the front line of this war—the abortion clinic.

So here goes, taking each of those three charges in turn.

Yes, the abortion rate here is high (though curiously it's even higher in the US). But the fastest rising rate of abortion is for under 18s. Deanna, who manages the Marie Stopes clinic I am in, says: "Business is growing all the time, really, because of binge drinking and teenage pregnancy, coupled with the fact that lots of girls are simply clueless about contraception." So it would seem that the protesters should not be tough on abortion, but the causes of abortion.

Two, women choose abortion as a form of contraception. Frankly, I don't know anyone who would choose feticide as their preferred form of birth control. I do know lots of women, however, who have taken responsibility for not bringing another baby into the world when the resources—emotional, psychological and physical—sadly aren't there for it.

"I didn't go through uni and med school thinking, 'Yes! I want to be an abortionist'," says Dr Kate Worsley of Marie Stopes International, who has carried out many. "But it's a small aspect of medicine that's most needed to be done well." According to the World Health Organization, unsafe abortions kill more than 66,000 women worldwide every year. The Lancet has called it one of the most neglected public health issues of our time.

British women are lucky. The law gives us strength and legitimacy to decide what is best for us and our families, and control over our reproductive destinies. Any changes to return that power to MPs or lords (few of whom will face the experience of abortion themselves) will erode trust in women to take responsible decisions about their own pregnancies. As the American feminist Florynce Kennedy said: "If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament."

I came away from the clinic with nothing but respect for the doctors—trained, after all, not to take away life but preserve it—sympathy for their patients and more than ever convinced that the decision to end a pregnancy, whether wanted or unwanted, is never undertaken lightly by the woman who needs the termination or the doctor who performs it.

"Every day, women leave the procedure room," says Worsley, "and they always turn and say, 'Thank you'."

I understand why.



In US, abortion foes want 'personhood' for fertilized eggs

Anti-abortion activists in several states are promoting constitutional amendments that would define life as beginning at conception, which could effectively outlaw all abortions and some birth-control methods. Granting "personhood" to fertilized eggs would give fetuses the same legal protections as living, breathing humans.

Ever since abortion was legalized, anti-abortion groups have pushed for a federal Human Life Amendment that would define life as beginning at conception. One of the reasons abortion was legalized was that the court determined that a fetus is legally not a person. Abortion opponents theorize that by granting human status to embryos they will destroy the legal foundation for abortions.

Last November, the Colorado Supreme Court cleared the way for advocates to begin collecting signatures to place a personhood amendment on the state's 2008 ballot. Similar efforts have failed in the past.