

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 XIII No. 1 July 2006

Public outreach

—Ed Golly

TAMPA —IT WAS LONG-TIME MEMBER Jerry Moore who insisted we apply for a vendor space at the St. Pete Pride Festival. “Yes,” responded the woman handling vendor sales by e-mail, “we still have a few spaces available. And I hope we can work you in, because I’m an atheist, too.” A check for \$50 secured space for the June 24th event and our crew was assembled under the direction of Jim Young. Assisting at the kiosk were Ed Golly, John Kieffer with Diane and Joe Reinhardt.

Vendor hours were from 10:00 to 4:30. Sales were brisk as usual, interrupted by the mid-morning Festival Parade that lasted about 45 minutes.

Upcoming events

This was only the first of several outreach events in which A of F will participate this year. The last Saturday of October will find us simultaneously at the Circus McGurkis and the *St. Petersburg Times* Festival of Reading, each an all-day event. Looking ahead to 2007, we have applied for space in both the Plant City Strawberry Festival and the Florida State Fair. We are awaiting response from both event organizers. Years of vending experience has led us to stock the items that sell best and we can be fully prepared for either or both events.

Atheist Forum

When we began producing the *Atheist*

Forum on a weekly basis in Tampa four years ago, it seemed we might eventually exhaust our topics. Hardly. The climate in our country has left us wondering how we can cover all the issues that concern us as atheists.

Joe Reinhardt has evolved into the primary host of the live, call-in production and relies on several Tampa Bay area members to assist. We prefer a variety of members to participate and hope more will come forward to be on camera or learn to assist with the production. Remember that Public Access changes the program schedule every 13 weeks. To be kept informed of the current schedule by e-mail, send e-mail address to AthALFLE@aol.com or see the masthead on page 2 of the newsletter.

Old Time Atheist Hour

Our Web cast continues to be produced very economically from “The Fortress of Liberty” in Tampa. Set for live production every Wednesday night at 9:00 Eastern Standard Time, we will be sporadically missing some Wednesdays through the summer, so listeners should check the schedule on the InfidelGuy.com. This will both confirm program dates and topics for the shows.

To hear the *Old Time Atheist Hour*, just connect to www.InfidelGuy.com and listen live. A high-speed Internet connection is really the ideal way to listen because dial-up connections will generally not produce a steady audio stream. Our phone is always open at (813) 835-1500 and we always solicit calls from listeners. We receive calls from all over the country and Central America, and have re-

ceived e-mail from as far away as New Zealand.

Our production cost for a world-wide audience is only \$10 per hour, and we can schedule any time we want. There is no reason other members can’t set up studios in their own computer rooms and broadcast on any schedule they want, whether it’s once a week or once a month. Why not a program in Spanish? We also plan to connect with more guests by phone, but we first need to expand the phone system to handle multiple calls.

We would like to begin soliciting sponsors for the Web cast. Sponsors could simply make a direct donation for as many hours as they want to support, or actually advertise a product or service on the program. Our e-mail contact address for the Web cast is the same as for the Public Access TV show—AtheistForum@aol.com. Please consider assisting in any way you can with this very worthwhile A of F project.

Remember that current members of A of F will also now be able to use our classified section in the newsletters free as an incidence of membership. Contact editor Michael Harvey for further information.

Ybor Nights

It’s beginning to get out of hand. As members of the Tampa Bay Chapter continue to assemble every Friday night on the sidewalk beside the fundamentalists, the Christians become increasingly frustrated. The situation has now escalated to bull horns, and it seems we can just stand aside and let them make our arguments for us. They openly demonstrate the intolerance of their belief, especially when passersby stop to chat with the atheists. Few things can frustrate religion more than the voice of reason.



First ever Atheists of Florida Awards Banquet

It’s not too early to book the evening of February 4, 2007. Our Board of Director’s meeting will be held during the day followed that evening by the first Atheists of Florida Awards Banquet. The Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore, the same hotel in which we hosted the 2003 Atheist Alliance International convention, will be the site of the event. Atheists of Florida is now undertaking enough projects that it’s time to recognize all the members who volunteer time and talent to make these efforts a success. Further details will be forthcoming.

“As men’s prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is no scientific evidence to support the idea of intelligent design

though they are suns and galaxies. (Revelations 6:13)?

On the same page, David Berlinski, senior fellow at the Discovery Institute writes, "Having been told that Darwin's theory of evolution is a great good thing, the American people have affirmed that they do not believe a word of it."

My answer to his statement - having been told that intelligent design is a great good thing, scientists of the world have affirmed that they do not believe a word of it.

Are there flaws in divine selection? There seem to be many, but two stand out.

Any reptile, bird or mammal that has six or eight years of reproduction produces four to six offspring a year. Of that twenty-five or so offspring, only two will survive on average. This is not unusual among animals. Over ninety percent of all animals that hatch or are born die before they reach adulthood. They die from starvation, from disease or by being eaten by some other animal that is trying to survive. Death and suffering is the norm in the animal world.

Within our species over 60% of human fertilized eggs do not implant in the uterus. Of those that do, 15% are flushed out with the first menses and the female never knows she was pregnant.

The greater picture is even worse. Over ninety-six percent of all plants and animal species that have ever lived on earth are now extinct.

These figures make sense if we understand natural selection, but do not if we think a supreme being acted as an intelligent designer of biological life.

Back to the bed bug example. It is not uncommon in the animal kingdom for either sex to give their lives in the process of reproduction. This can be explained by understanding natural selection, but no one can know the mind of a divine designer and it would be folly to say that we do.

There are, of course, many other examples of flawed or at least very unusual methods of reproduction.

Plants, animals and almost all lower forms of life reproduce by having sperm and egg unite. In plants the female ovary produces eggs and the pollen produces sperm. Pollen is usually transferred by wind or insects. All fertilization is internal.

In animals fertilization can be external if the species live in water. Many fish species and all amphibians are fertilized externally.

It is internal fertilization that challenges intelligent design. Natural selection can explain the evolution of delivery of the sperm to the egg, but in many cases it hardly seems to be intelligent.

Peripatus, or velvet worm, is an animal that is a cross between an insect and an earthworm—more precisely, a cross between annelid and an arthropod. The males have no penis and they deposit a bag of sperm (a spermatophore) on the back of the female. This eats a hole through the flesh of the female and the sperm fertilize the females eggs.

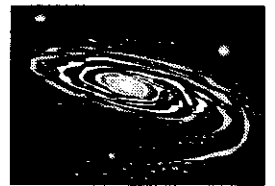
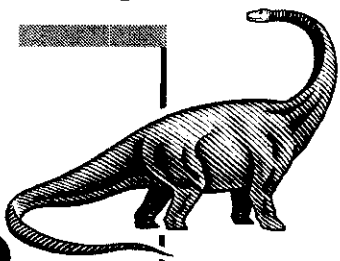
The male sea worm, Platynereis, lacks a penis and the female a vagina and yet this species has internal fertilization. The worms swim out of their borrows and the female bites off and swallows the posterior of the male. This posterior end contains the testes and sperm. She digests the feast and the juices allow the sperm to penetrate the gut wall and fertilize the females eggs. The male survives to grow a new posterior. The ultimate in oral sex.

All spiders masturbate. None of the males have a penis. They masturbate onto a small mat that they weave and then pick up the sperm with their hand like structures, the pedipapls, and deposit them into the female. This is artificial insemination.

Among the birds, only ducks and ostriches have a penis. The males fertilize the females by the use of a very accurate squirting method.

Mosquitoes are food for frogs, fish, bats and dragonflies. That is good for nature. So, why must the female have blood to reproduce? Last year 800,000 children died in Africa from mosquitoes that carry disease. In 2005 mosquitoes killed 2.7 million people and infected 300 million more. The male mosquitoes get along fine on plant juices. Many species of mosquitoes are becoming resistant to insecticides. Is this suffering a result of natural selection or divine selection?

And finally, nothing is stable in the universe. None of the known elements are stable, continents are moving, the earth is slowing in its rotation, the moon is moving away, the sun is burning out, and the universe is expanding. This cannot be considered intelligent design by intelligent humans.



**Mark Twain
Scholarship Fund
2005
Fundraising
Campaign**

Our warmest thanks and appreciation to the following donors from the 2005 fundraising raffle:

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And the winner of the raffle for the Barrister bookcase was **Celia Glantz.**

Received via e-mail:
From: Gene Ehrich
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2006 12:12 PM
Subject: Nonprofit Org postage permits
I have regularly been getting mail from an organization called St Mathew's Churches with an address in Tulsa, OK. I have read a number of articles about them and they do not actually have a church but raise money through mail solicitation.

One of the articles can be found at: <http://loper.org/~george/trends/2003/Apr/815.html> The article is worth

reading, here is just an example.

"Once a traveling tent-revival preacher, the Rev. James Eugene Ewing built a direct-mail

empire from his mansion in Los Angeles that brings millions of dollars flowing into a Tulsa post office box. Ewing's computerized mailing operation, Saint Mathew's Churches, mails more than 1 million letters per month, many to poor, uneducated people, while Ewing lives in a mansion and drives luxury cars.

Now comes my question:

How can I track down the postal permit 6655 and file complaints with post office and any other organizations that might revoke their non profit status and their permits? These people scam the poor, don't pay taxes and live in mansions. They get free and/or reduced price postage. Join me if you will.

Response from Brent Yaciw:

Tracking down the postal permit would be relatively easy: just contact the postmaster of the PO the mailings originate from.

The rest, however, would be more difficult. The IRS grants them non-profit status, as does the state they are incorporated in. Getting officials with enough guts to do the right thing is the difficult part, in this right-wing-dominated government of ours. Any organization that wants to call itself a church pretty much can do so, and there's no requirement that they do [anything] with the money people send them...which is pretty much what they all do anyway.

I think the best thing to do is push for tax-the-churches legislation at pretty much every

level.

Or start your own church, and steal from the stupid just like they do. If I could sleep at night, I'd consider it; my sympathy for those foolish enough to throw money at [con-artists] who promise "spiritual rewards" wanes daily.

—**Brent Yaciw**

Vice President, Atheists of Florida



Letters to the editor for Saturday, May 27, 2006
Daytona Beach Journal

State motto 'In God We Trust'

Re "New Florida State Motto: IN GOD WE TRUST," article, May 13:

Hats off to state lawmakers for making "In God We Trust" Florida's motto, to the elementary school children who requested the bill and to all other states that have "God" in their mottoes and agendas.

The United States is a country founded by god-fearing men who were intelligent enough to understand that with "faith," no matter what god people believed in, people always had hope, honesty, a conscience and respect, which proved correct for years until atheists tried to change the backbone of this country.

People of all faiths are fed up listening to atheists/non-God believers whine, complain and sue because of any reference to "God" in agendas because they say it offends them and is against separation of church and state. Really? Where is their tolerance of a word that can't hurt them? What country have they been living in?

This motto has been on currency/courthouses/meeting rooms in government/social clubs; oaths are taken on a Bible, etc.; and until atheists had prayer removed from schools, children had accountability present and were able to start their day with a non-denominational prayer and Pledge of Allegiance. Elimination of that practice has more than proved detrimental, judging by daily news accounts of horrible events involving children because they were robbed of the presence of hope, honesty, conscience and respect.

We are not trying to push anything onto atheists. If the word "God" upsets them so much, they can either learn tolerance or move and stop trying to change our country. The majority of people have a "faith," no matter what name they call "god" by. —**Carole Bishop**
New Smyrna Beach

Reply from Jim Strayer:

In response to the Letter to the Editor, 05/27/06, regarding the new State motto IN GOD WE TRUST: It seems that Florida lawmakers and many citizens have decided that we all should share their faith in a god. My dictionary defines faith as a belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence. Superstition has almost the same definition.

Every one who has faith in a god has accepted someone else's faith. If the existence of a god could be proven there would be no reason for faith. There would be one religion instead of thousands. There would be no Atheists.

Because there is no proof by reason or science that a god exists it has become necessary for lawmakers around the world to pass laws, display signs, issue money and make mottos to support their particular belief and to give each some credibility.

Thankfully the United States Constitution does not mention any god or faiths. Hats off to the wise men who wrote it.

—**Jim Strayer**

Ormond beach, FL



LETTERS →



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