

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI: Sunday, November 17 at 2:00 p.m. in the Boardroom of the Ft. Lauderdale Main Library. The topic will be "The Pope and Evolution."

TAMPA: Saturday, November 30, 12:30 to 2:00 in Meeting Room B of the Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street. A video tape entitled "The Rhetoric of Intolerance", which is an open-letter video to Pat Robertson from Dr. Mel White, will be shown.

Convention from page 1

convention include the book and products room, which will contain books, tapes and other products of interest to all free-thinkers, atheists and humanists in attendance. Also, the TV Forums room will screen television programs made by Alliance member societies from around the country.

On Saturday, there will also be a workshop on computers which will help you to understand the fascinating world of the Internet. Throughout the convention, speakers will be presented representing a broad range of topics including the environment, population control, and also separation issues and other topical subjects.

On Saturday evening, the main Banquet will feature Gerald Larue, author of "Freethought Across the Centuries—Toward a New Age of Enlightenment."

Of course, an added attraction is the location of the Clarion Hotel, which is convenient to Disney World and other major Florida vacation parks. The Clarion is offering exceptionally low rates for this event, which is still another reason to attend. Build a real bridge to the 21st century by attending this exciting convention in the spring of 1997. **A**

Pope continued from page 6

"It's incredible," conceded Monsignor Bernard la Goutte. "The avalanche coming down on us."

Since May, anti-pope activists have draped a black sheet on the Reims cathedral on the 22nd of every month to protest the pope's Sept. 22 Mass in the northern city.

At virtually all of the pope's other stops, opponents sued to block city officials from spending taxpayers' money to underwrite the visit. Some bristle at the use of air bases for papal Masses.

"We're not against the pope's visit. But public subsidies clash with the law, which since 1905 has decreed a separation between church and state," said Andre Filamant, an activist from the Brittany state of Finistere.

The visit has also renewed debate here over the 76-year-old pope's increasingly frail health -- and on whether he should resign or be removed.

"In 1980, the pope asked us, 'France, eldest daughter of the Church, are you faithful to the promises of your baptism?'" La Croix said in an editorial. "How will we answer the Holy Father?" **A**

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Volume V Number 6

September / October, 1996



Atheist Alliance Convention taking shape

If you're like many who are bored and disillusioned with political posturing and media information designed solely for the perpetually brainwashed masses, you'll be relieved to know there's hope for those who wish to be enlightened! Simply sign up for the Third Annual Atheist Alliance Convention, which is being held this year in Orlando, Florida.

The Atheists of Florida, representing the national Atheist Alliance organization, and the Humanists of Florida are jointly sponsoring the event, which is being held beginning on Friday, March 28, and running through Sunday, March 30th. Humanists and Atheists will gather on Easter weekend at the beautiful Clarion Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida for a weekend of enlightenment, humor and thought-provoking discussion with like-minded individuals.

The theme for this event is appropriately entitled: "Imagine! Freethinkers United!" A tentative schedule of events for the weekend includes a "Social Hour" on Friday after registration, followed by a dinner on Friday night featuring an expert on population control, plus a lively skit to close out the days events.

Some note-worthy features of the *(continued back page)*

Alliance Members:

Atheists & Agnostics of Wisconsin
Atheist Centre
Vijayawada, India
Atheist Coalition
San Diego, CA
Atheists of Colorado
Atheists of Florida
Atheists & Other Freethinkers
Sacramento, CA
Atheists of San Francisco Region
Atheists United
Los Angeles, CA
Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia
Metropolis Atheists
Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX
Minnesota Atheists
Rationalist Society of St. Louis

TIA braces for chapel

TAMPA—The ongoing movement to establish a chapel at Tampa International Airport has experienced a resurrection with the retirement of Executive Director George Bean.

Having left in August, Bean had firmly opposed the construction of any type of chapel in the airport. However, replacement director Louis Miller seems to be entertaining the idea. At the Aviation Authority meeting in June, the Board directed staff to consider a location for an "Interdenominational Faith Chapel." It was suggested that at a minimum, space should be identified where people could go to pray, meditate or meet with family or friends during troubled times.

The Interfaith Airport Chapel Committee has been established for years, relentlessly trying, with the aid of the Tampa Ministerial Association, to get the chapel approved. To our knowledge, no mention has been made of any payment being made for the space — it would all be accommodated by the airport.

The third level of the airport is the transfer level, where the trams connect the terminal with the airside. It is currently undergoing renovation. Coupled with Bean's retirement, this provides the perfect time for the Chapel Committee to strike.

In a recent phone interview, Miller claimed he has inherited the chapel movement and pleaded unfamiliarity with the details of the motives of the Committee. He pointed out *(continued next page)*

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Atheists of Florida



P.O. Box 130753
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that there are presently 30 major airports around the country which have some form of chapel, including Miami and Orlando. Insisting he would never permit any type of chapel in which any preaching or promotion of a specific religion would take place, he is, nevertheless, receptive to at least entertaining the idea of some form of religiously neutral space.

Realizing that a chapel per se would be very difficult to get approved, the Committee has now switched to stealth tactics, identifying the space they want only as a "quiet place." Eventually, this would evolve into a Christian chapel.

What we can do

The Airport Authority Board meets the first Thursday of each month at 8:00 am. in their conference room at the airport. The agenda is printed in advance and available to the public. If nobody comes forward to oppose a chapel, it is likely to be approved.

We can start by writing to each of the five Board Members and Chairman Miller. Since a report announcing the chapel recently appeared in the *Tampa Tribune*, a letter might be outlined something like this:

I recently became aware that Executive Director Louis Miller is considering the construction of a "quiet space" for an airport chapel at Tampa International Airport. This would constitute an unconstitutional infringement of use of public, taxpayer supported space by a religious organization. I appeal to you to oppose any such measure and keep the airport utilized for its intended purpose of travelling.

Also, members of the Tampa Bay Chapter of Atheists of Florida will be in attendance at all Aviation Authority board meetings as long as this is a potential issue. The more of us who appear to oppose this movement, the better. If you would like to attend or have any more information, call Ed Golly at 813-839-7567.

Here are the names and addresses of the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority members:

Mr. Louis E. Miller, Executive Director
P. O. Box 22287
Tampa 33622
813-870-8700; FAX 875-6670

Mrs. Stella F. Thayer, Chairman
MacFarlane, Ferguson & McMullen
First Florida Tower
111 E. Madison, Suite 2300
Tampa 33602

Mr. W. Crosby Few, Vice Chairman
Few & Ayala
109 North Brush St., Suite 202
Tampa 33601

Ms. Arthenia L. Joyner, Secretary
Stewart, Joyner, Jordan-Holmes & Holmes, P.A.
1112 E. Kennedy
Tampa 33607

County Commissioner Chris Hart,
Treasurer
601 E. Kennedy
Tampa 33601

Mayor Dick A. Greco, Assistant Secretary/Assistant Treasurer
306 E. Jackson
Tampa 33602

Mr. Stewart C. Eggert, Attorney for the Authority
Allen, Dell, Frank & Trinkle
Barnett Plaza
101 E. Kennedy
Tampa 33601

The following is a list of contributors to our Legal Defense Fund. We'd like to extend our thanks to each individual for their generous contributions.

Maria Richardson	\$ 25.00
Miguel Perdomo	25.00
Alex Gribko	25.00
Jose Solarzano	25.00
Gerald & Florence Morgenroth	50.00
John Massen	100.00
Andrew Herschel	75.00
Celia Glantz	500.00

Pope Plugs Darwin

A century and a half after Darwin published *The Origin of the Species*, Pope John Paul II issued a formal statement declaring that the human body may not have been the immediate creation of God, but is the product of a gradual process of evolution.

Although the church has never formally condemned the theory of evolution, it strongly cautioned that evolution could play into the hands of atheists who sought to remove the hand of God from the act of creation. It was in 1950 that Pope Pius XII stated in the encyclical letter *Humani Generis* that Darwin's views as a "serious hypothesis" could be embraced by Catholics as long as it was not presented as "certain doctrine."

This latest action is seen as part of a progressive campaign on the part of the church to amend wrong teachings which were adhered to in the past. In 1992, the pope sought to rectify one of the church's most infamous wrongs toward science, the persecution of Galileo for asserting that the Earth moved around the Sun.

The earlier expressions about evolution by Pius came against the 1950s backdrop of concern over the spread in Europe of communism, which denied the existence of God.

Evolution was, in his statements, "gladly made use of by the proponents of communism to make of themselves defenders and propagandists of dialectical materialism and to take from minds every notion of God."

Welfare for Churches

While most foes of the recently passed welfare reform legislation were lamenting its impact on poor children, an obscure provision sneaked through. It is a provision that could divert welfare money in an entirely new direction-into the coffers of religious organizations.

The "Charitable Choice" provision of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 gives religious organizations the right to compete for social service money even if their programs are distinctly sectarian. Sponsored by John Ashcroft of Missouri and supported by Bob Dole when he was the Senate's majority leader, the law would allow states to distribute welfare money to churches, mosques and synagogues to provide welfare services as long as it is not spent for "sectarian worship, instruction or proselytization."

This would mean that federal funds could go to a church day care program, even if children

spend time in the sanctuary where religious icons and scripture bedeck the walls. It also means that recipients of public money would be permitted to hire staff on the basis of a religious test.

Ironically, Bob Dole was the senator who vociferously objected to a contract between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Nation of Islam Security Agency to provide security services for public housing projects. Dole was particularly concerned about the discriminatory hiring practices of the Nation of Islam and that federal money might be going to subsidize a religious group. Yet this is precisely the situation the new welfare bill has wrought.

Before the new law, religious organizations could receive government subsidies for providing social services, but the programs themselves, their settings and staff had to be distinctly non-religious. The U.S. Supreme Court had said such restrictions protected the church-state separation. But those limits created situations that angered some conservative legislators, including Ashcroft.

For example, in 1989, a Mississippi judge ruled that the Salvation Army couldn't fire an employee in its federally-funded domestic abuse shelter because she practiced the Wiccan religion. The Salvation Army had a choice: either accept government money and evaluate employees based on job performance without regard to religious affiliation, or reject government money and discriminate at will.

Now, thanks to Ashcroft's changes, the new law lets religious groups have it both ways: They can restrict hiring "to their own kind," and get paid by the government to do so.

Charitable choice is not only unfair to job applicants, but it will disrupt the delicate harmony of America's religious pluralism. It opens the tax bank to religious groups and will lead to skirmishes for federal dollars. In Utah, the Mormons will be the big recipient of government money; in Boston, the Catholic Church will win the prize; and in Manhattan, the largest chunk will go to Jewish charities. The favored religion will get the biggest piece of the taxpayer pie. Resentment by the unfavored is inevitable.

Advocates of the separation of church and state are horrified by the specter, but so are many religious groups that know the government money will bring government strings and oversight. The Methodists, Unitarians, Presbyterians, Jewish groups and the Baptist Joint Committee have all written to the Senate in opposition to charitable choice. They see danger to religious freedom in having the government scrutinize each welfare program to see if there was any "proselytizing."

-Robyn Blumer



Published eight times a year by Atheists of Florida, Inc., a non-profit, educational organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts for the membership.

Membership dues and general correspondence should be sent to:
Atheists of Florida
P.O. Box 530102
Miami, FL 33153-0102
Contact phone is (305) 966-2739

Membership dues:

Life Member \$500.00 yr.
 Sustaining 50.00 yr.
 Couple 30.00 yr.
 Individual 20.00 yr.
 Student (under 25 yrs) 10.00 yr.

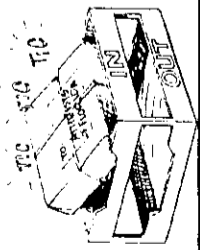
Send newsletter correspondence to:
Tampa Bay Chapter
P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33601-0753
Email: AthAI.FL.E@AOL.COM

The A of F newsletter is provided free to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters from members are published on a space-available basis. Articles may be edited for clarity or length. Atheists of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

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Letters



Fuel to the fire

September 21, 1996

Editor:

This is in response to a letter by Ms. Morgenroth from your 8-96 newsletter.

As rational people we abhor acts of arson, racism and sexism that exists in humankind.

However, Ms. Morgenroth has failed to mention several of the relevant facts.

1. Some of the burnings were related to race, but only a very few.
2. There are more white churches/synagogues burned/vandalized in this country every year than black.
3. Several of the black churches were burned by blacks. In one case, the church was burned by its own minister.
4. Some of the churches were burned by people with a history of mental illness, not related to hate or racism.
5. In most cases, churches were burned as an act of rebellion by young people who were forced to go to church/church schools by their parents.

Adding fuel to the fires of racism by eliminating certain truths doesn't serve anyone except the haters.

C.W. Mitchell
St. Augustine, Fl.

GOP Hypocrisy

Editor:

GOP convention speakers used the strategy of machine politics, with funders of Christian Coalition candidates firmly at the levers of control. Political machines use selective and tangible incentives, jobs, gains, to attract votes. They trade favors for votes. Promised by Dole/Kemp is a system of secularized welfare to subsidize hordes of overbreeding families whose excess fertility comes from obeying sectarian church law.

Current GOP policymakers care not what kind of men become fathers. They can be maniacs, rapists, incestors, or brothel clients, and all their conceptions will be carried to full term, because a Constitutional Amendment will make abortion a crime.

Will a tax bonus for each child encourage planned parenthood, or will it burden

taxpayers with more indigent dependents? GOP hypocrisy regarding Big Government peeped through when Dole admitted using the tax-paid Big Government GI Bill after Hitler's religious war against Jews led to his physical disability. Hitler, never excommunicated, said his rise to power demanded a "believing people." The GOP convention exalted emotional religiosity.

Wrapping dumpsters in red/white and blue may be a symbol of the reservoir of excess labor that puts no upward pressure on wages. Into that dumpster go ongoing generations of infants who grow up to become units of labor. When there are too many people for too few jobs, they become "wretched refuse," the junk which employers can fish out of the trash and hire for nearly nothing. GOP funders want dumpsters full of babies. By 1850, Hell-fearing obedience of church law in the Old World created waves of desperate people escaping to America. They fled church-dominated, overpopulated, low wage homelands. U.S. borders are now overrun by the same kind of refugees, driven here by consequences of their own irrepressed fecundity.

The rapid in-migration of people with high fertility rates is a danger to the republic. Numerical reality must be faced, even if it gives rise to accusations of bigotry. Swelling populations always bring burgeoning service demands. A GOP victory in November will be catastrophic.

A..D. Veirs

MARK ANDREW TROP

Attorney at Law

Shoreview Bldg., Ste. 201
9999 N.E. 2nd Avenue
Miami Shores, FL 33138
(305) 759-5727

Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.

P.O. Box 39561
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33339-9561
800.849-9349
954/563-7386

MARY BENNETT HUDSON

In France, Apathy Gives Way to Hostility Ahead of Papal Visit

PARIS (AP) -- Past papal visits to France inspired barely stifled yawns. Many French, it sometimes seems, would give God himself a Gallic shrug. But as Pope John Paul II prepared for his fifth visit, apathy gave way to growing hostility. The pontiff, who for years has tried to coax "the eldest daughter of the Church" out of her indifference, may have roused a dozing giant.

Leftist activists are protesting government funding of the Sept. 19-22 visit. Hundreds of disillusioned Catholics are renouncing their baptisms.

Recently, a crude homemade bomb was discovered in a church where the pope made one of his first stops. In the St. Laurent-sur-Sevre basilica in western France, police found an inscription in Latin and French: "In the name of the pope, boom."

France is 80 percent Catholic, but less than 15 percent practice their religion. At Notre Dame and other cathedrals, tourists far outnumber worshippers.

Past papal Masses in France have drawn tens of thousands of people; in other countries hundreds of thousands flock to see the pope.

The French -- fiercely independent and proudly secular -- clashed with the Vatican long ago over bans on women priests, artificial birth control and abortion. But the resentment runs deeper than that, even among the faithful.

Lately, it has infiltrated the flock in a way that wasn't apparent on John Paul's four other visits since 1980.

Anger is simmering in France over the 1995 dismissal of Jacques Gaillot, a liberal bishop who lost his diocese northwest of Paris after preaching for years against Vatican policies on homosexuality, priest celibacy and other touchy issues. Gaillot remains immensely popular in France.

This summer, scores of disaffected Catholics began writing and telephoning their local dioceses to demand that their names be stricken from baptismal rolls.

"I told them I don't believe in the Church or in this pope, and that I'm no longer a child of God," said Patrice Salvy, a farmer's wife from Chanay.

Only 6 million of France's 45 million baptized Catholics regularly attend Mass. (continued on page 8)

House approves controversial school voucher program for DC

WASHINGTON -- The House recently approved a school voucher program for District of Columbia schools that had been opposed by city officials and teachers unions but pushed by Christian conservatives. The program to give poor residents access to private school scholarships funded partially with federal money was contained in a \$100 million school reform plan that otherwise had the support of the district's delegate to Congress and city council.

Christian conservatives have for years pushed the idea of giving parents tax money to send their children to private schools. Currently, Milwaukee has the only operating program, but its program and an Ohio proposal have been challenged in court on the grounds that they violate the constitutional separation of state and church.

Opponents of the D.C. voucher plan said it would draw off the best students from public schools at a time when officials should be trying to improve the overall system.

"I don't dispute the obvious -- that some individual students may profit. But how in the world would that improve the educational quality in the district for those not privileged to be accepted at private schools in neighboring states?" asked Rep. William Clay, D-Mo.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who made a rare appearance in the debate, said, "We should quit requiring the children of District of Columbia to go to violent schools, drug-ridden schools and schools that are dens of illiteracy and dens of ignorance, and we should give them a chance to have a scholarship and go to a decent place."

Critics maintain such voucher programs are unconstitutional because tax money could be spent to send students to religious schools.

"You cannot pass the collection plate to taxpayers," said Joseph Conn, a spokesman for Americans United for Separation of Church and State. The group says it will file a lawsuit challenging the plan if the House version of the city's budget becomes law.



Primitive & Ancient Religions

As a special feature this year, the Atheists of Florida newsletter will present a scenario of a different religion each issue.

Religion has been present in various forms from the earliest recorded history of man. The varying superstitions and beliefs that led to religious practices are too numerous to mention. The following categories are some of the more prevalent forms of worship that man has developed since ancient times.

Animism

Animism is the belief in the possibility/occurrence of direct communications between human beings & spirits of the dead. "Spirits" are defined as something that is worshipped in objects. Things working in natural phenomena (rivers, seas, clouds, sun, moon, stars) are all imagined to be inhabited by spirits.

Angels/demons

Out of the concept of souls, the imagination of man creates angels and demons. Therefore, storms, lightning, disease are all said to be ruled by spirits. Many gods were thought to behave exactly as human beings. For example, sacrifices were made to appease "the god" of lightning. (Out of this comes ancestor worship.)

Ancestor worship

Great men of tribes and powerful leaders were worshipped through charms/statues. This form of worship is still prevalent in many cultures.

Nature worship

Belief in spirits animating everything. It is hardly surprising that people in primitive cultures would try to explain natural forces by attributing them to good/evil deities.

Idolatry

Idolatry is a term used primarily by early Christians. It was so designated to all other forms of religion existing around them, all of them hostile to Christianity. "Idols" were defined as any picture, sculpture or natural object which is worshipped or revered.

Demonology

Food or evil beings. Christianity particularly regards demons as predominantly evil. Tribal people see disease as caused by evil spirits entering the body. Convulsions, for example, were thought of as possession by a demon. The

progress of medicine has done much to dispel the belief in cases which were formerly attributed to demonic possession.

Sorcery & witchcraft

Many books & studies have been made concerning the superstitions of the Middle Ages and Reformation, in which countless numbers of men and women were tortured and killed because of the belief in witches, demons and sorcery. Primitive religions, (island religions in particular) still incorporate the belief in witches, demons, voodoo magic and sorcery. It has been noted that the demons of one religion may closely parallel the good deities of their enemies.

Divination

'Oracles' were found in Ancient/Greek/Roman religions. They include examination of entrails of animals, birds in flight, lightning, dreams and astrology. All of these things testified to a belief in some ancient religion.

Theism

The belief that God or a divine being has created the world and endowed it with certain powers. However, man is left to work out the results without direct intervention or through acts of god. (Tom Paine was a famous deist)

Monotheism

Christianity and Mohammedanism are considered by some to be the only two truly monotheistic religions, with a belief in only one god.

Pantheism

Identifies creation with a Creator. Everything is "as one" with the Creator. All things are aspects/manifestations of one eternal being.

Atheism

Definition: "A" - without

"Theos" - meaning God

There are three divisions of Atheism according to the Encyclopedia of World Religions:

Dogmatic atheism denies the existence of a divine being; Critical atheism says He has not been proven to exist; Philosophical atheism says that it is impossible for finite beings to know in any real sense that the Divine exists.

Races without religion

There are a few societies of people that have no recorded religion. They are found in certain areas throughout the globe. In South America, a tribe of Brazilian Indians is said to have no religion whatsoever. "They make no distinction between right and wrong, and have, therefore, neither fear nor hope of any present or future

punishment or reward, nor any mysterious terror of some supernatural power, whom they might seek to assuage by sacrifices or superstitious rites." — *Quote from Encyclopedia of World Religions.*

The Zulus & Kaffir tribes of Central and South Africa are two examples of tribes without religious practices.

In the Pacific Islands, the Caroline Islanders have no temples, altars, offerings, nor sanguinary rites.

When questioned about their lack of religious beliefs, a Nile tribal chieftain replied, "Existence after death! How can that be? Can a dead man get out of his grave unless we dig him out?" When asked about good and evil actions of men, he said, "Yes; there are good and bad in men and beasts... Most people are bad; if they are strong, they take from the weak. The good people are all weak; they are good because they are not strong enough to be bad."

Native Island Religion

Australians had sorcerers, but no other form of worship nor any idea of a Creator. Many believed in ghosts or souls wandering the Earth.

In Tasmania, the Aborigines thought they could pursue the hunt/chase in the afterlife. They did have burial mounds and employed exorcists. The exorcists had considerable power over them. They used charms to expel diseases. However, their superstitious regard for the sun, moon and constellations could not be said to be religious worship.

Ancestor worship prevailed in New Caledonia. Feasts were prepared for Spirits of the dead every fifth month. The New Caledonians also preserve finger and toenails of the dead. They bury all of the body but the head, then after 10 days, friends twist off the head, extract the teeth and preserve the skull.

The Maoris had a mythology of their own for the islands. Everyone from birth had a protecting god.

Hervey Islanders thought the universe is like a hollow of a coconut shell. But for them, there's no idea of a supreme being.

Sandwich Islanders gave great importance to volcanic deities. They also had peculiar customs regarding taboos. During the season of strict taboo (tapu), no fire or light can be made, no canoe launched, no one could bathe and no one should go outside. Dogs and pigs couldn't make noise (their muzzles were tied shut!).

On Fiji, according to their religion, man would sail and fish all day in the afterlife. It is said of these islanders "nowhere was cannibalism more strictly enjoined."

The African bushmen had great belief in magic. Kaffir tribes had no form of worship, but they had a belief in an invisible god. There was no image of him. Ancestor worship was extremely important to them. The Masai had a belief in a supreme being who dwelled on top of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Congo tribes of the African West Coast thought that good and evil both reside in the body. Fetishes (charms) are prevalent. Witch-burning was common among the coastal tribes. It has been said of the African tribes that "Africans believe not in soul, not in spirit, but in ghost."

Native American-Indians believed in the beneficent divinities in nature. They had a limitless number of spirits. The "Totems" of North American Indian protects him from harm. They believed in a duality of the soul. One part is free to depart on excursions during sleep. The soul departs on,

death for Elysium - the Land of the Dead or "Happy hunting ground" for Indians. This was a place to hunt, dance and rejoice. According to their belief, relatives are gathered at a long lodge waiting for the spirit of their loved one to arrive. Mexican Indians, and Aztecs in particular, had in many ways reached a much more advanced stage of civilization than the American Indians. But this is quite a contradictory statement, as further investigation reveals that extensive human sacrifices were used in their worship of the gods.

Mythology

The Greek and Roman civilizations of the ancient world are considered to be among the most advanced and enduring races of people that ever existed. The Greeks, and later the Romans, used myths to explain natural phenomena. They imagined a world ruled by a master race of gods who ruled the earth, often with human emotions and sentiment. Nature/Ancestor worship was prevalent. The myth of Zeus, the king of the gods, was traceable to their ancient past, before the Golden Age of Greece.

According to myth, from "Chaos" came Gaia (the Earth) & Uranus, (the Heavens). Many mythological stories were created by the Greeks about the gods in order to explain natural phenomena.

One myth had the world destroyed by flood. Only Deucalion & his wife Pyrrha were saved. In an ark they floated 9 days and nights. They rested on Mt. Parnassus. This sounds quite familiar to the Western religion myth of Noah and the Ark.

Demeter was the goddess of agriculture. There was a myth that told of how she went to get her daughter Persephone, back from the underworld. She struck a bargain with Hades. The deal was that part of the year Persephone lived in the underworld with Hades, (in winter), and the rest of the year (spring & summer) she stayed with her mother. This is how the four seasons were explained to ancient Greeks.

