

theists United

A RATIONAL ALTERNATIVE

Co-President's Message

What I Learned in Church

As some of you know, I went to church recently. It was "payment" to my friend Ann for some valuable work she had done for AU. She took me to Agape (pronounced ah-gah-pay), a church in Religious Science. They are theologically liberal, but their services are the stand-up-and-shout variety, more often associated with fundamentalist Christians. Only eight years old, they have a flock of 5,000, so I went in thinking I could learn something we might imitate about running a popular meeting. I left very glad that we are not, in any way, like this group.

I envied their professional quality theatrical lighting over a tiered stage, which led to a choir loft holding 78 choristers. I remembered our own frantic and ultimately futile attempt to get a group of four or more back-up singers for our revival.

Throughout the one-hour-and-fifty-two-minute emotional service, I grew more and more uncomfortable, and understanding the reason has taken some reflection. It did feel a little awkward not standing and participating, as if I were watching a bad play which had been written and directed by the uncle of the person sitting next to me.

There was an obvious minority in the congregation which was not happy. I saw pain in the faces of many, the expression

of a person swallowing bitter medicine with only a slim hope of a cure. I wanted to reach out to these people, to give them AU cards and assure them that there is a rational way to cope with whatever ails them.

The majority, however, was happy, bordering on ecstatic. I didn't understand, at the time, my unease with this. I grew up in a church, and I have always believed the joys of the worship fantasy to be harmless. But I knew, watching this spectacle,

"I grew up in a church, and I have always believed the joys of the worship fantasy to be harmless..."

that something was very wrong, is very wrong, with the whole idea. Finally, I realized that I had the same concerns Plato had when he discussed the theater. He believed that the actor was possessed, not in his right mind, and that his illness infected the audience. He thought that theater should be reserved only for the noblest of purposes. (Unfortunately, this included praise to the gods.)

For the next two millennia, this observation worried many critics. If an actor, pretending to be someone else, sharing visions which are not true, moves the otherwise rational members of the audience to laughter and tears, apparently



Continued on page 2

April General Meeting

Sunday, April 23, 2000

Toastmasters Debate

For the unlucky folk who can't attend the AAI convention in Sacramento (see insert), AU and Freethinkers' Toastmasters have planned an excellent consolation. The group will run a debate on a topic of interest to atheists for the April 23rd meeting. (The exact subject had not been decided at press time.)

This award-winning Toastmasters group is closely associated with Atheists United and other members of the Los Angeles Freethought Federation. It was organized to train atheists and humanists to present our views well. Member Steve Elkins, a winner of numerous Toastmaster awards, is currently in upper-level competition with a speech explaining freethought.

Bob Richert, a founding member of AU and of Freethinkers' Toastmasters, will host the meeting.

At press time, the usual 11:00 a.m. board meeting seems unlikely. (A board meeting will convene at CFIW at 11 a.m. on the second Sunday of each month. This month that will be April 9. Members are welcome to attend that meeting.)

The social period will begin at 12:15.

The meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. announcements and the speaker, followed by a break. Questions and answers will follow the break. We'll have discussion and reports, then sound-off before adjourning. Those who wish will reconvene for after-meeting eating at Dinah's, 6521 S. Sepulveda Blvd, LA.

Co-President's Message

Continued from page 1

trustful of what they see, can this be considered sane?

Finally, Samuel Taylor Coleridge settled the issue in most people's minds. He coined the term, "the willing suspension of disbelief". He perceived that people do know that the play isn't true, and their behavior outside the theater demonstrates that knowledge. We suspend our disbelief, he said, in order to concentrate our emotions.

It seems that this is true of most churchgoers also. The people around me were dressed as people who lead ordinary, productive lives. It's not really unusual to hear someone explain, "you don't have to believe all that myth to get a lot of good from the church." But rarely do they even whisper this thought to the believer in the pew next to them. And even among most of those who would never deny a belief, one has to assume, from the secular paths they follow, that if they were to think about their religion, they would realize that it was inconsistent with truths in their lives. I have often asserted that we are very fortunate that most people who say they believe in a god live as though they do not.

In traditional drama, there are some people who can't distinguish fantasy from reality. We read the stories of television and movie stars being stalked by isolated individuals who believe that actors are the characters they play. Sometimes the results are tragic, but most of the time, because their delusion is not socially acceptable, they get help before they do serious damage to themselves or to others.

When it comes to the theater we call religion, however, help is less often available. While the folks who suspend their disbelief on Sunday morning act as if the fantasy were not true, they continue, outside the church building, to speak as if it were. The people who have trouble distinguishing imagination from reality are not isolated; they are encouraged. This multiplies their numbers by the thousands. The press, of course, informs us of the large group excesses, and the mainstream religious community is quick to disassociate itself from the "cult" or the "extremist." But for every holy war, there are a million cases of domestic violence committed in the name of a religion. For every conflagration such as happened in Waco or more recently in Uganda, there are innumerable individual suicides of people who could not wait to be with their god. For every smarmy televangelist, there are countless people living pathetic lives of self-sacrificing service to a master who exists only in their imagination.

These people are the victims of the mainstream church and the "pillars of society" who want to keep up their fantasy without considering the cost. It is time we held them responsible.

As a Christian and—for more than thirty years—as an atheist, I have thought of most religious people as well-meaning and harmless.

Finally, I know better.

Bobbie Kirkhart

Atheists United, Inc.

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ATHEISTS UNITED is a 501 (C)(3) not-for-profit educational organization with two purposes: 1. Preserving the separation of church and state; and 2. Promoting atheism, primarily through education.

The *Atheists United Newsletter* is published monthly for members and is also available by subscription. Deadline for submissions is the first day of the month prior to publication, otherwise at the discretion of the editor. Submissions should be no more than 500 words long and are subject to editorial revisions, at the discretion of the editor, for reasons of clarity or space. Send all material to Editor's attention by mail to AU, P.O. Box 57435, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-2435, or by email to bkirkhart@aol.com, or by fax to 818-785-1743. Opinions and statements made by authors may not reflect the positions of Atheists United and are therefore not the responsibility of Atheists United, its officers, directors, nor editor. All material © 2000 by Atheists United. All rights reserved. Permission to use articles is explicitly granted to the editorial staffs of member organizations of the Atheist Alliance and of the Alliance of Freethought Organizations of Southern California. Credit should be given, and a copy is requested for our files. U.S. Postal Bulk Rate Permit No. 888, Van Nuys, California.

Atheists United

P. O. Box 57435 • Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-2435

Atheist Information Line: (818) 785 - 1743

Calls are machine-answered with a short message about our next open meeting. Messages may be left and will be relayed to the appropriate officer.

Myth Makes Monkeys of Creationists

Evolution and the Myth of Creationism by Tim M. Berra, Stanford University Press — reviewed by Jerry Brown

As its title suggests, this book presents the evidence that creationism is in fact a myth, that “creation science” is not science at all but simply religious dogma and an oxymoron. It tells how science works, what evolution is, and how it is known to have occurred. The author says that some of his fellows who read the first draft thought he was coming down too hard on the creationists (I think there may be a message there) and that he should maybe soften it up a bit. He decided not to, because it is time to call this issue as it is. I say, “HOORAY!”

And that is just what he does. Even religion, especially fundamentalism, does not escape unscathed. Though many scientists see no more need to oppose creationism than astrology, Berra says not so. There is no big push to have astrology taught as science in schools, as there is with creationism. The whole idea is a threat to the entire educational process and must be taken seriously.

Several examples are given to show that evolution is a current event, such as the case of the runaway rabbit population in Australia. And if you’ve ever wondered, as I have, why it’s

important to use all of the antibiotic prescription instead of stopping when you begin feeling better, the answer is here: it’s evolution at work. Why are the bugs always one jump ahead of pesticides? Again, evolution.

A section is devoted to refuting the claims of creationists. Radiometric dating is clearly explained, along with the way it is falsely held to be invalid. Fred Hoyle’s objections are shown to result from straying out of his field of expertise. The design argument and irreducible complexity are dealt with, although not much differently than by Dawkins. (Maybe that’s the only way they CAN be dealt with.)

A very important point mentioned is the increasing problem of scientifically illiterate judges making decisions on scientific issues.

This is an excellent clearly written discourse on the evolution/creation controversy. In this reviewer’s opinion, anyone who can absorb even a part of it and still think creationism is a valid scientific theory would feel right at home in the Flat Earth Society.

My thanks to Helen Colton for recommending this book.

God Withdrawal

by Mike Jordan

I used drugs, because I couldn’t face anything in my life. When I stopped, the withdrawal pains were indescribable. To survive, I depended on various fixes, including temporary use of prescribed drugs, to help me begin to face some things.

I drank, because I still couldn’t face myself. When I stopped, I went through some physical withdrawal pains, but mostly the withdrawal was emotional. But it was worth it, because without that crutch, I had to learn to survive without my “medicine,” and I began to face myself.

I smoked cigarettes, because I still couldn’t face stress. When I stopped, I experienced persistent anxiety. During the moderate physical withdrawal, a myriad of colds and flus, which my body had previously suppressed, manifested - so I was sick, off and on for quite a while. But it was worth it, because, without that crutch, I could not only breathe easier, but I was driven to succeed in finding ways to cope with and face whatever stress I now encounter.

I drank coffee, because I still couldn’t face the morning. When I stopped, I had blinding headaches and fell asleep every afternoon for weeks. But it was worth it, because now I don’t get edgy or dehydrated, and I sleep better. My body feels so good that I can focus on my personal goals, instead of just trying to feel better.

I had a lot of reckless sex and got into many unhealthy

relationships, because I still couldn’t face being alone. When I stopped, I was alone for a long time. But it was worth it, because during that solitary period, I continued to work with more determination toward self improvement and I surrounded myself with healthy people.

I ate a mountain of unhealthy food, because I still couldn’t face life without it. When I stopped, the withdrawal was purely mental. I couldn’t stop thinking of junk food. But it wasn’t so bad, and it was definitely worth it, because now my body feels excellent — and I even crave healthy food!

I believed in a god concept, because I still couldn’t face the little challenges of my life. I stopped believing gradually, as I learned to meticulously face every facet of the sparkling gem my life has become.

I didn’t go through withdrawal, but my friends did. The people I had met on my spiritual path had a mentally allergic reaction to any discussion of my new ideas. They said I was OK, but acted like I wasn’t, and I felt very sad.

But it was worth it, because I discovered an ultimate power, which is a static, non-conscious reality that surrounds and exist within me. My new, extremely pragmatic and productive spiritual path is the constant exploration of that reality. I have shot light years forward, and my life has become an adventure.

You May Be on Convention Program

Notice to all the gang who are going to the fifth annual Atheist Alliance Convention in Sacramento April 21-23 (see flier insert if you haven't yet decided): An early part of the Program will include an "Open Mike" for members who wish to "spout off" or simply to introduce themselves. This scheduling was a result of suggestions from previous Conventions that a time should be set aside for just this purpose. Thus, people can get some idea about their fellow attendees and have some basis for discussions in the halls or at breaks and meals.

The scheduled time is Friday, April 21, at 3:30-4:45pm. Because of the attendance and, we hope, the great number of people who may wish to speak, please limit yourselves to three minutes maximum. This session will occur immediately after the Welcome by Marie Castle and the local hosts.

↖ Check This Out! ↗

What's in a Name? *Fifty Bucks!*

As we've been promising for some time, Your "Name the Newsletter" contest is here! One talented and creative member will win a cash prize of \$50.00. Those who have already submitted are still eligible. (As announced in earlier newsletters, to be sure your submission is recorded and has the appropriate date, submissions should be made by mail or by e-mail. If you submitted in another form, you may want to resubmit.) Those who have not submitted and wish to do so must have their admissions into the office or newsletter editor by April 24. Multiple submissions are acceptable. All eligible entries (AU members' first submissions of a name not currently in use) will be printed in a ballot in the May Newsletter. Also on the ballot will be the option to leave the newsletter as it is. Ballots may be returned by mail or at the May meeting, but they must be received by June 15. Unless one name gets more than 50% of the vote, a run-off ballot of the highest vote-getters will be printed in the July newsletter. These votes must be received by August 15.

At least forty votes must be received in order to change the name, but if the name is not changed, the person whose submission gets the most votes wins the \$50.

The winner will be announced at the awards banquet in September. Names of the entrants will not be announced until the contest is complete.

This letter was printed in the Public Forum: *Daily News*

Forum:

Rabbi Michael Gottlieb (March 12) seems to be saying that he believes that "God" exists because "he" is needed.

Without "the notion of God," he says, life is "ultimately meaningless." His key word is "ultimately." That is a fancy word that means "in the end." The problem with this is that it creates a problem where none exists. We do not live our lives to make them meaningful as they come to an end; we live them within the meanings of our day to day and year to year existences. We find our meanings within families and social groups, in "making livings" of occupations, daily work, being economically sufficient; of planning ahead for "leisure time" and vacations; of creating and being humans.


Certain of us, however, have been caught up in "preparing for life after death." for being "with God" in heaven after they die. This is what people such as the rabbi mean when they speak of "ultimate" concerns. This though is not meaningfulness of life; it is meaningfulness of death. [That portion below, the Daily News did not include.]

Gottlieb claims, "Without God, ultimate morality ceases to exist." Here again that idea of "ultimate" gets in the way of seeing morality for what it is, the operating principles amongst humans. Our moralities serve to make our lives amongst those with whom we live as orderly as possible, so that there aren't many unpleasant surprises.

There are in our societies, and they are a mixed bunch, differences that produce often tragic results. From the gang warfare in our country to the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and the Near East, we have conflicts and atrocities committed by people of "have God on their side."

The rabbi does not need a "God" where the absence of one does just as well.

Kenneth H. Bennett, Eagle Rock

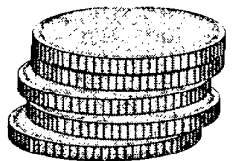


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Member's Atheist

Testimony in *Daily News*

AU member and former president Don Malvin was a featured writer in the March 12 issue of the Daily News. Malvin's article, which appeared on the front page of Viewpoint Section, was part of a segment called "The Big Picture."

"The Bible Led Writer Away from God" was the headline of this only atheist representative of the six stories.

Recounting fond memories of Hebrew school, which he attended to please his grandfather, Malvin said, "I did not intend to become an atheist...the process was slow and, for years, almost subliminal." But always he had been bothered by questions.

As an adult who studied science, he came to realize that, "The Bible is the work of bronze-age people who reveal nothing beyond what was known at that time."

In conclusion, Malvin turned around some questions religionists often pose. To "What purpose has life without God?" he asks, "What purpose has life with God?"

Dear friends,

I enjoyed Ken Bonnell's letter in today's Daily News. His unabridged version, of course, is far better.

I have gotten many favorable responses to my article in last Sunday's Viewpoint section. I have encouraged these individuals to check our web site: <http://au.atheism.org>

If you haven't read my article, I would be pleased to email a copy.

The following is my response to a Daily News Public Forum letter critical of my Viewpoint offering. Hopefully it will be published in a few days. (*Editor's Note: It has since been published.*)

Best wishes,

Don Malvin (the former Alexander Prairie)

Regarding Christopher Chul's critique (Public Forum, 3/16/2000) of my article "The Bible led writer away from God" (Sunday Viewpoint 3/12/2000):

Chul states "the Bible predicted many scientific facts...". He then quotes Job 26:7, "He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing."

From this Chul concludes, "It clearly predicts the expansion of the universe over 3000 years ago and that the earth hangs in space as a globe."

To me, this is an enormous stretch of interpretation, demonstrating if one believes strongly enough, he or she can glean almost meaning they wish from reading scripture.

It has never been my intent to diminish someone's faith. It is important, however, that the policy makers of our nation realize there are many millions of Americans who share my philosophy.

donmalvin@earthlink.net

Dear Editor:

With Proposition 22 having been vigorously debated in our communities and newspapers prior to the March 7 primary, we have been hearing a lot of dogmatic and prejudicial talk from the religious side. It is quite distressing, as an atheist, to hear such irrational and narrow-minded views, as it reminds us of how much religion continues to rule the hearts and minds of our communities.

But there is a silver lining to this that I would urge atheists and freethinkers to seize. Much of the debate around Prop 22 has revolved between honoring what 'god' says about gays vs. the humanist perspective of honoring all people no matter who they are. For a lot of religious people who have been raised to believe that Christianity is all about love and tolerance for their fellow man, this dichotomy has created a major cognitive dissonance for them. How can they reconcile their church leaders' demands that they discriminate against gays to their internal belief that their religion is all about tolerance and understanding?

We on the other side know, of course, that the source of this dissonance stems from religion not being divine at all. We know that most religious leaders are far more interested in exerting their power over the populace and the political levers of government than they are in love and tolerance of their fellow man.

What this debate has created is an opening for our message to get through. Those that have found themselves in a cognitive quandary will look elsewhere, anywhere to resolve their discomfort. This is the time that the message of atheism has the best chance to be heard and considered.

Of course, the religious leaders continue to do everything in their power to keep that message from being considered. And as long as we don't bother to take action, most of those followers pushed to the edge of their belief will be brought back to the flock and reassured that their doubts were only temporary insanity or the temptations of Satan.

I urge you to not let this moment slip by. Write to your newspaper, talk to your Christian acquaintances, call up radio stations. Point out that the source of their dissonance is not Satan, but the false and contradictory teachings of their faith. Encourage them to consider that it's their religion, not their sanity, that is to be questioned. Remind them that religion has always been a dangerous and destructive force in society, and that this is just the latest manifestation of it. Assure them that it's OK to discard their religion, that there is an entire community of rational non-believers who don't suffer such dissonance, who lead happy and fulfilled lives, and who are ready to support those who have grown out of their religion.

Moments like these don't come often. Seize the day.

AyoUth Seeks GenX Involvement

Is AU alive?

One of the defining characteristics of life is that it reproduces. In this respect, we seem to fall behind other indisputable examples of life such as mosquitoes and echidnas. Perhaps individual AU members have children or grandchildren, but the evidence is slim.

And for good reason. The youth of today (and every day, for that matter) has little interest in lectures, banquets, and many of the events that AU has traditionally sponsored. Events such as the ArtFest, AIDSWalk and the Winter Fair somewhat change the balance, but involvement a few times a year is not enough to compel most of Generation X to pay membership fees and check the newsletter each month for these opportunities.

Still, a couple of anomalies exist in the form of under-30 members, and an idea has emerged... and even taken shape in the form of a weekly event: the AyoUth Coffee Night.

The group, founded by Monica Davis and Matt Waggoner, is starting off simple with a weekly Coffee Night at Lulu's Alibi in West Los Angeles (1640 Sawtelle Boulevard, just south of Santa Monica Bl. and a block from the 405). They meet Mondays at 8:00 p.m. It's an open format, with an emphasis on free discussion with other people who are unlikely

to invite you to bible study or tell you that caffeine is the work of the devil.

We encourage all people in the 15-35 age group to join us for coffee and relaxation. If you know anyone of these ages, don't hesitate to invite them. The event is open to prospective members as well, and we hope to get a core group going so that we can plan other events that will captivate the interest of younger people.

So, if you or someone you know is of the X Generation, come out for coffee with us this Monday!


We're Meeting the Challenge!

Many thanks to the latest two to step up to

Don Latimer's Challenge –

Betty Fulford & Fran Prevas

April is the last month of this drive and your last chance to enter the honor roll of those who put the cause of AU and the future of freethought on the right track. Next month, we'll see your name here, and in the decades to come, you'll be able to see our growth and know that you have been a big part of it.

.....
 **Asks... Can you meet the Challenge?**
Yes! I'm prepared to help AU meet Don Latimer's

Challenge with a monthly pledge!

Please charge the following pledge amount to my Visa or MasterCard on the ☐ 3rd ☐ 18th of each month.

☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$10 ☐ Other amount over \$10: _____

I prefer to help AU meet Don Latimer's Challenge with a quarterly pledge. Please charge the following pledge amount to my Visa or MasterCard on the 3rd of March, June, September, and December.

☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$10 ☐ Other amount over \$10: _____

I would like to contribute to the Challenge fund with a one-time gift. Please charge to my Visa or MasterCard the gift amount of:

☐ \$1000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other amount over \$10: _____

Visa/MasterCard number: _____ expires: _____

Signature X _____

Monthly and quarterly pledges are for a period of one year. You will receive notification of renewal time, but your pledge will be automatically renewed for the same amount unless you choose to change it. Your pledge can be cancelled at any time with 15 days notice before the transaction date by writing to Atheists United, PO Box 57435, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-2435, or by calling the office at (818) 785-1743.

Thank you for your generous support of Atheists United.

Meetings of Allied Freethought Organizations

Page 7

Meeting Dates, Times, Phone Numbers

AUGen - Atheists United General Meeting: Fourth Sunday, except December. 11:00 AM, board meeting, 12:15PM, social hour; 1:00PM, meeting. Center for Inquiry West, 5519 Grosvenor. Info: (818) 785-1743.

AUOC - Atheists United Orange County: Brunch. Second Sunday, 10:30AM, Jolly Roger Restaurant, 1727 E. Dyer Rd., Irvine, one block east of 55 Freeway. Info: David (714) 220-1777 or e-mail: ocau@thinkdontpanic.com.

AUSFV - Atheists United San Fernando Valley: Discussion Group. Third Wednesday. 7PM IHOP Restaurant, 6429 Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys, one block N. of Victory Blvd. Info: Sam (818) 993-1353.

AUSLO - Atheists United San Luis Obispo: 3rd Saturday, 3PM. County/City Library. Info: Peggy (805) 544-1580.

AyoUth Coffee Night - Atheists United Youth Group: Mondays 8:00 p.m., Lulu's Alibi, 1640 Sawtelle Bl. Info: Matt (310) 286-2691 or Monica (310) 383-8409.

ECLA - Ethical Culture Society of Los Angeles: First and Third Sundays, 11:00 AM, Children's Community School Auditorium, 14702 Sylvan Street, Van Nuys. Info: (310) 470-2873.

FTM - Freethinkers Toastmasters: Second and Fourth Saturdays, 2PM. CFIW, 5519 Grosvenor. Info: David: (310)479-6318.

GALAH - Gay and Lesbian Atheists and Humanists: First Sunday, 1:00 p.m., The Village Gay and Lesbian Center; Room 135; N. Mc Cadden Place Los Angeles, Info: Ken: (818) 500-9858

HALA - Humanist Association of Los Angeles: Third Sunday, 2:30PM, MGM Center, Colorado & Cloverfield, Santa Monica. Info: (213) 876-9036.

SHJ-Society for Humanistic Judaism, Third Friday Info: (213) 891-4303.

SHOLA - Secular Humanists of Los Angeles: First Sundays, 11:00AM, Center for Inquiry West, 5519 Grosvenor. Info: (310) 371-8469.

Membership Form

I support the aims and purposes of Atheists United which are to keep state and church separate, and to promote atheism. I apply for membership in Atheists United including a monthly Newsletter at the level indicated:

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Telephone _____

Name(s) of other family members: _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date _____ Email _____

Signature X _____

Payment Method ☐ Cash or Check ☐ Visa/Mastercard number _____ expiration _____

☐ Life Member @ \$500

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☐ Family Membership @ \$45 per year

(requires two signatures)

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☐ Newsletter Subscription Only @ \$12.50 per year/\$20.00 outside the U.S. *(does not include membership, no signature required.)*

Send Check or Money Order To: Atheists United, P.O. Box 57435, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-2435

AU Cable TV Listings

AU is currently reorganizing our Public Access Outreach effort. During this time there may be some interruption in programming. Please bear with us.

Media One, Hollywood	Ch.37	Sunday	1:30 P.M.
Media One, Verdugo Hills	Ch.19	Monday	8:30 P.M.
Adelphia, Beverly Hills	Ch.37	Sunday	Between 9-11:30 A.M.
Adelphia, Marina	Ch.3	Sunday	Between 9-11:30 A.M.
Adelphia, West Hollywood	Ch.3	Sunday	Between 9-11:30 A.M.
Adelphia, All Others	Ch.77	Sunday	Between 9-11:30 A.M.

Out of State- Greater Seattle Area

Washington	Ch.29	1st Sunday	6 P.M.
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Would you like to see our programming on your local cable public access? Call the office to help! We need local residents in areas in order to get our programming on the air!

Freethought "Links"

For those of you who are connected to the Internet, check out the following websites!

<http://au.atheism.org>

AU's Website

<http://www.atheistalliance.org>

Atheist Alliance

<http://www.slonet.org/~ipauslo>

AU San Luis Obispo

Board member email addresses:

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Henry Farber: margief2@juno.com

Steve Gage: steven.s.gage@boeing.com

Harvey Tippit: hartip@earthlink.net

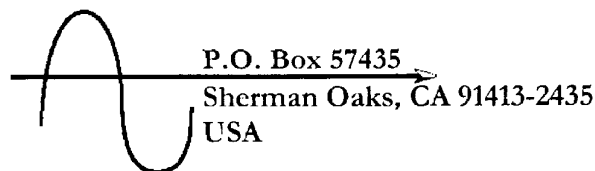
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Newsletter contribution: Bkirkhart@aol.com

APRIL 2000



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Freethought Across the Millennia

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Once Again, While the Community of Faith
Gathers to Celebrate a Resurrection Fantasy,
the Community of Reason Gathers to
Celebrate the Wonderful World of Reality.

EASTER WEEKEND, APRIL 21-23, 2000
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

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www.AtheistAlliance.org

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www.rthoughtsfree.org

Why You Will Want To Be At This Convention

Proceeds from the convention are shared equally by the host member society and the sponsor, Atheist Alliance. The hosts gain funds for local activities and the Atheist Alliance gains funds to support national outreach activities and help new groups get started. You will be participating in and supporting the coalition-building efforts of the Atheist Alliance, the only democratic, grassroots-based, volunteer-run, member-run national organization within the Community of Reason.

DISCOUNTED AIR FARES

Northwest Airlines has been selected as the official airline of the Atheist Alliance convention. Call Travel Advisors, 800-526-9737, and ask for Irene Fillmore. She will tell you the discount (it depends on how many are going). If another airline has a better deal at the time, she will let you know so your travel will be as economical as possible.

• CONVENTION HOTEL REGISTRATION INFORMATION •

The convention site is the Hilton Hotel, 2200 Harvard St., Sacramento, CA 95815. Special convention room rates are **\$72 per night**, single or double, available for Thursday through Sunday nights, **April 20 through 23**. You must request Rate Code "SAA" to receive the convention rate. Make room reservations directly with the hotel.

Call by March 31st to get these rates. Call toll-free 800-344-4321 or 800-HILTONS, or locally 916-922-4700.

CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM (Please enclose with payment)

NAME(S) (Print clearly so name tags can be made) _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Registration(s), incl. debate @ \$85 ea. \$ _____
(After Mar. 20, add \$10 to each registration)

Friday night dinner(s) @ \$35 each ☐ \$ _____

Saturday lunch(es) @ \$25 each ☐ \$ _____

Saturday banquet(s) @ \$35 each ☐ \$ _____

Note in box how many vegetarian meals, if any.

Debate tickets for Non-Registrants @ \$8 ea. \$ _____

Camp Quest kids (ages 4-12) @ \$50 each \$ _____

Fee covers Thurs. 3 - 8 p.m., Fri. 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., Sat. 8:30 a.m. - 10 p.m., Sun. 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., materials, lunches, field trips.

TOTAL enclosed for all registrations, meals,
Camp Quest kids, extra debate tickets \$ _____

Write check to "Freethought Across the Millennia" or "FAM." Mail to FAM, P.O. Box 15162, Sacramento CA 95851.

Atheist Alliance 6th Annual National Convention

*Easter Weekend, April 21-23
Sacramento, California*



• Hosted by •

Atheists & Other Freethinkers



Special for Kids

Special for All

Camp Quest Fun All Weekend!

Dan Barker Debates Christian!

Marie Castle, Alliance president

Ms. Castle will open the convention with: "We Don't Have Time to Whine: Defining the New Millennium — Not for the Weak-Minded." She's from Minnesota and as plain-spoken as her state's notorious governor.

Herb Silverman, "Notorious Notary"

This is the atheist math professor from Charleston SC whose state spent 5 years and \$40,000 to keep him from becoming a notary public. No atheists allowed in public office there! Silverman is a natural comedian. You will enjoy his tale of woe as much as you are horrified by it.

"Ace the Magnificent" aka Dr. Joe Morrow, Prof. of Psychology

This will be fun! Morrow is a magician. "Ace the Magnificent" will show how rational thinking goes beyond the evidence of the senses.

Charlotte Poe, founder & president of Freethinkers of Ventura County

Ms. Poe will supply the catharsis we all need occasionally to vent our frustrations with religion. Her topic: "Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church."

Andrew Benson, author of *The True Origins of Christianity & the Bible*

Benson attacks religion at its roots—its fictitious, forged and fraudulent "history." He is an enthusiastic, entertaining speaker, a Greek (despite his name) who loves to dance and sing and unsettle religionists. The theme of his speech is atheist proselytizing: "I will make you fishers of men," he promises, "and you will use the Bible as bait."

John Michael Patrick Murphy, radio talk show host of "Murphy's Law"

Here's the theme of all our organizing: Murphy's topic is "The Time is Now!"—for people of reason to come out of the closet! This will bring you to your feet, cheering!

John Hill, School Board Member

Get an insider's "View from the Board"—the school board. This veteran school board member will tell how to influence those people and even become one of them. Find out things you never knew about public schools.

Lucia Hall, Skeptical Thinker

Ms. Hall asks, "Can (and should!) skeptics challenge religion?" The answer is YES, and Ms. Hall gives the scientific principles that support her assertion. A "must hear" presentation for atheist activists.

Paul Storey, host of "The Third Millennium" TV series

If you think religion may have some value, Storey will lay out the facts to the contrary with his frightening, informative talk, "The Damaging Effect of Religion on Overpopulation and the Environment."

Drs. Paul Geisert & Mynga Futrell, instructional materials developers

Drs. Geisert and Futrell are the creative geniuses behind the teaching module, "Different Drummers," which introduces students in comparative religion classes to the contributions of non-conforming thinkers (like us) to human progress. They'll talk about the status of teaching about religion and freethought in public schools.

August Berkshire, speaker on atheism at public schools

Berkshire, the associate president of Minnesota Atheists and its outreach speaker, has spoken to over 2,000 students in public school comparative religion classes on atheism. He will describe his strategy and experiences and provide take-home materials and a teaching module he developed.

Molleen Matsumura, National Center for Science Education

NCSE does battle with creationists to keep them from mucking up science curricula. Ms. Matsumura will give the latest on what the scientifically brain-dead are up to.

Bob Webb, Mark Twain performer

Bob has played Mark Twain since he was in the military in World War II. Enjoy "Letters from the Earth," a treasure of irreverence!

Jon Nelson, Atheists United co-pres.

Jon will give an atheistic perspective on ethics. You will get plenty of take-home arguments to counter the myth that religion is the foundation of morality.

Ed & Helen Kagin, Camp Quest

Hear about the historic first residential summer camp for children of nonbelievers in the U.S. See photos of their 5 successful years.

THE BIG DEBATE!

Dan Barker from FFRF will debate Evangelical Christian John Morehead on "The Resurrection of Christ." What a way to enjoy Easter! Open to the public for a fee, but included in your convention registration.

CAMP QUEST FOR KIDS!

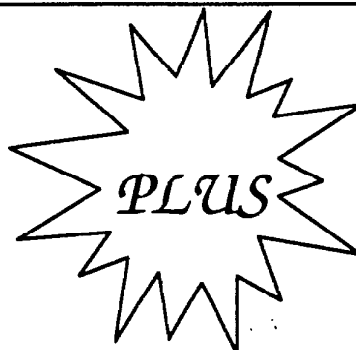
Bring the kids! Instructors from the acclaimed freethought summer camp will provide care in a learning and fun environment for ages 4 - 12.

CYBERSPACE SHOW & TELL

Pat Kelley will initiate you into the wonders of web sites and show you how to navigate the internet.

THE MARKETPLACE

Shop 'till you drop in the god-free shop! VENDORS! Call for space: 916-920-7834.



DEMOCRACY IN ACTION!

Atheist Alliance open board meeting

Watch the only fully democratic grassroots national atheist-humanist organization in action. The board meets openly late Thursday and most of Friday. Policies are made, budgets are set, problems are resolved and elections are held, all done entirely by representatives of the Atheist Alliance member societies. Truly unique!

REGISTER TODAY! SEE OTHER SIDE