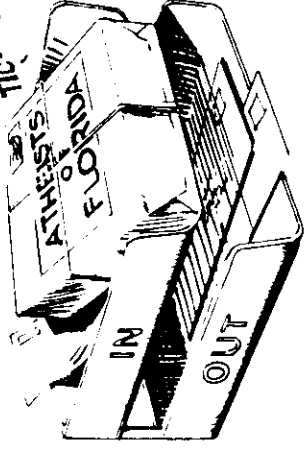


Our December, '93 issue had an item titled "Taking the 'X' out of Xmas". It was submitted by Jim Sanders of Flagstaff, AZ. In response to seeing his article run in our newsletter, Sanders sent this note

Letters



1994 looks like a good year for freethinkers. More and more people, I believe, are giving up what I like to call "religious correctness" and so are not acting "religious" just to be nice. Perhaps you saw my article "The Missing Millions of Religious Non-thinkers" in the Sept./Oct. 1993 issue of *The American Rationalist*. I contend that there are millions of people who just don't bother with religion. They resist classification. Since they know it is proper to be religious, they lie on questions about their belief in polls. There is some indication of this in the new book *One Nation Under God*. I have read it and it is well worth reading. The book (and

two other studies I have obtained) are discussed in the November 29, 1993 issue of *Newsweek*. The sub-heading of the *Newsweek* article reads, "Provocative new surveys reveal a nation where most claim to be religious but few take their faith seriously." Amen!

I will enclose some material I have collected and perhaps a thing or two I have written. Keep up the good work!

FREETHOUGHTFULLY
YOURS,
Jim Sanders
Flagstaff, AZ

Nixes chaplains in military

Our friend John Marthaler in Mississippi offered his opinion on the military chaplain issue

Christian brainwashing had the effect of making me a believer up until 1954. Four months before Pearl Harbor, I enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps. I enlisted to fight and protect the people of the United States and not to fight and protect a god.

All through World War II, I believed that I could go anywhere in the world without dragging a chaplain with me. We hear the clergy telling us what great character religion makes of men. It would be helpful to know if the church was responsible for the character of each of the 150 men in the "Tailhook scandal." It looks like the chaplains are doing nothing for the character of the men.

It is time to replace the chaplains with something better. It is unconstitutional to have the chaplains in the armed forces. A citizen can be loyal to the United States without believing a lot of holy crap called religion.

John Marthaler
Pascagoula, Miss.

United we stand

Contacting the librarian here in Delray Beach, I have negotiated his agreement to receive and "post" (they just make all the newsletters they receive available to the public) our great newsletter and to put *The Humanist* on the regular magazine rack for public consumption. To accomplish this I agreed to pay for a one year subscription. I recognize that that publication doesn't exactly represent us, but it's better than no representation at all. He has also agreed to consider *Atheist* titles if I will supply them for his consideration (not pay for them). I report this to you not for a medal but in the hope that possibly other active Atheists will do the same in their local libraries.

Max Weatherly
Delray Beach, FL

You may fax letters or comments to the newsletter. Our fax is open weekdays during normal business hours at (813) 839-7567. Tell the operator you have an Atheists of Florida newsletter fax.

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Volume III Number 3

March, 1994



Don't blame me

When criminal is victim

PENSACOLA — THE STORY MOST likely to be followed closely by Florida atheists this month is the Griffin trial. Having murdered Dr. David Gunn at the clinic where he performed abortions, Griffin is claiming that anti-abortion propaganda drove him to it while his lawyer, apparently every bit as deranged as the defendant, says the deed "was the action of a good, decent human being [who] had been fed poison." While it's difficult to argue that religion is indeed mental poison, the concept that violence against abortion clinics was "Biblically supported" ranks with the "junk food" defense utilized in the murder of Harvey Milk — maybe this one should be labeled the "junk book" defense.

As the trial begins, the essential ruling of the court has been the admission of evidence purported to have influenced Griffin, including graphic videos of aborted fetuses and a handbill calling for Dr. Gunn to be stopped.

Newsletters produced by the anti-abortion movement are an underground which is generating material of a more violent nature than we might imagine. Former minister Paul Hill calls murder "defensive action" if it saves unborn lives. The Capitol Area Christian News recently congratulated a

LITTLE LEAGUE Pledge
I TRUST IN GOD
I LOVE MY COUNTRY
AND WILL RESPECT ITS LAWS
I WILL PLAY FAIR
AND STRIVE TO WIN
BUT WIN OR LOSE
I WILL ALWAYS
DO MY BEST

Pledge of Deceivance? Spotted on a Tampa dugout

19-year-old charged with destroying a clinic, and commended a Denver man arrested for an acid attack. Another newsletter called on the faithful to pray for divine destruction of a Planned Parenthood clinic in Des Moines, "in a manner which no one can mistake for human torching."

The story in *Newsweek* cited some rather sobering facts: death threats at clinics climbed from 8 in 1992 to 78 last year; incidents of hate mail and harassing phone calls rose from 469 to 628; bomb threats nearly doubled, from 12 to 22. Can you just imagine the outcry if a member of an atheist group was instrumental in the destruction of a church?

(continued page 6)

"Man is a creature who cannot make a worm, and yet makes gods by the dozens."

— Montaigne

Atheists of Florida



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ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED

Pigeon: LOOKING UP THE WORD in the dictionary reveals several definitions, and perhaps a little bit more of our past than some would like to admit to. The primary definition is of course the bird we are familiar with; a secondary definition is a reference to a young attractive girl (a somewhat sexist reference as the following will reveal). The next definition is quite derogatory in nature: a dupe, person easily fooled. Finally, a pigeon can be a card that improves a poker hand.

The reason for all this bird talk as applied to religion comes from a casual little experiment performed by the famous behaviorist, B. F. Skinner. Skinner liked to feed pigeons in the park, and one day in his random scatterings of food he noticed an odd form of behavior, which he christened superstitious behavior. (Christened is, as you will see, the ideally appropriate description of his action.)

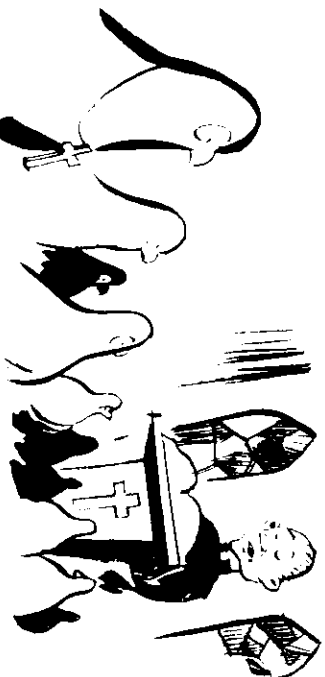
Suppose that just before Skinner threw out a handful of food, a pigeon was engaging in some form of pigeon behavior, say strutting or cleaning its wings or whirling to the left. When the food came, the pigeons apparently assumed that whatever they were doing just prior had caused the food to appear. They repeated the behavior(s), and food came again — eventually. After awhile, all the pigeons were engaged in repetitive, often bizarre behaviors that they thought, in their tiny little bird brains, would result

in a reward of food. Once conditioned in this manner, sometimes they would continue for hours without any reward.

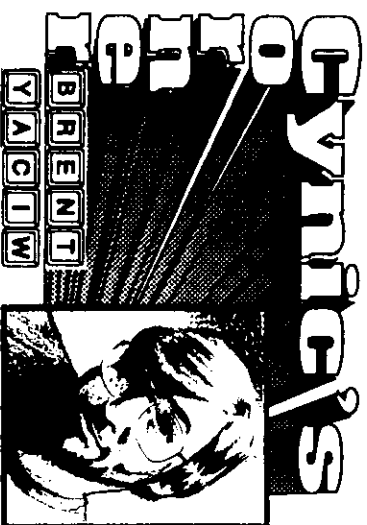
Compare this to the typical religious ritual of prayer. When someone happens to be praying, and an entirely random event that "answers" their prayer occurs, the behavior is reinforced heavily. However, unlike pigeons, humans who have prayed for years with no results whatsoever, not even once, will continue to do so on the strength of promises from religionists trying to stay in business: Who are the real birdbrains here?

The Fright Staff

If you are interested in an excellent exposition on superstitious behaviors taken to an extreme, pick up a copy of William Sleator's *House of Stairs*. This book describes the adventures of a group of teens suddenly thrust into a strange building, encouraged into superstitious behaviors for survival, which eventually results in violence. The scary part about it is that the book is based on real experiments done during Nixon's



Brent is currently working on his Ph.D. in English at Florida State.



Pigeon see; Christian do



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Jan - Apr	May - Aug	Sep - Dec
Individual	\$ 50.00	\$ 40.00
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Inside the Cult
 written by Marc Breault and Martin King
 published by Signet Books, \$5
 — review by Patrick Bens



That good old harmless religion

INSIDE THE CULT



NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITIES ARE convinced of their special qualities and their superiority over others, and any threat to this self image — such as being criticized, shown up, or defeated — produces a violent reaction and often a desire for revenge.

If Janet Reno had read this sentence by Alan Bullock, she may not have ordered the holocaust in Waco.

According to Marc Breault, co-author with Martin King of the Penguin paperback *INSIDE THE CULT*, the crazy cult leader was willing to sacrifice his life and that of his followers if the authorities damaged his ego.

Martin King, with his reports on Australian Television and Marc Breault, the former cult member, on floppy disks via CompuServe, exposed David Koresh's vulnerability to the entire world. Their willingness to show the real David Koresh hit the Texas cult leader where it hurt him most: his sexual appetite for 12-

13-, and 14-year-old girls in the name of geodesic. Koresh (born Vernon Wayne Howell) lived the sexual outrage ministers and pastors and priests only dream of.

Like Hitler before him, with charisma and daring, this former janitor persuaded computer analysts, teachers, and nurses to leave their jobs, their homes, their native Australia, England, Canada, or New Zealand and come to Waco to live in abandoned school buses with no running water, electricity or toilets for miles. Like Hitler, he succeeded against all odds through luck, perseverance, deception and arrogance. His luck ran out when he wanted Marc Breault's wife to join his "Harem for Christ". When she refused, Breault, once Koresh's most trusted disciple, began to question the cult leader's motives and morals.

On floppy disks, Breault (pronounced: Bro) kept daily records of the outrage happening around him and when he was ready — and able — he left the cult and started to contact the local police and even the FBI. Not only do we get a taste of the life inside a cult but we also learn how inefficient and indifferent the American authorities work.

When the right to bear AK47s and the right to believe in crazy stuff go hand in hand, you see what a Wacko you can create. And with his bible in one hand and an AK47 in the other, David Koresh roamed the vast territory, holding 15-hour bible studies and military exercises through a snake infested pond. He became the master of the land and leader of the pack through a couple of lucky breaks.

What is difficult to understand in this day and age is that so many seemingly educated men and women fell for his hell. And offered their teenage daughters to this unshaven, undereducated guitar player. What for me is even more difficult to understand is that after Jonestown nobody, no press, no police, no politician in America seemed to care enough to save the life and laughter of even one innocent child.

Could the inferno have been avoided? If water cannons had been used, no fire could ever have ignited! Why didn't Janet Reno think of that?

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 Attorney at Law

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Their reluctance to bend to the forces of demographic change sweeping the country is clear. They sense the turning of the tide in favor of multiculturalism. They are fighting desperately to stay in power. The heartland of America, a phrase often used to describe the geographical description. It no longer reflects the *soul* of America.

The population drain from the mid-United States has been tremendous. Simultaneously, the major cities along our coastlines have sustained enormous increases in population, swelled by immigrants from all over the globe, particularly Asians and Hispanics. No one has to preach family values to these people. They are living examples of the qualities outlined in the Republican Rightist preachments. When we look at their hard lives both in their countries of origin and since they came to these shores we can readily discern how empty

of real meaning were the words "traditional" and "American" used by the Bible-thumping Fundamentalists.

So, I ask, what is political about family values? What is the political issue about it that deserves space in a party platform? They were made into political issues by the Far Religious Right to advance the agendas of Pat Robertson's "Christian Coalition", James Dobson's "Focus on Family" and other Fundamentalist and Pentecostal groups which have been permitted to coopt the Republican Party, and which still control it.

There is one traditional American family value I neglected to share with you. It is the value exemplified by the feuding Hatfields and McCoys. Should we be proud of it? Or should we build our values around our current family and community needs in the real worlds of today and tomorrow? **A**

Blame from page 1

In view of the shifting political scene including a pro-choice president, James Wagoner of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League observes that opponents "haven't won in the political system, so they're apparently determined to bomb, shoot, stalk and murder their way to their goal." They can already claim a partial victory: in the face of such scare tactics in recent years, the number of U.S. doctors willing to perform abortions has continued its steady decline.

Another step backwards

MISSISSIPPI — The Mississippi House overwhelmingly has approved a bill that would allow prayer in public schools, as long as students initiate the prayer.

The action comes two months after a Jackson high school principal was suspended for two weeks because he allowed the students to read prayers over the intercom.

The House approved the bill 109 to 8 and sent it to the Senate.

Religion at any cost

ROME — If ever there was a form of government truly Christian is spirit it would certainly be communism. Yet the church's vehement opposition to it coupled with its total failure in strongly Catholic nations such as Cuba demonstrates conclusively the inability of the church to shape the character or morals of its disciples.

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI

The Miami Chapter will again hold a joint meeting with the South Florida Secular Humanists on **March 27th** at the **Main Library of Ft. Lauderdale** at **2:00 pm**, Rooms A&B. The lecturer will be Philosophy Professor Emeritus of FAU, Dr. Robert Schwarz. Topic: Taking stock: 40 years of college teaching.

TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will meet **Saturday, March 26** at the **Clearwater East Public Library** from **10:30 am to noon**. For more information: Ed Golly 839-7567.

MANA-SOTA

Ed McDougall, Sr. is generating interest in the formation of a new chapter in the Manatee/Sarasota area. He held an organizational meeting Sunday, Feb 27 which was attended by six people, three of whom became new members of A of F. The first regularly scheduled meeting will be **Sunday, March 7** from **1:30 to 3:30** at the residence of Ed McDougall, **6420 Goldfinch** in Sarasota. For more information, you may contact Ed at (813) 922-8200.

*** CODESH Meeting ***

"The Good Life - A Humanist Perspective"

Having recently joined the *Coalition for Secular Humanism, Atheism, and Freethought (CODESH)*, the *Atheist Alliance* is notifying all members of the second meeting of CODESH. Co-Hosted by: *The Bertrand Russell Society, The Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism, and The Humanist Association of Canada.*

**Thursday, July 7, to Sunday, July 10, 1994 at the
Chestnut Park Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada**
(in the heart of downtown Toronto)

Topics covered during the meeting include:

"The Positive Reach of Humanism: An agenda for the 21st Century"

"What is the Good Life? A Coalition Perspective"

"Humanist Outreach: Ceremonies and Services"

There will be 8 sessions reflecting the interests of coalition groups and a trip to Buffalo to view the *Free Inquiry* Headquarters. And, our own Dr. Albert Lyngzeideton, Chairman of Atheists of Florida, will be one of the featured speakers.

For more information contact Christos Tzanetakos or Ed Golly, or you may phone Tim Madigan at (716) 636-7571 for a registration form.



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NEWS FILMS

Family Values

—Sidney M. Goetz

Has there ever really been any substance to this term?

Insight

ALTHOUGH I TALK about family values is getting to me.

The term 'family values' is frequently qualified by the adjectives "traditional" and "American". That should alert us to be on guard that the basic beautiful concept is being distorted by some to advance their particular agenda or ideology.

Former Vice President Dan Quayle attempted to co-opt the expression for the Republican Party. He was early on the principal spokesman for this new "political" position. But President Bush was not far behind. And the Republican Party platform enshrined the principle of family values as a party ideology, identifying it further as "traditional".

The Democrats stood toe to toe in the debate, advocating the same values by name, though the content differed. Tipper Gore led the Democrats in this battle, ready to take on anyone who tried to challenge her bona fide family values. Her credentials included the leadership of Parent's Music Resource Center, which she co-founded with Susan Baker, wife of Secretary of State James A. Baker III. PMRC had been fighting lewd and violent rock music lyrics since 1985. Her persistence paid off when the Recording Industry Association of America announced the imposition of a uniform record warning label system.

But it took the Republican Party national convention in 1992 to produce, finally, a rash of definitions.

Let's take "traditional" family values first. How far back are we supposed to go to be traditional? Do we go back to the Old and New Testaments? That would really be traditional!

Sid Goetz is a retired attorney, National Board Member of the American Humanist Association, and Florida State Board Member of The American Civil Liberties Union.

We see mass murders. We see sibling hatred and deceit. We see cruelty and physical abuse of children. ('Spare the rod and spoil the child.') And we see men able to divorce their wives by the flick of the wrist. ('You no longer please me. Get thee out of my house.')

Are these the family values that Dan and Marilyn and Barbara are advocating? Of course not!

So let's come down to a more recent past and examine some traditional American family values. What do we find? In our colonial past, Puritan family values included burning witches at the stake. In the Southern states, slavery of the black race, with cruelties such as separation of families and sexual exploitation — not to speak of rape by white masters, were accepted practices.

Are we still going back too far? Are these examples of family values *too* traditional and too painful?

Let's get into the 20th century. In the first few decades, the subjugation of wives and children in the USA, often accompanied by brutal beatings and abuse, was accepted as perfectly normal family values. Women and children were without rights. They were simply chattels of the husband in fact and in law. Of course I'm sure that those who call for the return of the family values of the good old days would publicly deny their goal to be a return to such an era. But I challenge them to look into the theological teachings of Far Right Fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches which preach the inerrancy of the bible and the supreme dominance of the husband and father over wife and children, and their right to administer corporal punishment for refusal to obey. These *still are*, I submit, the sinister objectives of the behind-the-scenes manipulators of the Republican Party. They were actually responsible for a platform which demanded a *constitutional amendment* banning abortion under *any* circumstances, including rape and incest.

Marilyn made it clear at the Republican convention that what she and Dan meant by traditional family values was to turn back the clock to the "good old days" before the great cultural upheavals of the '60s. Speaking about "our generation's social revolution", she said "our goal must be to go back to the future." She was talking about the days when pre-marital sex was very

common, but *not openly acknowledged*...when an unwed young woman who became pregnant was shipped off to some far off place to have her baby and spare the family the public embarrassment. The days when her baby was labelled a "bastard", and the law left him/her in an orphan home heretofore of any right to inherit from his father.

Yes, when the Far Right talks about tradi-

What is the Christian Coalition?

The purpose of the Christian Coalition is five-fold:

- 1) Represent Christians and advocate Christian values by all lawful means before the United States Congress, the various state legislatures, and local councils.
- 2) Train Christians for effective political action, with particular emphasis on preparing them to serve as responsible citizens, activists, and candidates.
- 3) Inform Christians in a timely manner of important issues and legislation to enable them to communicate with public officials at the federal, state, and local level.
- 4) Effectively communicate Christian values in the public arena and speak out in the media on Christian causes and issues.
- 5) Protest anti-Christian bigotry, and hold accountable those individuals, corporations, or agencies that seek to denigrate, defame, or discriminate against Christian values and those who hold them. To engage in legal and political action to protect the freedoms guaranteed under the United States Constitution.

tional values, they're talking about the good old days when parents lied to children and children lied to parents about their sexuality.



When unfaithfulness in marriage was no less commonplace than today. When a woman who sought a divorce was compelled to prove her husband's adultery by hiring detectives to catch him in the act. When perjury by a desperate spouse was so common in marital cases that our system of justice was in danger of collapse. The days when spouse rape was not a crime, and a wife was not permitted to testify in court against her husband. The days when one never even heard about the huge number of cases of incest and child abuse.

One of the principal family values standards in those days was concealment and deceit about family problems. They were simply swept under the rug rather than openly acknowledged and confronted.

A social revolution swept across the nation like a breath of fresh air in the '60s and '70s. It was a revolt against authoritarian figures who failed to practice what they preached, who professed to a morality to which they failed to adhere in their daily lives. America's children caught on to the fact that the preachers often were empty words; that their parents were telling them to do as they say, not as they do.

The fundamentalists wish to return to these traditional family values?

The family values crowd in the Republican Party simply refuses to recognize the realities of the social and economic changes that have come over our country in the past 30 years. They refuse to give recognition to the undeniable fact that white, European, male dominance in the life of the country has been undergoing dramatic change. Economic and demographic statistics tell the real story.

Can we realistically expect the homeless, unemployed, single parent mothers struggling to put food on the table for their children to concentrate their energies on other than bread and butter, life and death issues?

I challenge the Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertsons to *get real!* Real family issues involve health care, child care, parental leave and workplace flexibility. Is it so difficult for them to understand and to distinguish between dire needs and moral preachments?

The family values of "hard work, integrity and personal responsibility" have not been discovered by the Republican Party or by the Far Right religionists.

The dominance of white males of Western European origin in the Republican Party has long been noted by our leading commentators. (continued)