

As the year comes to a close, we find ourselves having accomplished more than we had budgeted for. With membership renewals not due until January, our treasury is getting slim. This month we are including an envelope with this newsletter. Won't you please consider sending a small contribution to help see us through the end of this year?  
Thanks.

John J. Diamond, 74, one of the three original incorporators of Atheists of Florida, Inc. and the organization's Registered Agent, died Thursday, Nov. 4, having never fully recovered from open-heart surgery last summer.

AOF president Christos Tzanetakos officiated at Mr. Diamond's atheist memorial service, which took place Nov. 6 at the Joseph Coffer Funeral Home in Miami. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to the AOF Scholarship Fund.

Mr. Diamond, an AOF board member, is survived by his wife, Lillian, and two daughters, Jackie and Jill. The couple's 39-year-old son, Eric, died in July in Fort Lauderdale after a hit-and-run driver struck him while on his bicycle.

Born in Montana, Mr. Diamond moved to Manhattan at an early age. He attended Peekskill Military Academy and the University of Pennsylvania, and later served as an instructor in the Air Force at its Rantoul, Ill. base. He left New York in 1968 and moved to Miami, where he supported.

formed John J. Diamond Enterprises. He served with S.C.O.R.E., Service Corps of Retired Executives 1975-1979 and as Commodore of the Miami Beach Anglers and Boating Club. In 1989, he joined the South Florida Chapter of American Atheists, and became a lifetime member the following year.

In the spring of 1992, while running for a seat on the board of directors for the newly formed AOF, Mr. Diamond noted: "I cannot remember when I was not an Atheist. My philosophy has always been that what was scientifically demonstrable was believable, all else a fairy tale."

Our deepest condolences are extended to the Diamond family, which has suffered two great losses these past six months. The organization has lost an enthusiastic and hard-working contributor to the atheist cause, but members can memorialize Mr. Diamond in a meaningful way by making a donation in his name to the AOF Scholarship Fund, which he supported.

12 November 1993

*Atheists of Florida*

Atheists of Florida, Inc.  
P.O. Box 530102  
Miami, FL 33153-0102

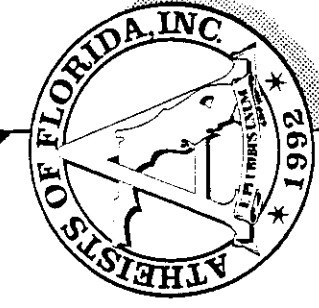
ADDRESS CORRECTION  
REQUESTED

# Atheists of Florida

*Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church*

Volume II Number 9

November, 1993



## Overwhelmed

*So much news this month, we hardly know where to begin*

Most significantly and regretfully, we are all suffering the loss of Atheists of Florida charter member and Board member John Diamond (see back page).

For all the national state/church news, see the Newsfiles section of this newsletter.

Several members of the Tampa Bay Chapter attended the Freedom From Religion Foundation annual convention in Huntsville, Alabama the weekend of October 22-24. Hosted by founder and president Anne Gaylor, the convention featured several speakers who called for an end to tax-free church ownership of commercial property and accused the Catholic Church of covering up the pedophilia of some of its priests.

Vashti McCollum, who challenged religious teachings in public schools in 1948, told conventioners the nation's debt might be paid off if churches were required to pay taxes on commercial property holdings.

Gaylor said the Foundation filed suit in Denver last week seeking to recover millions of dollars in government funds spent to welcome the pope there earlier this year.

During October, AOF Vice-president Ed Golly was asked by WTVT-TV to appear on *Eye On Tampa Bay* to discuss a recent best-seller book by Betty Eadie called *Embraced By The Light*. It is the story of Eadie's near-death experience of nearly 20 years ago. Although written to the level of about fourth grade, it is so patently absurd it is actually difficult to read. Sharing the studio panel with Golly were a fundamentalist Christian and another woman who claimed to have experienced a near-death experience. (She, too had just completed a book about her trip). Eadie was linked to the studio by satellite hookup. As Golly said, "I'm not sure we're dealing with a near-death experience as much as a brain-death experience". Dorothy (of Oz) would have beamed with pride.

Our "Intro" brochure is at the printer and next month you may look forward to our new newsletter cover and a copy of the brochure. Both will be printed with an accent color.

Last month, the IRS officially declared the Church of Scientology exempt from federal income taxes, ending a 40-year conflict with the government. The decision saves Scientology millions of dollars in taxes annually and enables them to declare donations as charitable contributions (see letters).

In Clearwater, where Scientology owns more than 14 parcels worth more than \$21-million and is planning a \$29-million church directly across the street from the Ft. Harrison, the decision will heavily favor the church's efforts to be exempt from paying nearly \$7-million in property taxes.

Our newest feature planned for the newsletter is called *Insight* and is expected to premier next month. It will feature an in-depth look at topics of interest to atheists and the atheist movement.

"There is something feeble and a little contemptible about a man who cannot face the perils of life without the help of comfortable myths."

— Bertrand Russell

## Or, How to Write an Entire Book Using Pretzel Logic and Antiquated Research

**+** TODAY MARKS A SERIES of new beginnings for me and for this column. I have moved, somewhat temporarily, to Tallahassee, Florida, to get my Ph.D. degree in English.

Although I am still a once-a-month and eventually-returning resident of Seminole, it's quite a change to be spending most of my time in a town filled with people under thirty. This is also a step in the evolution of this column. Previously printed almost solely in the *Atheists of Florida* newsletter, it is now going out to other publications, and I hope to make it available nationwide through America Online computer service.

Here in Tallahassee, I'm in the heart of the Bible Belt, or so it would seem. It's no wonder our state is so screwed up with all the religionists here influencing our legislators, who are rarely rational (with a few noted exceptions such as Helen Gordon Davis) to begin with. Just this week, our local rag featured a story in "Your Health" advising people to both lithe and "I.G., R., B.H., and H.O.P.," which stands for "Love God, Relax, Be Happy, and Help Other People." In other words, give us your money, fantasize instead of having real relationships, don't do anything, be ignorant-is-blissful, and make sure other people are similarly opiated. Another story was titled, "In Praise of Traditional Values." Enough said. A letterwriter scolded us to keep "dirty" magazines out of kid's sight, making sure they acquire the religiously-correct neuroses about sex.

With this in mind, I thought it appropriate to begin a new series of columns looking at the effects of religion on all of our lives, even before day one, regardless of the belief or non-belief of parents or ourselves. For most of us, the fact

that we exist is at least partly due to religion. Despite the claim of many religions that Darwin's theories are false, most have practiced a form of social Darwinism long before the man himself was ever born.

Take a look, for example, at the practices of the Catholic Church in the 1700's. Jonathan Swift, in *A Modest Proposal* (1729), satirically suggested that starvation and overpopulation be dealt with concurrently by consuming children. (Of the Catholics, he wrote: "there are more children born in Roman Catholic countries about nine months after Lent than at any other season; therefore reckoning a year after Lent, the markets [for infant flesh] will be more glutted than usual, because the number of Popish infants is at least three to one in this kingdom, and therefore it will have one other collateral advantage by lessening the number of Papists among us." Darwin didn't deliver his first paper on evolution until 1858, but one can plainly see that Swift understood higher percentage of population equals dominance, and as a non-Catholic clergyman, Swift feared this trend.

Of course, such "be fruitful and multiply" programs are not restricted to the Catholics; most other Christian and many non-Christian religions have similar encouragement to up their birthrate. The large families typical of early America were not solely due to high death rates or lack of birth control. A strong cultural tradition glorifies motherhood and demands women who are not mothers; a similar tradition questions the manhood of males without offspring and promotes fatherhood with or without the followup of parenting. This double standard is also religion-based: mothers are identified with the home, but fathers are identified with the outside world. Despite the church's ongoing efforts to control evolution to their advantage, the churches continue to rail against evolution; presumably, they don't want us to recognize their manipulations.

# ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA NEWSLETTER



## The Collapse of Creationism

# Atheists of Florida

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Atheists of Florida, Inc. is a non-profit, educational organization designed to enlighten public awareness about atheism and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts for the membership. Membership dues should be sent to the chapter of interest. Direct general correspondence to Miami Chapter / P.O. Box 530102 / Miami, FL 33153-0102. Contact phone is (305) 936-0210.

Annual dues are prorated on a four-month basis, with annual renewals due by January 1.

Jan - Apr	\$20.00	May - Aug	\$30.00	Sep - Dec	\$30.00
Student (under 25 yrs)	5.00	Student (under 25 yrs)	5.00	Student (under 25 yrs)	5.00
Individual	25.00	Individual	20.00	Individual	10.00
Family	30.00	Family	24.00	Family	12.00
Life	1000.00	Life	1000.00	Life	1000.00

Newsletters are published ten times per year, in provided 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.

rights.

Barry Rowe  
Indianapolis

## Wake up, America!

Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, estimated at 350,000 strong, actively recruits and supports fight-wing fundamentalists for public school boards nationwide. They actively denounce church-state separation, and will stop at nothing short of complete control of the public schools.

Speaking at the National Religious Broadcasters Association in Los Angeles in March 1993, Robertson said, "I'm convinced on the political scene that if the evangelical churches, the Roman Catholic churches, the Orthodox Jewish people, all of us will work together, we can elect anybody to any office at any level — school boards, state legislatures, city councils, mayors, governors, House of Representatives, Senators . . . The Bible says when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice. We can do that!"

Although Robertson's Coalition has its own interpretation of the First Amendment, most Americans with half a brain can see clearly the unambiguous meaning and intent. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press..."

If Americans become too complacent, it is not out of the realm of possibilities that the Christian Right could seize control here, just as the Muslim fundamentalists have in Iran, Syria, and Sudan. Then, banning books would become national policy, indeed. Yes, it is time to wake up!

Barry Rowe  
Indianapolis

From the *Saturday, October 16 St. Petersburg Times*:

## We need 'real solutions'

Our country is in a bad way but there is not the faintest reason to suppose that religion offers a way out. Efforts by such groups as the Christian Coalition to declare religious war in America can only serve to further divide us and retard real solutions.

Our problems are multifaceted but the decay of the family unit is a consequence of our disregard and inattention to our children. This results in a group of young people with low self-esteem who lack motivation, have poor learning skills and twisted morals, and are looking for an easy way out. Adding religion to this scenario only succeeds in preventing children from having a rational education.

We must concern ourselves with learning how to make children more surely into moral beings and we must encourage people to think rationally about moral behavior. We are after all a mutually interdependent society and we have a responsibility to each other. This is what our children need to learn. Not

Christianity which teaches intolerance, fear and submission. That is why returning prayer to the schools is not the answer.

We need to look to our children and concern ourselves with their development and education. We should as role models teach them acceptance, kindness and understanding, and that they should treat people as they would want to be treated. After all, a person is more likely to act wisely when he is instructed that when he is ignorant.

Monica Madden  
Tampa

From our own mailbox:

Gentlemen:  
Regarding your article on Atheists and Foxholes, I think that Atheists' fears are a mistake. B.F. Skinner, who is an Atheist, said that when he occasionally said: "Oh, God!", it was merely a conditioned reflex.

Other Atheists have admitted that when in great pain, or near death, they prayed. In Freudian terms this constitutes a "regression" to an earlier state of mind and is a natural phenomenon. The Atheist should only feel ashamed if he does not come back to his senses and converts to religion.

Sincerely,  
David Herrera  
Gulfport

Dear Editor,

I am very honored that my poem *Atheist's Creed* was published in the July/August issue of your newsletter, and wanted to thank you kindly for this privilege.

I am the sister of one of your members, Miguel V. Perdomo, from Miami, Florida, and it was he who sent it to you at my request. I have become an atheist progressively, from a very strict Catholic education (the best environment to become a true atheist), and have fought the usual sort of intellectual isolation and sarcastic rebukes of all "friends" and co-workers who seem to think that when you don't have a god in mind you automatically become a sort of blood thirsty Dracula-type human being to be feared and blamed for all the evil in the world.

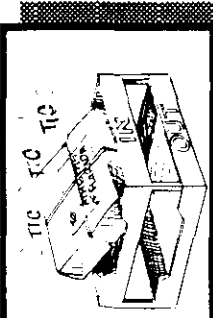
I like to think myself as a writer with a vein of poetry, and I am trying to succeed in both my mother tongue, Spanish, and in English, and by the way, I would gladly be used as a translator for your newsletter or any other atheist's publication to extend its reach to the Hispanic market and minds.

Thanks again for publishing my poem, and I will keep in touch with more collaborations and my membership.

Godlessly yours,  
Horrenvia Valdes  
Las Vegas, Nevada

## Another free ride

With the announcement by the IRS that the Church of Scientology is now an officially recognized religion and thereby entitled to full tax-exemption by the government, Atheist of Florida members were quick to respond to the media. The following two letters were published October 25 in the St. Petersburg Times.



# Letters

Regarding the tax-exempt status of the Church of Scientology, a recent letter writer stated: "Scientology is not a religion because it was written by a fiction writer. It definitely ought to be taxed heavily."

I agree wholeheartedly. However, it seems that this writer is very shortsighted.

All religions, including Judeo-Christianity, Hinduism, Christian Science, Mormonism, et al., were all written by fiction writers and, therefore, all definitely ought to be taxed heavily.

*Jerry Morgenroth*  
St. Petersburg

Re: Ruling may cost Pinellas millions, Oct. 14: The IRS' exemption of the Church of Scientology may doom the county's efforts to collect a tax bill exceeding \$7.9-million.

"In Pinellas County, more than 3,000 parcels already qualify for a similar exemption, taking more than \$1.2-billion in land and buildings off the tax rolls."

Isn't it time that people of all faiths recognize the inequities of tax-free churches? Why shouldn't churches pay at least a "maintenance" tax? Like every home and business owner, churches also are provided the protection of fire and police departments, along with other public services.

*Ray A. Bleit*  
St. Petersburg

*Yacov even makes an occasional appearance in the Religion section of the St. Petersburg Times; this on September 18*

## The Church does not 'mean well'

The church is not a democracy. Pastors are like shepherds; the religious life is suffering; the church is not a well-meaning social organization.

Fortunately for those of us with more intelligence than sheep, we live in a democracy (of sorts). We recognize that the archaic thinking of the church is not well-meaning or beneficial to our lives, we think voluntarily suffering in the name of imaginary deities is for fools.

Free thought is the ideal of a free people; the church is the ideal of sheep.

*Brent Yacov*  
Seminole

## 'All' fallacies must be challenged

I must disagree with two recent letters. First I would like to point out that none of the Communist societies abandoned religion; their leaders attempted to force atheism on them just as others have tried to force religion. Neither works: A true atheist society, which has yet to exist, must allow others to reach atheism through logic and reason, not by force.

The Russian economy was not destroyed by Communism; it was horrible to begin with, which is why there was a revolution. Nor was the Soviet government unusual in eliminating dissenters by imprisonment or death, since this is practiced by numerous dictatorships and theocracies worldwide, including Christian ones. Look at Iraq or Nicaragua, for starters.

The Founding Fathers may have been religious men in a sense, but most were deists who believed that religion had no place in government. Wise, perhaps, but unable to predict tactics such as "stealth" candidates, pro-religion candidates who hide their religious affiliation and financial backing but vote for the church, not the whole electorate. Presenting your case to these "proper authorities" is akin to letting the fox guard the henhouse.

Speaking of disinformation, when one of the letter writers complains "certain humanists and atheists" have used "devious means" to remove religious influence in public school textbooks, he doesn't understand that our Founding Fathers never intended it to be put there in the first place.

Our society will only begin to "come to its senses" when it begins to challenge all potential fallacies and misinformation, not just that of atheists and humanists, but of religiousists, politicians, advertisers and anyone making a claim.

*Brent Yacov*  
Seminole

## More liberal court boosts human rights

The announced resignation of Supreme Court Justice Byron White is very good news. His egregious disregard for individual freedom is clearly evident in his voting record.

Justice White voted to overturn *Roe vs Wade*; opposed homosexual rights; dissented in every pro-church/state separation issue; supported censorship of adult literature; opposed self-determination for right-to-die patients (doctor-assisted suicide).

The American people have been subjected to an ultra-conservative majority high court that has been determined to erode human

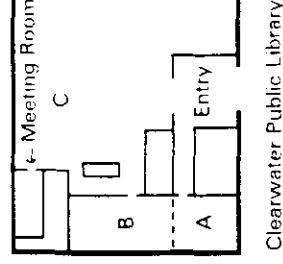
# Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

## MIAMI

The Miami Chapter will meet **Sunday, November 21** in the Board Room of the Ft. Lauderdale Main Library, 100 South Andrews, beginning at 2:00. One of the *Forum* programs will be shown. For more information, call the Atheist Hotline at (305) 936-0210.

## TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will meet **Saturday, December 11** at the Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street in meeting room C (see map) from 10:30 am to 12:30. This meeting will follow both the Annual Board Meeting of Atheists of Florida, Inc. and the Annual Board Meeting of the Atheist Alliance. The results of those meetings will be reviewed. For more information: Ed Golly 839-7567.



## Name dropping



*Christos Tzanetakos*

## Message from the

# President

**I**N AN INTERVIEW for the monthly magazine *Greek-American Review*, to be printed in the Nov. 93 issue, I was asked:

"As a member of a minority point of view, what difficulties have you experienced in your professional, personal and social life?"

My reply: "The ancient Greeks said, 'Ouk en to polo to ef, meaning, it is the quality, not the quantity that counts."

"My personal and social life was immensely enhanced by my association with like-minded people; after all, who can be better company than John Lock, Mark Twain, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Edison, Bertrand Russell, Jean Paul Sartre, and Richard Feynman to name just a few. As for my professional life, being independent, my religious views, or lack of, were totally irrelevant."

A testimonial to the above had just arrived in the form of a dedicated and autographed book, *The Quotable Bertrand Russell* by Lee Eisler.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Lee Eisler

and his wife two years ago while attending with my wife and our daughter the Annual Meeting of the Bertrand Russell Society in Washington, D.C.

In the 336 pages of *The Quotable Bertrand Russell*, Lee Eisler, who is also a founding member of the Bertrand Russell Society, has accumulated in a most provocative way the whole spectrum of the ideas which has established Bertrand Russell as the most outstanding philosopher, social critic and courageous activist of the twentieth century.

And yes, it is indeed a privilege to be part of an enlightened minority.

*The Quotable Bertrand Russell* definitely deserves a special place in the library of every atheist and non-atheist alike.

*The Quotable Bertrand Russell*  
Published 1993 by Prometheus Books.  
Buffalo, New York.  
Phone: (716) 837-2475

## Board Meetings

The Atheists of Florida annual board meeting is scheduled for **Saturday, November 27** in Miami, Florida. Included in the agenda is an expansion of the Board from the current 12 members to 18.

On December 4, the national board of Atheist Alliance will meet in Los Angeles. Christos Tzanetakos and Ed Golly, both representing Atheists of Florida, will be in attendance. This meeting is expected to lay the groundwork for the future of the Atheist Alliance.

# NEWS FILTERS

**BY AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY**, Girl Scouts has voted to allow participants to pledge service to the spiritual power of their choice -- or none at all.

The measure, which takes effect immediately, leaves the official wording intact while allowing individual girls to substitute for God the spiritual power of their choice or skip a religious reference altogether.

Delegates to the Girl Scouts national convention in Minneapolis voted 1,560 to 375 to make the change.

Most quoted in the press was an 18-year-old delegate from Roseville, Minnesota, Angie Greiling who stated, "I believe that Girl Scouts are an inclusive organization, and the idea is that we are across all lines, not just focusing on one group or religion or race."

**"On my honor, I will try to serve God and my country, to help people at all times, and to live by the Girl Scout Law"**

The obvious hostility came from the "Family" type Christian groups who can't stand to see any aspect of our society move us away from a total theocracy. You know exactly what they would have said.

Meanwhile, Boy Scouts remain regressive, refusing to alter their oath which includes a pledge of service or duty to God. The organizations are separate.

## Proposition 174

By a huge 7-to-3 margin, California's effort to instigate a voucher program has been soundly defeated. The program would have given \$2,600 in tax vouchers to parents for each child per year to be used at private or even religious schools.

Hardly signalling the end of the movement, we may expect to see more activity in state legislatures or supporters will propose vouchers under different names, such as scholarships.

A primary difficulty in getting a voucher program passed is in the wording of the initiative. Some argue that the California vote was really a rejection of a poorly written initiative. But the more they try to make measures "reasonable," the less support they get from advocates.

Elsewhere, voucher bills are pending in the Pennsylvania state legislature. Private or public school vouchers of \$700 would go to children in K through eighth grade, and \$1,000 for

grades 9-12.

Commensurate with this agenda is a report submitted by Americans United that state/church conflicts at the state and local level continued to grow in the past year, with a new report showing 247 incidents including six in Florida.

The report cited "a systematic war of criticism" being waged by Religious Right activists against the separation concept. This included campaigns to return state-sponsored prayer to the public schools and the voucher plans allowing tax dollar aid to private, sectarian schools.

The difficulty seems to stem from the fact that while a majority of Americans favor the separation concept, they have difficulty comprehending its full meaning, actually favoring such things as prayer in public schools, displays of religious symbols on public property and tax support of religion.

According to the report, "Public school officials in Sarasota County advised principals to eliminate 'symbols of the occult' from Halloween activities, including witches, black cats, ghosts and devils."

## Nothing fails like prayer

This month's story of "prayer healing" comes to us close to home in St. Petersburg. A two-year old child suffering from sickle cell anemia had her life saved by a court-ordered blood transfusion early in September. Her mother, a Jehovah's Witness, is opposed to blood transfusions on grounds of superstition. The hospital appealed to the court where Pinellas County Circuit Judge G. O'Brien followed the consistent holdings of the legal system that parents may not place their children in a life-threatening situation by refusing medical care.

The child's mother predicts a continuing conflict in view of her daughter's disease.

## Fence and ideas both full of holes

Sunday, October 3 saw a rather weak attempt to form a human chain of anti-abortion advocates along U.S. 19 in Citrus, Pinellas and Pasco Counties. The third annual silent prayer "National Life Chain" was held from 2 to 3 p.m. in a blazing sun as participants held signs and solicited encouragement from passing motorists.

Last year 30,000 people were said to have participated in Pinellas County forming the largest chain in the nation. This year the count was estimated at about 5,000. Huge breaks in the chain, with some areas containing only a few crackpots and other stretches of blocks

Do we have a social and political system that exacerbates and condones the conviction of the innocent because prosecutors want a guilty verdict at all cost? Do careers of lawyers, policemen and judges advance with the conviction of the innocent? It seems so. And worst of all, do our civil "servants" have contempt for the unfortunate who may be innocently accused and contempt for a public that keeps saying, "We need more jails; we need more cops; we need more convictions."

I heard the Sinti Valley verdict of innocent in the case of Rodney King. I have heard the rationale by the jurors. It makes no sense to me. True, Rodney King is from the dregs of society. True, Rodney King is an ex-con. But did he have to be beaten so long? Where is our humanity?

I was on a Thursday that I came across my divorce papers and thought about my expressions of contempt for my wife, a genuinely good person, and the expressions of contempt from her to me. I was sad. I knew that we had all failed...and that in spite of flowery words we are all guilty of contempt. The lawyer for his client, the doctor for his patient, the businessman for his customers, the politician for his constituency, and the husband for his wife...and at that point it is all over. The lawyer, doctor, politician, businessman or civil servant always reaches a point from which he will never recover...the point of incompetence by reason of contempt...of arrogance...of false pride...of abandoning the search for a reason for living

and a meaning to life itself. The only logical answer is to divorce ourselves from the situation. There is no oversight, no doing it over, no going home again. We can only look back with anger and rage at the mistakes we made not ever comprehending why, when, or where they happened but knowing full well that if we lived it over we would do it all the same way again.

In order to have good we must necessarily have evil. In order to have right we must have left. In order to have love we must have indifference. In order to care we must have contempt. We all assume positions of man-made authority for the bottom line...money. The measure of success even in marriage is based on how successful the money situation is. Laccocca was willing to work for a dollar a year to get the job at Chrysler and then he milked it for millions when he was securely and arrogantly in place...even when his company floundered in debt.

When did Jimmy Swaggert and his cadre of Tele-evangelists develop contempt for their "flock"? More important, why does it continue amid scandal after scandal that has even engulfed the "sacrosanct" Catholic Church in its most vulnerable area -- pedophilia and homosexuality? Although the religious community has a history of deep contempt for atheists as well as for each other, we must realize that atheism could not exist without religion.

But it was Thursday and life is not fair and Friday was still a long way off...before my day of rest.

## Mike Perdomo Where there's a Will...

The Miami Herald of October 14, 1993, brings the news of a settlement to split an estate left by two sisters in California to the Christian Scientist Church. The wills originally stipulated the condition that the book *The Destiny of the Mother Church*, written by the husband of one of the sisters about the life of founder Mary Baker Eddy, be published. This book "was rejected by the church in the 1940s on grounds that it expressed heresy by attributing qualities to Fiddy that some Christian Scientists said bordered on treating her as a divinity," says *The Herald*.

It is nothing new to attribute divinity to human beings. In a prison in Miami there is one inmate who claims to be the son of Yahweh. Someone else in Waco, unfortunately did the same thing. Also, Father God M. J. Divine. The book *Strange Seers and Curious Talls*, by Marcus Bach, published by Dorset Press, New York, brings some more examples. The Jewish followers of Jesus, caught between Judaism or the invention of a new religion, chose the latter and made him divine. All the Roman emperors self-proclaimed themselves divines, including

Constantine, a very superstitious and egotistic person, as Paul Johnson asserts in his book *A History of Christianity*, published by Atheneum New York, on page 68 and others.

The same day, *The Herald* brings the news of the Pope backing a letter by Cuban bishops urging a political dialogue between the Cuban government and Cuban exiles.

The pope's statements, at this time, make me ask, "After 33 years?" After reading the above mentioned book by Paul Johnson, at times vague, at other times sharp, one realizes that the papacy has always put itself next to the rulers, the powerful, the wealthy, flirting with monarchies and pacting with tyrants like Hitler, Mussolini, and Napoleon. As a Cuban exile, I want to see the fall of Castro in any form. And from this point of view I welcome the pope's statements. But seen from another perspective, at a time the fall of Castro seems imminent, those statements look more like a flirt with the potential new bosses than a bona fide step for peace.

**con-tempt** *n.* The act of viewing something as mean, vile, or worthless scorn; legally, the willful disrespect or disregard of authority.

# Queening Up Contempt

John Quiindongo



**I** WAS ON A THURSDAY in 1992 in September that I first understood the meaning of contempt. Before that day the word had no meaning in the sense that I had never used it as a matter of course to explain behavior. I divorced my wife and the word contempt was never used, but now I realize that bickering in court was overdone. The whole divorce became messy and both sides lied because of the contempt that had grown between us where we had once loved. I don't know if contempt is a feeling that strikes you suddenly or just builds gradually until the only solution is to change the all-consuming environment. My wife had been a good sex partner, a good cook, a very clean housekeeper, a good mother and above all a good person. Our mutual commitment each other had been total. Then why did we decide to divorce and leave each other after 25 years? The answer was in the feeling of contempt that had crept into our marriage and had inflicted a mortal wound. Life would never again be the same.

**I** remember going to Puerto Rico a long time ago to act as a courier escorting a group of Puerto Rican draftees to Parris Island, South Carolina. I was 17 years old and it was a Monday. The sun was bright,

Atheist of Florida charter member John Quiindongo lives in Ft. Lauderdale

the weather was warm and the year was new. As we went to board the plane in San Juan a sergeant came over, grabbed the roster from my hands and started the boarding roll call. As each recruit passed by, the sergeant kicked him in the buttocks before boarding as a sign he had been checked off. I said nothing because I was a sergeant myself and didn't want to convey dis-order. But I do remember vividly the sneer or scorn in the curved lip when he went through the outrageous antics. The sneer disappeared when he was finished and officially turned the group over to me. It reminded me of the movie *The Picture of Dorian Gray* when Dorian committed his first act of cruelty and decided to hide the picture because he "saw a change in the appearance of the picture. An almost imperceptible change in the lips...but nevertheless, it was there...in the lips...the look of contempt."

**I**t was Wednesday, the year was 1990, and I was visiting the county jail in California to interview an old woman indicted for sexual offenses leveled by a hysterical parental mob. The story was ridiculous and rumors of underground tunnels and dungeons under the day center were a manifest of a crazed mob mentality being appeased by a political machine dependent on the electorate. I said hello to her and sat down.

She said to me, "Did you know that the Mexicans here are beaten?" I asked if she was beaten. She said, "No, but I am a high-profile prisoner. The Mexicans are poor and defenseless and who will go to their defense?" "Nobody, nobody," I said, "because people are afraid to stick their necks out for the downtrodden."

"I will when I get out of here," she vowed, "because I think they enjoy a sadistic pleasure. I can see it in the sardonic smile when they inflict the punishment."

She was subsequently released for lack of evidence. But she never did do anything about the jailhouse beatings she witnessed and neither did I. All was forgotten after a few months.

completely unoccupied, were contrasted by some densely populated areas.

Meanwhile, the Florida Supreme Court ruled in October that abortion protesters must maintain at least a 300 foot distance from a clinic.

"Florida citizens are entitled to both unimpeded access to licensed medical facilities and freedom from unwanted confrontations and communications when undergoing lawful medical treatment," the court stated in its written ruling.

The Aware Woman Center for Choice clinic in Melbourne initiated the suit against Operation Rescue and other abortion protesters. Although abortion rights advocates declared it a major victory for Florida clinics, the ruling is not likely to end the fight.

The state Supreme Court was siding with a Brevard county judge who had issued a permanent injunction against Operation Rescue and anyone else who would protest outside the Melbourne clinic. The injunction was in response to demonstrations wherein as many as 400 protesters had blocked the driveway and street in front of the clinic and used loudspeakers to broadcast loud music. They also went to the homes of clinic workers and doctors.

The judge ordered protesters to stay at least 300 feet away from patients attempting to reach the clinic, banned loud noises during the hours when surgery is conducted, and ordered them not to visit the homes of clinic employees and patients.

But in mid-October, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta determined that the injunction might violate the free-speech rights of protesters and directed a federal district judge to determine whether there are any First Amendment violations.

Anti-abortionists will therefore ask the U.S. Supreme court to overturn the Florida court's ruling and will pursue a hearing in federal court to try to block any impact the ruling might have.

The Florida court's decision rested on a case from 1969 in which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a city ordinance in Rockford, Illinois which forbade noise or disturbances of school classes. The court said, "the First Amendment must yield when protected speech substantially interferes with the normal functioning of a public or private place." That includes, according to the state court, any medical facility wherein the tactics of demonstrators might jeopardize the health, safety and rights of Florida women.

"Operation Rescue has formally stipulated that its program is directed toward closing down abortion clinics," the court noted. "This philosophy and the organization's past tactics are clearly incompatible with the normal activity of this particular place."

## Lutherans kick the anthill

Following four years of preparation, a task force organized by the nation's largest Lutheran body has released a report titled *The Church and Human Sexuality: A Lutheran Perspective*. Sent to 19,000 pastors and other church leaders (who probably turned sheet white with shock) the report includes such concepts as: masturbation is healthy, teaching teens how to use condoms to prevent disease is a moral imperative, and the Bible supports homosexual unions. Churches have until next June to respond.

A second draft will accommodate those responses and be prepared for a churchwide assembly of delegates in 1995.

Obviously creating considerable conflict within the organization, the 21-page report begins with a confession that the church has too often overlooked "the created goodness of sexuality." It declares masturbation to be a generally appropriate and healthy means of self-pleasuring.

Although endorsing the use of condoms, teenagers are encouraged to be chaste until they enter a permanent commitment. But upholding traditional Christian superstitious "values", the report attacks promiscuity, prostitution, sexual abuse, adultery, pornography and the exploitation of sex in advertising and entertainment. However, in an effort to retain the church's homosexual constituency, the task force said it recognizes many Lutherans take literally the biblical condemnations of homosexuality. But it urged the flock to challenge such attitudes, citing responsible biblical interpretation which strongly supports committed same-sex unions and emphasizes what they say is the pre-eminent biblical command -- to "love your neighbor as yourself." So while not actually planning to establish any official ceremony for homosexual marriage, they seem to be accepting same-sex unions.

The Lutheran denomination claims 5.2-million members.

## Confusion at the top

Remember that vacation Clinton took in August? Seems he did some thinking during the trip and came up with some sobering announcements.

"Sometimes I think the environment in which we operate is entirely too secular. The fact that we have freedom of religion doesn't mean we need to try to have freedom from religion, doesn't mean that those of us who have faith shouldn't frankly admit that we are animated by that faith..." Clinton said.

Hey, Bill, we elected you to do the job and follow the constitution, not your superstitions.

# Lead Us Not Into Temptation

written by Jason Berry  
published by Doubleday  
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## Hush-Hush; Don't Tell

by Max Weatherly



**O**F ALL THE nonsense heaped upon vulnerable heads in these Christian dominated United States of America, the most dangerous one, I think, is the denial of sexuality. I'm sure your neighborhood psychologist would call sex and hunger the strongest of human needs. So far as I know, the discussion as to which is the stronger remains unresolved. Pre-Christian attitudes were happily bereft of the myriad sexual hangups which bedevil modern Americans. But after the Babylonian enslavement of the ancient Jews, something had to be done about a decimated population, so back in Israel, the elders got together and decreed that every "ladpole" had to wriggle into a uterus and no other orifice. To give the new regulation teeth they, as is usual in religions, told the populace that Yahweh had made the decision himself and told them to announce it. And, as usual, it was accepted, however reluctantly, and it has been fortified much later by the preaching of St. Paul, who had his own sexual fears, to this day.

At the Council of Nicea in 350 CE, the "boys" got together and put some organization into a scattered inchoate religion which had demonstrated great promise of Control, called Christianity, and while they were at it they decided which

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religious writings were (and were not) "divinely inspired." Then, at the Council of Trent in the second half of the Sixteenth century the then Pope ordered that all priests should take a vow of celibacy because, he said, Jesus had been to its core the stage was set for the present troubles with which Jason Berry's book deals.

Let me here warn all but the most pathologically devoted bibliophiles that Berry's book is badly designed and therefore very hard on the eyes. The typeface is so precious your can hardly see it and margins are narrow, so that the page looks somehow crowded. That, in addition to Berry's way of going on and on and on long after the point has been made, makes for something like tedium.

The first 125 pages are devoted to a famous French Louisiana case regarding one Father Gilbert Gaute's molesting of three boys in his parish, brothers, and the resulting suit brought by their parents, a suit which expanded quickly as more boys told their parents of similar experiences. In that regard, Berry tells us that some states actually prohibit civil action against religious institutions. So some Americans really are "above the law?" When I was in elementary school we were taught that George Washington never told a lie and that no one was above the law. All of us have since discovered that that is not true, but I still did not know that churches had that particular exemption, along with many many others.

Berry struggles mightily for objectivity but never quite makes it. He falls to his knees and prays for forgiveness for having cursed (in his heart) a priest. Yes, the priest was another molester among many — but he was a priest! And the author appears to credit the Church

### *the anti-sexuality of Christianity has affected all of us*

for toppling a Haitian dictator — is he talking about Aristides? And he pleads, all the way through a long book for — he hopes — "nuanced changes" in sex attitudes. He falls to his knees again — now remember that he is a journalist of some quite valid reputation struggling for objectivity — to pray about something which is troubling him. He even weeps. In fact a lot of people mentioned in the book weep at conferences where the bravest of confrontations effect nothing. The Vatican is always silent. The Curia (which means "men

together" and is the power plant) apparently holds that any *crime* is preferable to *scandal*. In fact, some of the stonewalling that goes on in case after case is positively breathtaking.

Part One, "Anatomy of a Cover-up," deals, in addition to the Gaute case, with the several cases of molestation (and homosexuality — there's lots of that although homosexuals and pedophiles are quite different in their orientations and behavior patterns) Berry has investigated. He lays a concrete foundation for what he has to say in following pages.

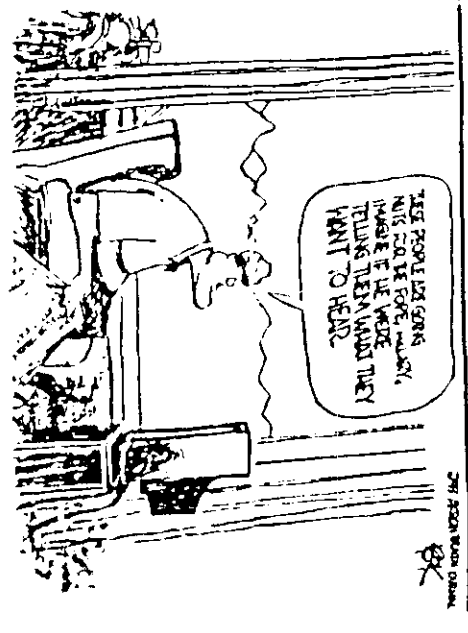
Part Two, "The Political Dynamics of Celibacy," deals with what Berry sees as "inner decay." He suggests — and I find it easy to believe — that Pope John Paul II is literally embarrassed by sex. (John Paul's biography reports that he wanted to be an actor — but, finding success in seminary, stuck around and whaddya know? became a Pope. I think that's an interesting sequel.)

In discussing the "inner decay" which he feels was brought about mostly by pedophilic and homosexual priests who were not celibate (if a homosexual priest were actually celibate then he was OK) Berry writes, "No device was to bar the flow of sperm or prevent a woman's potential to conceive. This was religious belief in a biological order, ordained by God, with procreation the sacred function of sex." In 1993? Yes, "decay" is the right word.

Catholic or not, religious or not, the anti-sexuality of Christianity (e.g., celibacy, and/or the denial of genital sex) has affected all of us. This nation was founded by Deists and not by Christians. The USOFA was founded as secular with strong guards against the intrusion of religion. (The founders had not forgotten the Dark Ages or the Inquisition.) But Christians (who, after all, "know" the Truth as the rest of us do not) have played an ever increasing role in American life, culminating but not slowing down in 1954 when they persuaded cynical Congressmen ever watchful for votes to put "In God We Trust" on all specie and paper

money, replacing the dignified and secular original, *E Pluribus Unum*. Also we're faced with the Ten Commandments (originally lifted from the oldest known book, the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, which had thirty-seven of them) in most schools and almost all public buildings. And we find Cideon Bibles in hotel rooms. And most of us, Atheist, Buddhist, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, all of us are inundated with the Christian message or at least presence.

So, when Christianity denies possibly the strongest of human drives it creates decay in society — not just in the Church but in all society, willy-nilly. For humans are going to have sex whether or not the Pope approves. Thus there follows the hiding, the lying, the cheating, the pretending — all destructive.



In Part Three, "Tragedy and Hope," Berry cites abuses of clients by psychotherapists — as if that cuts any ice. Does he intend to say that "everyone does it so it can't be so bad that priests do it?" Indeed. A tragedy develops when someone who carries the trust and the prestige of a priest (or a judge, or lawmaker, or parent) and betrays that trust.

Hope? I don't have any hope for religion except to hope that it decays away entirely, leaving us humans dependent upon ourselves for comfort and guidance. It's too easy — it's too comfy. My hope has long lain in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, even with the outlawing of literature, even with worship of the machine — humans seem to insist on worshipping something. But at least those people will worship something they can see and feel. Aside from that, people will be free to express the strongest of human drives and they will be free of decadent and utterly chimerical religions.

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