

You were wondering about Florida's education system?

No kidding. The books really do contain a resolution which reads exactly as follows:

THE FLORIDA RESOLUTION HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 7, pages 506 and 507 of LAWS OF FLORIDA, PASSED IN 1923 states:

Whereas, the Constitution of the State of Florida expressly states in Section 6 (now Section 3) of the Declaration of rights that, 'No preference shall be given by law to any church, sect or mode of worship, and no money shall be taken from public treasury directly or indirectly in aid to any church, sect or religious denomination, or in aid of sectarian institution'. And

Whereas, The public schools and colleges of this State, supported in

whole or in part by public funds, should be kept free from any teaching designed to set up and promulgate sectarian views, and should also be equally free from teaching designed to attack religious beliefs of the public. therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THE SENATE CONCURRING:

That it is the sense of the Legislature of the State of Florida that it is improper and subversive to the best interest of the people of this State for any professor, teacher or instructor in the public schools and colleges of this State, supported in whole or in part by public taxation, to teach or permit to be taught atheism, or agnosticism, or to teach as true Darwinism, or any hypothesis that links man in blood relationship to any other form of life.

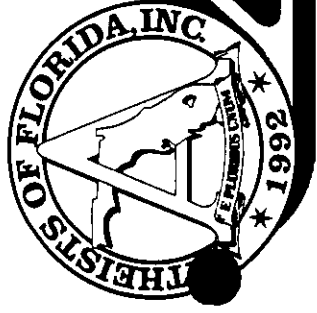
12

Atheists of Florida

May 1993

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Member of **ATHEIST ALLIANCE**, the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies
Chapters in Miami and Tampa Bay
May, 1993
Volume II
Number 05

Who we are

MIAMI/TAMPA—Atheists of Florida, chartered in 1992, is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization which serves as a watchdog group concerning state/church separation issues in particular within the state of Florida. We are an affiliate of the Atheist Alliance, which is a national collective of atheist organizations allied for purposes of information exchange. Our membership application includes our Statement of Purpose. Members receive this monthly newsletter which includes commentary from members, news regarding state/church separation violations within the state and country, letters from members either addressed to the newsletter or published in periodicals, a book/film review column, and news of the organization.

At its first Board of Directors meeting, Atheists of Florida immediately established a Scholarship Fund which is prepared to offer scholarship assistance to students who demonstrate an understanding of atheism and freethought. The balance of the Fund is reported regularly in these newsletters, along with a quarterly financial statement of the organization.

With chapters in Miami and Tampa Bay, Atheists of Florida is working to expand our membership and chapters throughout the state. We offer an introductory brochure which expands on the meaning of atheism and our objectives as an organization, and are publishing booklets about specific subjects concerning atheism, religion and state/church separation. A copy of our bylaws is available on

request to any current member.

We are presently producing a 13-week Cable TV program which is being broadcast in the Miami-Dade region and the Tampa/Hillsborough County areas. The 30-minute programs, hosted by Dr. Albert Lyngzeitson, Ph.D., chair/Philosophy professor, Florida Atlantic University, allow atheists to discuss atheism and state/church separation issues of the day.

A speakers bureau is available from Atheists of Florida which can provide atheist speakers on topics of our choice or yours.

Approximately 10% of our population is atheist, agnostic, or some form of freethinker with no involvement in religion. Yet within our culture, atheism is a particularly despised position to express. This is because religion has become a multi-billion dollar tax-free business which naturally strives to promulgate this situation in an effort to convince the population that no American can be a complete citizen without embracing some form of superstition. As a result, most atheists are apprehensive about expressing their opinion, "playing along" with the traditional acceptance of religion. Members of Atheists of Florida have shown the courage to be identified with an idea which can only benefit mankind when the medievalist insanity of religion is left to its proper place... in our past.

"It would be better to give up books than abandon the Bible"
— William Jennings Bryan
Scopes Evolution Trial

Atheists of Florida Forum

Cable Telecast Times:
Miami-Dade Cable-TAP Channel 35:
 Mondays, 10:00 a.m.
 Wednesdays, 9:30 p.m.
 Thursdays, noon.
Tampa, Jones Intercable:
Time Channel
 Monday, 3:30 p.m. 24
 Tuesday, 8:30 p.m. 23*
 Wednesday, 8:30 p.m. 24
 *Simulcast on Paragon Channel 16 or 17 for Hillsborough County

Atheists Of Florida, Inc., is a non-profit, educational organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and atheism, and to provide intellectually stimulating contact for the membership.
 Membership dues should be sent to the chapter of interest. General correspondence should be directed to the Miami Chapter, P.O. Box 530102, Miami, FL 33153-0102. Contact Phone is (305) 936-0210. Annual dues are: \$50.00 - Sustaining; \$30.00 - Couple; \$25.00 - Individual; \$5.00 - Student (under 25 yrs.). Dues are pro-rated quarterly, with annual renewals due by January 1.
 Newsletter correspondence and chapter inquiries should be sent to the Tampa Bay Chapter, P.O. Box 130753, Tampa, FL 33681-0753. Deadline for newsletter items is the 15th of each month. The A.O.F. newsletter is provided free of charge to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters are published from members on a space-available basis, in general accord with guidelines set out in Vol. 1, No. 6.
 Atheists Of Florida, Inc., is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

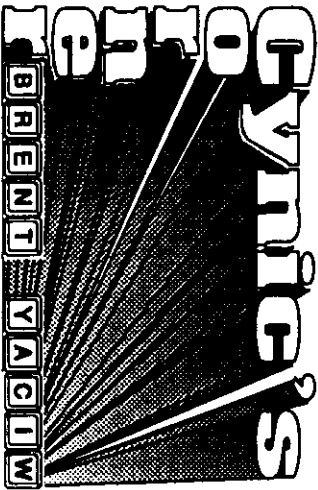
Chairman Albert E. Lyngzaideason
 President Christina Tsametakos
 Vice President Ed Golly
 Secretary Celia Glantz
 Treasurer Charles A. Ross
 State Board of Directors
 Kyoto Brogdon
 John J. Diamond
 Steven Miles
 Louisa Miller
 Florence Morgenthau
 Daniel Street
 Brent Yaciv
 Newsletter Editor Ed Golly
 Assistant/Letters Editor Brent Yaciv

BEFORE GOOD AND EVIL: "EVOLUTION"

Good and evil are merely social constructs; the essence of our humanity. Good is defined as obedience to these social constructs; evil is when we our animal instincts instead of said constructs.
 I have been putting two quotes on the chalkboard every day in my classroom, and I placed this one there one day. I did not identify its source, which I have told my students either means I do not know it, the person is someone they probably wouldn't know, or the person is historically insignificant.

Well, the last assertion is true, although it contradicts the first possibility. As the originator of the quote, I was well aware of its source, but felt that they might take it more seriously if it wasn't merely a "teacher says" pronouncement.

This wasn't invented for my course, and since I teach English, not philosophy, it may well be identical to the words of another person noted that it sounded Taoist). However, the point is still the same: we human beings make the rules. We always have. The god concepts of religions



simply an effort to put more authority behind rules of dubious logical sense or lacking in statistical evidence, much as the conservatives mentioned in last month's column attempt to confuse us with statistically-suspect pronouncements about our societal decline. Their next step, once they have "proven" how much we've gone downhill, is to claim that a lack of religion—no prayer in schools, etc.—is the cause of it all.

However, let's return to the original statement. It evolved out of a discussion with my office-mate on the existence of evil and good in the world. Being a Christian, he spouts the standard line about good being godly and evil the work of satanic figures, and cannot imagine that all of this could be an accident. Obviously, I

Freethinkers need to come out of closet

Published in Florida Today April 27, 1993

It is estimated that approximately 10 percent of the U.S. population is comprised of freethinkers—those who form opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independent belief. Famous freethinkers include such notables as Thomas Edison, Mark Twain, Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan, Burt Lancaster, Steve Allen, Bertrand Russell, Robert Ingersoll, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein and Clarence Darrow. Unfortunately, the majority of freethinkers are afraid to "come out of the closet" for fear of ostracism, loss of job, harassment, etc. I, however, freely admit that I am a freethinker and am proud of the way I think.

Sadly, there are many common myths about non-religious people. It is claimed that we are immoral, responsible for the world's ills, have no reason to live, angry people, must be unhappy, arrogant, all communists, agents of the devil, blind to truth, love and beauty. I believe, as Katherine Hepburn stated: "I'm an atheist and that's it. I believe there's nothing we can know except that we should be kind to each other and do what we can for other people."

Barry A. Rowe
 Indialantic
 (Brevard County, FL)

Messages to Ashes

Dear Sir:

Suppose, just suppose David Koresh had been just a little bit smarter. Suppose he had dug a tunnel under the house down to a depth of about fifteen feet with vents installed to provide ventilation. Then suppose he went down into his burrow and waited out the conflagration which he knew would ensue. Then suppose he chose to emerge by himself after the ashes were cool.

Would he be hailed as reincarnated? Would we have an immediate world wide church with millions of followers?
 O how vulnerable the people are! O how

incredible their capacity to be deceived is!

Yours Truly,
 Louis Miller
 N. Miami Beach

Forum scores

Dear Mr. Golly:

Congratulations to you, Christos, and the rest of the crew for such a magnificent idea, the Forum on Cable TV.

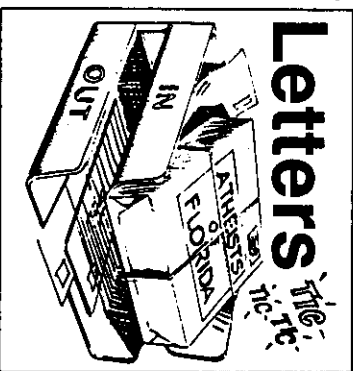
The themes have been very interesting and very well explained by the participants. And the days and time distribution is a very good idea also. A success.

Sincerely,
 Mike Perdomo
 Miami

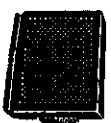
A tidbit of news from Jolly Old England

I watched 60 Minutes on TV, where Morley Sater interviewed the Headmaster of the swank, upper class University of Eton and was surprised to learn that, in order to get through Eton, it is mandatory to be a member of the Church of England!

In fact, they insist -- no if, ands or buts. Otherwise, out you go! Personally, I had to leave school at the age of 14, and I was a member of the lower class -- Eton was an unattainable dream! (Class distinction) Old chap, old chum, old boy!
 Victor St. John
 Clearwater



Letters



Videotapes!

Atheist/Humanist Speakers

I have made tapes of several nationally-known speakers, such as Delos McKown, Edd Doerr, Skipp Porteous, Sid Goetz, Roger Gredey, Jim Strayer, and Bette Chambers. For a complete list, send SASE to:

Brent Yaciv
 6642 - 122nd St. N.
 Seminole, FL 34642
 Videos are \$10.00 each, including shipping and handling.

Commentary

Losing Touch

—John Quirindongo

IT IS EASY to lose touch with the important people in our lives. It begins with our grade school teachers who are bigger than life. It expands to our parents after we're married. It develops into a cleft between management and labor, between us and our children, between politician and voter.

When Bill Clinton ran successfully for president, his motto was "It's the economy, stupid." His appeal was universal. Most people saw -- and more can now see in retrospect -- that George Bush had lost touch with the voter. He had been in politics too long. He had made it a boring job, instead of the vibrant and energetic mission it is. He was quick to complain about broccoli and slow to notice the growing deficit. He vomited at a failed state summit to Japan, a successful nation that pays its CEOs 1/20th the salary paid to chief executives in this country. He had to be armed with American CEOs that are overpaid and uninterested in their appointed mission while their companies floundered in huge losses. Frankly, he looked like a fool on a fool's mission accompanied by fool's jesters.

Bush played the political game like a wimp going to defeat, insisting in status quo and do-nothing *laissez faire* domestic politics. The Reagan "trickle-down" theory had failed miserably and Bush would not take corrective action. He was seen commiserating with religious evangelists before the military success and political blunder of Desert Storm. He kept repeating "I'm a good president" and "The economy is doing fine." He even went further by saying "The one thing the

Atheist of Florida charter member John Quirindongo lives in Miami, Florida

Democrats have not mentioned in their convention is the three letters G-O-D." And last, but not least, can we forget his promise "I will do *anything* to get elected."

Bush pandered to the religious right with the ill-begotten theme of family values. The Republican romance with this faction had become a nightmare for the voter. He compared his opponents to his dog intelligence. Above all, he blamed the media and not his lackluster ineptness for his poor showing in the polls. In the end, 62 percent of the electorate voted against Bush the incumbent, and gave Perot, a late newcomer to the game, 19 percent of the vote.

I hope President Clinton has learned from the Bush experience. Although it was "the economy, stupid," what is important to keep in mind that it is ALWAYS the voters. The people finally dumped the religious right after watching them make their strongest move at the Republican convention. If President Clinton hasn't learned from the Bush defeat, then he too will have a failed one-term presidency. Politics by its very nature makes it easy for the politician to lose touch with the very people they need to be re-elected -- the voters.

MEMORY RELAY

*In this, the only world we know,
as people come so people go.*

*Not one alive was living when
Charles Dickens held a restless pen--
and yet, when young I met a man
who'd known him. Such a living span
takes only two: if six we link ...
then Shakespeare dips a quill in ink.*

*If twenty-one? Mohammed gives
to scribes a creed, through which he lives.
Choose thirty ... join the multitude
for which Christ Jesus conjures food;
on thirty-six, with Plato feast;
to more for sages of the East.*

*Count forty-three ... hear Homer tell
the Trojan tale he'd heard as well.
One hundred, say ... salute the day
when writing starts, with signs on clay.
Two thousand ... and we're face to face
with founders of the human race.*

*As each has come so each has gone:
but each a torch has handed on.*

---Barbara Smoker

Atheists of Florida

CHAPTER MEETINGS:

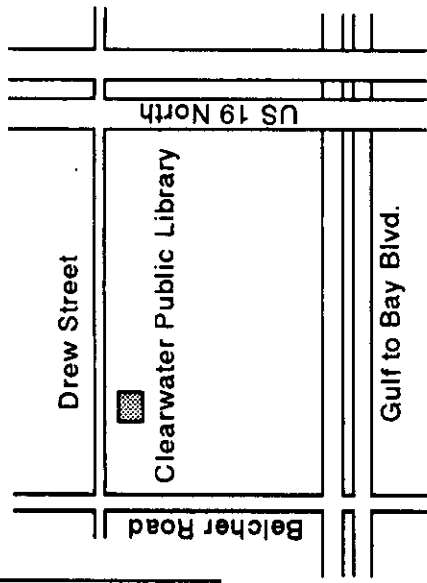
MIAMI

The Miami Chapter will meet Sunday, June 13 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, May 29 from 1:00 to 2:30 at the Clearwater Public Library, 2521 Drew Street. One of the *Forum* programs will be shown, followed by our

business meeting. For more information: Ed Golly 839-7567.



structs?

Start with the basics: food (including drink), shelter, procreation. If you are hungry, there is no societal concept of ownership, and someone else has food, you take it. Your needs outweigh those of another, except under special circumstances such as your mate or young, where the instinct for genetic survival may overcome immediate instinctual needs. The same applies to shelter; if only one house was available, and it was too small to provide for the needs of anyone else, you would fight or kill to acquire that house.

Applied to procreation, this means that you not only would have sex whenever and wherever you thought you could safely do so, but that there would be no refusal allowed: the stronger person would force the weaker to satisfy desire. In our species, this stronger person was the male, which perhaps explains why the male sex drive is often stronger and why males are usually physically stronger. This is not universal; in (continued next page)

disagree. If you examine all of the so-called evils in the world, every single one can be explained without any supernatural basis whatsoever.

We are not talking about natural disasters; bacteria and viruses, tornados and hurricanes, and similar events simply exist. There has never been any rational evidence that such events are "punishments for sin" or some other conscious thoughts is clearly ignorant of science and logic, which is why so many supposedly educated people who hold "doctor of divinity degrees" fall victim to these superstitions. After all, if your entire schooling is based on accepting something as unproven as the existence of a god, it's not likely that logic has played a major part.

Instead, our concern is with acts of humanity and how such acts are defined. For the first step in our discussion we must think on a purely instinctual level, forsaking all the trained responses and societal regulations that have evolved. What are our basic animal instincts, and how do they conflict with society's con-

some species, like black widow spiders, the female is stronger. Our species doubtless evolved this way because those males with strong sex drives and physiques mated more often than weaker males, and perhaps with the stronger females, thus producing the physical and emotional qualities seen today. In ancient times, these qualities were desirable: then civilization happened. Such tendencies make it difficult to live in a larger group, since once we get beyond a certain size the dominance games become literally impossible: no one person could fight every other for the top of the pecking order. Even being the elected ruler of a "civilized" country is exhausting; imagine having to take on all comers, constantly challenged for your right to rule.

Of course, if as a ruler you can convince the others that you rule because of "divine right," you're suddenly much safer. Challengers risk "offending the gods." In an old medieval tale called Havelok the Dane, c. 1285 A.C.E., the young Havelok is given to a peasant to be killed. However, the peasant's wife sees a royal birthmark on him, and since it is "sacrilige" to harm royalty, Havelok is saved. Rational thinkers would have recognized this hokum for what it was and quickly eliminated the so-called royalty, who were primarily just more unscrupulous and cutthroat than the average person. These human parasites still exist using similar tactics to maintain control in many parts of the world.

Atheists are despised by kings, queens, popes and pontiffs because we see through the royal scam. All their pomp and circumstance doesn't convince us that they are the most qualified to run the country. In fact, were it not for the pre-Atheistic notions of our Deist Founding Fathers, we might well be sinking into economic obscurity as is England, dragged down by the wastes of an official royalty. However, let's not be too smug; we have our own unofficial royalty, in the form of tax-free friars and similar religious tapeworms that are gutting the country unnoticed by the majority. We also have the huge empires of wealth built by those who claim piety to distract others from their dirty deeds in clandestine conferences, such as the S & L bandits or most of our politicians. I'm certain that any politician who was outspokenly atheist would have little chance of election to a major office; nor does claiming faith hurt unless you are openly supportive of the religious right in metropolitan areas (it's not a problem in Hicksville, where the ignorance makes religion bloom).

Our only chance is to make the most of every opportunity to show atheism in a positive light. A reputation as shrill protestors of almost anything will not help; we must calmly and rationally expose the absurdity that is the foundation of religion. Be informed and be steadfast, but be persistent. We have only sanity to gain.

Oh, don't worry! After all... Religion Doesn't hurt anybody

Read your Bible! Try the story of Abraham and Isaac. Good Family Values here. Such a good example, in fact, that you might even want to re-enact it for yourself. But you won't be the trendsetter. It's already been done.

Desperate to persuade his brother to become a Christian, 31-year-old Andrew Cate of Indianapolis was convinced a miracle would generate the desired result. In the Old Testament story, God instructed Abe to sacrifice his son, Isaac. At the last minute, God intervened to provide another sacrifice. There were two unfortunate factors involved in Cate's modern-day medievalism--he had a two-year-old daughter, and there still is no God to intervene.

In November, 1991, Cate fired 10 bullets into his daughter, then walked naked through the neighborhood carrying her dead body. His public defender maintained Cate was mentally ill at the time, which, as we know, applies to anyone who embraces superstition, and asked for the minimum 30-year sentence. The court gave him 60 years. No word about the brother.

The Christians are coming!... the Christians are coming...



One if by the vote...two if by propaganda!

The Religious Right: Who are they?

The Religious Right is the name given to a collective of groups usually loosely allied but in close cooperation, sharing a common agenda of conservative political and theological ideologies. Their aim, of course, is to theocratize America in order to force their philosophy on all of us by law.

As some of the most prominent televangelists began to involve themselves in the political arena in the late 70's, most notable Falwell's Moral Majority and Pat Robertson, this name began to identify their movement. Robertson's Christian Coalition is presently considered the spearhead organization of the Religious Right.

the state constitution barring local laws protecting civil rights for gays.

Michigan: groups are expected to push a Colorado-style anti-gay initiative and intensify attacks on the state's health education program. The final two paragraphs of the article are the most chilling and bear repeating. Quoting Kropp, "The bottom line on the Religious Right is that, as a political movement, they're doing everything they need to do to succeed."

They're raising money, forming grass roots-based groups, identifying local activists and putting forth a clear agenda. If they're not forcefully challenged, they will surely succeed."

IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, People for American Way, the civil liberties watchdog organization based in Washington, released a report claiming the Religious Right can be expected to be active in nearly a half-dozen "hot spots" this year. While we may often expect such organizations to exaggerate prognostications in order to boost their fund-raising efforts, this report may bear sincerity in view of the facts contained within. Since release of the report, we are seeing many of its forecasts bearing true.

In an article earlier this year from the Religious News Service and printed by the *St. Pete Times*, a year of "unprecedented political activity" could be ahead for us, according to president Arthur Kropp. He declared, "On issues including (abortion) choice, gay rights, public education, freedom of speech and more, the Religious Right is poised to wage an unprecedented grass roots campaign."

Kropp said a survey of activities found the conservative religious movement active in 42 states and DC but cited six states, including Florida as focal points for activities.

Of the following examples cited, how many are already bearing out:

Florida: Christian Coalition allies are expected to continue their effort to take control of the state's Republican Party. They already in control of 10 to 15 of the state's 67 county executive committees.

California: Operation Rescue has declared February "No Place to Hide Month" and vowed to harass at work and at home doctors and other health-care workers who provide abortion.

Virginia: Christian Coalition forces are planning a big role in November's state legislative elections, building on significant inroads into the state's Republican Party apparatus.

Colorado: the movement is expected to campaign for public funding of private and religious schools. The campaign follows a stunning victory in securing an amendment to

I Pray Allegiance to the Flag...

A COLUMN BY JAMES J. KILPATRICK appeared in the April 19 *St. Petersburg Times* titled "Pledge still poses a problem for the court". It discusses the constitutional dilemma of requiring a student in public school to recite the Pledge of Allegiance considering the fact that it has been converted into a prayer by inclusion of the phrase "one nation, under God."

The basis for the court's continual consideration of the issue is our old friend Robert I. Sherman of Buffalo Grove, Illinois. When his son Ricky entered first grade at Riley School, Sherman filed suit to forbid recitation of the pledge. The township defended the law and the District Court ruled against Sherman on the basis of an affidavit filed by the principal stating that no pupil is *required* to recite the pledge. The 7th Circuit upheld that decision leading Sherman to petition the Supreme Court for review. The Court may actually accept Sherman's case in the upcoming term.

Noteworthy in the report is the argument as embraced by the Chief Judge of the 7th Circuit who acknowledged that the case raises the question of implicit coercion. Even though there are no penalties for remaining silent, and no inducements to join in, "there remains social pressure to do so and a sense of exclusion." By contrast, social pressure is not legal pressure, and the Court may actually accept Sherman's case in the upcoming term.

Newsflash!.. Atheists of Florida are psychic

If you still have it, look at page 2 of the March '93 issue of our newsletter! Referring to the Waco whacko, David Koresh, we quote:

"If history is a guide, based on the violent overtones of the Bible, a peaceful solution doesn't look likely. Maybe U.S. taxpayers will get lucky: Someone in the compound will light a match and accidentally blow the whole place to Kingdom Come."

and "Government retains the right to set the curriculum in its own schools and to insist that those who cannot accept the result exercise their right to select private schools at their own expense."

"Objection by the few does not reduce to silence the many who WANT to pledge allegiance to the flag 'and to the Republic for which it stands.'"

In a telephone interview with the Atheists of Florida, Sherman gave his assessment of the Kilpatrick story: "All of the 'facts' were wrong. He got everything screwed up."

On a brighter note, Sherman said that it's a good sign the U.S. Supreme Court hasn't yet decided whether to take the case. "If there was no interest, they would have told us to forget it by now," he noted. "We expect some sort of decision by June 30. They will either take the case for review, refuse it, or hold it over until the next term, which begins the first Monday in October."

Sherman said he hopes the Court's decision is based on the U.S. Constitution and *not* the mood of the country.

"If it's based on the mood of the country," he predicts, "we'll lose."

But Sherman said he refuses to be daunted by legal setbacks. Each defeat only demonstrates the extent of discrimination against atheists in this country, and gives him more fodder for his fight for equality and state/church separation.



On the set of the Forum: Ed Golly, Flo Morgenthau, Brent Yaciw, and host Dr. Albert Lyngzeitson

From Christiansanity to Sanity

Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher To Atheist

by Dan Barker

(Madison, WI: Freedom From Religion Foundation, 1992) 222 pages, paper \$20.00

If you have ever longed for an excellent, entertaining and highly readable book which can be used to easily demolish the "strongest" arguments of unreasoning Christians, you will certainly find it in Dan Barker's *Losing Faith in Faith*.

B & FILM

Dan, who works with the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), has a unique perspective because he was once a preacher. He therefore has the inside scoop on what and how clergy "think." He spent most of his life as a theist. He has written numerous Christian songs (he still receives royalties); and he has produced two children's Christian musicals. He believed in miracles, faith healing, and speaking in tongues.

So where did Dan go right? He did not find it easy making the transition from Christianity to sanity. He went through much torturous "soul-searching," but the absurdity, immorality and utter uselessness of Christianity became so apparent to him, he had to reject it.

Losing Faith in Faith includes new writings by Dan, as well as reprints from FFRF's newspaper *Freethought Today*. In "Ripples:

Bible a Moral Guide" he correctly states, "There is not enough space to mention all of the places in the bible where God committed, commanded, or condoned murder." (p. 37) Nevertheless, Dan discusses some of the more noteworthy embarrassing passages. He notes that God lies (Ezekiel 14:9); that Jesus encouraged the beating of slaves (Luke 12:47-48); and the "Prince of Peace" even encouraged the killing of his enemies (Luke 19:27). In Isaiah 45:7 we learn that God is evil; and in Matthew 5:38-39 we see that Jesus promotes reckless violence.

In fact, in response to "turning the other cheek," Dan advises: "A more sensible rule would say, 'If someone smites thee on thy right cheek, then get away from that person! Defend yourself to avoid further harm. Ask for help, file charges, try to stop the abuse from happening to someone else. Never invite abuse.'" (p. 353)

This book is a remarkable debating aid which can leave even the most dogmatic religious nut rattled. Every library should have this book--right next to the bible.



Norm Allen, Jr. is the Executive Director of African Americans for Humanism and Editor of the AAH Examiner



From the home office in Oshkosh, WI....

- Just thought you'd like to see the Top Ten Religion Stories of 1992...it's enough to keep you wondering if we have really concluded the Dark Ages:
- #10 Southern Baptists continue to splinter as key missionary executives resign and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship gains strength
- #9 U.S. Methodists reaffirm 20-year old stance that homosexual practice is incompatible with Christian teaching
- #8 Famine and fighting in Africa, warfare in the former Yugoslavia and domestic disasters bring outpouring of aid from religious groups
- #7 The "repentance" by religious leaders for the wrongs done to native peoples, a theme which arose during the Quincentenary of the Columbus voyage
- #6 A U.S. Supreme Court ruling that prayers at public school graduation ceremonies are unconstitutional
- #5 The religious aspect to the war in Bosnia
- #4 Allegations of sexual misconduct by U.S. clergy bring lawsuits and new actions from the churches
- #3 The decision of U.S. Catholic bishops to scrub the pastoral letter on women
- #2 The decision of the Church of England to ordain women priests
- ...And the number one religion story of 1992...
- The election of Southern Baptists Bill Clinton and Al Gore

Just the Fax, ma'am

Follow-up to the February, '93 newsletter story on Israel's national telephone company initiating a fax service that transmits messages to God via the Walling Wall in Jerusalem. In May, the Roman Catholic church will unveil a high-tech confessional at a show in Vercenza, Italy, that will accept confessions by fax. And in December, a sect of Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn, N.Y., began selling its members special beepers so they would know instantly when the Messiah arrives on Earth.

Shroud of Bloomingdale

Spotted in the *St. Petersburg Times* a few weeks ago was an item about a Bloomingdale (Minnesota) High School senior who complained that a picture of Jesus that had hung in a hallway in the school for the past 30 years should be removed because of its endorsement of Christianity--a violation of the First Amendment. It has come to the point where a federal judge has actually agreed. Almost.

The ruling was that until an appeal is heard, the picture can stay. The catch: it must be covered with a drape.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the complaining student has probably been called every one of them.

Arrive in Style

They're ready and waiting, the official Atheists of Florida T-Shirts! Fronted with the logo in beautiful Royal Blue and backed with the political slogan--

"SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE... MORE THAN A GOOD IDEA IT'S THE LAW"

Order yours now from
ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA
 P O Box 530102
 Miami, FL 33153-0102
 \$11 pp, specify L or XL

More attempts to re-write Constitution

Apparently some people in Congress are simply never quite able to understand the Constitution and its guarantees of religious freedom, nor the glory of the foundation of the First Amendment. They are bound and determined to get religious indoctrination into the public school system of this nation whether it is legal, ethical, Constitutional or not. For several years now, measures have been routinely introduced in Congress to force prayer on public school students. At least four of the new measures propose "voluntary prayer" contending that prayer should be allowed as long as no one is forced to participate, never mind school or social pressure. And hear this: the state is not to prescribe the prayer. If not the state, then whom? Any employee of the school or school board is "the state". Who is left to write the prayer?

Rep. Bill Emerson, Republican (what else?) from Missouri, is the sponsor of the amendment, just in case you'd like to drop him a note.

\$ IN ... \$ OUT

It seems the *Old Time Gospel Hour* is plenty willing to take in, but not pay out. In Tampa, it is carried on WTVT 13. A couple of weeks ago the station filed suit against the ministry for failure to pay some \$59,985 plus interest in broadcast fees. Can you imagine extending that ch credit to a known purveyor of lies?

Rushdie update:

Associated Press reported in the *Fort Pierce Tribune* a couple of months ago that it has now been over four years since the Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the execution of Salman Rushdie for what many Muslims considered insults to Islam in the novel *The Satanic Verses*.

Rushdie has been in hiding ever since, constantly guarded by British police surfacing only occasionally to give speeches in the United States, Britain and Scandinavia.

The British government severed diplomatic ties with Iran over the incident. Although governments and writers around the world have urged Tehran to rescind Khomeini's edict, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's present spiritual leader, maintains the death sentence must be implemented "without a doubt," while an Iranian government charity has offered \$2 million, plus expenses, for Rushdie's execution.

Silence is golden

This story from the March 4 edition of the St. Petersburg Times written by Nichole Christian

For 42 years the South Pasadena (Pinellas County) City Commission has been opening its regular meetings with a prayer. This year, they have finally begun to approach the 20th century.

With still some mileage to go, the prayer is actually being replaced with a moment of silence. It all came about as a result of a resolution drafted by former Commissioner Ted Pugh earlier this year.

It said, in part, that prayer is "offensive to believers of faiths other than that of the person presenting prayer" or "so innocuous that they have little or no meaning or impact."

Pugh claimed that when asked to write an invocation that would cover each religion he just never felt he could do it right.

Now the commissioners bow their heads for 30 seconds before meetings. Invocation remains a part of city council or commission meetings in at least 12 Pinellas County municipalities, including St. Petersburg, Pinellas Park, Largo, Safety Harbor, Dunedin, Reddington Beach, and Gulfport.