

Keep digging it up

Atheists of Florida member Louis Miller keeps pegging away at the "Bibles in the military" issue with the kind of tenacity that inspires us all

I am starting to feel like a dog worrying an old bone with my diatribe about the expenditure of armed forces money to purchase bibles, but here goes. It occurred to me that we now have a new Secretary of Defense and a new Administration. As the readers of our little journal know from past issues, I wrote to former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney protesting the purchase of the \$200,000 worth of bibles. I got "zilch" (nothing) for a reply). He did reply to someone else's effusive letter of

praise.

So...I'm writing to the new Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, and will keep the readers informed after a decent interval. Here is a copy of that letter to him:

March 8, 1993
Secretary of Defense Les Aspin
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Aspin:

Let me first congratulate you on your appointment as the Secretary of Defense. I know that President Clinton has made a wise choice.

Several months ago I wrote to your predecessor, Mr. Cheney, because I was deeply disturbed after reading that the armed forces had purchased more than two hundred thousand dollars worth of bibles. I decried this expenditure to him, both as an ex-serviceman and a taxpayer. Since that time, I feel

more than ever that in this time of fiscal crisis, it behooves all of us to guard against unnecessary and inappropriate expenditures.

My concern is principally against the idea of government subsidizing one religion or another, which delivery of these bibles would amount to. I am not against the expenditure of money for servicemen with things like dances, shows, etc.

I am sorry to say that Mr. Cheney never replied to me. I hope that you feel as I do and the way that most of the American people feel, that is, that the American serviceman or woman does not need to have religion pumped or insinuated into him by an agency of our government.

I would very much like to have your views on this.

Yours Truly,
Louis Miller

We're standing by for that response.

Atheists of Florida

April 1993

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P.O. Box 530102
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



ATHEISTS of FLORIDA

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Newsletter of Atheists of Florida, Inc.
Volume II Number 04

Chapters in Miami and Tampa Bay
April, 1993

Atheists of Florida Forum on Cable TV

MIAMI—THE FIRST FOUR of a series of 12 programs for the Dade County Cable-TAP Public Access Channel 35 have been produced and are on the program schedule (see page 2). Hosted by Dr. Albert Lyngzeitson, Ph.D., the first program is titled *Atheism: Not a Religion*. Produced by Atheists of Florida President Christos Tzanetakos, the featured guests are Ed Golly, Florence Morgenroth and Brent Yaciw.

In Tampa, the same programs will be run on Jones Intercable three times a week, with one of those transmissions being simulcast on Paragon Cable which serves all of Hillsborough County. We are currently initiating discussions with Paragon Cable which serves Pinellas County to obtain a time slot on their Access Channel.

The WLRN Cable-TAP program guide is the *MAGAZINE*, which carried an article introducing the program. Along with our logo, the story outlined some of the objectives of Atheists of Florida. Some excerpts:

"In emphasizing a scientific basis for rational living, the organization has formulated the following concepts: Because human beings evolved in a manner similar to other lifeforms, Homo sapiens are viewed merely as links in the chain of living matter; Global population control is vital to the health of our planet and extinction through man-made cause must be avoided; Cooperation and equality among our own species must be encouraged; All humans have a common origin and artificial classification of race and ethnicity are divisive and detrimental to our future; All humans should be called 'Homo sapiens' with only minimal

respectful reference to geographical and cultural origins.

Atheism is a philosophy that accepts only what can be verified by scientific means, constantly open to independent verification, and rejects supernatural articles of unverifiable faith. The first four topics will be:

- #1 Atheism: Not a Religion
- #2 Separation of Church and State, featuring ACLU attorney Santiago Leon and Christos Tzanetakos.
- #3 Women, Religion & Power: topic and discussion featuring Florence Morgenroth.
- Morgenroth's talk is being produced in booklet form to be made available to members or anyone interested.
- #4 The Religious Right in Today's Political Arena.

If you have ideas for program topics, be sure to inform the producer, Christos Tzanetakos. Also, try to view the programs to offer constructive criticisms of our efforts. If the first 12 programs are deemed successful by Cable-TAP, we will continue to produce the series.

He who will not reason, is a bigot;
he who cannot is a fool;
and he who dares not is a slave.

Sir William Drummond
(1585-1649)

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 atheists, and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts 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 pre-paid quarterly, with annual renewals due by January 1.

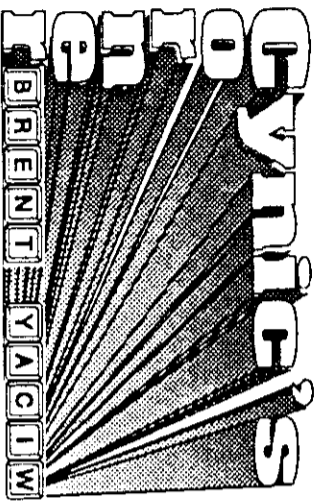
Newsletter correspondence and chapter inquiries should be sent to the Tampa Bay Chapter, P.O. Box 130753, Tampa, FL 33681-0753. Deadline for newsletter items is the 15th of each month. The A.O.F. newsletter is provided free of charge to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters are published from 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.

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Conservatives Don't Really Want Better Education

For those of you who are unaware of it, State Senator John Grant, R-Tampa, has introduced a bill into the legislature that would eliminate the requirement elementary school teachers to pass the mathematics section of the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), a test required for graduation at junior colleges and before progressing to upper-level coursework at universities. This is not a difficult test; many contend that the high-school Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) has more advanced math on it. I took the test after not having a math course for 16 years and passed with flying colors. Anyone unable to pass this test has no business teaching children; their comprehension of simple logic is too limited.

Considering the constant bemoaning by conservatives such as Grant about the "dumbing down" of the populace and the "lowering of standards" (usually a code word for an anti-minority stance that defies works of



white males and devalues all others), this opposition would seem the ultimate hypocrisy, and inconsistent with the typical conservative stance. Why in the world would conservatives promote a lowering of requirements, especially with simplistic arguments like "there's no need for them to know" and "there are a lot of good teachers who can't teach because of this one requirement?"

The key can be found in another article about a "cultural index" released by a few "conservative think tanks" (we'll ignore the oxymoron for the moment). Several examples of why conservatives would prefer that the general population be ignorant of basic mathematics are obvious in this index. I'll address just two of the more obvious examples.

In the first example, they note that the AVERAGE SAT score has dropped almost 80 points since 1960; from 975 to 899. Understanding why this is no reason

was an ancient Aztec priest murdering a child to his bloodthirsty deity or the pope today telling his sheep that his deity is offended by birth control, religion is a force of great evil in the world and always has been. I consider it our first priority to create a single document of such intellectual integrity, technical clarity and emotional purity that everyone will be compelled to recognize the Bible for the "mean and sordid little book" that it really is and move it to the fiction section where it belongs.

Get Mad. Get Militant. Get Active. Get Involved.

Permit a small aside, please. We must do whatever it takes to remove the cultural stigma attached to Atheism. Our collective denial of any deistic/demonic beings cannot be used to deny the honor, decency, integrity, or Humanity of our decisions to deny utterly the prime human aberration: superstition. i.e.; Religion. We have just as much a right to observe this Reality and conclude that it exists abinitio, (sans 'god', etc.) as any glass-eyed theist has to grovel and prostitute his/her Mind and Heart to appease his/her fiction.

The noxious and absurd Christian claim that Atheists, et al., are inherently somehow "unmentionen," is as grossly repugnant as it is flagrantly false. It may be that we are just "better" at being decent, caring and genuinely moral humans than they. Theists know this, and have no choice but to dump on us. I for one do not need to have the "creator" of Fleas and Pollution, etc. lecture me on what is decent, honorable, or, above all, Just. We need to remove the lies generated about us and replace them with the truth.

When you consider the horrendous damage done all over the world by those who promote and sell the Bible it has to make you sick in both your Mind and Heart. They simply cannot be allowed to continue to infect an entire species and planet with their monstrous, evil fantasies any longer. We will have to lay on with a will because they have such a head start and have managed to infect millions with pretty, well polished lies, but those who really care about Earth, Humanity and all its creatures and critters must try.



We are on the right track

According to the IRS, in 1986 and 1987 Jerry Falwell's Old Time Gospel Hour, the broadcast ministry of the Thomas Road Baptist Church, raised funds for political purposes. This constitutes a clear violation of their tax-exempt status. As a result, IRS began a four-year investigation of organizations affiliated with Falwell which led to a revocation of the tax-exemptions for these organizations for the two years in question.

It seems Falwell's operations have been trying to work off debts that last year reached over \$37 million at Old Time Gospel Hour and \$73 million at Liberty University. Needless to say, the last thing they could stand is to pay taxes. So, although "guilty as sin", Falwell had to reach an agreement which would restore his tax-exempt status. The settlement amounted to a \$50,000 payment of back taxes for the two years of violations, after which he continued to operate tax-free.

Of course Falwell's endorsement of Republican candidates has been absolutely flagrant. We can only hope for now that this will become a precedent for future actions against his and other religious organizations which endorse candidates and certain stands on political issues. But the struggle will be long and difficult. IRS doesn't want to rock the boat, even when violations are obvious, especially against the power and wealth of the church.

**Atheists of Florida charter member
 Jim Bainbridge lives in Holiday,
 Florida**

Commentary An Atheist Agenda?

— Jim Bainbridge

Christians sell the idea that the Bible is the "Greatest story ever told". As we all know, it is actually the greatest lie ever told. No creator deity authored or inspired or revealed any of it. To quote someone from a few years back when the great buffoon Reagan proclaimed Bible week; "Few people know what a mean and sordid little book it really is." Yet it serves as their shield and buckler; it is the horse they ride when they go about the business of trampling the rights of those who choose to not be pestered by the insipid, moronic rubbish generated by religion. Mark me: NO Atheist/Agnostic or Humanist effort will succeed until the Bible is illuminated once-and-for-all to be the grotesque, absurd lame, pathetic, evil, lying piece of trash that it is. "Somehow, Wilcox or worse", we must rid our species and planet of the odious and degrading notion that humans must grovel to or in any way propitiate any of the hoards of deistic/demonic beings conjured up by the fertile, but demonstrably flawed imaginations of mortal, finite humans.

Evasive confusions and convoluted conundrums

Ed Golly tells me we do not have an "emotional issue". Our appeal is primarily, almost exclusively, to the intellect. Which is only natural given that, as humans, the prime aspect of our sentient humanity is intellect. Some would argue that it is emotion which provides our humanity, but I think not. The essence of empathy is derived from Intellect; the ability to transpose our own precious selves into the dilemma of others. The appeal is to our emotional aspect, but the motive lies in the intellect. Which is not to deny the qualitative relevance of our feelings. Heart and Mind are equal side of the same coin. I only offer that mind is the womb of all evidence and substance of reality.

Ergo, our "emotional issue." I hate being lied to. Few things will make me hotter or burn faster than to be lied to. In "Excalibur," Merlin is asked by Arthur, "What is the most important

quality of my knights?" His answer: "Truth, sire. Above all, truth. When a man lies, he murders a part of the world." I could not agree more. Therefore, our prime function must be to not suffer a lie to live. And there is no greater source of degrading and debilitating lies than religion; especially those spawned by the Christian bible.

Religion is awash in lies. It is saturated with them. From the ludicrous rubbish of Genesis to the tacky Jewish fantasy of revelation, it is clearly a work of pathetic, puny, and provincial human fiction. Its massive and relentless ignorance of the reality we live in is flagrant and readily demonstrable. (We are now in the process of creating an elegant, competent, and effective contradiction to the bible. The goal and intent is to render the power base of those who sell the bible null and void. Wish us luck.)

Yet how those swimming in the ecclesiastical eyewash of Christian dogma clamor to protect their legacy of venomous, putrid, contemptible lies. Why? Because the lies are a buffer between their fragile mortality and the brute, insulting reality of death. How? By wearing carefully fashioned blinkers that interfere with their perspective of reality. How else can one explain the priesthood getting away with such flagrant, violent offenses against Truth and Knowledge? It is our job to remove and destroy their blinkers. As much as anything else, it is the fear inspired pursuit of their fictional, religious fantasies that is responsible for so much of the horror and destruction plaguing our planet and species. (By the way, regardless of what they call themselves, they are all priests).

From birth, our lives are littered with debris spawned by centuries of insulting and degrading lies. And if a lie is the betrayal of truth, religion is the most flagrant betrayer of all. If we, as Atheists / Agnostics / Humanists, etc., have a prime directive, it must be to illuminate the robust fact that the whole of religious doctrine and dogma is a plethora of well polished guesses, clever evasions, and degrading lies. We must make it well nigh impossible for any sane, reasonably literate, sentient human to endorse any deistic/demonic based religious dogma as being anything but moronic rubbish. Whether it

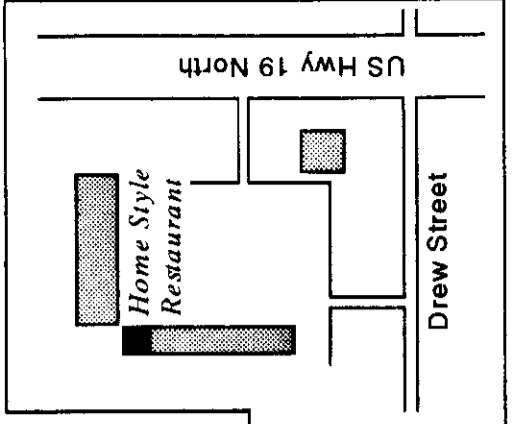
Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI

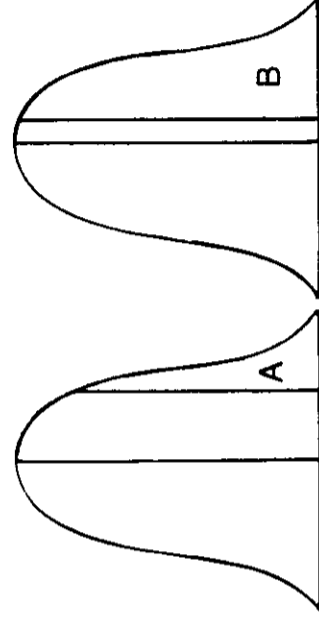
The Miami Chapter will meet **Sunday, April 25** in the Board Room of the Ft. Lauderdale Main Library, 100 South Andrews, beginning at 2:00. One of the Forum programs will be shown. For more information, call the Atheist Hotline at (305) 936-0210.

TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will meet **Saturday, April 17** at 12:30 for lunch and a casual meeting at the **Home Style Restaurant**, located on the northwest corner of US 19 North and Drew Street in Clearwater (see map). Service is buffet style and we will have a table large enough for all of us.



for panic requires knowledge of basic statistical analysis, and how a bell curve operates. Since this is difficult to explain, I've included two graphics to illustrate my point. Curve 1 represents the entire population in 1960. Curve 2 represents the population in 1992. Assume that the average score for the entire population, represented by the center line on both curves, is 800. Section A on curve 1 represents the percentage of the population that took the SAT in 1960. The average of this group is 975 in 1960. Now look at Curve 2. Note that the



Curve 1

Curve 2

percentage of the population that takes the SAT, and goes to college, has increased. According to my Almanac, in 1970 only 10.7 percent of the population had four-year college degrees. In 1991, 21.4 percent did — nearly double in twenty years. Obviously, if the percentage of the population taking the SAT doubles, the average score will decrease **EVEN IF THE AVERAGE FOR THE ENTIRE POPULATION STAYS EXACTLY THE SAME**. Statistics that only talk about average SAT scores are misleading at best, simply lies at worst.

Another example is the statistic on child poverty. In 1960, **THE GOVERNMENT CLASSIFIED 27 percent of children as poor**. By 1970, the number had dropped to 10.4 percent, but by 1991 it had risen to 21.8 percent. The earlier emphasis was to point out that the since the government is classifying them, the government may well change its classifications from time to time, resulting in a greater or lesser number of children that qualify as poor. Since these classifications are usually tied to other indexes (such as inflation or wages), they often

(Continued next page)

provide inconsistent results useful only for political purposes, not realistic portrayals of societal conditions.

Even worse are statistics used to advance the religionist agenda by psychology studies. One example is an article by Michael Schwartzman that originally appeared in *Child Magazine* claiming that fantasy figures actually help children. He used the Santa Claus myth as an example, that rewards the child who curbs the impulse to be "naughty" and behaves. What this really teaches kids is simplistic, unquestioning obedience to authority to gain rewards; as opposed to rational reasons for avoiding certain behaviors through independent reasoning. Another example is the Tooth Fairy, who compensates the children for loss and rewards them for getting older; implying that life is always fair and everything must require a reward. Hardly a realistic view, but good preparation for indoctrinating the idea of a "heavenly reward." No doubt Mr. Schwartzman listed religious belief as one of the positive traits this fantasizing aids.



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Video Available

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Please indicate date of meeting: _____

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Of Cross and Gallows...

Hangmen of England

—review by Patrick Bens

There is in existence somewhere, although I cannot remember where I came across it many years ago, a tale describing the adventures of some Christian sealers whose ship was wrecked on a remote and unknown island, and who set out to explore it in some trepidation lest it be inhabited by hostile savages or, worse still, cannibals. The first thing they set eyes on as they moved inland was the rotting corpse of a man hanging on a gibbet.



Nothing could have given them greater relief or comfort, for it proved that Christians had been there before." Thus begins Bailey's well documented book about the hangmen or executioners whose duty to their King or Queen (the head of the Church of England) it was to execute criminals as well as many innocent men, women and children.

I got a kick out of reading about the Earl of Sandwich, whose mistress was shot dead by a jealous clergyman, who got the rope. Another clergyman was hanged for forgery. No mercy from the Head of the Church of England for him either...

When I came to the part where one executioner gives a scientific account of a perfect hanging technique, I felt like he intended to teach a few tricks to the do-it-yourselfers. You will agree with me that these how-to tips make Dr. Kevorkian look like an amateur.

England's hangmen were as popular as its kings and Queens. Their names turned up in children's games as frequently as today's sports heroes' names wrap candy bars.

It shocked me to learn from this book that Margaret Thatcher lobbied to bring back the death penalty by hanging. And in my opinion, if the allegory of Al Gore and Bill Clinton does not succeed, hung men like Pat Robertson will gain more clout. And how will Pat punish blasphemy? You will undoubtedly think, "Well, oh yes, this book is all about medieval stuff: hanging is a barbaric method of execution during the Dark Ages." Well, the Dark Ages aren't over yet, because the last man officially hanged for his crimes was hanged no sooner than 1993 in that other Christian nation—the USA.

Hanging by the neck until death was introduced to the English by the Romans around the time that the Romans were introduced to the teachings of the Savior J.C. The Christian Kings decided early on to use decapitation as a means to silence their political opponents and critics. The book has many illustrations and

happens to be an alcoholic father who murdered his whole family, the kid who nicked the bread or a fourteen year old girl who farted in the presence of her boss. They all were strung up, — without mercy from their Christian Sovereign, the Head of the Church of England. No mercy, only Christian revenge.