

Atheists of Florida
 P.O. Box 130753
 Tampa, FL 33681

Redux (continued from front page)

informed or do not want their child to become the center of controversy.

I know of teachers who are teaching intelligent design at public schools, but because I am not a parent I have no standing.

Children see God on our money, our buildings, and in many other places, but to have them learn about the supernatural in a science class is very scary. What is happening in Dover, Pennsylvania, and Gull Lake, Michigan, should send a message to the Atheists of Florida that it is only going to get worse—much worse—unless schools do something about it now.

Michael Harvey contributed to this article.

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Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

TAMPA BAY: Pinellas County—First Sunday of each odd-numbered month (Jan., Mar., etc.) 1:30. Due to holidays and outreach events, no more meetings at the library for the remainder of 2005. Members will be notified of special events, including the outdoor event planned for November 6.

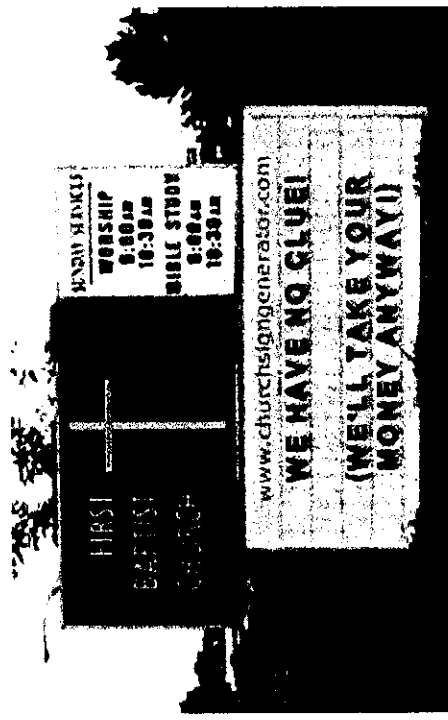
Tampa—First Sunday of each even-numbered month, 1:30-4:30. Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa.

Dinners follow all meetings at nearby cafeterias.
 FMI: Ed Golly, 813/835-1500, AthALF@aol.com.

Big Deal! Free CD—to all first-time attendees of any Tampa Bay chapter meeting, of a debate between Dan Barker, former minister turned atheist, and Jason Gastrich, Christian host of a weekly Internet Web program. This discussion covers many of the common foundational arguments of the Christian belief system, and Barker destroys them all.

Miami: Every week on Tuesdays at 6:30
 The Field Irish Pub
 3281 Griffin Road Dania Beach, FL 33312

Go Public: A of F needs to be more forthright in asking members and other possible donors to donate funds to the organization. If churches can do it, so should we!



If the love of money is the root of all evil, why do preachers want so much of it?

Scopes Redux?

—Jim Strayer

THE SCHOOL BOARD IN DOVER, PENNSYLVANIA, is using the issue of intelligent design to change the scientific standards of their science classes, and possibly Florida's science classes. Here in Florida, Governor Jeb Bush has appointed Cheri Pierson Yecke as K-12 Educational Chancellor. She has stated that she believes alternative theories to evolution should be taught in public schools. She apparently has no concept of how a scientific theory is determined. It took years for science to work out the best ways to do scientific research and how to verify that research to escape the superstitions of the past. Because scientists have found that the scientific method works, an explanation of it can be found in almost any science book at any level. That is why the school board in Dover wants a supplemental text introduced into their system. The book, *Of Pandas and People*, by Kenyon and Davis, supports intelligent design, but does not meet scientific standards. It has been reviewed by many scientists and science teachers. It is obvious that this book has no data to support intelligent design and therefore there is no hypothesis or theory. Still, the Dover policy is to require the teachers to read a statement that intelligent design differs from Darwin's view and refers students to the intelligent design textbook. The supporters of ID say that, "Intelligent Design is simply the science of design detection." What they say is that the natural world is too complicated to have evolved without some guiding supernatural force (God) and as long as there are some unknowns in science it must be true.

Intelligent design would allow chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, and biology to introduce the "unknown" into scientific research. No longer would testable experimentation be required; it would have to look as though there was a designer. That is the goal of the Dover school board and that is why the nation is watching this case with so much interest. Intelligent design is just the way to get the supernatural (God) accepted in the public school system. It would mean that school boards and even individual teachers could change scientific standards; it seeks to discredit scientific facts. Using the scientific method means that observations will be made with our senses and technical equipment. Then data will be collected and a hypothesis will be formed based on testable evidence. Scientists report their findings in scientific journals so that their methodology and data are available to other scientists. Experiments and observations must be repeatable—that is, the reporting scientist and any scientist who repeats the experiment must get the same results, or else the data are suspect.

All of that would be changed if a testable hypothesis is not necessary. Anyone could use their superstitions to "explain" what was designed and how often the designer interceded in the process. All they need to say is that it is "too mysterious" for scientists to understand.

The people testifying for the parents who brought the case against the school board have done a superb job. They have shown that ID is not science and that the organizations that support ID have an agenda of getting the supernatural into public schools. I believe that they have shown that it would be unthinkable to have different standards in the public school level than at the college and university level.

At this time the judge has not ruled. Imagine what will happen if this case goes to the Supreme Court with the new Bush appointees. The Dover case is not the only important intelligent design case that is being watched. There are others that come up from time to time, but one of the most serious is taking place in Gull Lake, Michigan. This case is similar to the Dover case. They use the same text, *Of Pandas and People*, and the same Christian law group, the Thomas More Law Center, to defend intelligent design creationism. The reason this case is different is because two science teachers have been teaching ID. The administration is backing them and it was only because of a parent of one of the students that this case is being investigated. It looks like more law suits will be filed.

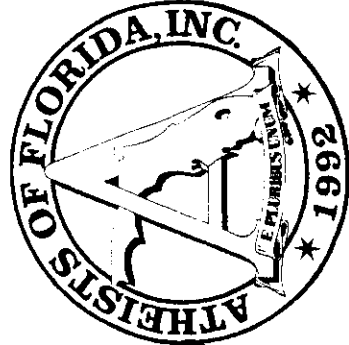
I have been dealing with the creationist crowd for years. This swing toward the very young is much more serious than the "Crusades for Christ" that has representatives on almost all college and university campuses, and the debates that the religious right is able to set up almost any time. In my discussions with other atheists I find a lack of interest in what the religious right is doing in the public school systems in other states. The three top educational people in Florida, Jeb Bush, John Winn, and Cheri Pierson Yecke, sidestep questions about intelligent design with the comment that Florida has more important educational issues to face.

I am sure that the religious right knows where they stand on the issue. Any teacher in Florida can introduce the concept of a supreme being into any science class, and unless the administration or a parent complains, nothing will stop them. Many administrators would support the teacher, but others could be fearful of what would happen if they attack the issue. Most parents are not well (continued on back page)

For centuries, theologians have been explaining the unknowable in terms of the not-worth-knowing.

—H.L. Mencken

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Strayer's series *The Solution is Evolution* will continue in the next newsletter. Strayer is a retired biology teacher living with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea, Florida.

They never seem to go away, these myths about Charles Darwin. If they were stories about the goodness of his character or his work I am sure they would have died long ago, but they are not, and I am sure that they will not. The most blatant myth is that Darwin recanted his beliefs on evolution on his deathbed. The deathbed conversion myth is so effective

THE SOLUTION IS EVOLUTION

No. 28—Charles Darwin—The

Deathbed Myth

—Jim Strayer



that it still exists today: it is an excellent example of an urban myth. Lady Hope, the widow of Admiral of the Fleet Sir James Hope, an evangelist, is

given credit by most historians for starting the myth. It was printed in several publications after Darwin's death, including the Boston *Watchman Examiner*. Even as late as 1955, it appeared in the *Reformation Review*.

Probably the most shameless version was written in a book by the Christian author, Oswald J. Smith, *The Challenge of Life*. In it he quotes Lady Hope giving a vivid description of the deathbed conversion. Smith says that Lady Hope of Northfield, England, is a wonderful Christian woman who was often at Darwin's bedside before he died. Lady Hope states that Darwin often read from Genesis and declared that Darwin said that when he was young he had unformed ideas, and that he wished he had not expressed his theory of evolution. She claimed he spoke of Jesus Christ and His salvation.

These lies are perpetuated on many Christian sites on the Internet. They are of the same ilk as e-mail hoaxes. It is more difficult to find the truth on the Internet. The truth is that Darwin's daughter, Henrietta, wrote in the *Christian* in February 1922, "I was present at his death bed, Lady Hope was not present during his last illness, or any illness. I believe he never even saw her, but in any case she had no influence over him in any department of thought or belief. He never recanted any of his scientific views, either then or earlier. We think the story of his conversion was fabricated in the U.S.A....the whole story has no foundation whatever."

The editors of the *Christian* agreed with Dar-

win's daughter, and added: "Many who follow the investigations of Charles Darwin would have been glad to learn that some higher power claimed his soul. If there is no evidence that such was the case, it is well that the facts should be known."

One of the reasons that this myth has been able to survive is because his autobiography was posthumously censored by his wife and one of his sons. Their deletions were about neighbors, friends, and religion. It is assumed that they thought it would bring dishonor to his memory. However, when his granddaughter, Nora Barlow, happened upon Darwin's original autobiography and discovered what had happened, she had it published in its entirety in 1958. This is one passage from his uncensored autobiography revealing his true thoughts on Christianity:

"Thus belief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress, and have never since doubted even for a single second that my conclusion was correct. I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all of my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine."

The above quote sums up Darwin's stance on Christianity, but the following quote has much meaning in the politics of education in our time and is possibly the reason that the myth was started:

"Nor must we overlook the probability of the constant incalculable in belief in God on the minds of children producing so strong and perhaps an inherited effect on their brains not yet fully developed, that it would be as difficult for them to throw off their belief in God, as for a monkey to throw off their fear and hatred of snakes."

It would seem that the thoughts and writing of someone who is healthy in body and mind would be more accurate than the words of someone who had never met Charles Darwin. It does not matter to the people who create the myths; what matters is that often the myth is believed and the truth is not.

What is indeed puzzling and somewhat ironic, is that these myths are created, propagated, and perpetuated, by a group of people whose sacred religious tenets include admonishments against bearing false witness in several places within their holy writ.

Former Atheist out FOXed by Atheists of Florida Vice President on television!

As many of our readers might already know, our very own Brent Yaciw appeared on national television October 12th on the FOX News network where he faced-off with former atheist turned Christian—William Murray. If that name rings a bell, it's because he is the son of the late, great, and infamous atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair.

LETTERS



The pay must be infinitely better as a skill for Bronze Age superstition. Following is viewer commentary.

Sent via email from: TheHondaboy

Just saw one of your members on Fox News. I really thought it was fantastic. It just made me smile how he had this smirk on his face like he was well educated, and then continued to make unsubstantiated claims like, "Research shows." What research? Whose research? What is even better is that he claimed he was paying for the buildings and food in churches across the nation. Interesting...But absolutely the best thing I heard was when the gentleman, a member of a large atheist organization, that recruits members to it's fold and tries to convince others of it's own beliefs, much like a religion you might even say, proclaimed to say that people who buy into an organized religion (aka set of beliefs) were ignorant. How rich is that? Pretty ironic don't you think? Have a good day. Thanks for making Mine a little brighter! —N. Brown, MPA.

Vice President Yaciw responds:

Read it and weep, the facts are pretty clear: As I've always suspected from my experience, religion's claim of making a better society is false. No doubt, any relief is better than none, but the idea that the government should be promoting religion is what's absurd - and the idea that religion promotes a better society is akin to claiming the KKK (a religious organization, in fact) promotes tolerance! I'm sorry your ignorance of the research below caused you to jump to the conclusion it didn't exist; perhaps, before writing letters that expose your lack of knowledge, you might try some research of your own next time. If you had, you might have discovered that atheism is a lack of belief, that the Atheists of Florida promotes no specific belief but merely fights discrimination with a religious basis, and that atheists in general are more educated than the average citizen. But then, that would have required thinking for yourself, something churches discourage. Following is the web link to the primary research source: <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRSJ2000512005-11.html>

We welcome correspondence from readers. Address mail to: Atheists of Florida P.O. Box 130753 Tampa, FL 33681 Or email us at: AtheistForum@aol.com

The refining effects of religion

Sent via email from: James Shelwig

I just saw one of your representatives on Fox News. The assertions he made bordered on lunacy. I wonder what any of you would have done had you experienced the devastation that many did in Port Charlotte, Punta Gorda, the Parhandle, etc. last year, and your only choice for drinking water, food, shelter, etc. was in a church, or a shelter run by an organization such as the Salvation Army. Guess you'd all have starved (not a bad thought at that). Setting forth an agenda (as he did) is akin to saying that Charlie Rangel speaks for the Democratic Party. If he is the best you can do, we have no worries. Thank God (yep, I can still say that) that you don't speak for all Floridians (of which I am one).

A of F member Michael Harvey responds:

Once again, people like this miss the point. Our show, activist efforts, and Brent Yaciw's appearance are merely an attempt to provide some balance to public debate and to stir controversy such that the populace will not uncritically accept Bronze Age beliefs and tribal folklore as prima facie "evidence" of the existence of a so-called supreme being: in addition to, keeping church and state separate which benefits everyone, regardless of their "beliefs" or lack thereof.

Philosophical clarification

The Following letter is in response to a phone conversation between the letter writer and Chairman Golly.

Hi Ed:

I just wanted to recap some of my thoughts to you: Why I don't call myself an atheist: The definition of an atheist is a person who is without god. This places me in the untenable position of being without something that doesn't exist. The word atheist is a religious term, therefore it's ok for a religious person to refer to me as an atheist but it is not ok for me to refer to myself as an atheist. I refer to myself as a non-believer. No belief-system guides my life. As you know, atheists/non-believers do not believe. We think. Man Worship: The one thing the Jew/Christian/Muslim religions share more than anything else is patriarchy. At the top of their religious structures is a male deity. Genderized religion has done far more harm than good to the human species. The harm manifests itself in the form of sexism, racism and violence. This harm is particularly evident in the believers of the naked, abused, bloody, dead, white male body on the cross. I enjoyed talking with earlier this week. I hope to hear more about the good work of the Tampa Bay Atheists. Stay in touch.

—Dave Crockett, Maryland

Victory For Public Education

TALLAHASSEE—The Florida Supreme Court decided the first week of January to strike down the state's school voucher program.

"This is an important victory for public education and church-state separation," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "Now the state legislature can devote its attention to improving public education rather than subsidizing religious and other private schools. The children of Florida deserve the very best public schools the state can provide. Taxpayer dollars should be spent in public schools, not private religious academies."

The Florida high court, voting 5-2, struck down the state's "Opportunity Scholarship Program," holding that it violates a section of the Florida Constitution requiring a uniform system of free public schools.

Americans United co-sponsored the Bush v. Holmes lawsuit along with its allies in the public education and civil liberties communities.

Opponents of the voucher program asserted that the scheme ran afoul of the "uniform public schools" provision of Florida Constitution, as well as its church-state separation provisions. Although lower state courts cited the church-state provisions, the Florida Supreme Court did not rule on that subject, saying it was not unnecessary to address that issue since the plan was unconstitutional under the "uniform" provision.

Florida legislators passed the voucher law in 1999 at the behest of Gov. Jeb Bush. The program provides vouchers for private school tuition for students enrolled in public schools deemed "failing." More than half of the participating private schools in the voucher plan are religious.

In its decision, the Florida high court noted that parents retain the right to educate their children as they see fit.

"Our decision does not deny parents recourse to either public or private school alternatives to a failing school," declared the court majority. "Only when the private school option depends upon public funding is choice limited."

Texas pastor electrocuted during baptism

WACO, TEXAS—A pastor performing a baptism was electrocuted inside his church one Sunday morning last October after adjusting a nearby microphone while standing in water, a church employee said. The Rev. Kyle Lake, 33, was stepping into the baptistry as he reached out for the microphone, which produced an electric shock. Water in a baptistry usually reaches above the waist. Lake was pronounced dead at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center, nursing supervisor Pat

Mahl said. The woman being baptized apparently had not stepped into the water and was not seriously injured.

Pastors at University Baptist Church routinely use a microphone during baptisms, said Jamie Dudley, the wife of Ben Dudley and a business administrator at the church. "He was grabbing the microphone so everyone could hear," she said. "It's the only way you can be loud enough." About 800 people attended the morning service, which was larger than normal because it was homecoming weekend at nearby Baylor University, Dudley said. Lake had been at the church for nine years, the last seven as pastor. He had a wife, Jennifer, a 5-year-old daughter and two 3-year-old sons.

Statement on Intelligent Design endorsed by 3,739 Brights

Various school boards and communities in the United States are trying to introduce Intelligent Design (ID) into public school science classes. ID advocates may, by and large, believe ID to be scientifically credible. Then again, perhaps some of the proponents are trying to essentially surreptitious means to introduce religious beliefs into science programs. Whatever the impetus, the ID endeavor disregards the definition of science and must be rejected. Intelligent Design has no valid place in a science curriculum. It is not science. Science deals empirically with reality. In fact, central to scientific method is that its ideas about the natural world can be tested, replicated, and verified. Unlike science's account of the evolution of life on earth, the ID explanation postulates ideas that can not be observed or confirmed. By looking upon a designer as necessary to account for the origin and development of life, ID breaches science as a discipline.

The scientific process, with its rigorous methods of confirmation, is the best means to understanding our world, and no nation can expect to fare well if its citizens are confused about or misinformed in science. The Intelligent Design movement presents an impediment to educating students for our scientifically-oriented world. It is a grievous threat to the academic integrity of education.

Who are the *Brights*? These individuals are part of an international Internet constituency of individuals with a naturalistic worldview. *Brights* stand on the side of the fruits of reason and science as first presented to the world during the Enlightenment.

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Astrology would be considered a scientific theory if judged by the same criteria used by a well-known advocate of Intelligent Design to justify his claim that ID is science, a landmark US trial heard in late October.

Under cross examination, ID

Astrology is scientific theory—courtroom told

NewScientist.com news service—Celeste Blever

proponent Michael Behe, a biochemist at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, admitted his definition of "theory" was so broad it would also include astrology.

The trial is pitting 11 parents from the small town of Dover, Pennsylvania, against their local school board. The board voted to read a statement during a biology class that casts doubt on Darwinian evolution and suggests ID as an alternative.

The parents claim this was an attempt to introduce creationism into the curriculum and that the school board members were motivated by their evangelical Christian beliefs. It is illegal to teach anything with a primarily religious purpose or effect on pupils in government-funded US schools.

Supporters of ID believe that some things in nature are simply too complex to have evolved by natural selection, and therefore must be the work of an intelligent designer.

Peer review

Behe was called to the stand by the defense, and testified that ID was a scientific theory, and was not "committed" to religion. His cross examination by the plaintiffs' attorney, Eric Rothschild of the Philadelphia law firm Pepper Hamilton, began the following afternoon.

Rothschild told the court that the US National Academy of Sciences supplies a definition for what constitutes a scientific theory:

"Theory: In science, a well-substantiated explanation of some aspect of the natural world that can incorporate facts, laws, inferences, and tested hypotheses." Because ID has been rejected by virtually every scientist and science organization, and has never once passed the muster of a peer-reviewed journal paper, Behe admitted that the controversial theory would not be included in the NAS definition. "I can't point to an external community that would agree that this was well substantiated," he said.

Behe said he had come up with his own "broader" definition of a theory, claiming that this more accurately describes the way theories are actually used by scientists. "The word is used a lot more loosely than the NAS defined it," he says.

Hypothesis or theory?

Rothschild suggested that Behe's definition was so loose that astrology would come under this definition as well. He also pointed out that Behe's definition of theory was almost identical to the NAS's definition of a hypothesis. Behe agreed with both assertions.

The exchange prompted laughter from the court, which was packed with local members of the public and the school board.

Behe maintains that ID is science: "Under my definition, scientific theory is a proposed explanation which points to physical data and logical inferences."

"You've got to admire the guy. It's Daniel in the lion's den," says Robert Slade, a local retiree who has been attending the trial because he is interested in science. "But I can't believe he teaches a college biology class."

The trial is expected to finish on 4 November.

Editors note: It would seem that "Professor" Behe, like all advocates of "ID" wish to have it both ways. They want the freedom to redefine scientific terms and concepts but without the accountability and responsibility of peer review.

Voters oust School Board

DOVER, PA.—Voters came down hard election day on school board members who backed a statement on intelligent design being read in biology class, ousting eight Republicans and replacing them with Democrats who want the concept stripped from the science curriculum. The election unfolded amid a landmark federal trial involving the Dover public schools and the question of whether intelligent design promotes the Bible's view of creation.

Eight Dover families sued, saying it violates the constitutional separation of church and state. Dover's school board adopted a policy in October 2004 that requires ninth-graders to hear a prepared statement about intelligent design before learning about evolution in biology class.

Eight of the nine school board members were up for re-election. They were challenged by a slate of Democrats who argued that science class was not the appropriate forum for teaching intelligent design. "My kids believe in God. I believe in God. But I don't think it belongs in the science curriculum the way the school district is presenting it," said Jill Reiter, 41, a bank teller who joined a group of high school students waving signs supporting the challengers.

A spokesman for the winning slate of candidates has said they wouldn't act hastily and would consider the outcome of the court case.

The judge expects to rule by January; the new school board members will be sworn in Dec. 5.

School board member David Napierskie, who lost, said the vote wasn't just about ideology. He maintained that evolution contains inexplicable "gaps." A similar controversy has erupted in Kansas, where the state Board of Education this month approved science standards for public schools that cast doubt on the theory of evolution. The 6-4 vote was a victory for intelligent design advocates who helped draft the standards.

It's hear it for Protestant fundamentalists (American variety) yet again. Was there ever a more pragmatic bunch? After centuries of howling No Popery and denouncing the Whore of Rome, they're now trying to give us a US Supreme Court that will, in the probable event of Alito's confirmation, boast no less than five Roman Catholics, a clear majority: in order of arrival on the bench: Scalia, Kennedy, Thomas, Roberts and, most likely, Alito. You can see why the conserva-

Holy Alito! Not as crazy as Scalia, but just as bad

—Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair
COUNTERPUNCH
November 2, 2005 (Reprinted with permission)

There's

no doubt that Alito is vehemently opposed to any woman's right to choose. As his 90-year-old mother Rose snapped at reporters the day Bush nominated him, "Of course he's against abortion." In 1986, Alito helped write an opinion that employers could legally fire AIDS victims because of a "fear of contagion, whether reasonable or not." Alito honed a new edge to the notion of strict constructionism by arguing that the employers were justified in so doing because discrimination based on insufficient medical knowledge was not prohibited by federal laws protecting the disabled. In other words, irrational popular hysteria (that for example you could get AIDS from touching a door knob also touched by an AIDS victim) was in Alito's view an entirely sound basis for breaching legal protections. Years later Alito was still de-

fending this position, saying that the tide of science may have subverted the hysteria but nonetheless it hadn't shaken "our belief in the rightness of our opinion." Somewhat in the same vein, in 2001 Alito wrote a majority Appeals court opinion striking down a public school policy prohibiting harassment against gay students. Alito bluffly tore down the policy, saying it interfered with the First Amendment rights of other students to engage in "simple acts of teasing and name calling."

In 2003, when Alito was serving on what the Washington Post bizarrely describes as "the left-leaning" Third Circuit, he actually managed to outflank Judge Michael Chertoff from the right. Chertoff, (now director of Homeland Security and noted defender of torture and of holding so-called enemy combatants, without access to attorneys or judicial review) wrote a majority opinion in *Doc v. Groody* ruling that a search warrant should be confined only to the person named on that warrant.

Alito brushed such pettifogging notions aside, arguing for the minority opinion that the cops (in this case in Schuylkill county, PA) would be severely hampered if they had to interpret any search warrant in its written terms, rather than having the power to infer that such warrants gave police the power to search anyone else with the misfortune to be in the vicinity. In the case under consideration, the Schuylkill police had searched not only the suspect but also a mother and her 10-year-old daughter who lived in the same house. Also in 2003 Alito wrote a majority opinion approving the conditions for probation laid down by the state of Delaware on a man who had pled guilty to possession of child pornography, said conditions being his agreement to undergo random polygraph tests.

It's a prime function of the so-called "left-leaning" Third Circuit to attend to the interests of big business, massed in its Delaware corporate enclave. Here Alito joined Roberts in his deference to the Money Power, slashing away at the ability of stockholders to launch class action suits, or employees to litigate against racist treatment. In all, Judge Alito has issued 700 opinions, most of them on business/labor issues. All of these have been, in the opinion of the US Chamber of Commerce, home runs for the Business Team.

In 2001 Alito wrote a majority opinion striking down an EPA order mandating that the W.R. Grace Company clean up drinking water that its fertilizer plant had poisoned in Lansing, Michigan. Alito said the EPA lacked a rational basis for imposing such a costly burden on the company.

In a 1997 Appeals Court dissent Alito argued that a black housekeeping manager from Martroit, who claimed she'd been passed over for promotion for racial reasons, had no standing. To allow her to sue, Alito, wrote, was to allow "disgruntled employees to impose the cost of trial on employers who, although they have not acted with the intent to discriminate, may have treated their employees unfairly."

Alito's 1991 Appeals Court minority opinion on abortion has been widely publicized, and rightly so. The issue before the Appeals Court was the constitutionality of a Pennsylvania law saying that a woman had to inform her spouse of an impending abortion.

The actual case concerned a woman terrified that her abusive partner would beat her up if she so informed him. Alito's arguments were rejected by US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor who staked out her own ground with a tart dismissal: "The state may not give to a man the kind of dominion over his wife that parents exercise over their children."

Liberals now girding themselves for a showdown over the nomination have an inconvenient skeleton to deal with. When New Jersey's two Democratic senators—Bradley and Lautenberg—glowingly ("an accomplished and distinguished lawyer") presented Alito to their colleagues on the Senate Judiciary committee in April 1990, the room hummed with good vibrations.

Kennedy warmly praised President George H. W. Bush's nominee, and said he was "sure" Alito would be a successful judge. Though they had his record in the Solicitor General's office and as US Attorney before them the committee only asked Alito four questions, before voting to confirm. One of these piercing interrogatories went to Alito's 4-year-old son, coyly (this was Kennedy) asking whether the lad thought his father was judicial timber. The Democrats claim they're going to battle Alito down to the wire, but the recent Roberts nomination casts a shadow over this pledge. Senator Leahy of Vermont, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, voted for Roberts and so did that hero of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, Feingold of Wisconsin. So if any effective undermining of Alito's nomination is to take place, it will probably come from Republican moderates, the political grouping that has no appetite for a knock-down fight on abortion. Bush needs just such a showdown, to give him a stronger political profile amid his current woes.

The Democrats have Choice as almost their sole remaining issue and money raiser. But the Republican moderates who have to face the voters in the mid-term elections next year know that this issue could mean the difference between victory and defeat. A majority of the American people have no desire to abolish a woman's right to choose.

Mark Twain Scholarship Fund 2005 Fundraising Campaign

Following is the most recent list of 2005 donors.

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Just in case, gentle reader, you are still uncertain with regards to the true ideological motivation and willful ignorance underlying the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, following are some entertaining and enlightening quotes from the leading advocates of ID.

Michael Behe—Discovery Institute:

But a Darwinist cannot invoke angels adding staples to traps, because the angels are on OUIR side.

Direct from the Horses...

I'm not trying to smuggle religion in. Just because the conclusions have theological implications doesn't mean they follow from theological premises.

The fact that the theory's explanation is mystical, is beside the point.

William Dembski—Discovery Institute:

An object that is designed functions within certain constraints. ... Transgress those constraints, and we as well as our society will suffer. There is plenty of empirical evidence to suggest that many of the attitudes and behaviors our society promotes undermine human flourishing. Design promises to reinvigorate that ethical stream running from Aristotle through Aquinas known as natural law.

Phillip Johnson—Discovery Institute:

Our strategy has been to change the subject a bit so that we can get the issue of intelligent design, which really means the reality of God, before the academic world and into the schools. (American Family Radio, Jan 10, 2003 broadcast, in which Johnson discusses his book 'The Right Questions', encouraging Christians to actively debate issues of eternal value.)

Fund Raising Raffle

Here's how you can help the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund continue to provide this year's four \$500 and four \$300 grants to the winning essay contestants, along with a free copy of Bertrand Russell's book, *Why I am Not a Christian* to all applicant students. This beautiful solid wood Barrister bookcase, designed and hand crafted by Twain Fund founder Christos Tzanetakos, is being raffled. Tickets are \$5 each and can be purchased by sending \$5 for each ticket to the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, 3120 N A-1-A #503-South, N. Hutchinson Island, FL 34949-8874. The winning ticket will be drawn at the Tampa Bay Chapter of Atheists of Florida meeting scheduled for January 8, 2006. Winner will be notified by phone and winner's name will be posted on our Web site. Please be as generous as you can.

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