

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

TAMPA BAY: Last Saturday of each month except October, Noon-1:30, Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Meeting Room A.
Third Wednesday of each month, 7-8:30 pm, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa, Community Room.
 FMI: Ed Golly, 813/839-7567, AthALFLE@aol.com.

PALM BEACH: Meetings are held the **third Sunday** of each month at 2:30pm in Jupiter. Members notified by postcard. For driving directions or more information, call Charles Schisler 561/627-6340 or 561-624-9359.

Alliance *continued from page 1*

What attracted, and continues to attract members is the Alliance's fully democratic structure and its grassroots purpose of helping to build strong atheist-humanist-freethought organizations in every state.

The Alliance has always been eager to work in coalition with other freethought groups. The most recent effort has been the formation of the Coalition of the Community of Reason in September, 2000. It brings together Atheist Alliance, American Humanist Association, Council for Secular Humanism, Campus Freethought Alliance, Secular Student Alliance, American Ethical Union, North American Committee for Humanism, and Internet Infidels.

The Atheist Alliance has published *Secular Nation* quarterly since 1995. In mid-2000, the ATHEOS (Greek for *without god*) Media Group was formed as the publishing arm of the Alliance. Its first venture, aside from *Secular Nation*, has been publishing the annually updated *Freethought Directory*. More publications are planned.

The Alliance also sponsors the very successful Atheist TV Outreach Project, producing videos for public access TV stations across the country.

DADE&BROWARD: Third Sunday of each month, 2:00 alternating between Broward County Main Library, 100 S. Andrews Ave., Ft. Lauderdale, or Biscayne Cafeteria, 147 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables. Meeting notifications and activities available in *NEWSNOTES*, a monthly publication mailed to all active Dade&Broward chapter members.
 FMI: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441.

ORLANDO: Meetings scheduled for the **first Sunday** of each month at the Orange County Public Library, 101 E Central Blvd, 3rd Floor, DOWNTOWN ORLANDO, 1:00pm. FMI: Jennifer Gallo, 407/281-6824. AOF_Orlando@aol.com

Beginning this year, the Alliance is adding an Individual Member category, allowing atheist-humanist-freethinkers to join as individuals. The Alliance board will offer a proposal at this convention to add Individual Membership representatives to the board. If we work together, a Secular Era will indeed dawn.

—EG with contribution from *Sue Garland of the Atlanta Freethought News* and *Victoria McCoy.*

Newsfiles *continued from page 6*

analysis by accessing Online Sunshine, the official web site of the Florida Legislature. This voucher bill proposes to take money from public schools attended by nearly 90% of the state's students, and give it directly to private and religious schools. Since approximately 85% of the students receiving vouchers nationwide attend religious schools, this amounts to government-funded religion.

Under HB 0303, more than 140,000 students would be eligible for \$3,000 in tax money. The proposal would excuse schools accepting S.C.R.I.P.T. vouchers from admitting special education students. Moreover, the private and religious schools would remain exempt from most civil rights laws. For example, the schools receiving voucher payment could continue to discriminate on the basis of gender and religion in admissions. And the bill provides that the vouchers would continue throughout the student's education even if the overcrowding dilemma was resolved at the public school.

Urge your state representative and senator to OPPOSE HB 0271 and HB 0303.

10 March 2000



P.O. Box 130753
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Volume IX No. 7
 March, 2001

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of state and church

Sponsor of the MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, Incorporated
 A Member Society of Atheist Alliance International, the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies
 www.atheistalliance.org/florida

Atlanta Freethought Society to host AAI Convention

ATLANTA—ATLANTA FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY is proud to be hosting the convention of the Atheist Alliance International in Atlanta on April 13th—15th.

For those of you not familiar with the Atheist Alliance, this group is a consortium of independent, democratically run freethinking groups spread throughout the nation, with some international members as well. It is unique in that it is a totally member-run organization with no paid staff. Each group that joins has one vote on the Board of Directors, and convention-goers will all have the opportunity to attend the Board meeting. Please visit the Web site at <http://www.atheistalliance.org/> for more information, or see the flyer enclosed in this newsletter.

AAI has been a member of AAI for several years and by accepting the opportunity to be the host group of the convention, will be able to contribute to the success of this important network of rationalist groups. In addition, AFS will split the net profits from the meeting, which will be used to help offset the expenses of the new AFS Center.

The registration fee for attending the convention is \$170 if purchased by April 1st. This covers costs for the speakers, meals, meeting facilities and other expenses. There are also less costly convention registration packages available for those who do not wish to attend all the functions.

Some convention highlights: Friday night Banquet speaker—**Robert G. Ingersoll**. Additional speakers—**Edwin Kagin, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Herb Silverman, Eddie Tabash, Norm Allen, Jr., Dan Barker, and Dr. Paul Kurtz**.

Please plan to participate in this exciting undertaking by AFS and the Atheist Alliance in as many ways as possible—let's make this national meeting a huge success for AFS and the cause of rationalism in the world.

Atheist Alliance International began in Los Angeles 1991 under the leadership of **Jack Massen**. From the initial four member societies in the United States and one each in India and Finland. Altogether, the societies represent about 4,000 atheists. In addition, the Alliance has formed a collaborative relationship with *La Libre Pensée*, the national freethought organization in France. A jointly sponsored international conference is being planned for 2002 in Paris.

continued on back page

Religion tax implemented

'Faith-based' details show true intent
 As president-select Bush formed the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives practically his first day in office, details of the social service programs began to immediately raise eyebrows.

Slapping Madison, Jefferson, and the "Founding Fathers' crowd in the face by instituting his "faith-based initiative," Dubya's program will naturally include religious content—such as Bible reading—as long as the taxpayer money was only used for lights, chairs or other non religious expenses, administration officials claimed as they released details of the plan they will send to Congress.

Notably lacking were any particulars concerning how specific use of taxpayer funds would be monitored given that churches constantly demand exclusion from government audit.

"America is now reaping the harvest of epidemic secularism that was unleashed during the Clinton years. The social disasters that worry almost all Americans have their roots in the ruthless extirpation of faith in public life." —G. W. Bush

Let's face it. It's nothing short of a religion tax designed to pump billions of secular tax dollars into the coffers of religion, and the "socially preferred" religions at that. The administration acknowledged that clients of faith-based programs may be encouraged to convert to a particular faith, even though no federal dollars go to buy Bibles or crosses. But if a church now spends a dollar to provide after-school proselytizing and receives a tax dollar for the same purpose, why can't it spend its original dollar now to buy a Bible?

The concept is not exactly anything new. In 1996, Senator John Ashcroft—now Attorney General—attached without any notice an amendment, which was intended to gut the First Amendment's Establishment Clause, to the welfare reform bill.

Ashcroft's amendment, known as the "charitable choice" provision (closely related to

see **TAX**, page 5

"Man is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a flea, and yet he will be making Gods by the dozens." —Montaigne



www.atheistalliance.org/florida

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Membership dues

- Life Member \$ 500.00
- Sustaining 50.00 yr
- Couple 40.00 yr
- Individual 30.00 yr
- Student 20.00 yr
- Limited Income 10.00 yr
- Newsletter 10.00 yr

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WE HUMANS SEEM TO GET great joy in comparing things. We do it in sports, music, intelligence, and even with living things.

Of course, we put ourselves at the top and then compare the lower forms with each other. Hopefully, if you have been reading the Solution is Evolution articles you will

The Solution is Evolution

No. 6—Lower forms of life and evolution

—Jim Strayer

have learned that there is usually another way to look at most questions involving living things.

The amoeba is a very interesting lower form. It must

carry on most of the functions that most living things do and yet it is a single cell. This single cell must find food, digest it, get rid of waste, use oxygen, repair worn out parts, and reproduce. Not bad for a lower form.

Let us compare this single cell with any single cell in your body. How about a white blood cell. They look very much like an amoeba and they carry on the same functions. What about a muscle cell or a liver cell? Well, they don't look much like an amoeba, but they must carry on the same functions to stay alive. In the case of the muscle cell so it can contract, and in the case of the liver cell so it can secrete chemicals useful to other cells.

By now you can see what I am getting at. Our bodies are composed of lots and lots of cells that we considered lower forms. The main reason that the lower forms in our body differ from the lower forms found in a pond is that our cells have become so

This series will continue in the next newsletter. Jim Strayer is a retired biology teacher. He lives with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea, Florida.

specialized that they need help from other cells in order to stay alive and do their jobs. They have become so specialized that they cannot make it on their own like an amoeba can.

Would you say that the specialized cells that make up our body are a higher form of life than the amoeba which can survive on

its own? I do not want an answer to that question. I just want you to think about what your answer would be and why.

This leads to an even more interesting question. What is the reason for the specialized cells gathering together to form organs. We all know that the heart pumps blood, the lungs take in oxygen, the kidney's filter out waste and the muscles make us move, but why?

Most of us want to say that our brain must be kept alive. After all, that is what makes us who we are. True, but let us use that same logic on an earthworm or a Pine tree. What is the function for the organs in an earthworm? They do the same for the earthworm as they do for us. For some reason the earthworm brain does not seem that important to us. And what about the organs in a Pine tree? Of course they have organs too. What is the real function of the leaves, roots, bark, and stem?

Let us go back to the lower forms of life. What do they do that all the higher forms do in order to insure that their species will survive? They pass on DNA to future generations. All of the organisms in one celled creatures, all of the organs in higher plants and animals must keep the individual alive long enough in order pass on DNA.

Now comes the lesson. Of vital importance is the fact that sometimes that DNA has changes in its chemical structure. Those changes may lead to individuals more able to survive. This is the wonder of that process called evolution. What we refer to as the lower forms of life have evolved into earthworms, Pine trees and you and me. Feel better about the lower forms of life now?

Charles Darwin said, "It is not the stronger of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

Coming in the next issue... Results of the recent Atheists of Florida Board of Director's meeting. Hint: the board elected to raise dues. If you are considering joining, do so this month and save \$10!

Not with MY tax dollars.....

Editor:

I'm a bit confused on how this Faith Based Strategy is to work. For example, taxpayer dollars will pay for prayer to cure tumors in women with breast cancer. So I don't understand why Dick Cheney was rushed to the hospital when he has a White House full of Prayer

LETTERS



"I see that you work for one of those faith-based organizations" —Socrates

If literally brought

tears to my eyes to see atheists, deists, agnostics, and

skeptics emerge to where they were once too scared to

Paz has Pazzaz

Dear Editor:

I received the January 2001 issue of the newsletter today, and I was happy to see that the Atheists of Florida are reaching out to Latinos. Latinos make up a large segment of the Florida population, and there are many Latino atheists throughout the world. I was especially happy to see Manuel Paz's name mentioned in the lead story. We hosted Manuel recently at the Center for Inquiry-International (Atheist, New York). He is a truly dedicated scholar and a great spokesperson for atheist ideals.

—Fethi Carl
 Gulfport, Florida

Upcoming Atheist Alliance convention

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Closest door opens!

We received this via e-mail.

Dear Atheists of Florida:

I am currently a senior at Walter L. Sickles High School in Hillsborough county. A christian practice has been going on for quite some time, before school 25- students meet in the center of the school, while alternating members preach about "taking back the school for god" then engage in group prayer. All those offended have let it pass, and the prayer group vows

"not to let anyone stand in their way." Finally fed up with this offensive display and school wide tolerance, I made a sign that said "no prayer in school" and just stood near the group so everyone walking by would see me. I did this for about a week, until one day, another guy I'd never met before came up to me, told me he was with me, and participated in the silent protest. The next day, a couple more people showed up. Now, people I don't even know are approaching me and asking how they can get involved. I formed the Campus Ablmetech Society, and in the past 2 days the number of members has tripled. I distributed fliers explaining the purpose of the group, not to bash christians, but to organize just as well as a group that bashed us. I've caused an uproar in the school, and in a belief where I was once alone I have huge numbers looking to me for guidance. It literally brought tears to my eyes to see atheists, deists, agnostics, and skeptics emerge to where they were once too scared to travel.

I've sparked a school wide "coming out" of atheists, causing amazing impact and awareness on the student body. My goal was not to get prayer out of school, it was to do what I have done, and that is unite the freethinkers that hadn't yet emerged. I am happily taking the blows dealt by a furious (and scared) christian organization. Tomorrow morning I'm expecting an extremely large turnout. I thought maybe you'd be impressed by this (unexpected) success. I sense even more escalation in this. I hope I haven't wasted your time with this long letter, but I had to share my happiness with somebody.

—Michael Pryor
 Tampa

We responded with an invitation to Pryor to address the Tampa Bay chapter at one of our monthly meetings to keep us informed. We also suggested he might like to be the first recipient of our "Ten Commandments" bookcovers. We'll pass along his progress in the newsletter. —Ed

God's plan had a hopeful beginning, But man spoiled his chances by sinning. We trust that the story Will end in God's glory But at present, the other side's winning.

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Keep up the great work.
 Onward!
 —Vern R. Hien, Jr.
 Executive Director
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 AAHALLEN@aol.com
 Norm Allen will be a featured speaker at the

It's a church tax, period!

Source: *Jewish Journal* 03.08.01, *Sun-Sentinel*

Twice in as many years, someone is taking the Broward County Department of Consumers Affairs to court over a license needed in this county to sell Kosher foods.

First it was attorney **Sam Fields**, a kind man who attended the Miami/Dade chapter meeting and enlightened members about his case. Upon being asked what "Kosher" means, Mr. Fields explained that "Kosher" stands for a Jewish trademark. To us, it appears more like rabbinical taxation. And that's a euphemism for "protection money."



Action alert—school prayer looms

House Bill 1199 filed by freshman Democratic Legislator, Wilbert T. Holloway of Miami would authorize individual school district boards by resolution to allow invocations and benedictions at specified secondary school events. Below is the precise language of the bill which is followed by a **Call to Action**.

A bill to be entitled An act relating to education; authorizing individual district school boards by resolution to allow invocation or benediction at specified secondary school-related events; providing legislative intent; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Any district school board is authorized to adopt a resolution allowing the use of an invocation or a benediction at a secondary school commencement exercise, a secondary school-related sporting event, or a secondary school-related noncompulsory student assembly. The resolution must provide:

(1) That the use of an invocation or a benediction shall be at the discretion of the students.

(2) That an invocation or a benediction, if used, shall be given by a student volunteer.

(3) That an invocation or a benediction shall be nonsectarian and nonproselytizing in nature.

(4) That school personnel shall not participate in, or otherwise influence the exercise of the discretion of the students in, the determination of whether to use an invocation or a benediction.

Section 2. It is the purpose of this act to provide for the solemnization and memorialization of secondary school events and ceremonies, and this act is not intended to advance or endorse any religion or religious belief.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2001.

HOUSE SUMMARY

Authorizes a district school board to adopt a resolution allowing the use of an invocation or a benediction at specified secondary school-related events.

ACTION: If you live in the district of any of the four sponsors of the HB 1199, please contact their office immediately and request that they withdraw this bill as a clear violation of separation of state & church.

Sponsor—Wilbert T. Holloway: (D-103) 850-488-0766
Co-Sponsors—Rafael Arza: (R-102) 850-488-1683 / Edward B. Bullard: (D-118) 850-488-5430 / Frank Peterman, Jr.: (D-55) 850-488-0925
Thank you for your immediate response to this *Legislative Alert*!

Now it's **Mr. Uri Ostrovsky**, owner of Baraka Restaurant, a gourmet fish and vegetarian eatery, 3025 N. Ocean Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale-by-the-Sea (954/567-2525). Ostrovsky challenges that kosher inspections are an issue for the religious community and not appropriate for a government agency to dabble in.

"In 1981 Broward County passed a law to protect the consumer," says **Mona Fandel**, director of Consumer Affairs. "That law has never been challenged." (We wonder what Fields has to say about that!) The license fee is \$200 and covers the cost of maintaining the office of the rabbi who is the kosher inspector. His annual salary amounts to around \$48,000. He does one inspection weekly.

"This church tax drives up the cost of doing business in Broward County and is considered a strong-arm tactic not even in practice in Italian restaurants," complains Ostrovsky.

The whole matter has Broward County residents confused. The law was implemented to protect consumers, but no one understands from what. Not every kosher merchant or kosher restaurant patron is Jewish. Therefore, Ostrovsky believes, such a law is discriminatory. Merchants like Mr. Ostrovsky fear that kosher inspections are invitations to discreet abuse—corruption and blackmail cited as frequent examples. The citizens of New Jersey objected to a kosher licensing authority because the question as to "what is kosher" was considered too subjective. Inspectors can set different standards. This confusion invites abuse.

—Bens

It's a religion tax, period!

There are two major school voucher bills which have been prefiled thus far in Legislature 2001. Both are designed to enhance 'parental choice' in education. The first would establish a tuition tax credit scheme for corporate taxpayers. The second, the subject of this legislative alert, would provide vouchers to students in designated 'overcrowded' public schools to attend private or religious schools. The bill was heard Tuesday, February 20, in the House Education Innovation Committee.

HB 0303 (Relief from Overcrowded Schools) creates a statewide tuition voucher program for students in so-called 'overcrowded' public schools. Under this legislation, taxpayer dollars—\$3,000 per year per student—would be taken from the 'overcrowded public schools' and given students, in the form of vouchers or scholarships, to attend private and religious schools. You can view the entire text of HB 0303 and the staff

see **Newsfiles**, back page.

PAUL McMASTERS, IN THE *First Amendment Forum*, reminds us that one of the signal events in human history was the invention of the printing press in 1485. By 1485, church officials were trying to censor "dangerous publications." A year later, Germany's first secular censorship office was established in Mainz—the birthplace of the printing press also was the birthplace of banned books. As Gutenberg's great invention quickly spread across Europe, the censors were never far behind. Unlike the printers, they had centuries of experience in their craft.

In short order, countries began requiring printing licenses, a most effective way of controlling both the writers of books and the readers of books. Dominican monk Savonarola was much more direct. In Florence, he set off a "bonfire of the vanities," torching the manuscripts and printed works of such dangerous writers as Dante and Ovid. The earliest recorded banned book list was in England in 1529, when Henry VIII issued such a list.

"How quaint" might be our immediate reaction to such ancient history. But we're still at it, aren't we? Even here in America in the Information Age, we pay lip service to freedom of conscience, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, but we

continue to attack books as though they were the devil incarnate. The American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, as it does yearly, issued the list of the "Ten Most Challenged Books of 1999." Not surprisingly, most of the books listed were written by highly regarded authors, are judged essential teaching materials by educators, and are loved by young people. The hundreds of challenges in the Banned Books list trot out a variety of reasons for the complaints. Some of these are tried and true sexual situations, crude language, inappropriate for the age group, occult themes and violence.

But others reflect just how deeply we have sunk into personal pique, seeking to define ourselves by how we take offense. Descartes' dictum in 1637 was, "I think, therefore I am." The new, updated version is, "I am offended, therefore I am." Ironically, this attitude has even insinuated itself into A of F, with a few instances of rancor over member opinions that strayed from what some felt are, or should be, the group's values. Some have even resigned over the opinions of others, or expressed distaste over how others choose to refer to religious belief. Many of today's book challengers similarly complain about themes that they believe encourage disrespectful behavior, center on "negative activity," or lead young readers into fantasy worlds that create confusion.

Book challenges may well be exercises in free speech, but they too easily and too frequently turn into exercises of arbitrary power, even censorship. Just a few recent examples: In Lynchburg, Va., the school board decided to censor an anatomy and physiology textbook, objecting to the illustration of a vagina. A member of the committee of parents, teachers and students that had selected the book

described the text as one of the best she had seen.

In Foley, Ala., Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* was taken off the high school library's shelves after a parent complained about references to orgies, self-flagellation, suicide and characters' contempt for religion, marriage and family. Officials apparently were not impressed by the fact that the novel is ranked fifth on the Modern Library Top 100 best English language novels of the 20th century.

In Wichita Falls, Texas, the city council enacted a law that allowed "objectionable" books to be removed from the public library if 300 library-card holders signed a petition against it. A federal judge struck down the law as unconstitutional.

One measure of just how far such actions can go: In Spotswood, Va., not long ago, the school superintendent decided the banned books lists themselves were too dangerous and forced a teacher to remove them from his classroom door. The teacher later resigned after nine years at the school.

For the most part, book-banners don't seem to have a sense of history, a sense of irony, a sense of guilt or a sense of intellectual decency. Their rationalizations may be monumental, but they are no more than elaborate walls erected against knowledge and thinking. Books are feared because they arm people against oppression, conformity and ignorance. Books are dangerous because they challenge the conventions used to control. No wonder churches hate them! Two centuries of enlightenment brought on by the advent of the printing press have failed to ease our fear of the new and the different. We still struggle vainly to resist change. Censorship was born in the fearful heart of the first human being. It ranks high among our darkest impulses, at once announcing our fear and confirming our ignorance.

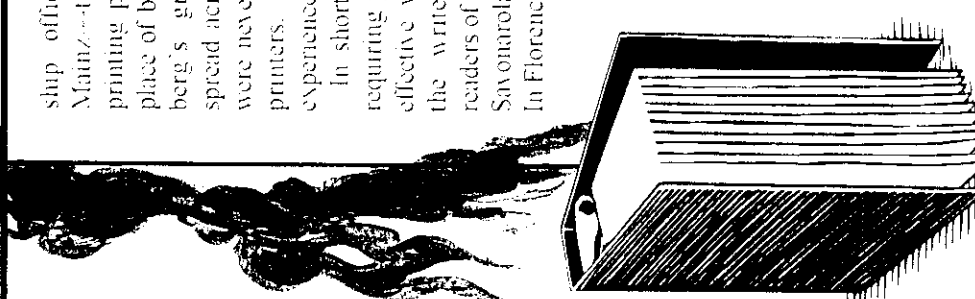
Banning Books: A Typical Tactic of Religion

—Brent Yacow

shop office was established in Mainz—the birthplace of the printing press also was the birthplace of banned books. As Gutenberg's great invention quickly spread across Europe, the censors were never far behind. Unlike the printers, they had centuries of experience in their craft.

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VETERANS FOR PEACE

Vets Working Against the Priests in Military Culture

For Info call Geo Boone 813/782-5428

Christmas Eve is the best time of the year to spend in a movie theater. Especially when two movies about atheists are shown!

The story of Chocolat could be described as this: during the 1950s, an atheist moves into a small, ultra-conservative French town, run by a fundamentalist

book & film REVIEW

Two movies about atheists

—Patrick Bens



Patrick Bens is a native of Belgium and director of the Dade&Broward chapter. A real estate investor and businessman, he lives in North Dade with his wife, Celina and two daughters. He edits NEWSNOTES, the monthly chapter bulletin.

Catholic mayor, and makes a real moussé out of it. One of the first sentences spoken in Lasse Hallström's latest movie is, "I think she is an atheist." She is Juliette Binoche as Yvonne, who, along with her daughter, Anouk (Victoire Thivisol) opens a chocolaterie across from the church. Her creations have names like

her diabetic handlady (Judith Dench), her handlady's grandson, who is artistically gifted, the battered wife of the town's pub owner, and later the leader of a group of boat musicians (Johnny Dapp) who happen to dock at the town's pier. All these new friends share her adventurous, free-thinking, unorthodox and tolerant lifestyle, the chemistry of her constant, charming smile and her insidious, suggestive chocolates which seem to be potent enough to change someone's lifestyle.

I found the movie light hearted, thanks to the brilliant performances by Binoche and Dench. The audience applauded at the end of the movie, suggesting it may well be on its way to a number of Oscar nominations.

However, my favorite character undoubtedly has to be the orthodox Catholic mayor. His religious fanaticism is maintained throughout the whole movie and resounds like a dead weight on the hope for progress for the townspeople.

His hatred for change climaxes the moment he decides to single-handedly go and carve up the entire chocolaterie with his letter-opener. It has too good an ending to give it away. The atheist Yvonne wins big time and religion takes a few on the chin.

When Michael Caine is featured in a movie, you can rely on his performance being brilliant. *Crail's* is no exception. Caine has been crafting his tongue-in-cheek violence for half a century. That comes in handy in this somber look at the sarcastic incarceration of the Marquis de Sade, still considered as the most libertine of the post-revolutionary philosophers of 18th Century France. The writings of the Marquis de Sade were way ahead of their time in terms of subject matter.

At the core of this tale is the centuries' old religious oppression of pornography. De Sade, who was hated by his mother in law, but loved by his wife through all his trials, is held prisoner in an insane asylum. A medical villain (Michael Caine) is sent to cure him by no other than Napoleon Bonaparte himself, who read the most daring prose ever written. Justice, the fictitious chronicle of a prostitute who counts only clergy as her clients.

The movie takes liberties with the true history of the lives of those involved. There is no record of the Marquis being violently tortured. Michael Caine, as the doctor, performs a variety of cruel exercises and examinations on the Marquis that I think are sheer invention of the director. But it is good that known facts are highlighted. So, for instance, was it true that the upper class read with pleasure de Sade's pornographic novels, while at the same time bending to the censorship of the Church to have the publications burned? Thus his poetry persists to this day and invokes not just the Catholic Church, but all denominations. Censors are hypocrites of the highest order, presuming to categorize themselves morally above anyone else.

Again though, this movie is thus manufactured, that the focus is virtually 99.9% on the explicit erotic contents of his writings and only scarcely on his criticism of the Church and its misuse of power. They do let the Marquis spit on a bible presented to him by the priest of the asylum, and when that same cleric dangles a crucifix in front of his mouth to be kissed, the Marquis, in shackles, rather swallows it so it can be processed with his bowels. The symbolism of Sadism is much larger than the media gives the Marquis credit for. Sadism, as is pointed out briefly in the movie, is a form of humor and if you follow Michael Caine's grin during the cruelest scenes, that becomes clear.

Tax *continued from front page*

"faith-based action"), allows religious organizations to administer social programs as long as there are secular alternatives. It permits government social services to be administered inside a church or house of worship, grants a right to religious symbols where government funded services are provided, and allows religious contractors to discriminate in hiring employees, who are paid with taxpayer funds. It also grants all religious organizations a statutory right to be eligible to contract with a state to administer social services. This right can be enforced with a lawsuit against the state. Furthermore, this federal legislation prevents states from requiring that religious social service providers deliver services in an environment free from proselytizing symbols and expressions.

In other words, charitable choice not only excludes non-believers from government-funded employment, but also allows groups to advance religious doctrines with taxpayer money.

For example, in Philadelphia, Hare Krishna devotees have received millions of dollars in government contracts to run a network of services, including a shelter for homeless veterans, transitional homes for recovering addicts and a halfway house for parolees.

Now, members of a wide variety of religious groups, some once considered far outside the mainstream, are preparing proposals for government financing to support the programs that Dittya has said he will make his focus: hierarchy, sexual abstinence and substance abuse treatment.

The Church of Scientology plans to seek support for its drug rehabilitation and literacy programs.

The church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, now called the Family Federation of World Peace and Unification U.S.A., plans to promote its abstinence programs in the schools.

Well, whadd'ya know. With all these "crackpot religions" lining up at the public trough, feathers start to fly.

Pat Robertson, head of the Christian Coalition and a key campaign supporter of President Bush, has raised serious questions about the faith-based initiative. He warned that such groups as the Unification Church, the Hare Krishnas, and the Church of Scientology "could all become financial beneficiaries of the proposal to expand eligibility for government grants to religious charities. This thing could be a real Pandora's box. And what seems to be such a great initiative can rise up to bite the organizations as well as the federal government."

In voicing his concerns, Robertson became the most prominent conservative to question the initiative, which would reduce regulations on religious charities and make it easier for them to receive federal funds for social services. Main in Olasky, a longtime Bush adviser on matters of faith, Michael Horowitz of the Hudson Institute and Terrence Scanlon of the Capital Research Center have warned that government grants could sap the vitality of religious social programs in the same way that conservatives contend welfare undermined individual initiative among the poor.

Liberals have attacked the initiative from the opposite direction, with such groups as the ACLU and Americans United contending that it would amount to government funding of religion, violating the constitutional separation of church and state.

Liberals groups welcomed Robertson's criticisms. "This means Bush's plan is in enormous political trouble," said Lynn. "When staunch Bush allies like Robertson start jumping ship, the plan clearly appears to be sinking."

In a commentary on his 700 Club TV program, Robertson said, "I have

to find myself on the side of the Anti-Defamation League and others, but this... gets to be a real problem," referring to funding for groups outside the religious mainstream. He said the Unification Church has been "proscribed, if I can use that, for brainwashing techniques, sleep deprivation and all the rest of it that goes along with their unusual proselytizing. The Hare Krishnas [do] much the same thing."

Americans United says the strong resistance to the plan from across the religious and political spectrum proves that the American people do not want entanglement between religion and government.

"This plan is sinking faster than the XFL," said Lynn. "People are abandoning the 'faith-based' initiative in droves because they don't want government-funded religion."

"If Americans keep up the pressure on the White House, the president will be forced to withdraw this initiative," Lynn continued. "Most Americans have a positive view of religion, but they also value the separation of church and state. They rightly see Bush's plan as an assault on an important constitutional principle."

John Dittito, head of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Partnerships, lashed out at Religious Right critics of the plan, asserting that they are out of touch with the needs of the inner-city poor. He and other members of the Bush administration have pledged to slow down while they retool their approach.

"Government-funded religion is a bad idea whose time should never have come," said Lynn. "There's just no way to perfume this skunk. Instead, the administration should toss it on the scrap heap, shut down the 'faith-based' initiative and go back to basics. Let houses of worship and religious charities be funded by the voluntary generosity of millions of Americans."

Following the recent earthquake in El Salvador, an American evangelical relief group which had received more than \$200,000 from the U.S. Agency for International Development and is set to receive a second similar amount, held half-hour prayer meetings before showing villagers how to build temporary homes of metal and plastic provided by the American government. Federal money cannot be used to overtly pay for religious activities or to provide selective help based on political or religious beliefs. Yet the country director for Samaritan's Purse, Paul Chiles, claimed, "We are first a Christian organization and second an aid organization. We can't really separate the two." This attitude would logically encumber all suspension-based organizations. They will rationalize the issue like Chiles: "We definitely don't ever use the gifts that we bring as a means to change people. We distribute it to people in need. At the same time, we bring the message of the Gospel."

The day of the religion tax has arrived.

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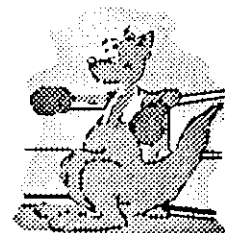
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