

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

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 of the Dade&Broward chapter.
 FMI: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441.

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.

ORLANDO: Meetings scheduled for the **first Sunday** of each month at the Orange County Public Library, 101 E. Central Ave. 1:00pm. FMI: Jennifer Gallo (407) 281-6824.

Faith versus fact

The St. PETERSBURG TIMES wrote an editorial condemning efforts to put creationism in the classroom. Fred Astaire would be proud of the verbal dancing in the editorial. A sample: "...scientific truth should not be looked for in the Bible. It holds other kinds of truth, subtler, more numinous truths of the spirit." Despite their semantic evasions about "other kinds of truth," reality glares through. Faith can be defined as believing in what you know ain't so, or to the human what sand is to the ostrich, but it cannot be defined as fact.

No matter how somber and pretentious the definition, faith comes down to deciding to allow yourself to believe something your intellect would otherwise cause you to reject, because otherwise there's no need for faith. Truth, real truth supported by factual evidence, does not need belief. Scientists do not join hands every Sunday, singing, "Gravity is real! I will have faith! Amen!" If they did, we would think they were pretty insecure about their evidence. Scientists, whether physicists or geologists or biologists, have no place for faith in their work.

Certainly, the *Times* should be commended for stating, "...even though biologists have shown that human beings and chimpanzees share 99 percent of their genetic material, there are those who reject science altogether or, worse still, blame

TAMPA: Last Saturday of each month except October, Noon to 1:30, Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Meeting Room A.
 With the completion of the Platt Library at S. Manhattan and Euclid in South Tampa (anticipated late November), we are planning to add evening meetings each mid-month beginning next year. We will continue to have our "last Saturday" meetings in Clearwater at noon, plus the dinners. As soon as the library opens, we will set up and announce our meeting dates.

science for all the evils of the world." Tom DeLay, Republican Whip in the House of Representatives, blamed the shootings at Columbine High School on teaching children "they are nothing but glorified apes." Readers need to know about politicians' ignorance, and they did at least expose DeLay for the fool we knew him to be. But they didn't go far enough. Rational thinkers have taken the scientific attitude a step further and have no place for faith in their lives. Yes, like anyone else, we must occasionally place a sort of faith in other humans, because no one has time to become the master of all knowledge. However, even on those occasions, we weigh the evidence carefully. We ask of our doctors, for example, a medical degree. We seek information from reputable sources regarding the effectiveness of procedures. We don't simply accept what is claimed on faith. This attitude becomes more and more a requirement for living in our increasingly complex world. We can no more accept the claims of ancient mystics on faith than we can accept the claims of today's so-called "therapeutic touch" practitioners, those exposed as failures by a simple test conducted by a nine-year-old girl. Faith has no place in our world, and if humanity is to survive, it should have no place in anyone's.

I'm in agreement with all but their last statement here: "Ignorance should not be equated with faith. Creationism does not belong in a biology class. Three-quarters of a century after Scopes, we have identified sub-atomic particles, gone to the moon, listened to quasars at the edge of the universe and cracked the Rosetta Stone of the human genome. Surely we can tell the difference by now between faith and fact." Apparently, we cannot, or they wouldn't be referring to "numinous" truths as if such a thing was factual, not merely imaginary. **A**

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P.O. Box 130753
 Tampa, FL 33681

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Officers meet

FT. PIERCE:—The offices and several board members of Atheists of Florida met on September 24, 2000 to discuss various aspects of the organization. This was not a board meeting and as such, no official action could be taken.

The prospect of an increase in some categories of membership dues was discussed. It was decided that a motion would be made and seconded and the board of directors would be polled to vote on their reaction. A majority would need to agree to the increase in order to implement it. Results of the poll have been that the board would prefer to introduce this idea at the next Board of Directors meeting when all board members may have input to the idea and vote on the motion at that time.

In order for A of F to maintain eligibility for bulk-rate mailings, any advertisements in our newsletter must in some way be related to our aims and purposes. The meeting clarified the suggested donations for advertising. For \$50, an advertiser may place a business card size ad in all eight issues for one year. A \$25 donation will include a business card size ad in alternating issues for one year. These suggested rates may be amended at the next board meeting.

Each year, Atheists of Florida applies for inclusion in the listings of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and the Florida State Employees Charitable Campaign (FSECC). Federal and state employees may donate a small percentage of their salaries to these funds and designate those funds to listed charities or put them in the general pool to be designated by the Funds. Of the 19 regions in the state, we have been accepted for listing in nine.

The state campaign has disqualified us, however, claiming we do not provide substantial services. This denial comes in spite of the fact that many religious organizations are listed which specify their services as simply to promote and advance their particular religion. Because of the obvious discrimination, we have filed a brief in the Fourth District Court of Appeals in Miami asking for inclusion in the FSECC. A of F founder Christos Tzanetacos has spearheaded the suit which has been financed by the Board of Directors. (see article, page 6). A of F member Mark Trop is acting as attorney for the suit, donating a considerable amount of time for our effort. Copies of the brief will be made available for a donation to A of F.

The meeting discussed the production of a Guidelines Manual and determined that Nan

Owens, president of A of F, will chair this project and put together a team to work on it. The finished product is scheduled to be completed by January, 2001 to be presented to the Board for approval. Items to be addressed in the project include:

- a cover the roles and range for official spokespersons.
- b use of our logo and organization name.
- c chapter organization and representation (chapters should elect and be managed by a council of chapter officers, not solely by a chapter director).
- d clarification of the precept that this organization does not belong to any one individual.
- e activities and views of individual members should not require that the organization and all its members endorse that viewpoint.
- f such a Guidelines Manual would in no way limit the activities of any member, but would ensure that official representations be kept to the basic views and goals of Atheists of Florida as accepted by its body of members.

The Orlando chapter has scheduled meetings in the main library, downtown Orlando, the first Sunday of each month beginning December 3rd at 1:00. All area residents will be notified by postcard.

The Dade&Broward chapter originated the idea of a calendar displaying all meeting dates for the entire year of 2001. Tampa Bay chapter will produce a similar calendar with plans for two meetings per month and a monthly dinner (see back page). Calendars will be distributed to members in the applicable regions.

If we can find a suitable facility, we hope to again get back into production of our cable TV programs of which we have already produced 60.

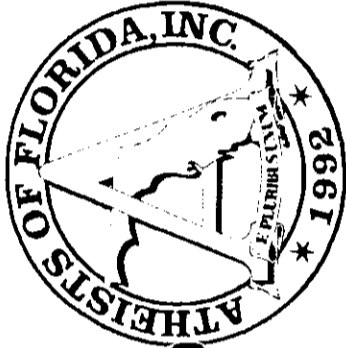
The next official meeting of the board of directors has not yet been scheduled, but it will probably be early in the new year.

Atheists of Florida Life Members

- Christos Tzanetacos Ed Corl
- Kyoko Brogdon Ed Golly
- Norma & Murray Cossey Gael Murphy*
- Robert Lancaster Doug Reid
- John MacKay, PA Scott Reiser
- Charles Schisler Mike Zaccar*
- Max Weatherly*

* Honorary Life Members

"I was a really good swimmer—until evolution."
 —Emo Phillips



Volume IX No. 5

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

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



www.atheistalliance.org/florida

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Phone/Fax: 561-465-6402

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Membership dues

- Life Member \$ 500.00
Sustaining 50.00 yr
Couple 40.00 yr
Individual 30.00 yr
Student (under 25 yrs) 10.00 yr
Limited Income (over 55) 10.00 yr
Newsletter (out of state) 10.00 yr

Send newsletter correspondence to Tampa Bay Chapter, address above. The A of F newsletter is provided free to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters from our members are published on a space-available basis. Articles may be edited for clarity or length. Atheists of Florida, Inc. is a Member Society of the Atheist Alliance International.

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IT BECAME OBVIOUS to early scientists that evolution was a theory that had much factual evidence to support it. That meant that they could begin to predict what they might find in the way of undiscovered living species (Living fossils), and what might be uncovered in later excavations of preserved fossils.

The Solution is Evolution
No. 4—The living Fossils

—Jim Strayer

Fossils of the Ginkgo tree had been found in north America that dated back seventy-five million years. They were thought to be extinct. Imagine the delight of western scientists when they discovered that they had been cultivated around Buddhist temples in China for thousands of years. There may be some wild Ginkgoes in remote areas of China, but it appears that there is only one surviving species of a group of plants that were very numerous during the age of the dinosaurs. This has made the Ginkgo a popular tree to cultivate and it can safely be said that there are Ginkgoes on almost every college campus in the United States. It is a classic example of a living fossil.



There are, of course, a number of living fossils. Many plants and animals were thought to be extinct only because no one was looking for them. Some were discovered by accident, like the Coelacanth.

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

fish, and other were discovered through adroit scientific work like the Peripatus (An animal that is a cross between a worm and an arthropod). An interesting example of a living fossil discovered through scientific research is the alligator. For years it has been classified as a reptile. After all, it looks like a reptile. But it does not behave like a reptile.

Alligators build a nest, reptiles do not. They communicate with their young before and after they hatch from eggs, reptiles do not. Both alligator parents guard the nest and young, and bring them food, reptiles do not. Alligators stay in family groups for years, reptiles do not.

There are physical differences between alligators and reptiles. Alligators have a four chambered heart like birds and mammals, reptiles have a three chambered heart. Alligators have a breathing muscle, the diaphragm—reptiles do not.

They also have a highly developed brain in that they have a cerebral cortex, reptiles do not.

The alligator's behavior and the special anatomy are more bird-like than reptile-like. Now that scientists are able to sequence the DNA of living things it is possible to determine close relationships by doing comparisons. It was not surprising to find that the DNA of alligators is more closely linked to birds than it is to reptiles.

Most biology text books still classify the alligator as a reptile. But it is apparent that alligators are somewhere between birds and reptiles in the evolutionary scheme of things. It is an excellent example showing that evolution has connections to all plants and animals and that there are not separate "kinds" of living things.

A of F fundraiser

Thanks to the following for their generous response to our recent fundraiser drive.

\$5 to \$50
Peter Rummel
Don Papineau
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William Jernan
Freda Kernes

Luis Santander
Charles Coryn
John & Dennis Deshates
Gerard Morgenroth
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LETTERS

In recent days, Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman has actively been emphasizing his personal faith in campaign speeches throughout the Midwest. At a stop in Detroit, Lieberman told audiences, "As a people, we need to reaffirm our faith and renew the dedication of our nation and ourselves to God and God's purposes." He added that he



believes the First Amendment "guarantees freedom of religion, not freedom from religion." Atheists of Florida members were quick to respond.

An Open Letter To Al Gore and the Democratic National Committee

Dear Al:

Received your letter today, and for a few minutes, I was tempted to send you the money that you asked for. The letter does a good job of playing up the differences between you and the Republicans. In fact, just a short time ago I was urging all of my friends not to "throw away" their votes on Ralph Nader, fearing that this might take votes away from you and lead to a Republican president. However, thanks to your choice for vice-president, I no longer fear this as I did.

Stop right there. I know you're thinking this is some anti-Semitic hate letter. You're wrong. I wouldn't care whether your choice was Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, or even a Scientologist, so long as I could count on him to do the job I elected him to do. It seems that you've forgotten what that is, so I'll remind you he should represent me. He should represent all of the people. He should obey and enforce our Constitution. Not his religion, not my religion, not anyone's religion. By his recent remarks, I can tell Mr Lieberman doesn't understand this.

Of course, you don't either, but you're either more tolerant or more intelligent than your running mate. You haven't been intolerant

or stupid enough to tell me (and the millions of others like me) that I am immoral because I don't buy into supernatural superstitions. Maybe this is what I should expect of an Orthodox or fundamentalist believer, whether he is Jewish or Christian, Muslim or whatever. I try not to stereotype people, but implying that morality is tied to a deistic belief is what created the stereotype. Maybe he's just not as bright as I've been led to believe, and he somehow thought that because he was speaking in a church his comments wouldn't get out. Oops? Even Dubya's gaffes haven't been this bad.

Our Founding Fathers understood what a mess religion makes of government. Wisconsin's Supreme Court, in 1890, understood when it stated: "There is no such source and cause of strife, quarrel, fights, malignant opposition, persecution, and war, and all evil in the state, as religion. Let it once enter into our civil affairs, our government soon would be destroyed. Let it once enter our common schools, they would be destroyed. Those who made our Constitution saw this, and used the most apt and comprehensive language in it to prevent such a catastrophe." But you don't, and neither does Mr. Lieberman, Mr. Bush, or Mr. Cheney. Thus I will vote for Ralph Nader, and I no longer fear that my vote might lead to a victory for George W. Bush. You've shown me that there is no place for me in either the Democratic or Republican Party, so what's the difference? Sincerely, Brent Yaciw Wesley Chapel, FL E-mail: athalhb@aol.com

Lieberman clueless

In the St. Petersburg Times of August 8, Sen. Joseph Lieberman is reported as saying that "a belief in God is the basis of morality, and of the nation."

Apparently, Lieberman is unaware of the non-theistic beliefs of some of the greatest Americans, as well as the beliefs of some of the greatest figures throughout world history.

An extended list would fill a large volume. In the interest of brevity, let me list some of the more illustrious non-believers, skeptics, and free-thinkers: Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, inventor Thomas Edison, author Mark Twain, philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, lawyer Clarence Darrow, scientist Albert Einstein, et al. Their agnostic or atheistic views have been well-documented.

For Sen. Lieberman to imply that these outstanding men were immoral is an insult to their memory. His arrogant statement is also an insult to the 29,069,000 non-believing atheists of North America (World Almanac 2000, p.695) who lead completely moral and ethical lives without acknowledging a belief in God.

—JERRY MORGENTHAU
St. Petersburg

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The Mark Twain Scholarship Fund has been disallowed inclusion in the FSECC listing this year upon discovery that it is sponsored by Atheists of Florida. Trustee Christos Tzanetakos sought relief from this discrimination by this hearing.

FSECC bars Atheists of Florida

— Christos Tzanetakos

AN INFORMAL HEARING BY PHONE with the Department of Management Services took place Friday, July 21 at 10:05 a.m. with Michael Cochran, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Management, as presiding officer, and Sylvan Strickland, attorney for the Respondent.

Ms. Carolyn Johnson, Chair of the Florida State Employees Charitable Campaign (FSECC) Committee, was the only witness.

After the introductions by Mr. Cochran, I made an opening statement:

"In lieu of the evidence provided to the Department and in order to avoid further time at taxpayer's expense, we are asking the Department:

1. To reverse the Committee's decision, and
2. To issue a letter to the members of the FSECC Committee warning them that as public employees, they took an oath to uphold our Constitution. Personal biases are unconstitutional and un-American."

Attorney Strickland asked various questions of me concerning the three points or reasons the committee cited as their basis for our disqualification.

He started with the committee's second argument that we are not in compliance with the requirement of submitting an independent audit.

I told them the reasons for our inability to provide an audited report was due to our small budget and revenues. Instead, I stressed that we provided something even better by submitting the bank statements and the canceled checks.

I also reiterated the statement that our Federal Register-950.204-(2) Organizations whose annual budget is less than \$50,000 may submit IRS Form 990 in lieu of an audited report.

He then argued the point that we do not provide substantial services statewide (we provide less than \$1,000 in direct services). I defended our position by stating that our organization provides according to its budget. The Committee failed to account for the additional information provided with the appeal papers of the four student

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recipients in 1999 and the total amount in grants of \$1,600.

I also provided the Department by fax the day before the hearing with four documents in support of our acceptance as a worthwhile organization. They were:

- A letter from Florida International University stating "Please accept this letter as acknowledgment of the scholarship material for the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, Inc. from Ms Dorothy Woods (one of our members in Miami). It is an excellent scholarship and thank you, in advance, for your interest and support of higher education, our future.
- A similar letter from the University of Florida, and
- Two letters from the Pinnellas County Local Florida State Charitable Campaign Committee, for the years 1998 and 1999, allocating to our scholarship from undesignated funds \$800 and \$500 respectively.

Their third and final argument was that non-discrimination criteria does not include religion.

Both attorney Strickland and the presiding officer, Michael Cochran, repeatedly tried to pose questions in order to get an incriminating answer.

I categorically stated that the scholarship application is open to all students who meet our qualifications as stated in the application form. Only the content of the essay is taken under consideration from the Trustees to select the winning essays.

Following my examination, I cross-examined Ms. Johnson.

Responding to my question, "Is it true that the committee investigated our application in September, 1999 because of my letter to her (dated September 4, 1999), reporting the discrepancy of the undesignated funds in Orlando?" That the committee, noticing the letterhead of the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, discovered for the first time that we are a "program" (as she stated) of Atheists of Florida? And did she confirm the above to me by phone?"

Her answer was YES.

Consequently, I asked her how many other organizations, if any, were also investigated and scrutinized.

Her answer: Ours was the ONLY organization.

Later on, I asked her if she heard or read in the media about the Boy Scouts who are discriminating against both gays and atheists. Why had neither she nor anyone of the FSECC Committee investigated the Boy Scouts who, of course, are listed and are receiving funds from the FSECC?

Naturally there was no answer.

The meeting took about an hour, and in my closing statement I again requested that the Department reverse the FSECC's decision and investigate wrong doing by the committee members.

Their refusal to comply has led to our filing of the suit in the Fourth District Court of Appeals in Miami. We'll keep you posted.

MY MOM WAS RIGHT. If you play music in church, they'll come.

In the early '60s, secularism was definitively gaining on the churches everywhere, even in the small towns of my native Belgium. My parents owned a large dancing hall that was chockful of merry makers every Saturday night. The next morning, none of them could or wanted to get out of bed to be in church. This resulted in the pastor getting very mad at us. He didn't hesitate to hurl insults at us during his sermons and name us as the source of all evil in our small, industrious town.

When asked about the pastor badmouthing us in public, my mother, who was openly anti-clerical, simply remarked, "If the pastor puts a juke box in his church, he'll have his flock back."

And sure enough, with Beatlemania exploding, soon our small town was overrun by more kids with guitars than there were stages to perform.

Before long the pastor picked up on the idea to round up a few of the beat-nicks to come and pick their guitar around the altar to try their luck at a gospel concert.

My mother's wise remark has now been proven to be as scientific as it then sounded emotional.

It wasn't the lyrics of the gospel that returned the flock to the church. It was the rhythm.

Rhythm speeds up the blood pressure, breathing rate and pulse. Soon the body can't resist the temptation to jump into action. Beta waves in the brain make a person react to the rhythm, first slowly, then progressively quicker, as the rhythm dictates. These vibrating impulses travel through the spinal cord towards the arm and leg muscles. Like a puppet on a string, the body wants —then starts to move. An upbeat tempo like "Jesus Christ, Superstar" leaves you with no choice: what begins with toe tapping and finger snapping, drives you to jump out of your chair to dance.

Elisabeth Miles, who authored the book *Time Your Brain: Using music to manage your mind, body and mood* (Berkley Books) states that rhythmic movements create endorphins in the brain. These chemicals are the creators of the "feel-good feelings."

It is therefore no coincidence that the rhythmic bells at Christmas or the rapping of the drums at Nazi rallies, the clanging of the Hare Krishna or the pounding on a hollow tree trunk by a medicine man usurp a communal response to follow a leader. Call it the pied-piper syndrome. Adding happy lyrics to a rhythmic tune eases the primary intention of helping to memorize the music. But by no means are lyrics

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.

the more important of the two. Rhythm alone is enough to create the pied-piper effect. In the days that the liturgy was in Latin, songs were not understood by the masses. The tunes, however, were easily assimilated despite the absence of comprehension because the melodies were hummed and the rhythm clapped. Often, gospel lyrics were corrupted with the native language to resemble a child-like nonsensical nursery rhyme.

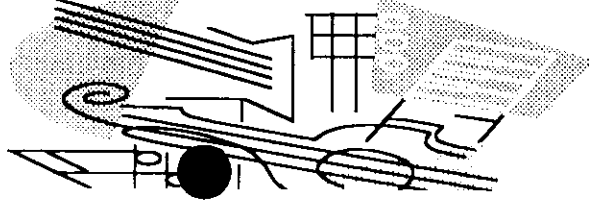
Researchers discovered that music doesn't have to be happy to make a lasting effect on people. (I think suddenly of "The Lorelei" in "The Holocaust"). Sad, somber, melancholic, downbeat and depressing melodies, like the ones droned to death at funerals, set people at ease and bring comfort and humbleness, as long as they are aesthetically high rated.

"It is perceived as pleasurable, despite the sad content," remarks Valerie Stratton, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at the Pennsylvania State University. Stratton goes on to say that listening to smooth, hum-like Gregorian chants is an effective method of relaxation, whether during group therapy or while on a solo walk in the woods. This explains the effect monasteries have had for centuries on the condition of mental patients. The soothing, simple, predictable rhythm patterns lower blood pressure and muscle tension and slow the heart beat from a regular 75 beats a minute to a mere 50.

Dr. Stratton also refers to the so-called "Mozart effect": a background of Mozart sonatas has proven to improve performance on space-time reasoning tests. Unfortunately, the opposite has been evidenced to be true, too. Tests suggest that overstimulating rhythms, with little or no creative value, stifle the perception and concentration of the test takers. When lyrics with incoherent subliminal messages were added, and repeated at high frequency, test takers were driven to annoyance and aggressive behavior.

Like with the visual arts, religion has made efficient use of music throughout history. Even the denominations that forbid music in their services use the influence of rhythm on a person's mood by means of the preacher's speech pattern. A short-long boom and drone scheme of syllables by a preacher's voice draws attention just as a concussion instrument does. The speech pattern is lessened to a basic beat. It is just as suggestive as the rhythm produced by a musical instrument and invites the congregation to join in with hand clapping, knee-jerking and hip swaying.

Foremost though, religious leaders have made use of upbeat and downbeat music to alter the mood of the masses to fit their intentions and expectations, whether it be for saintly celebrations as an escape from the misery of poverty or for the preparations of war. Whether a musical composition is stormy and pounding or serene and fatigued, the church shepherds will go to great length to turn that tune into the right rhythm for their sheep to march on.



Voucher evidence

An editorial in *The Palm Beach Post* noted that just because the grades of poor African-American children taken out of neglected public schools and enrolled in established private schools improve, that is not evidence that vouchers are called for. In fact, whites and other minorities did no better in private schools. By implication, most public schools hold their own against private schools. Thus the proper solution is providing resources to improve those schools. Giving a voucher to a white child at a good public school does not help African-American students. In fact, by draining money from public school districts, it harms those students.

Too many voucher fans would exploit bad conditions at minority schools rather than improve the schools.

Another notable fact is that students who improved did so at established private schools. Many such schools have waiting lists now. There are nowhere near enough slots for a widespread voucher program. Sure, entrepreneurs will fill the gap—with voucher mills, schools set up to make a profit, whose primary interest is not in education but in the bottom line. Having worked for such schools, this writer can tell you the students' every whim is attended to—but no one much cares if they actually learn anything.

there is only one true Church, the pillar and mainstay of the truth."

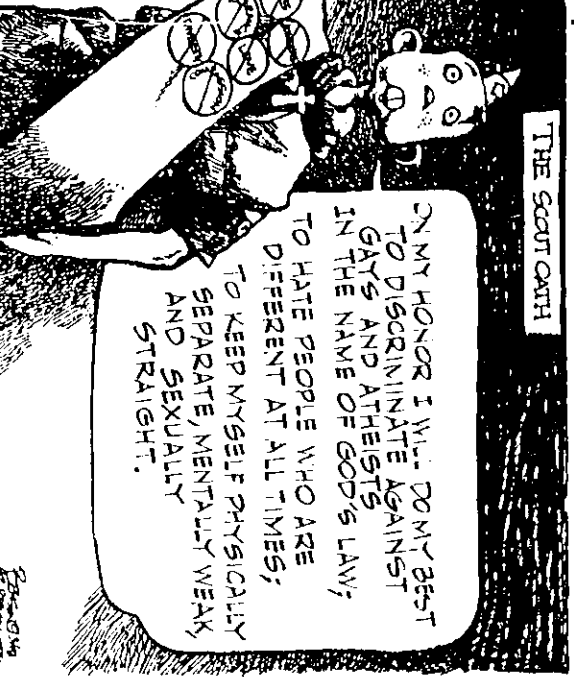
House supports Scouts' bias

WASHINGTON—The House solidly endorsed discrimination by the Boy Scouts of America with a 362-112 vote against a proposal to revoke its eight-decade-old federal charter because of the organization's policy of excluding gays.

The legislation was brought by Rep. Lynn Woolsey, D-Calif., to draw attention to the uneasy relationship between the federal government and the Scouts since the organization's stance toward gays became a

THE SCOUT OATH

ON MY HONOR I WILL DO MY BEST TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST GAYS AND ATHEISTS IN THE NAME OF GOD'S LAW; TO HATE PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT AT ALL TIMES; TO KEEP MYSELF PHYSICALLY SEPARATE MENTALLY WEAK AND SEXUALLY STRAIGHT.



national issue. Republicans brought the legislation to the House floor to show the lack of support for Scout critics, labeling it an attack on American values.

As the bill's opponents accused its few Democratic supporters of extremism, Democrats complained that the GOP's only intent was to embarrass them. Fifty Democrats and one Republican voted "present" in apparent protest of the procedure. One Republican, Rep. J. Greenwood of Pennsylvania, voted for the bill. David Smith of the Human Rights Campaign, a leading gay rights organization, said Republicans were "trying to change the subject from hate crimes to Boy Scouts."

Only in your back yard

From the Associated Press, we learned that a federal judge struck down a local law that allowed a petition with 300 signatures to yank "objectionable" books from the public library. The ordinance had its genesis in protests over what to do about *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate*. Both children's books deal with gay relationships, and that always gets the thumper crowd all a-twitter. Fortunately, the judge recognized the rights of others as well, and essentially told those parents they could censor their own homes, but not public libraries.

If only they dispensed beer...

Reuters let us know that The Church of England is considering installing cash dispensing machines in rural churches to help fill the gap left by bank closures. Church officials hoped the plan would restore churches to their medieval status. Of course, we see this as just more evidence that churches are a business, one that should pay its taxes like any other. Obviously, we'll keep you posted if this plan goes forward—or should we say backward?

Nothing new

The *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* published a column by Waldo Proffitt that makes a point we often point out. He christens Cal Thomas for supporting those so-called "spontaneous prayer outbursts" at football games and the like by reminding him of Matthew 6:5-8. Translated from the archaic, it says those who pray for the express purpose of being seen by others are hypocrites, which leads Proffitt to say these prayers are probably inappropriate, but he takes it a step further: "...Which leads to another conclusion, or at least suspicion, that the most inappropriate public display of religion may not be found in football stadiums but in the speeches of political candidates of both parties, who are not only wearing their spirituality on their sleeves but competing for the votes of the religious right, and left and center. I happen to be among those who believe that religion and morality are not the

same. And what we should seek in our elected officials, and in our schools, is morality practiced and morality taught. "Even we might say 'Amen!' to that, were it not for the sticky questions about whose morality, but any public admission that morality and religion are not the same is a good start.

William Raspberry, on the same issue, hasn't a clue. He says, "I need my civil-liberties friends to tell me again the mortal danger of prayer—of religion generally—in public places. I keep forgetting it." Obviously, he's in need of a history lesson, we'll start with biblical times, since the bible is filled with stories of murder and other atrocities committed in the name of religion, and work our way forward.

He really need look no further than the Vatican's latest declaration from the *London Times*: we learned that the latest declaration from Rome, which sets out the official position on church unity, is profoundly conservative: its language is harder, its tone less forgiving, its attitudes toward other churches more dismissive than anything since the Second Vatican Council in 1962. Superficially, it adds little new to Catholic doctrine, it sets out the familiar litany that there is only one true Church, "the pillar and mainstay of the truth." It goes on to examine other churches, including the Church of England, and reaches broadly the same conclusion as Vatican Two, which said that they "had not preserved the proper reality of the eucharistic mystery in its fullness." Because they parted company with Rome during the Reformation, Protestants have broken that umbilical link, and thus disrupted "their harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed." Same old stuff. It is what follows that sets an even darker

Under the thumb of the Catholic directives, St. Petersburg's Bayfront Medical Center was unable to resolve the conflict over religious influence over patient care.

Bayfront separates from BayCare

As the Catholic church fails to legislate its medieval morality on the United States, it sneaks around the back door by simply gaining control of all public medical facilities and subjecting them to the Catholic directives for medical care.

In July, 1997, the serpent struck St. Petersburg when BayCare Health System was formed encompassing Bayfront Medical Center and St. Anthony's Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital and its two affiliates in Tampa, South Florida Baptist Hospital in Plant City, and Morton Plant Mease's hospitals in Clearwater, Dunedin and Safety Harbor.

Bayfront had been in operation for more than 90 years, playing a key role in care for the area's poor. In May, '99, Bayfront and St. Anthony's announced they would divide complementary medical ser-

vice to save money. All obstetrics would be done at Bayfront. Shortly thereafter, the *Tampa Tribune* reported BayCare had quickly restricted abortions for nearly two years.

The St. Petersburg City Council demanded answers from BayCare about the restrictions, contending that Bayfront Hospital was in violation of its public land lease, which said medical care must be provided without regard to sex, race or religious creed. A dispute turned ugly after a public hearing a month later. The city issued a set of its own ethical directives for the hospital, but the Catholics would not concede.

As negotiations failed, the city sued Bayfront in federal court, claiming it failed to disclose its intended adherence to Catholic directives.

It was mid-August this year when the Coalition for Religious Freedom in our Secular Hospitals, a coalition which includes Atheists of Florida, brought suit in federal court against Bayfront Medical Center protesting religious entanglement. Two months later, Bayfront announced it would leave BayCare by year's end and be free of the directives.

Sandy Oestreich, Chair of the Coalition, announces that All Children's Hospital is now about to join BayCare and be taken hostage by the Catholic hierarchy again. Eighty percent of the residents in the area served by All Children's are non-Catholic. The Catholics appear determined to dominate the entire health care system of our country, in order to govern the medical procedures available to us.

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