

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

MIAMI: Sunday, June 18, 2:00 - 4:00 pm, at the BISCAYNE CAFETERIA, 147 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables (across from Barnes & Noble). FMI: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441 e-mail atheist1@bellsouth.net
Singles Happy Hour - each Wednesday from 4-5pm at the Caddy Shack pub & Grill, 315 S. 62nd Ave. Hollywood (located between 441 and Turnpike exit 49). For directions, call Rich, Mary, or Donna at the restaurant 954/985-3655.

PALM BEACH: Meetings are held the **third Sunday** of each month at 2:00pm at Piccadilly Cafeteria, on Military Trail near the N.E. corner with Summit Blvd., just behind McDonalds. It's between Forest Hill Blvd. and Southern Blvd. We meet for lunch in the room behind the folding doors where the trays are picked up. Members are notified by postcard. For driving directions or more information, call Charles Schisler 561/627-6340 or 561/624-9359. Please note, director Charles Schisler has switched his e-mail address to: schisler@earthlink.net

TAMPA: Saturday, May 27, (last Saturday of each month), Noon-1:30 p.m., meeting room A Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Clearwater.
Monthly Dinner--Wednesday, May 31st, Red Lobster. Courtney Campbell Causeway, Tampa. From 6:00 to 7:00, cocktails and complimentary appetizers in the Captain's room, dinner at 7:00. You may select half orders from the menu. FMI on dinners: Ed Golly--813/839-7567 or Jerry Moore--727/526-4223.

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 Geo Boone 813/782-5428

Chapel continued from front page

they simply ignored the issue of reduced parking permits. However, they eventually decided that, rather than issue them to us, they would deny Moore and his consorts the cheap permits, since they were not "employees of the Airport Authority nor its tenants, rather, simply visiting the airport as private citizens." A victory, of sorts, since our primary goal was that no special privileges be afforded this self-styled "chaplain" and his gaggle of godly gabbers.

What can you do? Go look in the chapel every time you visit the airport and keep an eye on the place to make certain the room doesn't become a stashing place for religious recyclable trash. If you spot someone using the chapel, announce that you are the airport chaplain and minister to them from a standpoint of reason. Remember, Moore and his religious thugs are relentless in their efforts to Christianize the airport without regard to the constitution. In fact, MacKay's public records search revealed that Moore has been attempting to secure employment as the official airport chaplain since 1985--some 15 years! Repeatedly denied, he simply took the next available course of action and declared himself the airport chaplain, in spite of the fact that there is no such position.

The price of religious freedom, more than any other freedom, is eternal vigilance!

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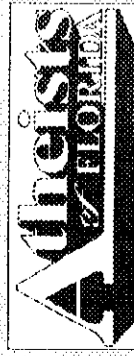
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Goin' to the chapel and we're...

going to park for free! Or almost. That was the discovery that was made about the self-proclaimed "Airport Chaplain." Shields Moore.

It all started several months ago when the esteemed Mr. Golly and myself met with the lawyer who's been providing a guiding light for us, John MacKay. At the time, things weren't looking too good. The Hillsborough County Aviation Authority and their cronies at the airport itself had recognized that the opposition to this, consisting of not only our organization but with the backing of groups like Americans United for Separation of Church and State, American Civil Liberties Union, and others, was serious about pursuing legal action if necessary. Henceforth, they walked the very thin line, making the room religious in name only, since none of the decor or other accouterments could be considered specifically religious in nature, much less definitely and defiantly Xian. We only had two things to protest: the name of the room, and the "chaplain."

By the time of our meeting, the HCAA had disavowed any official recognition or substantiation of Moore's claim to be the "chaplain." In fact, they had at times specifically told Moore in writing he was not officially recognized as anything. With only the name to complain about, it was felt that further legal action was fiscally unpalatable, given that the absolute best we could hope for was changing the name. We felt we were dead in the water, until the subject of parking came up.

Originally we thought of this because we were going to institute an "Atheist Chaplain" program, offering rational statistics and facts on the relative safety of air travel to soothe the non-superstitious passengers. However, we wondered at the costs involved, since parking for us regular folks ain't cheap, at about \$6.00 a day. I wondered out loud if Moore was paying this rate, since he was there at least fifteen days a month. MacKay offered to look into it, and we discovered to our astonishment that Moore was getting a special employee/tenant parking permit at \$4.50 a month! Yes, that's right, a discount of \$2,136.00 a year if one parked daily. That's just for Moore; apparently, he had enlisted several other religionists to babble at people and had asked for permits for them as well. We decided we wanted ours.

MacKay sent them several letters; at first, they simply ignored the issue of reduced

(continued on back page)

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 Sponsor of the MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, Incorporated
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Smile struck from schmuck

TALLAHASSEE--The ruling by Leon Circuit Judge L. Ralph Smith Jr. didn't even reach the issue of religion. The state Constitution, said Smith, says that "adequate provisions shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure and high quality system of free public schools." And private schools are not "free public schools."

Nonetheless, Florida's school voucher law is unconstitutional.

The top priority of Gov. Bush in his first year in office, he signed the voucher bill "with a smile on his face." Oblivious to the fact he was promoting unconstitutional legislation in order to buy votes from the right wing, which would like nothing better than to completely dismantle the public school system in favor of a Christian, taxpayer supported "education," Bush's smile must have been wiped clean by the court's decision. (see **Vouchers**, page 2)

Twain Scholarship Raffle winners

TAMPA--The February meeting of the Tampa Bay Chapter drew our two winners for the Scholarship Fund raffle.

The ring donated by Christos Tzanetakos is now owned by Maria Richardson of Key Largo. Congratulations, Maria.

Our Florida Panther poster donated by Ed Cort of Pinellas County goes to Life Member Kyoko Brogdon of Hollywood, Florida and sometimes Japan.

At the A off Board of Directors meeting scheduled for May 21, the five new Trustees will be elected.

It has been recognized that Humankind will thrive when the equality in all the fields of human endeavor between the sexes reaches its apogee. What are the obstacles in achieving this goal, and what should your generation do to eliminate them? Submissions of 750+ word essays are due to be postmarked no later than Dec. 31, 2000. Awards for this year will again be \$500 first and second place, \$300 third and fourth place.

Thanks to all who participated in the raffle. Your support will help keep the Scholarship Fund alive.

A

"I believe that life should be lived so vividly and so intensely that thoughts of another life, or of a longer life, are not necessary."

—Marjory Stoneman Douglas



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Mark Twain Scholarship Fund

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Individual 30.00 yr
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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 national Atheist Alliance.

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There have been many events on our planet that could be described as major. Two that stand out are the formation of the first ocean and the first land. Imagine an ocean with pure water, with different degrees of light and temperature. Now think of the huge number of niches that would be there when life first evolved.

The Solution Is Evolution
No. 1
-Jim Strayer

A niche is the physical and biological range in which a species can live and reproduce.

Any form of life could fill a niche, but if competition became too strong, a slight change in that life form could allow it to move to another niche. Life forms could reproduce and expand to fill many niches, but eventually they were in competition

Jim Strayer is a retired biology teacher. This series will appear on this page in the next seven newsletters. He lives with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea.

with each other for space. The organisms that could produce their own chemicals that were necessary for survival had a better chance of meeting competition. Other organisms could change to live off of these different life forms.

This same process could happen on the first land. Imagine all of the land on earth with nothing living on it. The first organisms that ventured onto land had it all to themselves, but it did not last long. Others came and then there was competition.

Evolution was progressing from the first life forms, to cells, and then to plants and animals. There is much that scientists want to learn about how life evolved on our planet. There is much that is known. There are many excellent books, beautiful and accurate video shows, and many magazine articles on the subject of evolution. Even with all of this, we still need to ask interesting and thoughtful questions.

In a series of short articles I would like to answer some of these questions. Not as a scientist, but as a teacher. If you have questions about evolution, send them to me in care of this newsletter.

Vouchers continued from front page

He plans to spend a considerable amount of your money appealing. "This is the first inning of a long, drawn-out battle," Bush vowed.

"There is a God!" claimed a teary Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Davie. "I haven't been this happy in a long time."

It's "a victory for all in Florida who believe in public education," said Rep. Les Miller, D-Tampa. "In spite of our warning about the constitutionality of vouchers, Gov. Bush and his forces in the Legislature ran this bad idea through the process. Today, their haste is being thrown back in their faces."

The case—brought by a coalition that included a teachers union, the Florida PTA, the NAACP, the League of Women Voters, and Americans United—is expected to move to the 1st District Court of Appeal. Both sides predict it will go to the state Supreme Court.

Out came the usual misguided arguments favoring "school choice." Patrick Heffernan, president of Floridians for School

of Rights. Much of the "logic" displayed is absolutely stupefying. Elaboration is unnecessary. All are printed unedited. December 29, 1998

Religious symbols are not offensive

This is a response to your article regarding "Atheists Complain of Displays." I, like Mr. Tzanetakos, am a citizen for the United States (born and bred) and unlike Mr. Tzanetakos, I am among the majority. I am a Christian and I want the nativity and the menorah displayed on city-owned property.

If I were afraid of people with different beliefs I would object to the menorah, since I am a Christian. But I believe everyone has the right to believe and honor the God they believe in or don't believe in. That is what the Constitution is all about. There is no place in the Constitution that mentions separation of church and state. Our forefathers, the founders of the Constitution were a religious group of men. It was in the first Amendment where separation of church and state was adopted. I believe the word amendment means change. Next Mr. Tzanetakos compares the display of these religious symbols to the Nazi swastika. This is absurd. Everyone knows the swastika is a symbol of hate and oppression. The Christmas symbols are a declaration of love and peace!

I think it is about time the majority starts to take over the decision making of this country, and stop letting a few members of the minority dictate their beliefs on us. Marilyn Collver—Port St. Lucie December 30, 1998

Public servant should uphold Constitution

Sorry to override your penchant for label worship Councilman Bowen, but I am neither a humbug, an atheist, an ACLU member—nor a communist. Before you begin another quixotic trade against those you label as such for complaining about religious decorations on public property, I would like to invite you—hopefully not for the first time—to read the founding documents of your nation.

Before you lead another prayer session at a taxpayer funded fire board meeting I'd like you to ask my father and his World War II shipmates what they were fighting for as the Japanese planes dove on them with their fanatical, religiously suicidal pilots. Of course, they were fighting for our freedom.

Part of that freedom, like it or not, guarantees the precious necessity of the separation of church and state. Indeed the Pilgrim settlers of this continent were escaping the intolerance of the church and states of that time. How well our founding fathers know of the dire consequences of co-mingling religion and politics.

In simple words, true freedom means being able to practice any religion, or none at all, without having your own government shove its religion down your throat using your tax dollars to do so.

City attorney Orr is said to have extensively studied case law before advising the council—just as he "studied" the laws forbidding billboards on our greenways? Past actions would place Mr. Orr in the job-securing role of a professional rubber stamper.

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MARY BENNETT HUDSON

Constitutional doctrine, not to arrogantly challenge those Americans who feel forced to remind you of the contents of those doctrines. It becomes another expensive drain on our taxes when your personal vendettas turn into legal dramas that have already been debated in our highest courts.

The title "councilman" does not describe a position of absolute power. Especially, the power to rewrite our Constitution. Olan R. Creel—Port St. Lucie January 5, 1999

Courts making atheism state religion

The federal courts have established atheism as the national religion. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1995 edition, printed in 1998, the fourth meaning of religion is "a cause, principle or belief held to with faith and ardor." "Atheist" falls within that definition.

Atheists have from every part of the country brought cases involving religions based on a belief in God on public lands and buildings and schools, and in all cases heard by the courts, the courts have ruled that such cases violate separation of church and state, thereby, in effect, saying that atheism is legal, and that the absence of God on public lands, buildings and schools is the only legal religion permitted by the Constitution.

If that isn't legalizing atheism as being the state religion, it certainly comes close.

The First Amendment states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibit the free exercise thereof...." Of course, the courts are not Congress, except in modern America the courts have usurped the legislative powers to the point where they can and have made legal actions (legislated if you will) against the individuals, the states, counties and cities in numerous ways.

Busing and the separation of so-called "church and state" are only two of the hundreds of them.

I am sure that our lawyers will be more than happy to say I don't know what I'm talking about and they are probably right. But in my heart, and from all I believe is right about our Founding Fathers and our beloved Constitution, I believe that the courts have again taken away from us our rights as individuals to worship as our religion dictates freely, no matter where that worship takes us. To us, God is omnipotent and omnipresent, no matter what the atheists and the courts may say.

God bless us, including all you atheists and judges. And God bless America. May she be forgiven for her transgressions against Him, since without Him, I sincerely believe America would not be free and prosperous.

Jason Thibodeaux—Fort Pierce

Space precludes our printing all letters, but you get the idea. This year we will be watching again and be ready to act. Arrogant politicians, oblivious to the law, are the very reason state/church separation groups such as our exist.

population and, on the other hand, an extremely low incidence of sectarian strife? The American Civil Liberties Union believes that the answer lies in the time-tested formula of complete separation of church and state required by the First Amendment to our Constitution and strengthened by a series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions which echo the intentions of its framers.

In Port St. Lucie, government officials are discussing an ingenious idea for an elaborate holiday display next year including religious symbols, accessible to residents and visitors and sponsored by private individuals on private land. Those who wish to express their holiday spirit and religious beliefs publicly can do so by supporting the display. The community effort would celebrate the First Amendment to our Constitution and avoid any concerns of church and state separation. The city of Port St. Lucie would be a shining example to other communities to acknowledge the success of church and state intended by the framers of our Constitution.

T.A. Hyner—P.R. chair, Treasure Coast ACLU, Stuart

Atheist group protests PSL religious displays

—Steve Siceloff

PORT ST. LUCIE—It's not the Walls of Jericho, but local atheists want to see a menorah and Nativity scene come tumbling down from their locations in front of the Community Center.

Problem is, both were erected in a designated common area by private citizens. The only city-sponsored display is that of a star on the new City Hall. City Attorney Roger Orr has said the star is secular and not specific to any religion.

Christos Tzanetakos, founder of the Atheists of Florida, said that logic, odds with past Supreme Court rulings on the subject.

"That's their legal interpretation," he said. "That's not my interpretation."

If the religious display is allowed to stand in Port St. Lucie, then similar displays will be allowed in other communities, and the United States will become a place "where women would be forced to be in the kitchen with babies," Tzanetakos said, confirming he has asked the American Civil Liberties Union to intervene on atheists' behalf.

"It's not the majority that counts; it's the law," he said. "The law protects the minority from the tyranny of the majority."

The ACLU threatened over the weekend to file suit against the city, if the symbols are not removed.

"They're just idle threats," Councilman Ron Bowen said of the organization's complaints, offering this advice for how the city should handle it: "Ignore it."

He said the city's past wishy-washy responses to the annual controversy has made it an easy target for attack.

"Until we take a good hard stand on this, we're going to be a target for the ACLU and the atheists," he said.

"I think everyone should sit back and relax and celebrate the season however they feel is appropriate," said Councilwoman Mary Ann Cernuto. She volunteered to take possession of and erect the menorah and would not comment directly on Tzanetakos' comments or the ACLU's court threat.

In a letter to Mayor Jim Fielding, Tzanetakos asked for a retraction of

comments he made to the *Tribune*, in which he said he did not care if he offends atheists with the religious symbols.

"Your remarks are offensive to our Constitution and a sad realization that politicians cannot rise above personal beliefs to uphold our Constitution the way the Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment," he said, "I demand the removal of all religious icons from public property."

Cernuto said the 1999 holiday season should be marked with a massive light display along Midport Road instead of another annual debate on religious symbols on community property. She has backed an idea by Councilman Ron Bowen to ask private individuals and companies to sponsor or erect holiday displays in small segments on the road.

The display, she argues, would draw people from outside Port St. Lucie just to see the lights.

A similar article in *The News* on December 22 contained these excerpts:

"...The atheist group said allowing the religious displays will open up city land for extremists to display symbols in front of the Port St. Lucie Community Center. The group's founder, Christos Tzanetakos, demanded the displays be removed and said it is a violation of the U.S. Constitution for the city to allow such religious items.

"It's not a matter of animosity of Christian and Jewish people... they can do all these things in the privacy of their homes or house of worship," said Tzanetakos.

"Suppose the Nazis wanted to express their feelings with the swastika. This is exactly why our founders tried to avoid this unnecessary conflict."

City officials, however, said they followed the law carefully and took the risk that extremists would have the opportunity to display their symbols on the city's declared public grounds. The council voted two weeks ago to allow the displays at the community center for one year only and most said Monday that they have no intention of removing the displays this year.

"We made sure this was a separation of church and state," said Councilman Glenn Magrane. The (Atheists of Florida) should feel represented because if they don't believe in anything and they don't have anything displayed, they're represented."

Sieg Christman, chapter president for the ACLU of the Treasure Coast, acknowledged that the organization might not have a basis for a lawsuit if the city allows other religious displays. City officials, however, are not doing a good job of telling groups their displays are welcome, he said.

"There's no case if they opened it to everybody," Christman said. "But from the complainants' respect, it doesn't look that way."

The letters which were published regarding the issue demonstrate the amazing lack of comprehension much of the public has of the issue and our Bill

ST. PETERSBURG—In our October/November, '99 newsletter we published the story of the Bayfront Medical Center's merger into the BayCare Health System, Inc. This move placed the hospital under the U. S. bishop's ethical and religious directives of the Catholic Health Care Service. Interpretation: medical care at the hospital would now be directed by the church rather than by state law.

St. Pete sues hospital over religious directives

In January, the city issued a set of "Proposed Ethical Directives" specifically for the hospital, carrying none of the religious directives which city attorneys said were governing the hospital.

Those Catholic directives frown on contraception and prohibit sterilization, elective abortion, in vitro fertilization and euthanasia.

Since last June, the city has asked the hospital for a copy of its contract with the Catholic regional health care network it joined in 1997. The hospital would not comply.

By late-January of this year, the hospital openly admitted its agreement to discontinue elective abortions as a condition of joining BayCare Health System. Under threat of a lawsuit by the city, they then released

Check out <http://www.AtheistAlliance.org>. This is no longer an ordinary web site—it's a Web Center. And it's where you'll find our new web page for Atheists of Florida.

Atheist Alliance Web page expands

CREATED BY A OF F BOARD MEMBER Jim Peterson, our new page is found on the Alliance site or by going directly to <http://www.atheistalliance.org/florida>. The site now includes a full description of Atheists of Florida, information about each chapter, e-mail contacts for all chapters and directors, and offers our sample newsletter. The Twain Scholarship Fund section includes an application form which may be printed, filled out and mailed to Ft. Pierce, and the winning essay for the previous year.

One of the best aspects of the whole deal is that as a Member Society of the Atheist Alliance we are allowed space on the web site as an incidence of membership. In other words, it's free!

Joe Zemel, Webmaster of the Alliance site, announces that the AAI site is the most full-featured atheist site on the internet and the most popular, with over 7,000 user sessions a month. He began by upgrading

the agreement and answered questions about the pledges and trade-offs that went into the writing of the 50-year contract.

Bayfront is a private hospital which sits on public land. Under its \$10-a-year lease with the city, it is expected to provide patient care "without regard to sex, race, color or creed."

By mid-February, the city's patience was exhausted and in a 7-1 vote filed a request in Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Court for "declaratory relief," seeking a determination of the city's and Bayfront's rights, whether the consent the council gave Bayfront to join BayCare Health System Inc. remains in effect; and whether the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment separation of state and church has been violated.

The vote also authorized the city to spend \$175,000 on legal and consulting services and to continue medication sessions with Bayfront.

"It would appear the church can control, as it deems necessary, what directives apply, and therefore affect the citizens of St. Petersburg," said Paul Lipton, a Miami-based attorney for the city.

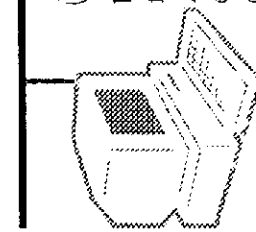
Lipton said that 1½ months after Bayfront received the council's consent to join BayCare, the hospital amended the articles of incorporation it filed in 1968 to include the word "religious" in its statement of purpose. That statement says the hospital is organized exclusively for "charitable, scientific and educational purposes."

The web site's programming to include the conveniences of electronic commerce, discussion groups, ad banners (for AAI revenue) and all the newest trends the internet has to offer—no small job since he was tackling it all singlehanded. As a result of his efforts, the AAI Web Center was named one of the 100 best web sites by *Yahoo! Internet Life Magazine* as the only atheist-humanist site to make the list.

The web site has become a source of revenue for the Alliance by joining with **GreaterGood.com** and **iGive.com** in providing goods and services from the most popular web stores to Atheist Alliance supporters. We are listed with other nonprofit organizations, such as Special Olympics, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Humane Society, etc. The goal of GreaterGood.com is to allow us to generate income from purchases at popular web stores.

The GreaterGood.com web site is <http://www.atheistalliance.greatergood.com>. It is also listed on our Web Center.

For everyone who registers online and selects us as a designee, Atheist Alliance receives \$3. Please register, even if you don't buy anything at this time. If you make purchases online, see if the company you are buying from is listed on the above web site. If so, please purchase through the link and Atheist Alliance will receive 5%.



SEVERAL RECENT ARTICLES in major newspapers have pointed out that Americans in general believe there is life on other planets—and most believe the aliens are smarter than we are. Given the front-page status of stories about a local football team, one which has finally won a few games but still declines to pay for what they promised taxpayers they would pay for. I'm not sure it would take much to find aliens smarter than the average American. However, as pointed out by two scientists I admire, the likelihood of the typical alien encounter scenario is minimal at best.

Isaac Asimov long ago wrote an article that assured us that life was out there, somewhere, just by sheer mathematical probability. In the same article, he reminded us that the likelihood we would ever contact alien life in a form beyond microscopic scale was infinitesimally small. The popular "water = life" mantra made so infamous by Dan Quayle, is simply not reality. Much more is needed for life, and even more for intelligent life to develop. Of course, there's always the possibility that aliens might invent a religion which is never overthrown, so a theocracy would prevent science from advancing on other planets as it has here. The flip side is no religion, imagine how much faster our own sciences could have advanced were it not for religious taboos on autopsies, building too tall, sharing information, etc.

The other scientist I mentioned was Carl Sagan, who has likened the current UFO abduction hysteria to religious experiences. Ironically, when a certain person took me to a church a couple years ago, the sermon was about a man being held in jail who was visited by angels who walked through walls, just as many abductees claim the aliens can do. Sagan does a much more thorough job of pointing out similarities between UFO/ alien encounters and religion than I have room for here in his book, *The Demon Haunted World: Science As A Candle In The Darkness*. Get it, read it, and spend no more nights in fear of aliens schlepping you away in their spaceships to perform unspeakably perverted acts on you. Leave that to our politicians!

What will humanity look like in a thousand years?

"Atheism is a requirement for a complete human being. Religion is a crutch that is shackled to you, one you never really needed in the first place, but were convinced by others that you couldn't live without. Once you discover it's only an illusion, that it's not even a real crutch, you discard it gladly."
—Brent Yaciw,
ATHALFLB@aol.com

course, therein lies the rub, because few people can discard their emotions when it comes to babies, endlessly presented in our society as the epitome of cute and cuddly.

He's also struck a nerve with the disabled, who, like many on the anti-abortion side, approach the topic with a typically adult attitude: I don't want to die now, so it's horrific for me to imagine being put to death as a fetus, or as an infant. It doesn't help Singer's case that he elevates animals to a place above infant humans. No parent can imagine their child, even a son or daughter as dense as Dan Quayle, given less value than an animal. Yet I can speak from personal experience on this: If I had been told that the cat who owned me several years ago could have been given another year of life by trading in the life of someone else's infant, I would not have hesitated. We only really value those to whom we have personal attachment, even if we don't particularly like them. This is how we convince soldiers to mercilessly murder for their country, not by "dehumanizing" the enemy as is so often claimed, but by depersonalizing them. It's not Lin Wu, Hans Burgher or Hussein Najir we are killing, it's just another Jap, Nazi or Ay-rab, and that makes it OK. Of course, the other side does the same thing to us, so we reduce the population in this politically correct manner. I've never understood how those who won't even discuss birth control, abortion, or infanticide think nothing at all of sending off the country's finest young men to be slaughtered by the thousands over land or oil or whatever. In fact, they are often proud of it, bragging about their husband or son's war record, usually based on how many they killed, while bemoaning the "waste" of abortion.



Peter Singer

One look at our major roads during rush hour and any remotely sensible person recognizes we have a population problem. The recent buzzwords, "fighting urban sprawl" are no solution, because they're simply trying to pack more people into a smaller area. The question is, how do we reduce the population without harming, or de-evolving, it? If the most educated, rational, and intelligent members of the population are the only ones who cut their reproductive rate, what will humanity look like in a thousand years? Yet implying that we should screen infants smacks of Hitlerian measures, and of course if the government started sterilizing those it considered "unfit," who wants to bet that atheists wouldn't be at the top of the list?

It's not an easy problem to solve. It is one we must address, before the planet becomes so packed that our semi-civilized world dissolves into a Road Warrior reality, where those who are the most efficient killers are the only survivors.

"He (you) said he is not worried about offending atheists with the Christian and Jewish symbols... You or any other individual can not offend an Atheist with unintelligent statements. Your remarks are offensive to our Constitution and a sad realization that politicians can not rise above personal beliefs to uphold our Constitution the way our Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment. As an Atheist and Founder of Atheists of Florida, Inc., to ask for a retraction of your remarks would be equal to our National Academy of Sciences requesting the retraction of remarks made by fundamentalist religious groups, lamenting the Academy's stand on evolution. As a U.S. citizen, tax-payer and resident of St. Lucie County though, I do demand the removal of all the religious icons from public property.

To make myself more clear, nativity scenes, Memorials and other religious icons are not offensive to atheists. We accept the right of all peoples to believe as they choose so long as they do so within the guidelines of our laws. Sincerely,
Christos Tzanetakos
Founder

December 18, 1998
City of Port St. Lucie
121 Port St. Lucie Blvd.
Port St. Lucie, FL 34984
To All Those Concerned:

In The Spirit of Giving, in the month that observes three religious holidays, we are politely asking you to remove all icons and symbols that demonstrates your local government's prejudice of one religion over another. We have received complaints from non-Christians about your religious displays and in an effort to save your tax payers a costly litigation process, we would like to see the removal immediately upon receipt of this letter.

A friendly reminder to those who have just taken elected offices: there exists a separation of church and state clause in the United States Constitution and your blatant violation is a slap in the face to citizens who believe in religious freedoms without the influence of government. Your direct attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated. Sincerely,
Sieg Christman
Chapter President, ACLU of the Treasure Coast

ACLU: Take down PSL Community Center display
PORT ST. LUCIE—A holiday display at the Community Center is offensive, in violation of the U.S. Constitution and should be taken down, the ACLU said Saturday.

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office received two complaints Friday about the display at the Port St. Lucie Community Center. "You can do it in front of your home. You can do it in front of a church. You can't do it in front of City Hall," Christman continued.

Christman faxed a letter to city offices on Saturday complaining about the display. The letter, also faxed to local newspapers, says taking down the display will "save your taxpayers a costly litigation process."
"He's got to do what he's got to do," said Mayor Jim Fielding, who had not seen the ACLU's letter Saturday night.

Councilman Ron Bowen, who also had not seen the letter, said he was suspicious of Christman's motives. "The ACLU has opened a local office and it looks like they're looking for something to do," Bowen said. "If they're going to try to fight city hall, they're fighting the wrong people."
"To heck with the ACLU," Bowen continued. "The city is not going to be run by the ACLU. If the city has to fight them, I don't have a problem with that."

Port St. Lucie can set example
The Tribune * Sunday, January 10, 1999
"Tis the season! Amid the caroling, partying and gifts, every year a little rain falls on the festivities, when government officials disregard the establishment clause of the First Amendment and go beyond Santa and Jingle Bells to include religious symbols in their holiday displays.

Because this practice runs afoul of the Constitution, concerned citizens turn to the ACLU, which for 77 years has defended religious freedom and challenged attempts by sectarians to impose their religious beliefs and practices on others through government sponsorship.
The common holiday misconception of the ACLU's involvement is that the ACLU commitment to complete separation of church and state represents hostility to religion. In fact, the ACLU upholds the Founders' belief in the precious sanctity of religious faith that engendered the Founders' determination to protect religion from government interference. They understood that religious liberty can flourish only if the government leaves religion alone.

The United States is the most religiously diverse nation in the world. More than 1,500 different religious bodies and sects, including 75 varieties of Baptists alone, co-exist and flourish in our nation. We have 360,000 churches, mosques and synagogues. More than half say they pray at least once a day and more than 40 percent say they have attended worship services during the previous week. The Census Bureau reports that 63% of the population claims church membership, a figure that has remained virtually unchanged since the 1960 census.
How has the U.S. been able to maintain, on one hand, an extremely diverse and devout religious