

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

MIAMI: Sunday, September 19, 2:00 - 4:00 pm. at the Broward County Main Library, 8th floor, 100 S. Andrews Ave., in beautiful downtown Fort Lauderdale. Topic for debate: *The Mystery of Madalyn O'Hair*.

FM: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441
e-mail: atheist11@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 954/985-5655.

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

Letters *continued*

Jewish population dropped to near 0% in many sub-districts. Likewise, in 1945, land ownership was predominantly in Arab hands. Jewish ownership dropping to less than 1% in 5 sub-districts. So, by what law, or right, did the U.N. or anyone else have to give the Arabs' land to the Zionists?

Mr. Schisler's other objection was with regard to politicians taxing the citizens to give inordinate amounts of foreign aid to a hybrid theocratic/secular state as a political boon, or expediency. Here are the numbers from the Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1998:

1) Chart No. 1313—1996, U.S. Government Foreign Grants and Credits. Israel receives \$5,301,000,000 out of a total \$15,937,000,000, which is 33.3%! Israel, one country about the size of New Jersey, receives one-third of the world's

TAMPA: Saturday, September 25, (last Saturday of each month), 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. in meeting room A or B of the Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Clearwater. Video: *Cosmic Voyage*, an excellent IMAX film shows us where humans fit in our ever-expanding universe

Monthly Dinner—Tuesday, September 28th, at 6:00 pm. Dinner will be at the Boardin' House Restaurant, 6821 W. Hillsborough, Tampa, just west of the Veteran's Expressway. **October 30—no meeting.** We will be participating in Circus McGurkis in Lakeview Park, 20th St. & 28th Ave South in St. Petersburg. All members are invited to help participate

Monthly Dinner Wednesday, October 27th, 6:00 p.m. at Jimmy Mac's Waterfront, 5000 Gandy Blvd. in the private room just off the entry foyer.
FMI on dinners: Ed Golly—813/839-7567 or Jerry Moore—727/526-4223

total! All of Africa receives 9.0%, and all of the Western Hemisphere receives a mere 2.1%!

2) Chart No. 1315—1996, U.S. Foreign Aid. Israel receives \$1,800,000,000, which is 297% of the \$606,598,000 which all of Europe gets. It is 27.65% of what all of Asia receives—\$6,508,000!

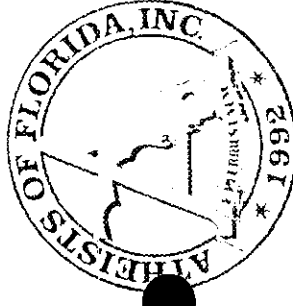
Do we label "anti-Semite" or "anti-Jewish" anyone who inquires: "Why does Israel require 33.3% of our Foreign Grants and Credits?" And what does this have to do with Atheism? Is not Nationalism the equal of Religion in the atrocious perfidities it perpetrates, as we witness today in the Balkans, in Africa, in India?

I believe Charles Schisler represents the highest standards and ideals of Rationalism and Atheism. Are rational analysis, factual evidence, discussion and opinion to be prohibited under the threat of being stigmatized?

Ms. Morgenroth, please tell me what ideas are dangerous to the cause of Atheism, and of what am I to "Beware?"

—Charles Coryn
Lake Worth

A



Volume VIII No. 6
September, 1999

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

A Member Society of the ATHEIST ALLIANCE, the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies

A of F elects new Board of Directors

TAMPA—An official vote count was tallied at the Tampa Bay chapter meeting Saturday, July 31 for the new Board of Directors for Atheists of Florida, Inc. Nineteen names had been placed in nomination for eighteen positions. We received about a 58% return of ballots (63 total).

The majority of board members (eight) now come from the Tampa Bay area. They are: Brent Yaciv, Edwin Corl, Dominick Florio, James A. Young (Lakeland), Nan Owens, Ed Golly, John W. MacKay, and Jim Peterson.

Five members reside in the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale region—Dr. Rebecca Porto, Dr. Michael P. Brannon, Anthony J. Schleifstein, Patrick Bens, and Chuck Ross.

Dr. James Williamson and Jennifer Gallo were elected from the Orlando area, while Christos Tzanetakos is nearby in Ft. Pierce. Jim Strayer is from Ormond Beach, and Steven Miles lives in Gainesville.

We thank all applicants for their interest in Atheists of Florida and all members who took the trouble to vote.

We plan to hold a meeting of the newly elected Board in September to involve all board members in the direction of Atheists of Florida under the leadership of the new board. Board Members will be notified by mail of the exact vote count and the date and location of the meeting.

Adopt a student

TAMPA—We have completed our 5th year at the USF Elm Street Flea Market with our Atheist Outreach operation. This past year a student group of atheists/humanists was formed under the leadership of George Giannakoulas and has been meeting every Wednesday possible throughout the school year. As usual with students they don't have a bit of extra cash to join organizations such as A of F. So what Ed Corl proposes is that when the student group meets this fall semester, he will secure the roster of participating students.

Now for the other side of this equation Corl seeks "Veteran Atheists" willing to sponsor a student to be part of Atheists of Florida. Anyone interested can contact Corl and he will supply the name, address, and telephone number of a student and then you

may sponsor the student with a membership for a paltry \$10. After Corl provides the contact, he's out of the deal. You may also consider signing your student up to *Secular Nation*, the Atheist Alliance quarterly magazine, for a mere \$15. Hey, kick it up a notch and invite a student to an A of F dinner sometime.

Ed Corl phone: (727) 321-6217
Address: BOX 530055 / St. Petersburg, FL 33747
E-mail: LLUED2@aol.com



Manning the stand at the Elm Street Flea Market at USF are Corl (sitting) and Britt Girard.

Since we had published sketchy details about this program in a recent newsletter, Ceil Glantz wrote to report that at the Miami July meeting, Director Patrick Bens decreed that so little is accomplished by our members for problems of religious encroachment in the schools that his daughters had to endure each school morning with prayers. But little can be expected from aging members. Thus, the future direction of atheism is in the hands of our college oriented atheists.

"The project to support this vital undertaking at the University can involve all of us to be part of the development and continuation of atheism," writes Glantz. "Truthfully, it is our only avenue of perpetuating our existence, so to the student project my contribution of \$25.00 is enclosed."

Ceil's contribution will provide a membership and *Secular Nation* subscription for the first sponsored student that Corl finds.

New look for the newsletter

TAMPA—As much as we liked the nameplate of our newsletters, we now produce 350 copies per issue. In its previous configuration, we had to run the cover page once for color, then a second time for the black. This new design allows us to run the cover sheet including color in a single pass, saving both time and wear on our new copier, which, by the way, is giving us excellent performance.

We were also always running short on space. The addition of two pages will allow us to run more news and essays submitted by our members.

A

10 September 1999



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Published eight times a year by Atheists of Florida, Inc., a non-profit, educational corporation founded to heighten public awareness about atheism, monitor state church separation issues, and provide intellectually stimulating contacts for the membership.

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
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 national Atheist Alliance.

Officers

Chairman: Anthony J. Schislerstein
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Vice President: Charles Schisler
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James Williamson, M.D. Nan C. Owens
Michael Brannon, Psy. D. Ed Cofl
Newsletter Editor: Ed Golly

THE STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN separation of state and church continues here in Florida, even during the hot summer months. Unfortunately, the Columbine High School massacre, the shootings at the Jewish day camp, combined with the occurrence of natural disasters, give new impetus to the felt need of our politicians to

share our concerns for the preservation of our constitutional rights and liberties. These include concern for equal treatment of women, gays, lesbians, and people of color, of all ethnic backgrounds, of all religions or no religion at all. Hence, in the face of a large prayer meeting planned Oct. 8 and 9 by the Promise Keepers at Tropicana Field, we are co-sponsoring an educational forum on Oct. 4, entitled, "Will the REAL Promise Keepers Please Stand Up?" The event begins at 7 p.m. in 130 Davis Hall on the USF campus in St. Petersburg. We are hoping that

Will the REAL Promise Keepers please stand up!

—Sidney M. Goetz

pander to the public's inclination to resort to prayer to resolve people's doubts and satisfy their emotional needs. So we are facing more proposed legislation to contain our secular institutions with initiatives that help satisfy the religiously inspired fulminations of our right-wing fundamentalists and evangelicals.

In the immediate future, however, Atheists of Florida is lending its energies to an alliance with other organizations that

many of our A of F members will attend to learn more about the radical political agenda that lies hidden behind the benign and prayerful facade of this organization. Our co-sponsors include the National Organization for Women, Americans United, Planned Parenthood, Equality of Florida, Suncoast Interfaith Alliance, Humanists of Florida and the Campus Women's Consortium. Please plan to attend!!!

A of F videos in St. Pete Public Library

IT WASN'T EASY.

After several months of persistent effort by A of F member Florence Morgenroth and dealing with a genuine runaround, we have finally placed four of our Atheists of Florida Forum videos in the St. Petersburg Public Library system. These are programs from our 1997 series. Although they are housed at the Main Library in the audio visual listings, patrons of the branch libraries may request that they be sent to their nearest branch for check out. Let's show the library that people *are* interested in the atheist philosophy. Those members who live in the St. Pete area, please make an effort to check out a tape. If you've never seen an A of F Forum, you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Here are the four programs available:

TITLE: Contemporary ideas on evolution

SUBJECT: Human evolution—Philosophy, Atheism.

CALL NUMBER: VIDEOS 576.8

CONT.—VIDEO7—Available.

TITLE: Anthropology and religion

SUBJECTS: Religion and science, Anthropology, Atheism.

CALL NUMBER: VIDEOS 215 SCIE—VIDEO7—Available

TITLE: Genetic engineering & religion

SUBJECTS: Determinism (Philosophy) Genetic engineering—Social aspects, CALL NUMBER: VIDEOS 155.7 GENE—VIDEO7—Available

TITLE: Giordano Bruno

SUBJECTS: Bruno, Giordano, 1548-1600, Astronomy—Philosophy, Cosmology, CALL NUMBER: VIDEOS 523.1 GIOR—VIDEO7—Available

Welcome Life members

Atheists of Florida welcomes two new Life Members this month with the addition of **Murray and Norma Cossey** of Lantana, FL, and **Ed Corl** of St Petersburg. Funds from Life memberships are held in Certificates of Deposit which now total several thousand dollars.

LETTERS

Questionable commandments

Submitted to and printed by the St. Petersburg Times June 25 by A of F member A. Martin
Re: House approves display of Ten Commandments, June 18.

So now, if lawmakers have their way, the Ten Commandments can be legally posted in public places. And we can breathe a sigh of relief, as we see the end of

violence and corruption!

they don't count in this democracy of ours... nor do the ideas of our founding fathers, who knew all too well what happens when religion is mingled with government

Of course, some of our citizens may not care for this "cornerstone of Western civilization"—especially if they have been reared as Muslims, or if they fail to recognize any supreme being as a wise law-giver. But then they don't count in this democracy of ours... nor apparently do the ideas of our founding fathers, who knew all too well what happens when religion is mingled with government. There are a few considerations to be examined. For instance, will sculptors be forced to stop making statues ("graven images")? What about observance of Sunday? Is it the same as "the Sabbath"? And if it is, what about scheduling baseball games? Will black-trench-coat games be deterred because a plaque falls them not to kill? Will future presidents refrain from committing adultery (also forbidden)? Will women enjoy being told they are numbered among the possessions that must not be "coveted"?
Can it be that as a cornerstone, this document is a little less than solid?
—*Ibigail Ann Martin*
Valrico

religion is mingled with government

OK of vouchers subverts constitution

This published in the Palm Beach Post May 23.
As a voter concerned about the new Florida law that allows financing of faith-based school systems with public tax money, I recently wrote to Gov. Jeb Bush to remind him of all the time and money being wasted in this attempt to subvert the constitution, since it is so plainly and clearly stated that this folly is unconstitutional.

Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.

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MARY BENNETT HUDSON

church, sect or religious denomination or in aid of any sectarian institution." This point is discussed again in Article VII, Section 6, establishing a state school fund. Money from that fund may be appropriated "only for the support and maintenance of free public schools."
Our real concern as voters is the subversive nature and waste of pursuing obvious unconstitutional endeavors. All Floridians should let it be known in one voice that we want our public schools improved, not divided and dismantled.
Gov. Bush should end this unfounded subversion, provide schools with necessary financing and start doing his job.
—*George Hunt*
Lake Worth

Another point of view

Editor:
Florence Morgenroth surely misses the point by branding Charles Schisler "anti-semitic." The Charles Schislers of this world are the backbone of Atheism and FreeThought, those who strive to keep cultural myths from overwhelming factual reality. What he objects to, on principle, is government agencies, such as the United Nations, appropriating (expropriating, stealing) lands that are already occupied, "owner-occupied", and giving them to someone else. Would I be labeled "anti-European" if I stated it was wrong for the Europeans to expropriate the Amerindians' lands, after first diseasing and killing them, and force-marching them to distant, barren reservations?
From the days of Moses and Joshua, when the Hebrews, following their imaginary god, invaded, killed and "displaced" the indigenous Semites (Canaanites, Phoenicians, Philistines, etc.), there has been a cultural myth that the Jewish people belonged there, that it was their "homeland." A different set of facts is presented in "Maps and Mythology—What Israel Records Reveal About the Land and the People of Palestine," by Edward Henderson, who serve in Palestine with the British Foreign Service, and helped found the American Educational Trust in Washington, D.C.

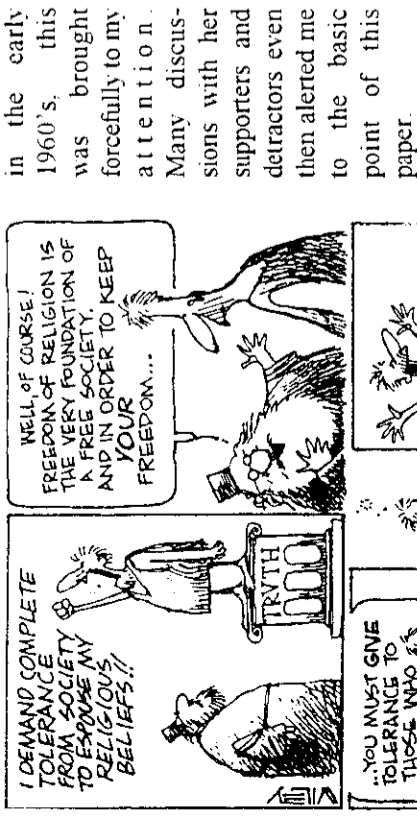
"An examination of the historical record shows that this land, inhabited continuously since the Stone Age, was under Jewish rule for only about 560 years, less than one-sixth of its recorded history. For much of the past 1500 years the Jewish inhabitants seldom numbered more than one or two thousand persons, and as recently as 1845 there were only 11,000 Jews in Palestine... In 1918 there were 56,000, less than 10% of the total population."
The maps in this booklet show population distribution and land ownership in 1946 near the end of the Mandate, prepared by the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP). Only in the sub-district of Jafa did the Jewish people have over 50% of the population. In the countryside (turn page)

EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN that there are many psychological factors at work which influence those who join, and those who basically endorse, but are reluctant to join, the atheist movement. Let me mention at the outset that there seem to be two intellectual, pro-freedom movements which should be

Atheists, Liberals and Libertarians in the United States

— Charles Schisler

strong, mutually-supportive allies. Both have so much in common that true advocates of one position should necessarily be strongly supportive of the other. These two individualistic ideas are atheism and libertarianism. When we gave taped lectures on Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism back in the early 1960's, this was brought forcefully to my attention. Many discussions with her supporters and detractors even then alerted me to the basic point of this paper.



So much national energy has gone into trying to make the United States into a religious, if not exclusively, Christian nation—that it may be expected that religious propaganda on all sides has deadened one's ability to think through the specific issues involved. To be an enlightened atheist one must first be aware of arguments promoting atheism—a task not easily found in our culture. But once found or independently discovered, for very good reason not every-

one who is pro-freedom would publicly endorse atheism. My personal experience proves that known atheism can seriously affect oneself in the workplace, not just in social situations. Yet there are positive benefits to know the philosophic values of associates, and for those of

Charles Schisler is director of the Palm Beach chapter. He holds a B.S. from the University of Nebraska and retired as a major from the U.S. Air Force

significance to know yours.

Because so much courage is necessary to profess atheism in the U.S. it seems odd that so many do it for reasons almost unrelated to the complete rejection of religion, as such. There are some who are first and foremost enthusiastic promoters of the Democratic party and use atheism primarily to subdue the right-wing Republican party. They use atheism as a tool for political ends—not necessarily because atheism itself has inherently noble intellectual merit.

There are surely those who see monopolistic Christianity as a great threat not just to an enlightened society, but to the great disadvantage of other religious traditions such as liberal Judaism. There are some professed atheists who understand that, like all religions, Judaism may have been *founded* on mythology, but delude themselves into thinking that Judaism can, or should exist independent of mythology. Other New Age quasi-religious movements with pseudo-scientific quackery, of which Scientology is but one example, are free to propagandize when the dominant religion is put down by atheists.

UNLIKE EUROPEANS WHO more nearly equate liberal as libertarian, in the U.S. we're unsure where libertarians fit within the artificial liberal-conservative spectrum. This illustrates the inadequacies of our political categories and thinking. Having long allied myself with such innovations in thought, I am convinced that liberals, generally speaking, are not as freedom oriented as their label suggests, but psychologically attuned to compulsion in human affairs. Liberals are not as interested in getting rid of god as in displacing god. They want to *play god* for everyone's good, yet not realizing that one's good is more often than not the distinct province of the individual. I quite often know very well what is in my own best interest and preference—but miserably uninformed what strong preferences you may harbor, or how best you may achieve them in all the various avenues and complex choices at your command. In that regard I am an inept liberal. Yet freedom is my (dare I say it) holy ideal. I am, in the true sense of the word, interested in liberty (libertas) and therefore libertarian.

Atheists, just as libertarians, are interested in personal autonomy, in a community of other individuals of principled, ethical persuasion—intolerant of god-dominion or the manipulation of others. Those desiring to replace god with some human counterpart are not ideal champions of atheism. Granted, one *can* be an atheist—lamenting that god does not exist—and constantly search for a way to supersede god. However, we who understand that an ultimate creator is an obvious, contradictory lie, and remain determined that no master rules our every move and manipulates our natural, humanistic desire for getting along in this brief life—we are the natural, most worthy representatives of atheism!

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission decided that the group may set membership qualifications that exclude atheists.

—By Adrienne Liu
July 1, 1999

Discrimination comppled against Boy Scouts dismissed

IT IS UP TO THE BOY SCOUTS to determine qualifications for membership, including whether to exclude atheists, according to a decision by a state commission.

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission voted 7-2 June 28 to dismiss a complaint filed by Pocopson resident Margaret Downey arguing that the Boy Scouts organization is substantially public and should therefore be held to state anti-discrimination laws. Downey is President of Free-thought Society of Greater Philadelphia, a Member Society of the Atheist Alliance.

The commission, which heard

arguments in Chester County Court in May, made its decision "on the basis that Boy Scouts did not fit the definition of a public accommodation under the state's Human Relations Act," said Laura J. Treaster, a spokeswoman for the commission.

A public accommodation, which would be subject to anti-discrimination laws, is defined by Pennsylvania's Human Relations Act as "any accommodation, resort or amusement which is open to, accepts or solicits the patronage of the general public."

The ruling upholds the ability of the Chester County Council of the Boy Scouts of America—and, by precedent, any other Boy Scouts organization in the state—to disqualify atheists for membership. It was the first ruling by the Human Relations Commission on Boy Scouts, according to Treaster.

"We are very pleased that the commission has recognized that it's our constitutional right to maintain our duty to God."

Gary Smith
(concept by Margaret Downey)



A VERY THIN LINE

said Douglas Dillow, scout executive for the Chester County Council. "We are a private organization, and as such, we retain a right and responsibility to set the standards of membership for our organization," Dillow said.

Carla Kerr, an attorney for the Chester County Council, said, "We think it was the right way to rule. There was no way to find under the Pennsylvania accommodations law that a Boy Scout troop is a public accommodation."

Downey, who filed the complaint about seven years ago after her son, Matthew Schottmiller, was denied membership to the Boy Scouts because he did not believe in God, declined to comment by week's end.

James Randall, the California attorney for Downey, who represented his own twin sons in a similar, separate case, said he was extremely disappointed. "I am frankly disgusted with the State of Pennsylvania and the commissioners of the state of Pennsylvania who haven't got the guts to stand up and say this is not right," Randall said. "You cannot look at any of these boys... look in their eyes, and say they cannot be Boy Scouts because they do not believe in God." Randall said he had not decided whether to appeal the decision.

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission is an 11-member panel that covers issues of employment, housing, education and public accommodation. The commission's final order was scheduled to be approved on July 26.

Similar fights seeking to compel the Boy Scouts to accept homosexuals, agnostics, or atheists in other states have yielded mixed results. Three state Supreme Courts—in California, Oregon and Kansas—and a federal court have ruled that Boy Scouts are not a public accommodation. But in New Jersey, an appeals court ruled that the scouts' policy on gays was discriminatory and said the group should not have expelled a gay scoutmaster.

BY NOW YOU HAVE HEARD about the giant leap backward taken by the Kansas State Board of Education. Their 6-4 decision to abandon the teaching of evolution in the state public schools as we approach the 21st century is a clear demonstration of what can happen when the Religious Reich secures a stranglehold on local politics.

While not strictly prohibiting the teaching of evolution,

Major victory for Religious Reich

Kansas backs out of 20th century

"Why is this battle being fought with students in the seventh grade?"

It will omit all reference to the subject from statewide high school science tests, allowing individual schools to drop it from their curriculum altogether. Consequently, the Board has made no secret of its hope that science teachers will introduce biblical creationism as a suitable substitute in their classrooms.

Passage of the measure relies on the abysmal ignorance of the general public on the subject of evolution. Most still think it's a theory and don't understand that a theory is supported by fact. Assuming it to be a concept completely unsupported by evidence, it can therefore be dismissed in favor of creationism.

"Evolution has been removed," said board member

Janet Vaughn, who opposed the new standard. "Instead of Kansas's curriculum having more and more credibility, it will have less and less."

The board voted on a modified version of curricula guidelines for grades kindergarten through high school that eliminates evolution as a way to describe the emergence of new species—for instance the evolution of primates into homo sapiens—while leaving intact references to "microevolution," or changes that occur within a single species.

Prior to the vote, the presidents and chancellors of Kansas's six public universities wrote a letter saying that the new standards "will set Kansas back a century, and give hard-to-find science teachers no choice but to pursue other career fields or assignments outside of Kansas."

Even though a Republican, Kansas Gov. Bill Graves warned board members not to adopt the anti-evolution curricula. He now wants to abolish the Board of Education.

Atheists of Florida Board Member Jim Strayer of Ormond Beach, appearing on a Tampa TV station to debate the issue in late August, noted that every major university in the world accepts evolution as fact. "Why," asked Strayer, "is this battle being fought with students in the seventh grade? Why can't the creationists convince a single university that they are right?"

What do you believe, Mr./Ms. Candidate?

A RECENT EDITORIAL by Lars-Erik Nelson, a columnist for the *New York Daily News*, highlighted just how the Religious Reich shoots itself squarely in the foot when it seeks to shove its agenda upon us wholesale. With vouchers and creationism out in the open, candidates are now asked to respond to issues of their religious beliefs more candidly than before.

Queried about his assessment of the voucher issue, candidate G. W. Bush, Jr., decided it would be just fine to allow vouchers on a national scale. He also, you may recall, suggested the posting of the Ten Commandments in schools and public buildings was no problem since, "we can all certainly agree on an acceptable set of commandments." Either he is unaware that several versions exist or, more likely, he can't even recite them. To say nothing of the fact that this act would positively establish a specific religion which is forbidden by the Bill of Rights.

Elizabeth Dole was asked by CBS News' Bob Schieffer on a Sunday morning program: "Do you personally believe the literal explanation of how the world was created in the Bible?" "I am a person of strong faith," Dole replied, and would go no further. "I have to note that you did not answer that question," Schieffer said.

Because of Kansas, the person who seeks to lead us into the 21st Century may now be asked legitimate questions about their religious beliefs and to what extent they think religion

should be pushed into the public's face.

Does Dole really believe that Noah built an ark and, as the old spiritual tells us, "In walked the animals two by two, there was the ox, the camel and the kangaroo"?

Does she believe that all life on Earth today descends from Noah's passengers? Does she accept the creationist view that God created the world only a few thousand years ago, and to fool us he also created rocks and fossils that appear to be billions of years old?

Nelson suspects Dole is not a creationist. Rather, as she seeks the Republican presidential nomination, she does not want to offend those dedicated GOP voters who are:

Steve Forbes, her multimillionaire rival, is no better. As he seeks the presidency, he does not want to offend the religious right and is steadily shifting from being a flat-tarver to a "flat-earther." Forbes told ABC News he would let the states decide whether to teach evolution.

The candidate pandering is troubling. As we enter a knowledge-based, computer-driven, nuclear-powered, genetically engineered 21st century, we cannot afford to have our educational standards set by any group of true believers who manage to win election to a local school board.

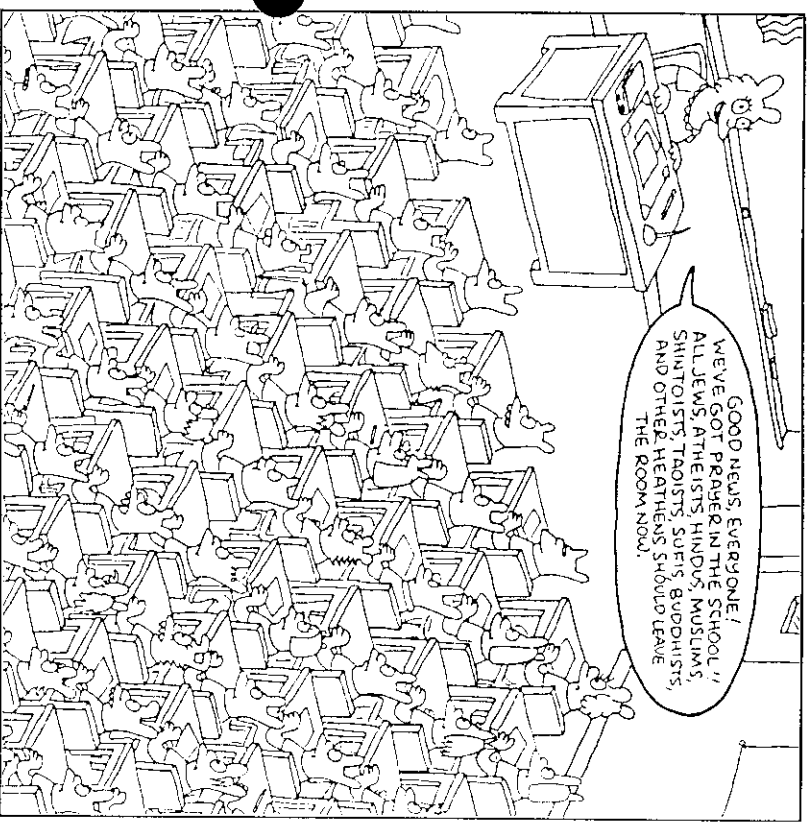
If evolution can be discarded today, what's next?

The Bible suggests (1 Kings 7:23) that the value of pi is not the approximate 3.1416 we are taught in school, but an exact three. In Iowa, the legislature once tried to enact this biblical value for pi into law. The effort failed, but if the fundamentalists ever try it again, they can be confident that politicians like Dole, Bush, and Forbes won't object.

Alabama retreating to dark ages

GAUSEN, AL.—"Always stand up," said Dean Young, director of the Christian Family Association in front of a crowd of about 300 flag-waving, cheering Christians. "The battle is not even close to being over. We've signed up for a war."

This "victory rally" against the ACLU in July was celebrating the 11th Court of Appeals overturning of parts of a 1997 injunction banning school-sanctioned prayer in Alabama. A three-judge panel had ruled that the U.S. District judge had gone too far in curtailing the religious rights of students in DeKalb County and sent the order back to the judge to be reworked.



The ACLU had represented an assistant principal who charged that schools forced his son to take part in daily prayer and Bible-reading. The county school board and the state attorney general appealed parts of the injunction and praised the decision.

"We've signed up for a war."

One of the speakers at the rally was Sylvania High School principal Gary Carlyle, who was chastised by the judge last year after a student invited the audience to join him in reading the Lord's prayer during a graduation ceremony. Carlyle was ordered to take classes to understand how to comply with the order.

"Let's confront society," he said at the rally. "Get involved. Let's convert our culture and society."

Young encouraged those present to stand together as a barrier against an erosion of religious freedoms, such as the loss of prayer in schools and the Ten Commandments stripped from classrooms, which he blamed for a wave of student violence.

Lord's Prayer ruled a human rights violation

SASKATOON, CANADA—The Constitution which, under the laws that brought Saskatchewan into Confederation, allows the Lord's Prayer and Bible readings in public schools. Yet a group of nine parents challenged the practice in July.

They cheered when it was ruled a human rights violation.

Ken Hatverson of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission declared the prayers discriminatory because they interfere with the freedom of religion for all students. The schools were ordered to end prayers in classrooms and assemblies.

During the hearing, the Board of Education argued the commission lacked jurisdiction because discrimination arising from recitation of the Lord's prayer or reading from the Bible during the school day is protected from censure under the *Code*. Specifically, Ss. 4 of the *Code* read as follows:

"4 Every person and every class of persons shall enjoy the right to freedom of religious association, teaching, practice and worship.

Look at the specific section of the Code on which they based their objection:

Religious Instruction

137. No religious instruction except as hereinafter provided shall be permitted in the school of any district from the opening of such school until one half year previous to its closing in the afternoon after which time any such instruction permitted or desired by the board may be given.

(2) It shall however be permissible for the board of any district to direct that the school be opened by the recitation of the Lord's prayer.

138. Any child shall have the privilege of leaving the school room at the time at which religious instruction is commenced...or of remaining without taking part in any religious instruction that may be given if the parents so desire.

Included among the witnesses who testified were former public school students, current students, and parents of children who attended public schools. Their experiences were essentially the same with variations only in detail. The evidence was not refuted. Generally, school assemblies, which occurred at differing hours, would commence with singing the national anthem followed by recitation of the Lord's prayer. There was evidence as well of teachers reading the Bible to pupils in the classroom.

In disagreement with the Board, the commission has made a statement which should be recognized worldwide—no government should ever assume the power of determining which religion its citizens should accept or even whether they should embrace any religion at all.

Incredibly, his opponent insisted that this fact represents a humanistic conspiracy on the part of all universities to undermine god-beliefs and convert the world into a collection of animalistic, immoral, godless zombies. Specifically why they have collectively agreed on this agenda he neglected to explain.

Strayer actually got him (a reverend from Sarasota) to admit on camera that he accepts a literal interpretation of Genesis in that the Earth was formed first, then the sun and the moon, and finally the stars and galaxies. When Strayer went on to expose some of the actual teachings of the Christian textbooks such as fire-breathing dragons having existed along with man, he was dismissed as being preoccupied with eccentric details. This is because his opponents had no idea that such bizarre teachings are actually contained in these textbooks and being taught today in private schools. Yes, the same private schools which we are now supporting with our voucher tax dollars in Florida.

PRAYER IS THE MAIN reason Mary Smith wanted her two youngest children out of public school. In mid-August, Florida taxpayers began paying their tuition at St. John the Evangelist Catholic School in Pensacola. They were among 58 children participating in the nation's first statewide tuition voucher program.

More than 90 students sought vouchers, so a lottery was held. Only five private schools—four Roman Catholic and Montessori Early School—have agreed to take voucher students.

Sister Mary Caplice, superintendent of Catholic schools in Pensacola, said non-Catholic children, whether on vouchers or paying tuition, must attend religion classes and Mass with all of the students.

On July 29, a second lawsuit was filed

by the Florida Education Association/United against Gov. Jeb Bush. Their suit will likely be consolidated with the suit filed in June by the Florida Teaching Profession/National Education Association, The NAACP, Americans United, Citizens' Coalition for Public Schools, and others.

A FEDERAL JUDGE in Cleveland was ruling like a ping pong ball on the voucher issue in August.

Ohio's voucher plan closely resembles Florida's and both are being targeted by virtually identical lawsuits.

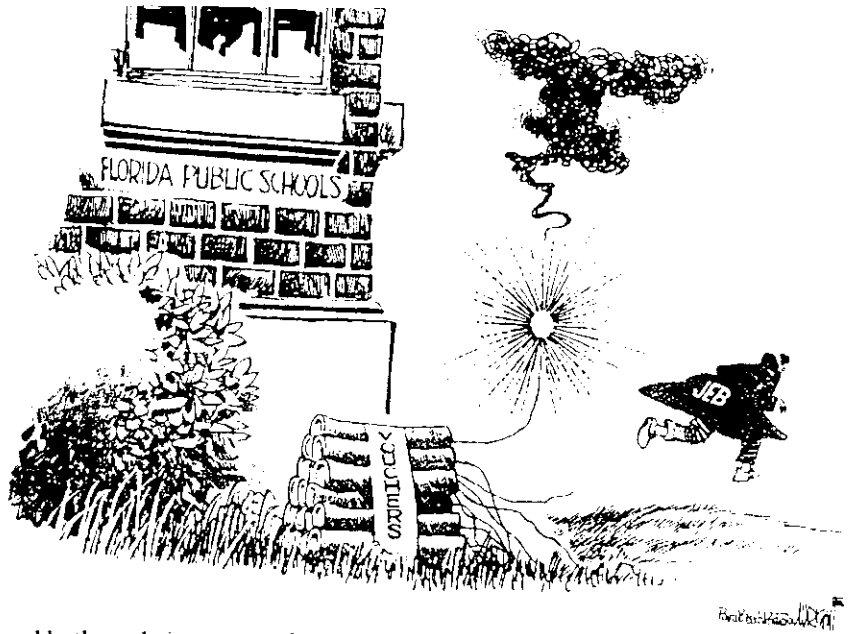
First, U.S. District Judge Solomon Oliver Jr. issued an injunction halting the 4-year-old program until a trial determines whether it violates the constitutional separation of state and church. The ruling was issued only 18 hours before Ohio's school year was to begin.

The state-funded program covers up to \$2,500 in tuition costs per child for poor families which allows them to attend private schools. Judge Oliver recognized that the participating schools are overwhelmingly sectarian, having the primary effect of advancing religion. Some 3,800 students had been planning to use vouchers to attend 56 private schools, most of which are religious institutions.

Only a few days later, Oliver reversed himself by ruling that elementary students who participated last year may continue to receive vouchers again this year. But no new children would be allowed to receive vouchers. The new ruling was to last only one semester or until a final judgement is reached in the pending lawsuit. A Dec. 13 trial date has been set.

Oliver reasoned that since the state had approved funding for this year's voucher program in late July, it was inevitable that a court challenge would come in August as schools were set to begin. That

also meant his decision was bound to cause inconvenience. He felt the timing of the decision "would cause disruption to the children previously enrolled in the program beyond that normally associated with a student's transferring from one



school to another."

The new ruling did not satisfy either side. Voucher opponents said they expect to win the case, claiming Oliver's decision made it abundantly clear that vouchers are unconstitutional and that the program is unlikely to be upheld.

Both sides have vowed to take the voucher case to the Supreme Court. The Court has never taken up a modern voucher case. It has been 25 years since the justices looked at tuition reimbursements for religious schools, striking down a New York policy that reimbursed low-income families.

Since then, the Court has grown more conservative and, in several narrow votes, has allowed some state involvement with religious schools.

"The Governor's Office is still completely confident that when the issue is raised here in Florida, the courts will uphold it as constitutional," said Carol Licko, general counsel for Gov. Bush. The Ohio Supreme Court last May decided Ohio's voucher law did not violate the separation clause but struck it down because of procedural errors by the state legislature.

It stands as a sharp reminder that the elected president has the power to appoint justices who will interpret the constitution any way they want.

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IRS denies Christian Coalition tax exemption

Last June, the Internal Revenue Service denied the Christian Coalition status as a tax-exempt organization.

"It's about time," said Barry Lynn, Americans United executive director, in response to a copyrighted report which appeared in the *St. Petersburg Times*. "The Christian Coalition is a hardball political machine that has been masquerading as a tax-exempt group. The IRS has finally pulled off the mask.

"This is a devastating blow to TV preacher Pat Robertson's political ambitions," continued Lynn. "His

crusade to politicize America's churches is now almost certain to fail. I, for one, say 'amen.'"

"The Coalition's primary political weapons are its voter guides," Lynn added. "Every year the Christian Coalition attempts to flex its political muscle by distributing these slanted guides in thousands of churches.

"In light of the IRS action, pastors would have to be out of their minds to distribute these guides now. The Christian Coalition's credibility is shot. That's the real impact of the IRS action."

AU gave the IRS a tape of a September 1997 closed-door Robertson speech to Coalition state lieutenants outlining his partisan political goals and strategies. Urging the group to emulate political machines such as Tammany Hall, Robertson took credit for the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994 and laid plans to elect a Republican to the presidency in 2000.

"That tape was the smoking gun," concluded Lynn. "Robertson sounded more like a ward boss than a religious leader. After that, the IRS had no choice but to deny the group's tax exemption."

Ventura criticized for refusing to declare day of prayer

ST. PAUL—Gov. Jesse Ventura once used his office to proclaim Rolling Stones Day in Minnesota, but he refused to sign a proclamation making May 6 a day of prayer.

Ventura broke with his predecessors, who typically proclaimed a prayer day in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer.

"I believe in the separation of church and state," Ventura said. "We all have our own religious beliefs. There are people out there who are atheists, who don't believe at all. ... They are all citizens of Minnesota and I have to respect that." Ventura did, however, sign a certificate of recognition.

"It is more of a personal recognition," said Ventura's spokesman. "There is a differentiation between a proclamation and a certificate of recognition."

A proclamation is signed by the secretary of state and goes on the state record. A certificate of recognition simply means the governor recognizes that the event is happening, but doesn't declare it as a state-sponsored day.

The governor of Virginia also issued a certificate of recognition. Montana issued an endorsement. Arizona issued a brief note of support. All other states issued proclamations including, naturally, Florida.

The Minnesota Family Council criticized Ventura's decision, saying that the prayer proclamation dates to 1795, when President George Washington declared a day of public thanksgiving and prayer. Tom Prichard, the group's president, noted that President Clinton and other governors have proclaimed a day of prayer.

They always told us war is hell

First it was Disney. Now the Religious Right is calling on all Christians to boycott the United States Army!

As if having staff chaplains wasn't enough, the US Army has officially recognized the Wiccan religion (Witchcraft to the RR). Thirteen right wing religious organizations, including Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Coalition, The Christian Coalition, the Traditional Values Coalition and the American Family Association have called on all Christians "to boycott joining or re-enlisting in the U.S. Army until it bans witchcraft from its posts."

Paul Weyrich stated, "Until the Army withdraws all official support and approval from witchcraft, no Christian should enlist or re-enlist in the Army, and Christian parents should not allow their children to join the Army."

John Machate, coordinator for the Military Pagan Network said that the boycott was "a direct attack on the constitution of the United States."

After all, we only want good Christians killing for us, don't we?



"There are people out there who are atheists, who don't believe at all... They are all citizens... and I have to respect that."

Fact is, no two of us are equal

TRENTON, N.J.—The state Assembly on June 10 passed a bill that would require all public school students to recite the "all men are created equal" passage of the Declaration of Independence every day. The lines would be recited along with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The measure passed 50-16 and goes next to the Senate. A spokesman for Gov. Christie Whitman said she is undecided about the bill. Schoolchildren would recite: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Lawmakers who objected said the Declaration of Independence reflects colonial values that excluded minorities and women. And some suggested changing "all men" to "all people."