

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI: Sunday, January 19 at 2:00 pm in the Boardroom of the Ft. Lauderdale Main Library. Dr. Michael Brannon, Professor of Psychology at Broward Community College will give a talk on "The Psychology of Religion". Atheist Hotline: 305-936-0210.

TAMPA: Saturday, January 25 from 12:30 to 3:00 at the Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street. Our favorite Forum of the '96 series was Ed Helm's portrayal of Mark Twain and you may view it at the meeting along with our regular business.

Chapel

from page 1

than a "quiet room" or some other generic designation. She even offered the assistance of the ACLU if requested by the board to help determine if specific actions would be appropriate.

Board Member Chris Hart would rather have had her drop dead. The driving force behind the chapel, he actually stated, with obvious direction toward Blummer, "I'd like to make a statement. If our schools were less concerned with permitting guns, knives and drugs into the schools and more concerned with putting faith back in, we'd all be a lot better off."

In all, six people decried the chapel, while only five supported it. But Mayor Greco interpreted this to mean that, "I'm sure if we were to put this to a vote of the people, they would approve it by a 95% margin." We can only surmise Greco has never read the constitution, either.

As Hart motioned for the chapel and Greco seconded, Joyner began to question the actual name of the room, rightly concerned that the

identity of a chapel might cause constitutional conflict. This notion was supported by Crosby Few, legal counsel to the board. Round and round they went, to the chuckles of the attendees, as parliamentary procedure was abandoned, until nobody was sure what they were even voting on.

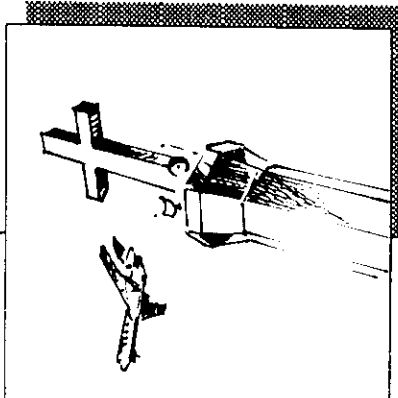
Final decision: "Let's just spend our money to build the chapel, and we'll control what goes in it and decide what to name it later," declared Greco.

We figure the theory is to get it built and later, when the public loses interest, they can quietly name it a chapel and fill it with bibles and crosses. But we'll be watching — at every month's meeting. You can be sure.

After the meeting, Blummer advised us the ACLU was able and prepared to bring suit against the airport the minute they define a chapel.

The renovation project was slated to require about \$15 million. Bids were heard that morning following the chapel issue. The lowest bid — \$26-million. After rejecting all bids, it was back to the drawing boards. Given that they're \$10-million over budget and now must seriously revise the renovations, do you think they might save a fast \$20-thousand by dropping the chapel?

All we can say is, they're politicians. **A**

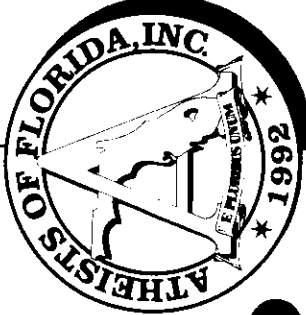


Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Volume V Number 8

December, 1996



The Devil in Daniel Webster

Sermon opens Senate

TALLAHASSEE—Daniel Webster, the newly elected Republican House Speaker of the Florida Senate, swept into office on Tuesday, November 19th with his personal pastor in tow. The opening prayer, given by the Rev. Gene Pritchard, mentioned Jesus Christ and was deemed by many to be more of a Christian sermon than an opening prayer of the Senate.

Webster is a conservative who was supported by the Christian Coalition. This concerns some lawmakers who were present at the opening session.

"I was personally offended today," said Rep. Jack Tobin, speaking from the House floor. "I would hope that you would respect the members of this chamber who are Jewish."

Webster commented later by stating that Tobin should have addressed his concerns in private. He also refused to rule out allowing sectarian prayers in the House chamber in the future.

"I don't want to hinder freedom of speech," Webster said. "The prayer is not to members — it's to God."

AOFF will be interested in following Daniel's career as House Speaker.

If you build it, they won't come

The rubber stamp came down hard, but they knew we were watching

TAMPA — It's not enough that you must see a church on every other street corner. The saturation of religion on the airwaves is ad-nauseum. Now it's even infesting the airport.

As expected, the Tampa Airport Authority was poised to vote to approve the expenditure of public monies for construction of the Tampa International Airport Chapel. That's literally a church built at taxpayer's expense. But it was board member Athena Joyner who awoke to the impropriety of the issue and voiced the objection heard round the table.

The December 5 meeting saw the chapel issue first on the agenda. Since it's a public airport and utilizes public monies to operate, the board meetings are open to the public. Therefore, they had to listen to all public opinion regarding the construction of a chapel during the third floor renovation. Six of us spoke out against the chapel, including Atheists of Florida members Jacques Musy and Ed Golly, Jeanne Pugh of Americans United, and Jan Eisler of the Suncoast Humanists and AOF. In town for the ACLU annual awards banquet held the previous evening, ACLU Florida Director Robyn Blummer was persuaded to show up and spoke of the state church conflict which would ensue if the room were identified as a chapel rather

(turn to back page)

8 December 1996

Atheists of Florida



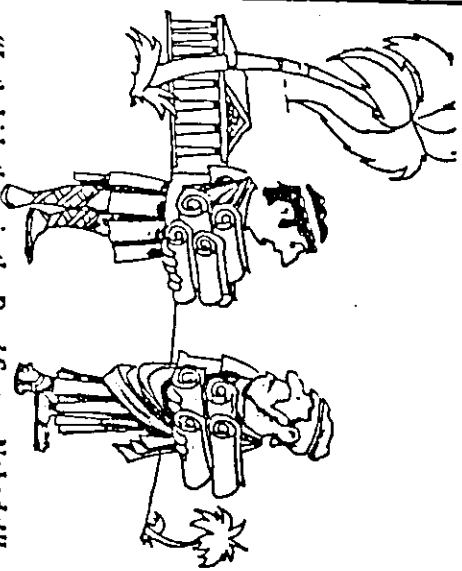
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Richard Russell, editor of the *Atheists & Agnostics of Wisconsin* newsletter, operates a telephone hotline. We thought you'd enjoy this month's message:

Commentary on Xmas



"Let's hide them in the Dead Sea... Nobody'll ever think to look there."

Lying in the Fields Taken Literally

HERE: WE ARIE in the midst of the Christmas season, and soon gullible people all across this fair land of ours will be trooping into their churches to hear the old familiar words. Follow along with me as we read from Luke, Chapter 2, Verse 8: "And there were in the same country shepherds lying in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night..."

Well, there's some lying going on here, all right. Those words are so familiar that people have long since stopped actually thinking about them.

Nobody really knows what time of year Jesus was born — if there even was a Jesus — but it certainly wasn't anywhere around December 25. Shepherds do not tend their flocks by night in mid-winter, even in the Middle East. But all the pagan cultures that the followers of Jesus ever encountered had this big whoop-de-do solstice festival at about that time of year to celebrate the turnaround of the life-giving sun from its annual trip south. Whether the festival was called Saturnalia or Yule or Sothis or Zagmukku, it was simply too big and too entrenched for the Xians to ignore. So they simply lied and said, "Yeah, our savior god was born on that day, too," and set the date for Xmas there.

And the beat goes on. Christmas has now sucked in Hanukkah, which is a comparatively minor festival of the Jewish religion, and black-pride advocates apparently felt compelled to come up with Kwanzaa just to keep pace. They are swiping the Xmas tradition the same way Xians swiped it from the pagans.

There are plenty of other lies going on in the biblical nativity stories, too. How about Matthew 1:23, which says that, in order to fulfill the prophecy for a Messiah, a virgin would give birth to a son and call his name Emmanuel?

Then, two verses later, we read that Mary decided to call him Jesus. Every year people read this story, and every year, there it is—2 verses apart—the bald fact that the prophecy was not fulfilled. How dense can people be not to see this?

Another thing about the virgin birth—if Mary really was a virgin, then Joseph couldn't have been Jesus' father, so all this claptrap about how Jesus was descended from royalty — "the house and lineage of David" — remember — is yet another lie. Either that or the virgin birth is, take your pick.

The fact is, the early Xians had to make up all this folderol about a virgin birth because every other culture had a savior of mankind who was born of a virgin, and the Xians needed their own to stay competitive. That's why you read



about the nativity fairy tales in Luke and Matthew but not in Mark, which was the earliest gospel to be written.

More lies — the Star of Bethlehem (noted by no one else except the writers of the Bible); the massacre of the innocents by Herod (totally unmentioned outside the Bible); the flight of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus into Egypt (or perhaps Jerusalem, depending on which account you read).

Look, folks, if it makes you feel good to hear Peter Rabbit or Paul Bunyan or Baba Yaga or Jesus Christ stories from your youth, fine. We certainly don't want to put a damper on the holiday festivities. But, come on! They're only stories. They're not really true. It's all smoke, a hoke, and a joke.

Oh, by the way, we put an "X" in "Xmas" because it stands for the unknown quantity — and that's certainly what Jesus is.

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c/o Nan Owens, Registrar

28001 Gulfcoast Hwy, Bradenton, FL 34111

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Atheists of Florida

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P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33681-0753
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Atheists Of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

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Free Church Parking

TAMPA —City government drew the wrath of downtown churches when they tried to extend the paid parking for after-hours churchgoers recently.

It all started when the city decided to cash in on the revenue for the new Lee Palace and changed the meter enforcement hours to midnight, seven days a week. Soon, councilman Rudy Fernandez and other members started receiving complaints from parishioners attending downtown churches.

"We've given them a list of the Masses when people would be most affected, and they have assured us they are working on something to help accommodate us," said Larry Cabrera, business manager for the Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Two days later, the city council voted unanimously to amend the ordinance and create a third meter enforcement zone specifically to accommodate the downtown churches.

Perhaps a list of films from Tampa Theatre patrons might achieve similar results for movie buffs?

Fighting the Good Fight

AOF Members combat Constitutional Violations

For the last few months, several members of AOF have been involved in ongoing struggles to bring First Amendment violations to the attention of government agencies.

In August of this year, the Baptist Convention in Orlando openly endorsed Bill Clinton for president. AOF President Christos Tzanetakis wrote a letter to the IRS to notify them of the breach. In part, the letter stated, "We were appalled to hear on our National Public Radio (that) the Baptist Preacher from their August, 1996 annual convention in Orlando, Florida, the public endorsement of this religious group to a specific political candidate.

"Of course President Clinton's acquiescence is indicative of the deterioration of the state-church wall of separation."

The IRS responded by stating that they needed further details (i.e. the date of occurrence, the particular Baptist organization, etc...). Tzanetakis also wrote a letter of protest to the chairperson of the Federal Election Commission.

Meanwhile, a violation of state church separation occurred in Mr. Tzanetakis' home district. Seven black Democratic ministers in

Fort Pierce were featured in a newspaper article after having endorsed their candidate for Sheriff.

Tzanetakis wrote the IRS to notify them and enclosed the newspaper clipping. In his letter, he added, "Although we are aware that endorsement of political candidates by religious and non-profit organizations is illegal, we would appreciate it if your office would clarify the legal status of political candidates seeking endorsement from the above organizations."

In a letter to other atheist groups nationwide, he writes, "Our organization is waging a legal battle to obtain an exempt status certificate from our State for sales and use taxes. Of course, the purpose is to prove the Statute unconstitutional rather than to get the exemption."

"Meanwhile, the churches enjoy this and other benefits automatically, despite their constant violations of the IRS rules for non-profit organizations. One of these violations is the open endorsement by religious groups or non-profit organizations.

"We feel that this is a good tactic to combat the religious groups who openly violate our Federal laws...we are quite certain that in each and every state similar cases abound. Perhaps a concerted effort by all our member societies as well as the other secular organizations can lead to a great victory."

In another violation of the Constitution, Ed McDougall of Spring Hill recently wrote a letter to the Board of County Commissioners in Hernando County to protest an extensive display of Xtian signboards. These signs were on display at the Hernando County Courthouse and they depicted scenes and text described in the Bible.

McDougall wrote: "I toured the area and, being a reasonable person, found the display to be totally Christian in content and could think only that due to its extent, the County of Hernando had given its approval and was providing accommodation of the Christian faith over all others...."

"Sir, my epistle is not meant to chastise the County and its Commission for its favoring one religion over another in a display mounted on public ground. It is meant as a strong protest of your blatant violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States...."

"As a tax paying citizen of Hernando County, I claim standing in this matter and demand that this totally religious display be immediately removed from public property along with all other religiously based decorations, adornments or structures."

This is the way to keep public officials aware of the blatant First Amendment violations they routinely ignore. **A**

This is the famous Xmas sermon written by Colonel Robert Ingersoll and printed in the Evening Telegram on December 19, 1891. The Rev. J.M.Buckley wrote an article calling on the public to boycott the Evening Telegram for publishing such a "sermon." Atheists of Florida presents the controversial sermon here in its entirety.

The good part of Xmas is not always Christian — it is

A Christmas Sermon

generally Pagan; that is to say, human, natural.

Christianity did not come with tidings of great joy, but with a message of eternal grief. It came with the threat of everlasting torture on its lips. It meant war on earth and perdition hereafter.

It taught some good things—the beauty of love and kindness in man. But as a torch-bearer, as a bringer of joy, it has been a failure. It has given infinite consequences to the acts of finite beings.

crushing the soul with a responsibility too great for mortals to bear. It has filled the future with fear and flame, and made God the keeper of an eternal penitentiary, destined to be the home of nearly all the sons of men. Not satisfied with that, it has deprived God of the pardoning power.

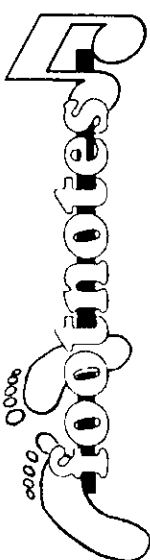
And yet it may have done some good by borrowing from the Pagan world the old festival called Christmas.

Long before Christ was born the Sun-God triumphed over the powers of Darkness. About the time that we call Christmas the days begin perceptibly to lengthen. Our barbarian ancestors were worshippers of the sun, and they celebrated his victory over the hosts of night. Such a festival was natural and beautiful. The most natural of all religions is the worship of the sun. Christianity adopted this festival. It borrowed from the Pagans the best it has.

I believe in Christmas and in every day that has been set apart for joy. We in America have too much work and not enough play. We are too much like the English.

I think it was Heinrich Heine who said that he thought a blaspheming Frenchman was a more pleasing object to God than a praying Englishman. We take our joys too sadly. I am in favor of all the good free days—the more the better.

Christmas is a good day to forgive and forget—a good day to throw away prejudices and hatreds—a good day to fill your heart and your house, and the hearts and houses of others, with sunshine. **A**



Investment Club on the move

A formation meeting of the Atheists of Florida Investment Club has established about nine members of the Tampa chapter ready to form up. The next step will be to prepare the bylaws, elect officers and determine the range of monthly contributions by members.

It's not too late to get in! Ideally, an investment club should have about 15 members and requires about 3-4 hours of work per month by each member for the first year. If we can get about six members from the Miami-Dade area, we'll have a great club. If you're interested, call Ed Golly at 813-839-7567.

☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒
The final four tapings of the **Atheists of Florida Forum** are in the can. In Miami they can be viewed on the Cable-Tap Communication Station 36 at:

Mondays 12:30 pm
Tuesdays 6:00 pm
Wednesdays 10:30 pm

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MARY BENNETT HUDSON

onward, there were many important events in Church history, but they were largely of a political nature, concerned with the control the Church sought to exercise over princes & states."

—World Religions

As a special feature this year, the Atheists of Florida newsletter will present a scenario of a different religion each issue.

CHRISTIANITY AS A state religion was influenced by politics and in turn, influenced the government of the state. The early Popes of Rome were often oppressed. Innocent I was one of the first to assert his jurisdiction, but Leo I, (the Great) was most successful at asserting papal rights. As the power of

The Origins and Founding of Christianity Part 2

the bishops grew, it wasn't surprising that the clergy began to claim exemption from civil law. They demanded to be judged by their civil peers. The Popes gradually became the pivotal influence of the Catholic Church in the fifth & sixth centuries. Papal elections subsequently held intrigue, bribery and strife. The role of the Virgin Mary was soon quite pronounced in Catholic religion. There is a tendency to pray for the aid of a female mediator, which was strong in Greek & Roman religions. This was transferred to the Virgin Mary.

The Church in the Middle Ages

Gregory was Pope in 590. He re-organized the church, re-arranged the liturgy and asserted Rome's supremacy. Karl the Great (Charlemagne) 774, paid his respects to the See of Rome. When Pope Leo was charged with corruption, Karl declared the Pope was above human judgment. (Papal Infallibility) In St. Peter's in 800, Leo crowned Karl the Emperor of the West. They set up what's now known as the Holy Roman Empire. The Council of Trent (1545) established the rules to which the Catholic Church still adheres. The Seven Sacraments were defined as 1) Baptism by immersion; 2) Confirmation; 3) The Eucharist administered; 4) Penance (confession with fasting); 5) Ordination; 6) Marriage and 7) Extreme unction, which is anointing only for

priests.

The title of 'saint' first belonged to every Christian. Under Catholicism, it was gradually confined exclusively to those conspicuous in their holy life or martyr's death. The Vatican today is recognized as an independent and sovereign state. The College of Cardinals elect the Pope. The Vatican even has its own stamps, coins, radio and railway.

The Inquisition

In 1163, the Council of Tours first used the title of Inquisitor in reference to inquiries into orthodoxy. The Inquisition was officially started by Pope Gregory IX in 1232. An inquiry into heresy in Toulouse was started, with appeal only to the Pope. The suspicion of heresy was sufficient cause for imprisonment. By 1480, it was elaborately organized. Volumes of books have been written regarding the torture and injustices surrounding the Inquisition. In this short space, to name a few of the weapons used may only introduce a glimpse of the horror and sadism unleashed. Here is a short list of some of the weapons used during the "Spanish Inquisition":

The Iron Maiden: Basically a coffin-like box fitted with spikes in which a living person is enclosed.

The Garrone: A seat with a screw which slowly draws the victim's head back and asphyxiates them.

Hanging cages: An iron cage in which a person is locked and hung until they die of hunger or thirst.

The Interrogation Chair: A chair with spikes in which the naked victim is forced to sit.

Cart's Paw: A kind of rake designed for tearing flesh.

The Wheel: One of the most nauseating devices. As the victim is placed on a wheel, the limbs are smashed, and then "pradded" into the spokes. They're then hoisted to the top of a pole and left to die in agony.

In the 17th century, the Inquisition actively diminished. By 1809, it was said that 31,912 persons had been burnt alive in Spain. In Italy, the Inquisition was active until 1860. Perhaps the most frightening detail surrounding the Inquisition is the fact that the central agency of the Inquisition is still in existence in Rome.

Protestant Reform

John Calvin went into Geneva and began preaching and lecturing about his particular offshoot of Protestant Reform. He was expelled from Geneva in 1538 and went to Strasbourg. In 1541, he was recalled to Geneva and became the head of the Church there. Geneva was said to be transformed from a merry and satirical place into Calvin's "City of God"

where "all was fire and prayer...labor and austerity." John Knox was one of Calvin's students. He returned to his native Scotland and began his career by denouncing the mass and the pope.



The stocks and crushing a woman's fingers between iron wedges. Woodcut from 1482.

teach catechism and hear confessions. The work was chosen by the general (head of the order), and a long probation was required before full admission.

Loyola was elected general, and a college was founded in 1542. The Jesuits had much success in Spain and Germany. The main reasons for their success were probably their undiscriminating obedience to orders from headquarters and the extent to which their obedience was rendered. They had continued interaction with society and were adaptable to local circumstances. Bellamy says of the Jesuits, "multitudes have met with and been influenced by Jesuits without the slightest suspicion of their identity." Another crucial ingredient contributing to their success was the subjugation of will, understanding, and even moral judgment to the superior and to what is considered to be the good of the Order of the Church.

The Jesuits

The Jesuits were an excellent example of the remarkable organization of some sects of Christianity. The Jesuit order was founded in 1540 by Ignatius de Loyola, a Spanish nobleman. The purpose was to preach, do works of charity,

A system of checks, i.e. 'spies', and a spirit of resistance to the papacy when not in accord with the order also existed among the Jesuits. The Jesuit order quickly spread throughout the world. Their motto was *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* meaning, "To the greater glory of God." The problem with this is that their motto was frequently interpreted (by the Jesuits) to mean that the end justifies the means. This led to the eventual dissolution of the order by Pope Clement in 1773. The Jesuits were expelled from Russia in 1820, Portugal in 1834 and they were expelled from Spain a year later. They were soon banished from Germany and France.

In 1648, a man named George Fox began a strange religion known as the Society of Friends, or Quakers. The term was given to followers of the religion by a magistrate who was told by Fox to "tremble at the word of God." Everyone could preach when the spirit moved them. The Quakers never formed a church. They believed in the denial of the lawfulness of war, oaths and amusements. They used the plainest language and dress possible. In their meetings, they frequently sit silent unless a member is "moved to speak or pray."

Christian Coalition

The Christian Coalition is a group founded in 1989 by Pat Robertson to "give Christians a voice in our government." According to a recent article concerning their political activity, they study: 1) How to control precincts; 2) How to contact elected officials; and 3) The best way to dispel paranoia about their organization. Another concern for the group is the "Do's & Don'ts of Churches & Civic Involvement." For example, they run seminars explaining things like: Why the IRS yanks the tax-exempt status if a preacher endorses a candidate. A recent meeting of the group showed members expressing disappointment that some of their bills didn't pass.

Among the bills were the following: A resolution encouraging the posting and obedience of the 10 Commandments and a bill banning the teaching of evolution as fact. The Christian Coalition sponsors more than 10,000 training seminars a year. It also runs school board "campaign schools."

—MIA A

OUT OF THE P.U.—Quotes from the Religious Right

Ralph Reed's success lies in his ability to merge the grass roots organization with the high tech (he's host of Christian Coalition Live, a TV show that is satellite-downlinked to the monthly meetings). Here are a few quotes from Reed and others associated with the Coalition: * All quotes by Ralph Reed.

"...it's less important to me what somebody's personal faith is than where they stand on the issues—I would vote for and actively support an atheist who was for lower taxes and protecting innocent human life...and the balanced-budget amendment and term limits."

"The thing that is striking fear and panic and unrestrained hysteria into the establishment...is that we are seeing the largest turnout of born-again Evangelicals and pro-life Catholics in primaries and caucuses that we have ever seen in modern American politics..."

"The banner that you and I walk under doesn't bear a donkey or an elephant, it bears the Cross of Christ...we have poured out of the pew into the precinct..."

"Our culture is superior because our religion is Christianity and that is the truth that makes men free." —Pat Buchanan

"I want you to just let a wave of intolerance wash over you. I want you to let a wave of hatred wash over you. Yes, hate is good...Our goal is a Christian nation. We have a biblical duty. We are called by God, to conquer this country." — Randall Terry - founder of Operation Rescue