

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

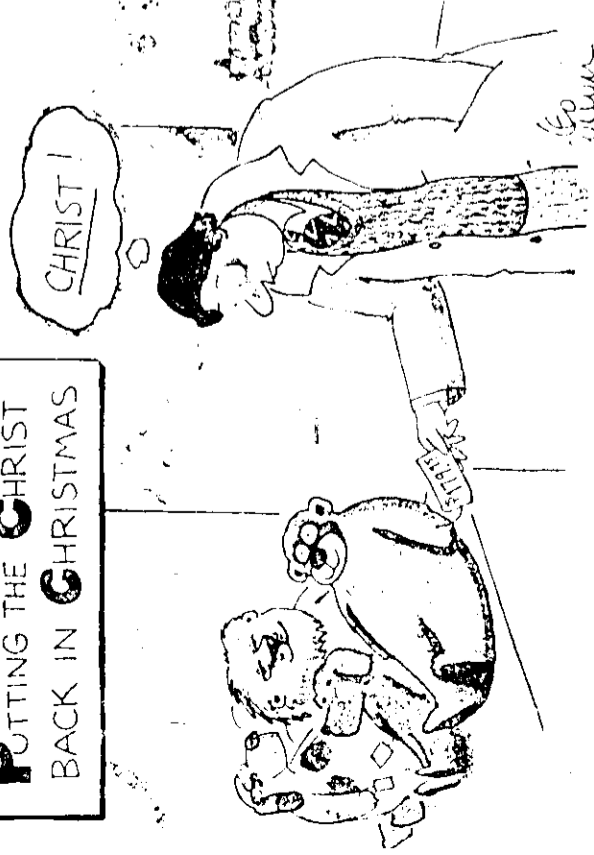
December 15, 2 pm, Ft. Lauderdale Main Library, 8th Floor Conference Room, 100 S. Andrews Ave., Ft. Lauderdale - "Christmas, Religion and the Future of Fundamentalism", Dr. John Xanthopoulos, Director & Professor of General Education - Ft. Lauderdale Art Institute; adjunct Professor of Education & Political Science - FAU & BCC; Chairman, Atheists of Florida and host of this year's Atheists of Florida Forum. Presented by the Atheists of Florida. Free and open to the public. Call 305-936-0210.

MIAMI:

Saturday, December 28 from 12:30 to 3:00 at the Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street. Following a shortened business meeting, the Humanists of the Suncoast will join us for a year-end party from 1:00 to 3:00 in combined meeting rooms A and B. Drinks will be provided and members are asked to bring something to nibble on.

TAMPA:

PUTTING THE CHRIST
BACK IN CHRISTMAS



Letters *continued*

I am even more confused by all this religious balderdash when I read the latest revelations of two local clergymen who have allegedly performed sexual acts on young boys in a neighboring county. Is this not sending the wrong message to our youth? Is this not sacrilegious, sinful and degrading to humanity? Is this not rubbing dung in the faces of the parents and families of the community who entrust their children to these individuals?

"I'm confused. Do not the Scriptures say, 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone'?"

Maybe the Christian soldiers of Hernando County should relocate to Bosnia, where they could practice another time-honored Christian tradition: ethnic cleansing.

Edward J. McDougall, Sr.
Spring Hill

A

Atheists of Florida Forum

The Forum is being hosted this year by A of F Chairman John Xanthopoulos, Ph.D. In the Miami-Dade area, it can be seen on Cable-TAP channel 36 at the following times:

Monday	12:30 p.m.
Tuesday	6:00 p.m.
Wednesday	10:30 p.m.

In Tampa, Time-Warner Cable runs the Forum on channel 25 on Sundays during the noon hour. The 1996 series programs will begin running in December.

10 November 1996

Atheists of Florida



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Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Volume V Number 7

November, 1996

What next--inflight deacons with collection plates?

It now seems inevitable — public funded church at the airport

TAMPA — As of this writing, the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority Board will be voting to install a chapel at Tampa International Airport on December 5.

While we can't be certain how the board will vote, we do have a draft of the proposal being drawn up. It identifies the intended space as a "Nondenominational Airport Chapel".

Following the November 7 board meeting, Atheists of Florida members Jan Eisler and Ed Golly, along with local Americans United director Jeanne Pugh, were told they would be given an audience with Authority Executive Director Louis Miller to discuss their objections to the establishment of a chapel. Only a few days later they were advised no such meeting would take place since this would violate the Florida Sunshine laws. In fact it would not, since this law applies only to an exclusionary meeting between two or more public officials.

The draft states that "Staff met with representatives of various organizations and had several conversations *continued page 2*

Front page news

Atheists of Florida grab attention of Highway Department

FT. PIERCE—Beginning January 1, Florida Department of Transportation officials will begin to remove all roadside memorials to crash victims. You know, those silly little crosses you sometimes encounter along the curb. The removal stems in part from the efforts of the Atheists of Florida in calling attention to the violations which abound with the roadside crosses.

According to officials in the Transportation department, the crosses are placed in areas where they can't be mowed or maintained. And they're often too close to the road and become a hazard for motorists.

The shrines will be replaced with a standard marker which is also commonly used by the Red Cross and other agencies as a safety symbol. According to the Tampa Tribune article which appeared on page 1 Nov. 26, "Sensitivity to the issue inside the department has been heightened by a group called Atheists of Florida, Inc., which sent (Florida Transportation Secretary) Watts a letter demanding the agency take down the shrines. Watts insists the atheist group's letter did not influence the agency's decision, although he hopes the new policy will quell any possible lawsuit."

The shrines often contain religious items and they are placed on public property, which is a direct violation of the separation of church and state. *continued page 2*



Alliance Members:

Atheists & Agnostics of Wisconsin
Atheist Centre
Vijayawada, India
Atheist Coalition
San Diego, CA
Atheists of Colorado
Atheists of Florida
Atheists & Other Freethinkers
Sacramento, CA
Atheists of San Francisco Region
Atheists United
Los Angeles, CA
Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia
Metropolitan Atheists
Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX
Minnesota Atheists
Rationalist Society of St. Louis

Chapel *continued from page 1*

with numerous individuals regarding the Aviation Authority's involvement in the development of an Airport Chapel. There are groups that support, and groups that oppose, locating a chapel in the Airport.

A representative sample of written correspondence reflecting both sides of the issue has been distributed previously. In addition, staff has coordinated with the Authority's General Counsel regarding any legal implications relating to locating a Non-denominational Chapel at the Airport."

This is a very interesting paragraph. Staff refused to meet with our organizations. And it doesn't tell us what opinion was rendered by the General Counsel regarding the legality of the establishment of a chapel.

Atheists of Florida contacted George Bean, the former Executive Director of the Aviation Authority who retired in August. He offered that during his rather lengthy tenure of over 20 years, no passenger had ever inquired about a chapel or quiet place to pray or meditate. Seems the public goes to airports to travel, not to pray. He explained that his firm opposition to the

construction of a chapel came from his fear that any manner of other "religious" groups would then demand accommodation from the airport, from Mooney's to Scientologists.

The draft goes on to define the location of the chapel. It then addresses the issue of furnishings as follows: "The Aviation Authority will finish the interior space at our sole cost and expense. This would include required seating arrangements and any amenities that might be appropriate. If the Tampa Ministers Association wanted to place a non-denominational sculpture, piece of art, or any appropriate object that would symbolize the intent of the room (without excluding or offending a particular religious organization), it would be approved by the Aviation Authority. Those donating to the religious symbolic expression would be given credit for their contributions."

Signage throughout the airport would be changed to identify the chapel and describe its location.

The option of meeting with a religious representative would be available, including information provided within the chapel as to how to contact a Chaplain or member of a religious organization.

Prohibitions defined are that the chapel would not be used as a place for fund-raising, solicitations, evangelizing, or the promotion of any specific religious group.

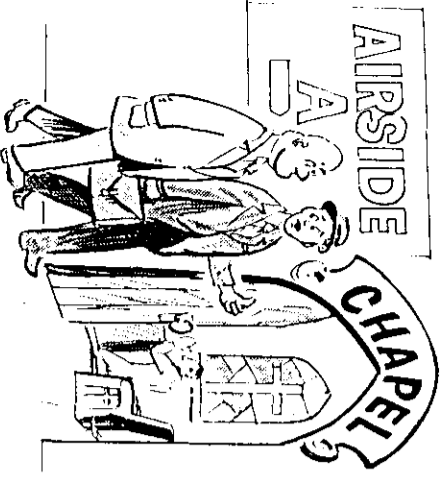
Like religion itself, all these conditions would be subject to the interpretation of the board or director. They could easily favor Christianity while prohibiting an unpopular religion. Pugh has sent a copy of the draft to the Washington headquarters of Americans United for a legal opinion which she hopes to obtain prior to the meeting. Atheists of Florida will be actively opposing the chapel, too and keep you posted in the next newsletter. **A**

Shrines *continued from page 1*

Surrounding neighbors also protested the placement of the crosses, saying that they acted as "morbid reminders of tragic accidents." Christos Tzanetakos, President of Atheists of Florida, Inc., wrote to Secretary Watts on November 5. Here is the text of his letter:

Dear Mr. Watts,
We would like to bring to your attention several violations occurring around our state over which your department has jurisdiction. As you can see from the enclosed newspaper clippings, many religious "shrines" have been placed along our public highways. Although we are very compassionate towards the families of traffic accident victims, the placement of these "shrines" and the acquiescence of your agencies are in direct violation of our laws. Therefore we are asking your office to instruct the appropriate agencies of your department to effect the immediate removal of all such shrines. Please let us know your decision.

Sincerely,
Christos Tzanetakos, President
cc: Florida State Attorney General **A**



Do you think they're trying to tell us something, Howard?



Published eight times a year by Atheists of Florida, Inc., a non-profit, educational organization designed to enlighten public opinion and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts for its membership.

Membership dues and general correspondence should be sent to:
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Atheists Of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the National Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

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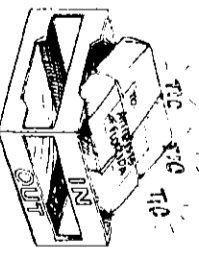
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The pressure for prayer

Jeanne Pugh is a close contact of ours and heads the St. Petersburg chapter of Americans United. She is the retired religion editor of the St. Petersburg Times. This letter appeared recently in the Times

The religion cutout on the "Xtra Credit"

Letters



page for kids in the Nov. 18 Floridian section contained some serious errors regarding the issue of school prayer. It is bad enough to see misinformation printed once—but twice on the same page is just too much!

I am referring to the statements that Madalyn Murray O'Hair was "mainly responsible" and "won the battle" to remove prayer from our public schools. That is *not true*. O'Hair has been targeted as the villain because she is (or was—we don't know what has become of her) an atheist.

The truth is that Madalyn's case in Baltimore was third in line after two other cases—one in New York State and one in Pennsylvania—that were initiated, not by atheists, but by religious as well as non-religious people concerned about religious indoctrination in the public schools. My children were in New York State when the Board of Regents not only mandated prayer every day in the classroom or over the public address system, but also wrote the prayer. It was one of those impossible things that the uneducated believe can be described as "non-sectarian, non-proselytizing prayer." There is no such prayer possible.

The article also tells the children that their grandparents probably "started each day at school with a prayer." That is also not true. I am a grandparent. I went to public school in New York State in the 1930's and 1940's. We had no daily prayers, even though we lived in a small city that was noted as "city of

churches" and weekly church attendance by nearly everyone was the norm. Prayers may have been common in some Southern schools, but studies show that most schools in the nation had eliminated daily prayer by the 1940's.

The pressure for prayer in the schools started in the 1950's, during the post-World War II anti-Communist, Cold War days when McCarthyism was rampant. The Christian fundamentalist movement seized the opportunity to label the enemy as "anti-God." Our Congress, in a knee-jerk reaction to the growing power of the Soviet Union, latched onto the hysteria by passing resolutions that added "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and printing "In God We Trust" on our paper money.

Most people, particularly youngsters, do not realize that this imposition of religion into the secular arena of our society is of such recent origin. In fact, when similar moves were tried earlier in U.S. history, it was the churches that rose up to object, declaring that "God should not be mixed with Mammon."

Jeanne Pugh
South Pasadena

So-called Christians need lesson in civics

Former Sarasota chapter director Ed McDougall recently moved to Hernando County. What he found there prompted this letter to the St. Petersburg Times.

Editor: I recently moved to this area from Sarasota. For a month I have followed the ongoing discourse raging over the display placed in the West Hernando Public Library by the group called P-FLAG. I am somewhat confused, to say the least.

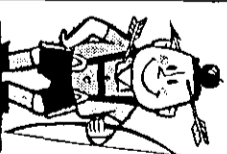
Most of the complaints seem to come from people claiming to be of the Christian faith. They seem to feel that they have some exclusive right to determine what our community is allowed to see, hear or read and that this right is based in their Bibles.

One writer stated that a picture of the display is a slap in the face of Christians and that homosexuality is sacrilegious, an unnatural practice, sinful and degrading to humanity, and that the Times has rubbed reader's faces in dung.

The same writer stated that the 2,000-year-old Scriptures teach that we should not offend even the least and that we should treat others as we would have them treat us. I'm confused. Does this mean that we should not offend anyone unless they practice a lifestyle different from ours?

Another writer states that Hernando County is sending the wrong message to young people. I'm confused. Does this mean we should teach our youngsters that the Jeffersonian Wall should be breached and that the church should have the final say on what the citizens of this county can see, hear or read?

turn page



Haur Jfaiih!

Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc.
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MARY BENNETT HUDSON

even larger than the split between the Protestant and Catholic groups!

For example, Anabaptists, ('Ana' meaning again), believed that adult baptism was the only true confession of faith. Many who believed this were killed and or persecuted.

Origins of the New Testament

Documents proceeded either from immediate disciples or those who learnt the facts from them. Many questions remain regarding the accuracy and contradictions found in the New Testament. When Christ lived, events were told and recorded through storytellers and by word-of-mouth. Also, Jesus' disciples interpreted the second coming to be an imminent event, so there would be no need for records and historical data.

The epistles of Paul were some of the earliest known recorded documents. In the preface to St. Luke's gospel, it is stated that those who had heard the apostles had written down their teachings.

The first three gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are narrated substantially in the same words, which has been termed 'synoptic'. Theories for the three similar versions are (1) that the second writer borrowed from the first, the third from the other two; (2) That there once existed a primitive written gospel which is no longer in existence; and (3) The common oral gospel was diffused by each of the three writers. There is a belief that 2 primary documents existed — one from which St. Mark borrowed, and another — called the "Logia" containing sayings or discourses of Jesus.

Mark, it was said, interpreted from Peter, but not in chronological order of the events. Matthew wrote in Hebrew. Justin Martyr writes that in his day the memoirs of the apostles

were read in the church service as well as the prophetic books. The synoptic gospels are estimated to have been written before the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70).

The fourth gospel differs greatly in style and words from the synoptics. The universal aspect of Christ's mission is emphasized, as if a long time has elapsed and the writer has knowledge of the other 3 gospels. According to sources in the *Encyclopedia of World Religions*: "the simplest way of accounting for divergence's and diversity (in the gospels) is by looking at the recorders as human beings capable of mistake or misinterpretation and the editors or copyists of their works as not exempt from the same frailties."

There are many other gospels in existence other than the four accepted by Christians in the New Testament. The Gospel of James supplements the other gospels and expands on them. The Gospel of St. Thomas offers accounts of extraordinary and foolish miracles performed by Christ in boyhood. The Gospel of Nicodemus contains a full account of the trial of Jesus and his descent into Hades. The Gnostic sects often used varying gospels.

The oldest written record in existence of these manuscripts is the Codex Sinaiticus, written in the middle of the fourth century. According to sources in the *World Religions*, "Quotations...are of much less value than might have been expected, for accuracy and precision were evidently not much considered by them and what they quoted has often been altered in copying." In the opinion of those scholars who have studied these ancient sources, true readings cannot be derived from any one set of authorities, but rather are the result of a weighing of evidence of all taken together.

— M.J.

Part II will appear in the December issue

Many questions remain regarding the accuracy and contradictions found in the New Testament

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Newest tax collector - the Diocese

A of F member David Barrera of Guilford sent this in. First, a synopsis of an article written by Katherine Gazella in the St. Petersburg Times followed by his letter.

Three Tampa Bay area non-profit groups will receive almost \$6-million in federal funds to construct rental housing for low-income seniors and disabled people. The November 14 announcement was made by U.S. Housing Secretary Henry Cisneros. He resigned his position the same day.

Calling the program "a thoughtful and compassionate answer...to the graying of our population," Cisneros handed out \$959-million nationwide. The money provides non-profit groups with capital advances to finance the projects.

The big score locally was once again made by the Diocese of St. Petersburg, which will get \$4.4-million to build a three-story, 76-unit apartment complex for elderly people in east Tampa. The diocese has already built housing with five previous HUD grants.

To qualify for the seniors housing under this grant, residents must be at least 62 years old and earn less than half the local median income. With the supplement of the HUD grants, the seniors will pay no more than 30% of their incomes for rent.

Barrera's letter:

Dear Atheists of Florida:

Enclosed is an article in the *St. Petersburg Times* on Friday, Nov. 21, 1996. HUD is giving this money to non-profit groups, but note that the bulk of the money goes to the Catholic Church. How can they get away with that? Isn't there some law derived from the First Amendment? You people should know about that. It sounds like it would be something that you would be interested in.

I can just imagine who would be chosen by the church to get apartments. These matters concern me because I am on Disability and Section 8. I never know when I am going to be dropped from those programs. It is bad enough that my Landlord is a Christian. You never know when they'll take a dislike to you and kick you out. Religion is particularly influential over homeless people. I dread the day that I will have to accept a meal from people who will give me a sermon.

I have been amused by all this adulation of Cardinal Bernardin for "teaching us how to die." First they scare the daylight out of us with stories about Hell when we're kids, and then later they die with serenity calling death "a friend." My mother was a Christian and it took six months for her to die of cancer. She was afraid. She required the bedside prayers of several ministers and laymen because she was afraid. She died in agony and not sanitarily with serenity. Now everyone is saying that Bernardin was brave and an example. We don't need his example. Millions of slobbs die every day just as bravely as he did. The media is disgusting.

Of course, I was very disappointed that Castro visited the Pope. Castro could have died clean.

Good luck with your atheism. Religion permeates everything.

David Barrera

Thanks, David, for bringing this to our attention. Atheists of Florida has some good local contacts and will look into this. Offhand, some other questions which should be raised: How much net profit can the diocese make on operation of these facilities? Is it reported to any government agency? Is there any inquiry made of an applicant's religion? How can anyone call a diocese a non-profit organization...it should be referred to as a tax-exempt business!

A final word about Bernardin. Just before he died, he wrote to each Supreme Court Justice asking that they oppose any form of a right-to-die law. As usual, religion assumes it knows best for all of us.

— Ed

Twain Scholarship Fund Drive

The September '96 Mark Twain Scholarship Fund drive was marred by the fact that many persons on our mailing list reported never having received the correspondence. However, due to the generous response of many of you, the Scholarship Fund is pleased to announce that first and second place awards for next year's competition will be increased to \$500 and \$300 respectively. For those of you who didn't receive information about the Fund or Legal Fund, we will include this in our membership renewal mailing early next year. Thank you to all who contributed!

NAME	SCHOLARSHIP FUND	LEGAL FUND
Richardson, Maria	\$ 25.00	\$ 25.00
Pardomo, Miguel	25.00	25.00
Gribko, Alex	25.00	25.00
Solarzano, Jose	25.00	25.00
Morgenroth, Jerry & Flo	25.00	100.00
Massen, John	25.00	25.00
Castelvecchi, Peter	10.00	75.00
Sarokin, Bernard	25.00	100.00
Herschel, Andrew	25.00	25.00
LeCaster, Robert	25.00	25.00
Walton, Jeffrey		25.00
Docar, Sergio		100.00
Klein, Helene		25.00
Tzaniakos, Georgia		25.00
Tzaniakos, Alice - Diamond ring	700.00	20.00
Brogdon, Kyoko	100.00	100.00
Barnett Bank	25.00	
Schierstein, Tony	100.00	
Cori, Edwin		Gen Fund - 266.00
Golly, Ed		150.00
Jones, Christopher	25.00	
Glantz, Celia	500.00	
Williams, Louis		500.00
Berger, Sylvia	25.00	3.00
Wood, Oly & Joan	150.00	
Total - \$266.00(General)	\$ 1,760.00	\$ 1,298.00
Total funds:	\$ 3,224.00	

Everything

appeared to be against the chances of the establishment of the new religion"

— G. T. Bertany

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

The Origins and Founding of Christianity Part 1

REGARDING THE ENORMOUS volumes of material written about the life and teachings of Jesus, the focus of this article will cover only some of the salient points in an objective manner.

The obvious facts surrounding the life of Christ are well known to most individuals in Western culture. Jesus Christ was born to Mary and Joseph of Nazareth. Joseph was a carpenter and Jesus was most probably a carpenter's apprentice

until he decided to engage in his controversial teaching. He started teaching around age 30, after being baptized by John the Baptist.

Jesus taught in the synagogue, and had 12 followers, or disciples. He reached out to those on society's fringe, ate with publicans and sinners, didn't condemn adultery, or spurn those who were tax-collectors. The Pharisees, those with religious power in the area, were outraged. Jesus taught things such as "turn the other cheek" in his Sermon on the Mount. Jesus emphasized love in the form of brotherhood for your fellow man. His new commandment added, "that you love one another, even as I have loved you" to the other ten commandments. This love was offered to those seen as undeserving, which angered many and contributed in part to Jesus' death. Jesus depicted God as the unseen Father, watching over his children. Christ believed in the "law of kindness", treating his fellow man as a loving father would treat his loved and erring children. He taught that men should "love their enemies, to do good to them that hate them."

After leaving Galilee, Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover. He rode into town on a donkey. He was sold out by one of his followers to the Romans, who crucified him. The followers of Jesus believe that he rose from the dead after three days, and that if you

truly believed that Jesus was the son of God, then you could achieve eternal life and forgiveness of all sins. In Christianity, Jesus embodied God's gift to mankind, his symbol representing his love for mankind.

A belief in Christianity also entails the belief in the "miracles" performed by and surrounding Jesus. The miracle of the Virgin birth, feeding the five thousand, walking on water, turning water into wine, raising Lazarus from the dead, and rolling away the stone after being dead for three days are some of the more notable miracles observed in Christianity. Christians believe that Faith in Jesus Christ can assure them everlasting life and forgiveness of all their sins.

The early roots of Christianity took shape several years after the death of Jesus Christ with the stoning of Stephen. Stephen was a young man from Jerusalem who was stoned after preaching some of the teachings of Jesus. There were others who followed him. Many strong figures in the early formation of the church were men like Paul, formerly Saul, who had participated in the stoning of Stephen. Paul was born a Roman citizen in a city distant to Jerusalem. Later, he had a "conversion" on the road to Damascus, and became a leading figure in the early formation of the Christian religion. Paul's letters (epistles), were written while he was incarcerated in Rome for years. They set forth guidelines which helped to establish the Christian church. He was prominent in the founding of the Church at Antioch. "Christian" first came into use at this time as a name to address converts.

Paul was the founder of Christian theology. He was not a companion of Jesus, and rarely quotes him directly. The theology of Paul was based on universal sin and wrongdoing by man. It was Paul who put forth the theory of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb for the sins of man. Therefore, the sinner is saved through Christ's death, according to Paul. And faith is the only way mankind can be saved.

Peter, the "Rock" upon which the Church was built, was told by Jesus, "Give unto him (Peter) the keys to the Kingdom of heaven." Peter was the head of the first established Christian Church. The Church was seen as the body of Christ. Peter took the lead on the day of Pentecost as chief preacher and exponent of the new teaching. In Rome, the government was hostile to Christians and they were persecuted. Under Nero, Christians were blamed for the burning of Rome. Peter and Paul were both believed to be martyred during this period.

Some of the Christians were killed in the arena for sport. And some men, Ignatius and Polycarp were two, were willing to die for

their right to believe in this new religion. The persecutions seemed to have only strengthened the underground movement. By the 2nd century, Christianity had spread to almost every Roman province. During the second half of the third century, many churches were built.

In 311, Galerius issued a decree of toleration. In 312, Constantine proclaimed toleration and by 327, he urged all his subjects to embrace the Christian religion. The Edict of Milan from Constantine (312) proclaimed universal toleration. Constantine exempted Christian ministers from all military and civic service, abolished laws/customs objectionable to Christians, made bequests to the church legal, contributed to the building of churches, had his sons educated as Christians, ordained the civil observance of Sunday and removed Roman God symbols from his coins.

Constantinople became a Christian city. By the fourth century, Emperor Constantine called the church's bishops together at Nicea and composed the Nicene Creed in 325. Although the Latin churches sent only 7 bishops, 318-bishops were in attendance at Nicea. These councils marked the beginnings of the Catholic domination of Christianity throughout the Dark Ages in Europe.

Later, at the council of Constantinople, only the believers in the Nicene Creed were summoned. The council added the paragraph dealing with the Holy Ghost, comprising the trinity of father, son and Holy Ghost.

Simplicity characterized Christian worship during the first two centuries. But by the end of the third century, the power of the bishops in the Church was increasing. The bishops had been elected by popular vote in the beginning.

The Church of Rome, birthplace of Christianity and the center of the Christian church, was not established as such until the 5th century. By this time, emperors, other bishops, canons and rival factions all contributed to the appointment of bishops, and general elections were no longer held for these high offices. The council of Constantinople had first given precedence to the diocese which was next to Rome. In 451, the Council of Chalce-

don gave the four chief bishops the title of Patriarch (Papa) or Pope. But the See of Rome was first recognized more from its political roots of the Roman empire than from St. Peter, the founder of the church. The Letters (epistles) sent from Rome began to give directions and commands. These were written in the name of the bishop, who became known as the Pope.

Monasticism had also been spreading. In 325, a society of monks was established on an island in the Nile. By 348, it had 3,000 members.

Christianity as a State Religion

Abuses crept in as the church increased in wealth and influence. Many entered the ministry for motives of ambition and greed. As bishops became more and more elevated above the clergy, they were less subject to popular election.

By the time Martin Luther became professor of theology at the University of Wittenburg in the 16th century, the Church held complete dominion over its people, with no room for dissent. There was rampant corruption and Luther was shocked to see dispensations being sold by local clergy in the name of God.

In 1517, he wrote "95 Theses Upon Indulgences" and posted it on Wittenburg Castle. Wittenburg's ruler sided with Luther, and he became a hero to reform-minded priests, merchants, peasants, humanist scholars and German nationalists.

In 1520, Leo X, the Pope, issued a papal bull asking Luther to recant. Luther refused to recant at the Diet of Worms, which was a special meeting called about the matter. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, declared Luther a political outlaw. In 1521, he was excommunicated.

Luther retreated to Duke Frederick's castle and spent his time translating the Bible into German. He eventually married a former nun. Many monasteries closed, and many more priests and nuns married. Luther rejected all but two of the Seven Sacraments in the Church. He kept Baptism and the Eucharist, and recognized only the Bible as the sole authority on the word of God. He believed Salvation could only come through God's grace. The "Protestants" are those protesting Catholic decision to prohibit Lutheran teaching.

Luther believed that the Pope was "the anti-Christ" and that Rome had perverted true religion. But the reformation, which began with Luther posting the theses in Wittenburg, split into many factions. Not all could agree on what constituted the Christian religion. Feuds among the Protestant factions grew

turn page



The Crown of Thorns

Luther believed that the Pope was "the anti-Christ" and that Rome had perverted all true religion

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- ANNETTE VAN HOWE, Humanist and Civil Rights Activist; 1996 Humanist Heroine, American Humanist Association; Delegate to UN's 4th World Conference of Women in Beijing, China.
- STEPHEN MUMFORD, Ph.D., President of Center for Research on Population and Security; Author of *Population Growth Control: The Next Move is America's*, and other books.
- MARGARET DOWNEY, Founder and President of Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia, the Anti-Discrimination Network, and Thomas Paine Pennsylvania Memorial Committee.
- PAUL KURIZ, leader of the Council for Secular Humanism and Editor of their journal, *Free Inquiry*; Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, State University of New York (Buffalo); author of numerous books, articles and reviews.
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Atheist vies for notary status

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Herb Silverman is an atheist who wants to be a notary public. South Carolina won't allow it.

Silverman contends that's because he refuses to acknowledge god, a requirement in the state constitution for all public officers. So he took his case to a higher authority — the state Supreme Court.

The battle is about more than just being a notary public. Silverman, a 54-year-old math professor at the College of Charleston, says it's the first step in fighting for atheists'

rights in a Bible Belt state.

"The first thing people ask you when you move here is what church you go to, and when you tell them that you don't believe in God, all of a sudden you don't have many friends," said Silverman, a Philadelphia native who moved to South Carolina in 1976.

A lower court judge sided with Silverman, throwing out the constitution's "God clause."

The state appealed, contending the case isn't about religion. Silverman, who crossed out the word God in "so help me God," should not have crossed out any word on the notary application, and besides, he did not have enough of the required signatures on his second application, the state's lawyers say.

Under the state's complex rules for becoming a notary public, Silverman actually had the required number of legislators' signatures -- eight -- at the time of his first application. But redistricting had changed the required number to nine, and when his second application was rejected he opted to take the whole matter to court.

Since 1868, South Carolina's Constitution has declared: "No person who denies the existence of the Supreme Being shall hold any office under this Constitution."

As a state-sanctioned official, a notary public swears in the application to fulfill the duties of the office, and protect and defend the state and U.S. constitutions "so help me God."

The only other states that require in their constitutions that public officers have a belief in a higher power are Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

In 1961, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states cannot require constitutional officers to profess a belief in God.

"Being a notary public is not a lifelong dream of mine," Silverman said. "My issue is just to change the state constitution."

He said he's received phone calls from people saying they pray that God would "eliminate" him from South Carolina.

"As long as they are just praying for it, obviously I'm not worried," he said.

NEWS FILES

Just another religious love story

EARTH — The divisiveness of religion was thriving in September. In a single day, masked gunmen fired upon worshipers in a mosque in the Indian city of Multan, while in London, 10 tons of explosives were confiscated from suspected IRA hideouts.

Rivalry between two Muslim sects in Pakistan was believed to have been set off in retaliation for the killing of the Shiite leader in a nearby town the previous day. Infuriated by the attack on their sanctuary, Sunnis in Multan came out on the streets to stone Shiite neighborhoods, shout anti-Shiite slogans and block roads with burning tires. To prevent further sectarian clashes in Multan, a city of more than a half-million people, police and paramilitary troops were called out by the hundreds to patrol the streets.

The back-to-back incidents highlighted the increasingly hostile relations between militants of the two rival branches of Islam in a country founded nearly a half-century ago so the subcontinent's Muslims would have a state of their own.

In London the "love thy neighbor" commandment applies only if thy neighbor's religion is the same as yours. Police are certain the IRA explosives they seized were planned for use in an attack intended to cause grave loss of life, economic impact and massive damage.

Prime Minister John Major said the raid undercut claims by the IRA-allied Sinn Fein Party that it is committed to peace. "It remains impossible to reconcile Sinn Fein's rhetoric for peace with the IRA's preparations for murder," said Major.

First world or third, religion remains a forever detrimental conflict with peace.

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