

# FREELY SPEAKING

FREE MINDS  
FREE PEOPLE

Vol. 3, No. 10

June 2006

Eight pages

## SKIRMISHES

### Another 'cartoon' controversy

• A University of Oregon student newspaper, The Insurgent, has come under fire for publishing cartoons viewed as anti-Christian and offensive. According to press reports, one of the cartoons shows Jesus on the cross with an erection, another pictures a sexually aroused Jesus kissing another man.

The Associated Press reports the toons have drawn the fire of some students, local Catholic organizations and the ubiquitous Bill O'Reilly of cable TV fame, who has said the university's president is a 'coward' and should be fired on the spot.

The university president, Dave Frohnmayer, says he denounced the cartoons when they were published but will not stop the newspaper's publication.

Being called names by O'Reilly, Frohnmayer said, "is like being called 'ugly' by a frog."

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## Celebrate the First Amendment

Join the Space Coast Freethought Association, the Humanists of Florida Association, the American Civil Liberties Union of Brevard and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brevard in a rally to celebrate the First Amendment, the Constitution and the freedoms protected therein.

**WHERE:** the grounds of Palm Bay City Hall, located on the Southeast corner of the intersection of Malabar and Minton roads.

**WHEN:** from 9 a.m. 'til Noon on July 1, 2006

**WHAT:** a celebration of liberty featuring talks on aspects of the First Amendment and a reading of the entire Constitution of the United States and Bill of Rights

## 'Separation' between government and religion means freedom for all

By Dianna Narciso

Jefferson said, in a letter to the Virginia Baptists, "Because religious belief, or non-belief, is such an important part of every person's life, freedom of religion affects every individual. State churches that use government power to support themselves and force their views on persons of other faiths undermine all our civil rights. Moreover, state support of the church tends to make the clergy unresponsive to the people and leads to corruption within religion. Erecting the 'wall of separation between church and state,' therefore, is absolutely essential in a free society."

It is unfortunate that many religionists reading that quote will maintain that Jefferson only meant to keep the

See **SEPARATION** on page 2

## HAPPENINGS

The Space Coast Freethought Association holds its June meeting from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. on June 4 at Melbourne Public Library, 540 E. Fee Ave., Melbourne. This meeting will be in the large conference room - on the right as you enter the library. The topic of this month's meeting will be "Activism 101."

Our meetings are free and open to the public. Come and join the conversation about the need for a wall of separation between government and religion and the importance of freedom FROM religion.

Our next Adopt-A-Road cleanup will begin at 9 a.m. on June 11. We meet in the parking lot of the Atlanta Bread Company Restaurant, located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Palm Bay Road and Stack Boulevard.

The Space Coast Freethought Association continues its Saturday Socials with a game night at the Narciso residence at 7 p.m. on June 17th. For more information contact Dianna by email at catspah@cfl.rr.com. We plan to play "Trivial Pursuit."

See **HAPPENINGS** on page 3

# SEPARATION (from page 1)

government from establishing a state church. And true, he does use the state church as an example. But an important idea in his words, to me, is that members of a particular religion could “use government power to support themselves and force their views on persons of other faiths.” We don’t require a state church for that to happen. It’s already happening.

It’s clear to me that we can’t argue separation from the Founders’ viewpoints because they concentrated too specifically on an official state church and were not unified in their opinions. They failed to imagine the future end-run around the First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom by those who do not respect or understand freedom for all.

The reality is that only a secular government that stays completely out of religion can fairly represent a religiously diverse population. That means no “In God We Trust” on our money. No “In God We Trust” mottoes for the nation or states. No “Under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. It means no “God Bless America” on government signs and website. No religious symbols or holiday decorations on government property. No time off for government employees for religious holy days. It means no prayers before legislative sessions and no organized prayers in public schools. And it certainly means no monuments to the Ten Commandments on government property. It means keeping religion out of government and government out of religion.

But too many of the religious do not understand the difference between government with its rights and

responsibilities, and individual citizens, with their rights and responsibilities. To them, majority rules. To them, there is no fear of the majority trampling the rights of the minority, because they do not envision the minority having any rights not granted them by the majority.

To this religious majority, being able to infuse their religious ideas and icons into government is part of the reward of being in the majority. They can not see the danger inherent in majority rule because they can not imagine a time in which they will not be in the majority. And, true to religious form, they are so certain that their views are correct and approved of by their deity, they can not fathom there being anything wrong with what they are doing.

How do we reach these people? How do we teach them the empathy necessary to understand minority rights? Attacking their beliefs won’t work. Pointing out the number of atheists in this country won’t work because atheists are despised and any attempt to reason that atheists deserve fair representation in government is met with doubt. Teaching them history could work, but it would require a complete overhaul of the educational institution in this nation. When do you think we’ll be ready to do that? We could push for required classes on government in high schools with the result that religious liberty will be ignored or treated with accommodation of the majority view. What we need is something to get them to see things from our perspective.

I attended the seminar on the separation of church and state held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brevard in April. A representative from the Church of Iron Oak spoke to us about their battle with the city of Palm Bay over home worship. When they needed to get the religious on their side, they came up with a slogan that would help them realize that they had something to lose too. Their slogan was “Keep home worship

legal.” The Iron Oak representative thought it was wonderful that the traditional religious institutions were willing to work with the Wiccans to ensure religious freedom for everyone.

What can we say to the religious that would make them realize that a completely secular government helps them as well as us? Space Coast Freethought Association’s secretary, Cameo Johnson-Cramer, came up with a slogan for us:

## **Separation of government and religion equals freedom for all.**

It’s short and sweet. It states the truth. But there is one major problem. The Christians got involved with the Church of Iron Oak because they saw the direct threat to their own ability to hold religious worship in their homes. They do not feel threatened by a little of their god in our government. The flaw is not in the slogan. And it’s not in us. The flaw is within them—the religious. Perhaps this slogan coupled with the visualization of a government dominated by a religion that Christians fear could do the trick. Imagine, under the slogan, a picture of the Capitol building with the symbol of Islam atop it and “In Allah We Trust” quoted beneath.

But that wouldn’t work. Christians who equate religious liberty with putting their god in our government would laugh at the thought that Islam would ever become a majority religion in this country. They are so certain that our Constitution sets up a Christian nation, and that they are such a powerful majority, that such a thing could never happen.

The way I see it, just as members of the clergy were outraged by our Godless Constitution when it was ratified, there will always be those who want theocracy for the United States. We will always have to struggle for religious freedom in this country. We will just have to try to reach those we can, and fight those we can’t.

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*Freely Speaking* invites articles which promote freethought and church-state separation and announcements relating to groups and activities which do the same. Email submissions to gricker@cfl.rr.com with the subject heading “newsletter submissions.” Inquiries about *Freely Speaking* should be directed to George Ricker by email or by mail to: SCFA, PO Box 60448, Palm Bay, FL 32906-0448 - att: newsletter.

# Humor in Religion

## Whale of a tale

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small.

The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible.

The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah".

The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to Hell?"

The little girl replied, "Then you ask him".

## Anticipation

A kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work.

As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was.

The girl replied, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

## Space Coast Freethought Association, Inc.

The Space Coast Freethought Association is a Florida nonprofit corporation, based in Brevard County. To join the online discussion group go to:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SpaceCoastFreethought/>

Our mailing address is:

Space Coast Freethought Association, Inc.  
PO Box 60448  
Palm Bay, FL 32906-0448

For more information, contact President Dianna Narciso by email at [catspah@cfl.rr.com](mailto:catspah@cfl.rr.com). or visit our website at:

<http://www.spacecoastfreethought.org/>

**SPACE COAST FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION**  
**A non-prophet organization**

## Join us!!!

*Become a dues-paying member of the  
Space Coast Freethought Association.*

*Annual memberships are \$15 for individuals,  
\$25 for couples and  
\$10 for seniors (65+) and students.*

*Applications are available at our meetings,  
online and by mail on request.*

*Join the fight against religious extremism  
and for separation  
between government and religion.*

If you would like to comment on an item in our newsletter or on the activities of the Space Coast Freethought Association, write a letter to the editor and email it to George Ricker at [griker@cfl.rr.com](mailto:griker@cfl.rr.com). Please use the subject heading "Letter to the editor." Letters should be no more than 200 words long and will be subject to editing. They must be signed.

If you prefer to mail your letter, send it to *Freely Speaking*, Letters to the Editor, PO Box 60448, Palm Bay, FL 32906-0448.

## SCFA store open at CafePress

How would you like to buy a tee-shirt or a button with the Space Coast Freethought Association's logo on it?

Check out the new "Space Coast Freethought Association" store at [cafepress.com](http://cafepress.com). You'll find the site at: <http://www.cafepress.com/scfreethought>

## SCFA Board of Directors (officers)

Dianna Narciso (President) ...George Ricker (Vice Pres.)  
Cameo Cramer (Secretary) ...Toni Sweeney (Treasurer)  
Doug Cramer ...Mike Sweeney...Charles Trantham

## HAPPENINGS (from page 1)

**The Humanist Club at Barefoot Bay** holds its next meeting from 2 to 4 p.m. on June 9th at the South Mainland Library, 7921 Ron Beatty Boulevard, Barefoot Bay. Contact George Oertel at 772-664-0170 for more information.

# THIS MONTH IN HISTORY *by Cameo Johnson-Cramer*

## June

### ~20 years ago - **Wallace v. Jaffree (School Prayer), June 4, 1985**

In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court determined it was unconstitutional for Alabama to institute school prayer. Its significance lies in its use of the Lemon Test, where the Court considered the intent of the legislature when they made the school prayer law.

### ~30 years ago - **Lemon v. Kurtzman (Lemon Test), June 28, 1971**

This case decided that the use of public funds to benefit private religious schools was unconstitutional. It resulted in the establishment of the "Lemon Test" for determining whether a law passes Constitutional muster regarding separation between government and religion. The Lemons Test requires that:

*"First, the statute must have a secular legislative purpose; second, its principle or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion . . . ; finally, the statute must not foster 'an excessive government entanglement with religion'."*

### ~40 years ago - **Torcaso v. Watkins (No Religious Test for Public Office), June 19, 1961**

The Supreme Court gave a unanimous decision, overturning the Maryland law requiring "a declaration of belief in the existence of God" for public office. Torcaso wanted to become a notary public, but could not because of the oath. Maryland justified its law by saying no one is required to hold public office.

*"There were, however, wise and farseeing men in the Colonies--too many to mention--who spoke out against test oaths and all the philosophy of intolerance behind them. . . ." - Justice Black, U.S. Supreme Court*

### ~300 years ago - **Adam Smith was born, June 5, 1723**

One of the best known economists and author of "The Wealth of Nations," Smith was also an active rationalist. While at Glasgow University, he ignored his scholarship's requirement to become a minister and tried to abolish school prayer and other religious duties. Even with these activities, he eventually became dean of faculty.

*"Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition."*

### ~300 years ago - **First Salem witch hanging, June 10, 1692**

Bridget Bishop was hung after being the first colonist tried in the Salem witch trials. In October the court was dissolved and those being held on witchcraft charges were released, but not before 19 women and men were executed.

### ~ Many billion years ago - **Summer Solstice began**

This year the solstice will be on June 21 at 7:26 a.m.

## The Beginning

*a poem by Jim Dempsey*

*In the beginning there was only the word.*

*And the word was DNA  
DeoxyNucleic Acid*

*And the DNA was in the double helix,  
And the double helix unwound.*

*The bases found their complements in the ancient sea,  
And then there were two.*

*And those two unwound  
And then there were four.*

*The earth was alive  
With the promise of greater things to come!*

© 2006 by Jim Dempsey

# The numbers game: who counts?

By George A. Ricker

One of the questions that gets asked frequently by nonbelievers and believers alike is: “How many atheists are there, anyway?”

The answer is difficult to find. It depends very much on who gets asked, how they are asked and who is doing the asking.

It’s a difficult answer to find because there are many atheists who don’t call themselves atheists, either because they are confused about the meaning of the word or are unwilling to own up to it for various reasons—not least of which is the potential of such admissions to create problems at home, on the job or in society at large.

Obviously, if atheism is the dogmatic denial of any possibility of the existence of any god, then the number of atheists is going to be smaller than if atheism is simply the absence or lack of god-belief, which seems to be the preferred definition among most atheists these days.

## Counting nonbelievers

Some atheists like to quote the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), last done in 2001, and make the claim that about 14 percent of the population are nonbelievers. However, that’s not what the survey says.

In fact, less than 1 percent of those asked identified themselves as either atheists or agnostics. The majority of that 14.1 percent in the “no religion” category (13.2 percent to be precise) was made up of people who simply said they followed no religion and made no declaration about god-belief one way or the other. While it’s true that the “no religion” group was the fastest growing category in the survey, it’s erroneous to claim, as some do, that all of them are nonbelievers.

On the other hand, there seems to be evidence that the percentage of atheists and agnostics in the population is much greater than is suggested by the number who identified themselves as such in the ARIS survey.

According to the *Cambridge Companion to Atheism*—edited by Michael Martin, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK (2005), from 3 to 9 percent of the U.S. population falls into the category of atheists, agnostics and nonbelievers in a god. It’s a modest percentage compared to most modern nations (even at the high end) but still amounts to a sizable number of people, from almost 9 million to almost 27 million individuals.

Other surveys put the number even higher. Harris Interactive’s Online Survey for 2005 reports that 8 percent of American adults “don’t believe” in “God” and

an additional 10 percent “aren’t sure.” This online survey typically reports the number of believers as lower than most other opinion surveys, but that may simply reflect a reduction of what Harris Interactive calls the “social desirability” bias. When other people are asking questions about god(s) and religion(s), interviewees may be more concerned about appearing in a favorable light to the interviewer than they would be when completing an online survey that does not involve direct interaction with another person, whether on the telephone or in person.

## A social bias

Clearly there is a social bias in favor of religion in the United States. It is a bias that is promoted politically and culturally. Those who openly reject gods and religions are viewed negatively, regardless of their values and contributions to society. They may suffer penalties in both their professional and personal lives unless they are willing to go along with the majority view and suppress their own opinions.

In any event, it seems reasonable to think there are millions of nonbelievers in our society. Whether they call themselves atheists, agnostics, freethinkers or go by some other label, they do make up a minority that is probably not less than 5 percent and may be as large as 18 percent of the adult population.

It’s still a minority to be sure, but it may be a more substantial one than is commonly supposed.

That said, I suggest it is a mistake to get caught up in the numbers game anyway. We should neither exaggerate the number of nonbelievers nor minimize it. If our cause is just, our numbers ought not to matter.

See **NUMBERS** on page 6

*Congratulations!  
You have found a  
non-prophet zone*

<http://www.spacecoastfreethought.org/>

# NUMBERS (from page 5)

## Principle counts too

Most atheists ask for nothing more or less than equality before the law. The same constitutional provisions that protect the right of believers to exercise their religions must protect the right of nonbelievers to be free to reject all religions. The requirement that all citizens deserve equality before the law and before their government requires that government agencies take no position on religious matters.

The rights of conscience are uniquely individual rights. Religious freedom is the business of individuals and of the religious establishments with which they choose to associate.

Government's role as the protector of individual rights of conscience cannot and should not extend to the effort to influence anyone's decision about whether to exercise a religion or not.

Consequently, government must stand mute on religious questions. It has no right or responsibility to make religious declarations, to endorse religious concepts or to dress itself in the trappings of religions. A constitutional democracy must respect the rights of conscience of all of its citizens. It cannot do that if it is favoring one class of believers over another or believers over nonbelievers.

## Being practical

As a practical matter, it is often argued that we atheists must tread softly lest we anger the religious majority. The fear of a backlash that may lead to greater repression of religious freedom is a real one. However, it cannot be allowed to make us timid.

Certainly, we should not go out of our way to be offensive to the religious. But it must be clearly understood that for some religionists our very existence is sufficient cause for them to be offended. Atheism itself offends them because it challenges a hierarchy of belief in which they have invested a great amount of emotional energy and not a little treasure as well. It challenges them because it threatens to upset a world view they find comfortable.

However, the notion that we should weaken our demand for equal justice before the law and the clear recognition of the secular nature of government is dangerous not only to the rights of conscience of nonbelievers but also to those who follow religions that are not part of the orthodox Christian tradition in this nation.

It is also important for nonbelievers to recognize that we have allies among the faithful. There are many among the religious who also believe in the secular nature of government and the protection of the rights of conscience for all Americans. Members of minority

religions and those who belong to liberal and progressive strains among traditional religious fellowships also are fearful of the actions of the fundyevangelists of the Religious Right.

## Conclusion

Playing the numbers game is dangerous. The numbers themselves depend not only upon the purpose of those who do the counting but the candor of those who are counted.

Clearly, the proverbial "Village atheist" no longer should be thought of as existing in isolation. There are many of us. Our numbers grow stronger every day, as men and women who live without worshipping gods or following religions step forward and speak out. And as more of us are willing to do so, more and more will follow suit. The courage of a few may encourage many.

It matters not, however, whether there is one atheist, one hundred or one hundred million. What matters is the principle of equal treatment before the law and by the government of all citizens and equal protection of the rights of conscience of each of them. We should expect nothing more than that. We should accept nothing less.

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## Did you know?

The United States Supreme Court has never held that children may not pray in our nation's public schools. Public school children are free to pray to themselves at any time during the school day. They may do so silently or vocally. The sole caveats are that they may not do so in a manner that disrupts classroom procedure or imposes on their classmates.

The court has held, in a number of landmark decisions, that public schools may not orchestrate prayers or lead children in prayer or direct children to pray or suggest that children ought to pray.

But there is nothing in any Supreme Court decision that prevents, either directly or by implication, any public school student from praying to whatever god he or she worships while in school.

Claiming otherwise is a dishonest distortion of the truth commonly made by the Religious Right to generate money and agitate those who don't know any better.

*Godless in America* by George A. Ricker is now available at book retailers. For more information go to:  
<http://www.godlessinamerica.com>

# Life just is...and so is death!

By Jack Maurice (©2006)

Presently our scientific knowledge doesn't explain the origins of our existence and we may never be able to answer the questions associated with those origins. Most of the enormous amount of what we do know, we have learned in the past 100 years or so.

Imagine what a prehistoric man would have thought of the things we take for granted today. If he saw a light bulb, he would have no way of understanding what it was. If the light was turned on, he might very well have fallen to his knees and worshipped it as a godly thing. There are still people deep in some jungle somewhere who haven't advanced much past the prehistoric state who might do the same.

Not knowing the origin of the existence of matter does not mean that we should turn to thousand-year-old superstitions and folk tales for an explanation.

What is the purpose of life? More so, who ever said there had to be one? Maybe, we just live. Maybe, we just are. What we do know is we are born through a natural biological process and die from the same process.

Do dogs or cats or rabbits or rats need a purpose to justify their existence? Of course not, they are animals of low intellect. Just about every cell in our bodies contains the evidence of our evolutionary origins. Those who assume that living things have some sort of metaphysical purpose are intrinsically assuming what they want to prove.

Purpose is an abstract human concept that exists only in our minds, much like beauty—with no physical reality. The basic process of life on Earth is so common that we share about 50 percent of our genes with carrots, and 98.5 percent of our genes with chimpanzees. In fact, according to the journal *Nature*, the "...earliest known ancestors of modern humans might have reproduced with early chimpanzees to create a hybrid species."

But even though we share almost identical DNA with chimpanzees, most chimps have nothing more than the basic survival instinct. That instinct is why they were able to survive and evolve while other species became extinct just as Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals lacked the ability to survive and Homo-sapiens flourished. We have the same basic instinct as lesser animals but we also have the ability to make tools and to use reason. We are simply smarter animals at the top of the evolutionary chain.

No other animal has the ability or the need to contemplate his or her life. It's only us, the smartest animals. We are aware of our existence and the world around us. We are sentient. We know that we are alive and will some day die. It is the fear of death that drives people to hope and/or imagine that there is a life after this one. Even I, a committed atheist by my own

admission, hope there is a life after this one.

Unfortunately, I have never seen any proof that there is and of all the friends and relatives I have known that are now dead, not one has ever come back and told me otherwise. With no proof to the contrary, it appears that when you're dead, you're dead...end of story.

Gods were created out of people's misunderstanding of natural things, their fear of death and the desire to live forever. People once worshipped the sun because they thought it was magical, but we know now that it is simply a huge ball of burning hydrogen held together by a powerful gravitational force, and there are millions of stars just like it in the universe. If someone worshipped the sun today, even an elementary school student would think them an idiot.

So where are we in all this? The same place as everyone else. *We* decide what life we want to lead. We define our own purpose. It's *our* responsibility to create the life *we* desire. We don't need to worry about whether there is a supernatural purpose for our existence or some existential meaning to life.

Let's strive to enjoy the life we have!

*Life just is! And so is death!*

\* Jack Maurice is the organizer of the Orlando Atheists Freethinker Group.

**SPEAKING OUT: SCFA members in print**  
(more on p. 8)

*Florida Today*—May 27, 2006□

## On church graduations, place blame properly

Because Brevard County public school graduations cannot be held in churches since a lawsuit last year, I've heard many complaints about the threat of bad weather in outdoor venues for graduations.

But putting weather ahead of freedom of conscience is crazy.

Forcing a public school to hold graduation in a church under a 25-foot-tall Christian cross is clearly a violation of separation between church and state.

And don't forget, the plaintiffs in the suit were willing for the graduation to be held in the church if the cross were covered.

But the church refused. So let's put the blame where it belongs:

On the people who pushed for the graduation to be held in the church without covering the cross.

As for outdoor graduations, people can pray for good weather.

**Charles Eugene**  
Titusville

# **SPEAKING OUT: SCFA members in print (more on p. 7)**

*Miami Herald*—May 20, 2006

## **Don't take 'Da Vinci' seriously**

□

The Bible is as far-fetched as *The Da Vinci Code*. It states that the Earth was created in only six days, women came from a man's rib, animals spoke human language, the Nile turned to blood, water turned into wine, a stick turned into a snake, Jesus walked on water, an evil being exists called Satan and many other outlandish things.

If people can believe the Bible, then I can see why religious leaders fear that people will believe *The Da Vinci Code*.

**CHARLES EUGENE**, Titusville

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*Miami Herald*—May 17, 2006

## **No evidence**

Letter writer Bambi L. Davidson (*Da Vinci* is fiction, May 13 Readers' Forum) states a simple truth: *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown is a work of fiction. I suspect that the brouhaha over this blockbuster is fueled by the nagging, subconscious voice of the faithful telling them that, in truth, the Gospels have just as much evidence to back them up as Brown has to back up his story—none.

**DIANNA NARCISO**, Palm Bay

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*Florida Today*—May 23, 2006

## **Religious graduation site may be breaking the law**

A recent letter complained that a community in Georgia was able to use church facilities for public high school graduations while ours no longer is.

The writer missed the fact that the problem with using a church for an official school function is not the church itself, but the display of religious symbols.

If Calvary Chapel in West Melbourne had been willing to cover up its cross, then there would have been no problem with holding graduations there.

When it was not, the school system ended up agreeing not to hold further ceremonies there as part of a lawsuit settlement from families who objected.

Perhaps the church in Georgia was willing to cover up its religious displays. If not, then their act shows a blatant disregard for the rights of religious minorities, and breaks the law. In that case, hopefully someone will be brave enough to take them to task for it.

**Doug Cramer**, Palm Bay

*Orlando Sentinel*—May 22, 2006

## **Ignoring the point**

With all the dialogue surrounding *The Da Vinci Code*, I'm dismayed that everyone is not just missing but ignoring the point. The real problem is that once you allow yourself to believe one story devoid of factual and historical evidence, you leave yourself open to believe just about anything. Religious leaders and the devout must know this, thus their outrage over Dan Brown's novel.

Despite continual attempts to place Jesus in history, Christian apologists always fail. There is no evidence Jesus even existed, much less that the stories of his life are true; and there is good evidence that Jesus is modeled on earlier dying/rising savior god myths.

Once you've accepted a story as true, and based your life, wealth and power on it, you'll do anything to hold onto it. This is what drives the outrage and fear of this new take on the Christian myth, and results in workshops and sermons to help the faithful convince themselves and others that their fiction is true while Brown's is not. The Gospel writers had just as much evidence for their story as Brown has for his—none.

**Dianna Narciso**

Palm Bay

*"Just as the right to speak and the right to refrain from speaking are complementary components of a broader concept of individual freedom of mind, so also the individual's freedom to choose his own creed is the counterpart of his right to refrain from accepting the creed established by the majority. At one time it was thought that this right merely proscribed the preference of one Christian sect over another, but would not require equal respect for the conscience of the infidel, the atheist, or the adherent of a non-Christian faith such as Mohammedism or Judaism. But when the underlying principle has been examined in the crucible of litigation, the Court has unambiguously concluded that the individual freedom of conscience protected by the First Amendment embraces the right to select any religious faith or none at all."*

**U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stevens for the majority, *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, June 4, 1985.**