

surveillance by governmental security organizations, general intrusions and interruptions by public officials, church functionaries and religious persons all intent on personal and property harm, or suppression of rights and civil liberties. (See: *Bill Murray, the Bible, and the Baltimore Board of Education* by Madalyn Murray O'Hair)

The Murray family was actually driven from Maryland through physical abuse and the organization was closed down after the corporation was captured by a group hostile and inimical to the interests of American Atheists, in June, 1965. That group, with the assistance of certain officials of the State of Maryland, stripped the corporation of all its assets, real estate, personal property, bank accounts, and then abandoned the corporation.

From Hawaii, where they had fled being beaten by Baltimore police, who charged upon them like infantry troops, the Murrays again (after getting out of the hospital) started the organization, only to have governmental agencies close it down through harassment techniques. Mrs. Murray and her sons fled to Mexico to be returned, illegally at gunpoint and without extradition processes, to the United States. In Texas, another organization for American Atheists was begun, while Mrs. Murray fought an attempt to extradite her to Maryland for "assault" against the 26 police officers who had beaten her family, including her 70-year-old mother.

By June, 1967 an attorney was found in Maryland who had courage enough to attempt legal action to recapture the Maryland corporation. Finally, after five years of legalities, on March 1, 1968, the State of Maryland accepted and approved the "Articles of Revival" for the corporation and it was returned to its rightful owners, but in name only. All real estate, property and bank accounts had been stripped from it, with no hope of recovering the same.

Meanwhile, being in and out of jail, Madalyn Murray (now) O'Hair, with her new husband Richard O'Hair, organized a trusteeship, known as "Society of Separationists," on January 1, 1966. On May 20, 1969, the name of the corporation "Other Americans" was changed for the last time (it had had to function under "hiding names" even to not-function) to "Society of Separationists, Inc.," and merged with the trusteeship of the same name. S.O.S., Inc., was dedicated to becoming the first viable group or society of persons who would advocate, labor for, and promote in all lawful ways, complete and absolute separation of state and church.

The purpose of the corporation was expanded to include a definition of American Atheism and the "Aims of the Society" were included in the corporate

raison d'être. These were:

Aims and Purposes

[1] To stimulate and promote freedom of thought and inquiry concerning religious beliefs, creeds, dogmas, tenets, rituals and practices.

[2] To collect and disseminate information, data, and literature on all religions and promote a more thorough understanding of them, their origins and histories.

[3] To advocate, labor for, and promote in all lawful ways, the complete and absolute separation of state and church and the establishment and maintenance of a thoroughly secular system of education available to all.

[4] To encourage the development and public acceptance of a humane ethical system, stressing the mutual sympathy, understanding and interdependence of all people and the corresponding responsibility of each, individually, in relation to society.

[5] To develop and propagate a social philosophy in which man is the central figure who alone must be the source of strength, progress and ideals for the well-being and happiness of humanity.

[6] To promote the study of the arts and sciences and of all problems affecting the maintenance, perpetuation and enrichment of human, and other life.

[7] To engage in such social, educational, legal and cultural activity as will be useful and beneficial to the members of this Society (of Separationists) and to society as a whole.

Definitions

American Atheism is the philosophy of persons who are free from theism. American Atheism may be defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at establishing a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience, independent of all arbitrary assumptions of authority or creeds.

Materialism is the philosophy that declares that the cosmos is devoid of imminent conscious purpose; that it is governed by its own inherent, immutable and impersonal law; that man — finding his own resources within himself — can and must create his own destiny; and that his potential for good and higher development is for all practical purposes unlimited.

From January, 1966 the corporation was in a protracted legal battle with the Treasury Department, Internal Revenue Service, to obtain tax exemption as an educational organization. As the confrontation developed, I.R.S. required an Amendment to the

Articles of Incorporation of the Corporation, to wit: the addition of a declaration that the corporation was "organized exclusively for educational and scientific purposes" and that the corporation would not "engage in any activities not permitted to be carried on by corporations exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law." This is the same provision—to prohibit lobbying or political activities—which is supposed to apply to all non-profit organizations, including every church or religious group. This Article of Amendment was accepted by the State of Maryland on August 29, 1973.

On April 5, 1974 the Society of Separationists, Inc., was held to be an educational, tax-exempt, non-profit organization. Upon appeal of the ruling, with a request for retroactive dating, on July 12, 1974 Internal Revenue Service ruled that the effective date of tax exemption of the corporation was to be as of March 1, 1968.

The war of attrition begun in 1963 continued without abatement as the Murray-O'Hair family fought simply for the right to have an organization of Atheists openly operating, openly demanding civil rights for Atheists, in the United States. During the period from 1965 to 1975 the survival of the organization was constantly in doubt. The budget was seldom met month by month. Mrs. O'Hair discovered that if the organization was to survive, she must charge for her many appearances, giving any monies derived to the organization. Her "paychecks" from appearances were endorsed, put into the bank and used as "paycheck" money for two employees working at the Atheist Center.

The organization grew at a snail's pace, for the media refused to give open and fair access to it, which made it, and still makes it, extremely hard to let Atheists all over America know they have an organization dedicated to Atheism. Despite such an obstacle, the word has filtered out and membership has increased every year. With this slowly increasing membership has come increased income, but as yet not nearly as much as is needed to become as powerful as the organization needs to be for real and lasting success.

The Society operated out of the Murray-O'Hair home for its first four years in Austin, Texas, then out of a small house converted to offices for another six years. During the ten-year period from 1965 to 1975, every agency of federal, state, county and city government which could move against the small organization did. From tax audits, to telephone tap-