



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

## Blaming Madalyn

*AFTER*

Everyone, it seems, gets angry when you mention Madalyn Murray O'Hair. The Christians get angry because they believe she is responsible for having prayer removed from the public schools. The atheists get angry because they say she gets blamed for everything. The KKK gets angry because they haven't had much to fight about recently and they need something to keep their juices going. Newspaper editors get angry because an angry community writes lots of angry letters demanding they "do something."

Following that "letter to the editor" a couple of weeks ago in which a concerned citizen accused Mrs. O'Hair of trying to get religious broadcasting removed from the public airwaves, the whole community seemed to be up in arms again. Fortunately, a few folks had accurate information and the rumor was quickly stopped. While there was a petition before the Federal Communications Commission back in 1975, it was denied. Even so, the

FCC says they are still receiving 8,500 protest letters a day. And it wasn't Mrs. O'Hair who had filed the petition, it was two California attorneys.

Neither is Mrs. O'Hair responsible for having prayer removed from the public schools. In fact, there is **NO RULING** banning prayer from the public schools.

In 1962 the Supreme Court handed down a landmark case ruling that a government written and approved prayer, required by the government to be recited by school children, is unconstitutional.

In 1963 Mrs. O'Hair was a party in an auxiliary case when the court ruled that governmentally-required religious devotions for school children, such as Bible reading and/or recitation of the Lord's Prayer, violates the Constitution.

Contrary to a number of emotional appeals still being made to "put prayer back in the public schools," the high court did not ban prayers in the schools; it only banned those prayers prescribed by

state authorities — and banned state-sponsored religious devotions and-or teachings.

In writing the majority opinion for the 1962 case, Justice Hugo Black stated: "Students have the right to practice prayer and read the Bible. But they do not have the right to the aid of the state in that exercise."

It was one of the high court's finest decisions, for it has protected our school children from all kinds of weird religions. In October, 1977, a federal district judge in Newark, N.J., used that ruling to deny the supporters of Transcendental Meditation (TM) from getting their teachings into the public schools. Kids can practice TM if they want, just as they can read the Bible and pray, but it's not to be taught in the classroom.

Although she didn't realize it at the time, Mrs. O'Hair did us all a favor. You see, the very God Mrs. O'Hair says does not exist is still working all things for good to those who love Him.