

Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication • Volume 8 Number 3 • March 2002

Our March Meeting

The March 10 AFS meeting will feature Andrea Lynn Steele, author of *Your Preacher May Not Want You To Read This*. (Her book will be on sale in our bookstore.) Andrea will speak on "Raising Independent Thinkers." See her website at <http://www.yourpreacher.com>.

The **AFS Center** is at Suite 500, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, in Roswell, GA. To get there, take I-400 north from Atlanta past I-285 by 8 miles to Exit 7B, which is GA-140. Take GA-140 (Holcomb Bridge Road) west about 1 mile and turn left at Grimes Bridge Road. Go 0.2 miles to 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, which is on the right.

Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the AFS Center at 12:30 on Sunday, March 24. The meeting will include a discussion of the Affirmations of Humanism and the direction for Humanists of Georgia for the year.

Fellowship of Reason Meeting

The **Fellowship of Reason** will meet at 12:30 PM on April 7 at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Highway in Atlanta. For details, see www.kindreason.com.

Do You Have Accounting Skills?

Mirza Choudhury has done an excellent job over the past year as the AFS Treasurer. Unfortunately, his work requires more time than he can spare, so he has reluctantly resigned his position. The AFS bylaws state that, under these conditions, the President should assign a new Treasurer, with the approval of the board.

Would you be interested in taking on this responsibility? If so, please see Judy Thompson or any board member.

Meetings and Activities

Mar 10: AFS General Meeting at AFS Center, 1:00 PM.
Mar 15: AFS Social, Athens Pizza House, 7:00 PM.
Mar 17: AFS Discussion Group at AFS Center, 4:00 PM.
Mar 22: AFS Game Night at AFS Center, 7:00 PM.
Mar 24: AFS Board Meeting at AFS Center, 11:00 AM.
Mar 24: Humanists of Georgia at AFS Center, 12:30 PM.
Apr 7: AFS Hike, Chattahoochee River, 10:00 AM.
Apr 7: Fellowship of Reason meets at NUUC, 12:30 PM.

AFS Activities

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet on Sunday, March 17, from 4 to 6 PM at the AFS Center.

The **AFS Game Night** will be on Friday, March 22 at 7:00 PM. This month, we expect to play Scrabble and other board and card games.

For details on the above activities, call Steve Yothment at 770-339-8394 or email him at SteveYoth@aol.com.

The **AFS Hike** will be on Sunday, April 7, at 10:00 AM at the Island Ford Branch of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. To get there from Atlanta, take I-400 North to the Northridge Road exit; stay in the right lane and cross over I-400, then take an immediate right onto Dunwoody Place. Go right at the second light on Roberts Drive. The park entrance is on the right less than a mile ahead. Meet at the end of the road. For info, call Lew Southern, 770-509-8272.

The AFS Social

The March **AFS Social** will be at Athens Pizza House, 1341 Clairmont Road, on Friday, March 15, at 7:00 PM. (It's at the intersection of Clairmont & North Decatur Rd. in Atlanta.) Please RSVP to Steve Yothment at 770-339-8394 or email him at SteveYoth@aol.com.

To get there from north of Atlanta, take I-85 South to Exit 91, the Clairmont Road exit. Turn left at the light and go 3.5 miles to Athens Pizza House, which will be on the left before you cross North Decatur Road.

To get there from the south, take I-75/85 north to Exit 251, the I-85 exit. Take I-85 north to Exit 91, the Clairmont Road exit. Turn right onto Clairmont Road and go 3.5 miles to Athens Pizza House, which will be on the left before you cross North Decatur Road.

The phone number at Athens Pizza is 404-636-1100.

"Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored."

- Aldous Huxley

"If humanity has indeed fallen from 'grace', then that grace can only be defined as the bliss of ignoring the knowledge of our individual responsibilities, and of having a god and a devil to blame or praise for our achievements and shortcomings."

- Andrea Lynn Steele, from her book
Your Preacher May Not Want You To Read This

Save money on long distance and help AFS! There is no monthly fee; calls are 40 cents for up to 10 minutes, and 4 cents per minute thereafter. Dial 10-15-335-1-area code-number. At the prompt, enter the AFS code: 215152.



Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at the AFS Center, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Roswell, GA, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

Mar 10: Andrea Lynn Steele, author of *Your Preacher May Not Want You To Read This*, will speak on "Raising Independent Thinkers." (Read about her book at <http://www.yourpreacher.com>.)

Apr 14: Our program on April 14 will feature Betty Bowers of the Landover Baptist Church. Betty says she's a better Christian than you! Her website at <http://www.BettyBowers.com> says to always ask "What would Betty do?"

May 12: TBD

Join the AFS Forum e-mail list by sending a blank message to afs-forum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Join the AFS Announcements list by sending a blank message to afs-announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To unsubscribe, send a blank email to afs-forum-unsubscribe or afs-announce-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists. We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about the advantages of living life free of religious dogma through speeches, debates, discussions, protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available.

We define freethought as "the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief."

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or, especially, lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion, primarily through having a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs and by maintaining and using our own extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other's company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to us are tax deductible.

Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

Atlanta Freethought News
an AFS publication

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Steve Yothment

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Darwin Who?

From *Rationally Speaking: A Monthly E-Column by Massimo Pigliucci* — March 2002

In 1859 the world got a piece of shocking news: it seems that not only is the earth not the center of the universe, as Copernicus and Galilei had amply demonstrated, but that human beings are not the pinnacle of creation after all. This devastating blow to our self-esteem — the second in three centuries — was dealt by Charles Darwin, a quiet Englishman who made his lifelong activity the understanding of the natural variation of living organisms. As is well known, the publication of his *On the Origin of Species* caused quite a stir in academic circles and among the general public. The first kind of controversy (the scientific one) lasted only a few decades: by the turn of the 20th century the theory of descent with modification (as Darwin called it), or evolution (as we now refer to it), was as solidly established as general relativity or the theory of gases.

Not so for the second sort of controversy: while the general public in most European countries does not consider the notion that we are closely related to chimps and monkeys particularly outrageous anymore, a vocal minority in the United States refuses the very idea on ideological grounds: it's not in the Bible, so it can't be. How can this bizarre state of affairs persist into the 21st century? To a scientist, this seems as incredible as somebody seriously defending the theory that the earth is flat (which a few people belonging to the Flat Earth Society in California actually do!). Scientists are not in the business of questioning people's religious beliefs, but they are also paid to teach the best of what we have good reasons to think we know, leaving individuals to make decisions on how to reconcile the discoveries of science with their own religious views.

It is this disconnect between what scientists accept as established beyond reasonable doubt and what a sizable portion of the American public believes that has prompted the annual celebration of "Darwin Day," which

just occurred on February 12 (that is, on Darwin's — as well as Lincoln's — birthday). Darwin Day is an international effort, mostly focused on the United States with a few outlets in Canada and Europe, to encourage the public to learn about evolutionary biology and to prompt scientists to get out of their ivory towers for at least a few hours and talk to the people who, after all, pay their salaries and research grants. Surely this sort of communication between experts and lay people can't be a bad idea.

Darwin Day was actually started in 1996 at the University of Tennessee as the result of a reaction to the silliness of a bill then being considered by the state legislature and which would have curtailed the teaching of evolution in Tennessee's public schools. A group of students and faculty of the then recently created Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology was discussing the situation over a beer (at a several-times-since-defunct brewery on Gay Street in Knoxville, TN) and decided to create a group whose mission would be to dispel the many myths and misunderstandings about evolution and Darwinism that periodically fuel such misguided legislative attempts as the 1996 Tennessee Senate bill n. 3229. (The bill fortunately died in committee, although it generated enough negative publicity that the BBC did a special show on the controversy.) So was born the Tennessee Darwin Coalition.

Just in case you'd like to start your own Darwin Day for 2003, let me tell you what we did in Tennessee this year. The events started on February 11 with a workshop for local junior and high school teachers on how to use evolution as an example of critical thinking. Imagine! The idea is that it would be much better for students to learn about the process of science and how certain conclusions (e.g., that we did evolve from a common ancestor shared with currently living chimps) are actually reached instead of just

learning facts that they have to take on faith. On February 12 there was a whole array of events, starting with an all-day information booth at the student union where faculty and grad students answered questions about evolution, continuing with a documentary festival in which videos were followed by a discussion of the main ideas presented. Darwin Day 2002 in Tennessee concluded with a special lecture by philosopher Elliott Sober (of the University of Wisconsin-Madison), who nicely showed why intelligent design theory is actually no theory at all. Now, you don't have to do all this to have a Darwin Day next year, but make sure to borrow a biologist or a philosopher from your local college and the fun is guaranteed.

While it is astounding to see that the state of science education in this country is so poor that people proudly "reject" well established scientific theories simply because they don't fit with their preconceptions, there is a bright side to almost everything, and the evolution-creation controversy is no exception. After my rude awakening to the realities of creationism when I moved to Tennessee, I started to study the problem and its roots. In so doing I learned quite a bit about why people believe what they believe, and what shortcomings of science education are contributing to cause the problem. The result has been a better awareness of the situation and a renewed willingness to do something about it (and a new idea or two to try out). The feeling is spreading throughout the nation: the Society for the Study of Evolution (the premiere professional society of evolutionary biologists) now has a permanent committee dealing with creationism and many of its members are starting to wake up from the torpor of their shielded academic lives to get back into the classrooms and into the public arena.

The reason this is excellent news for everybody, creationists included, is be-

Darwin Who? *(continued)*

cause it goes far beyond the scope of this particular controversy. It means that scientists – shaken by attacks on their discipline from as varied sources as the religious right and the academic left – may be finally starting to realize that they have a moral obligation to come to the public and explain what they are doing, why and how.

This, as the final words of Casablanca famously went, may be the beginning of a beautiful friendship. The result could be a better informed and critically thinking public, the true guarantors of a democracy.

Next month:

Those who “understand” Bin Laden

Many thanks to Melissa Brenneman and Bob Faulkner for patiently editing and commenting on Rationally Speaking columns.

(c) by Massimo Pigliucci, 2002.

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See Massimo Pigliucci’s website at <http://fp.bio.utk.edu/skeptic/> for this and other great articles.

A Letter Regarding Judge Moore

The controversy caused by Alabama Supreme Court Judge Roy Moore in a ruling against a lesbian woman to prevent her from being the sole guardian of her own child has sparked outrage from many people. In particular, Judge Moore used a religious argument for his findings rather than a legal argument like the other nine judges in the matter. A surprising result is that even some *religious* people have written letters to various newspapers to express their outrage.

Below is a letter from Darlene Ehinger, a PH.D candidate in Ethics and Theology at Vanderbilt University. Her letter was printed in the Huntsville Times on February 23. Yes, it has religious themes that are contrary to freethought principles, but note the excellent points she makes about ethics and the danger of declaring any group of people as “evil.” This letter may be a subject of discussion at the next AFS Discussion Group.

The letter is reprinted here by permission.

To the People of Alabama:

To my friends and family:

To my colleagues in many ventures:

I am deeply upset by the words and action of Alabama Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore who declared in a recent court custody decision that a group of human beings are “inherently evil” and, hence, not protected by law.

Adolf Hitler once said the same thing and a country of good people stood by and said nothing while millions of men, women and children were murdered.

For too long, far too many from the supposedly ‘religious’ right have mired the mercy and love of God in a sad bog of hate and intolerance and ignorance. Religious women and men of all faiths can no longer remain silent. We must find a way to salvage our religious sensibilities from those who would make it a venue for their own inadequacies, projections, fears and political agendas.

No one really understands the complexities of human sexuality, but truly religious people of every faith and every age know that what really matters is how humbly and kindly we walk with each other and with our God. For genuinely holy women and men all of creation is God’s doing and God made *all* things good.

Nor can any American allow our Western civil tradition of morality, law and respect for the individual be

betrayed by the horror of group stereotyping. To declare any group of people as evil is a most grievous offense and a dangerous threat to everyone’s freedom. Our Constitution was written not only to assure us freedom to worship but to protect us from government sponsored religious oppression. We must remove these unfit judges from office – and never elect their like again.

Finally, we must – each one of us – find a way to stand in solidarity with our gay brothers and sisters during this time of shame. It is imperative that we protect them in any way we can from the crimes of hate which may find support in these judicial words of hate. In the meantime, to any of you who is gay – I send you my love, my support – and my shared grief during this terrible time. For what it is worth, you are not alone.

You already have God’s great blessings; I merely send you my own.

Pax e Bene, Margaret Darlene Ehinger.

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Master of Divinity, School of Theology, Sewanee, TN.

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Freethought News

"RESPECT FOR LAW" BILL

A new bill being considered by the Georgia State legislature, S. B. 477, is called the "Respect for Law" Bill. If the bill passes as it currently is written, schools in Georgia would be expected to designate September 17 as "a special day to declare solemn allegiance to the principles of democracy and respect for the ideals of equality and justice under the law."

Under the bill, schools would develop a Respect for Law Day curriculum for first through 12th grade to focus on the history of law and its importance in a modern democratic republic. Included in the curriculum would be a permanent display of the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Magna Carta and the *Ten Commandments*.

It seems apparent that the real reason for the bill is to put the Ten Commandments on permanent display in every public school in the state.

[This article is from the Church-State-GA@yahoogroups.com email list.]

HOUSE BILL REQUIRES IGWT

A bill introduced on February 28 in the Georgia House would require all public schools and colleges to prominently display the national motto, "In God We Trust."

"We just think it certainly does no harm and it might inspire, particularly in these times, some patriotism," said Rep. Roger Byrd, D-Hazlehurst, one of the sponsors.

The motto already adorns the new Georgia flag, approved by lawmakers last year, and bills similar to the one Byrd is cosponsoring have been introduced this year in several other states.

A fundamentalist Christian group, the American Family Association, in Tupelo, MS, started a movement to urge legislatures across the country to adopt "In God We Trust" legislation. The organization has asked its members from all 50 states to contact lawmakers and push for similar laws.

BSA ADOPTS FIRST-EVER RESOLUTION CONDEMNING GAYS AND ATHEISTS

Petaluma, CA - The Boy Scouts of America have adopted a resolution dated February 6, 2002, in which gays and atheists are deemed unfit and unacceptable role models for scout youth. Although the Boy Scouts have had an unwritten policy concerning gays, this is the first time in their 92-year history that it has become an actual resolution.

The resolution came about in response to the many individual Scout Councils who are calling for change within their organization. These Councils were fighting to maintain their right to choose their own membership and leadership, even if this included leaders and scouts who happened to be gay.

But the new resolution strikes down local authority and autonomy and in effect says that parents and volunteers cannot be responsible for choosing the best leadership for their own children. "...the BSA values cannot be subject to local option choices," the resolution reads, "but must be the same in every unit..."

"It is ironic that the BSA core value of respecting diversity is not practiced within the organization," said Scott Cozza, president of Scouting for All. "And it is a shame that the BSA National Office is turning a deaf ear to its own members."

Scouting for All, and their supporters who struggle for human rights, spoke well at a recent press conference of the bravery of the councils in standing up to the National Office. "It is no small thing to risk getting kicked out of an organization you love," said Steven Cozza, 16-year-old co-founder of Scouting for All. "But denouncing bigotry and prejudice is really what the Scout Oath and Law are about. These councils recognized that and did the right thing," he concluded.

"If the BSA wants to continue to symbolize bigotry," said Scott Cozza, "let it do so, but without the support

of Americans and individual Scout Councils who oppose bigotry and discrimination. To this end our organization will continue to work for change by asking the United Way to adhere to their anti-discrimination standards, and by asking that public schools not allow the BSA to recruit in the schools until they include all of our children in a democratic fashion. We will also work to ensure that local and national government agencies, including the White House, really rethink their support of an organization that leaves our gay and atheist children behind as well as gay and atheist leaders. Scouting for All also urges President Bush to step down as the Honorary President of the BSA. He stated in his State of the Union Address, "to leave no child behind." Let's see if our President will stand by his own words."

[This article is from Scott Cossa, President of Scouting for All. Scott's email is info@scoutingforall.org.]

CHIEF JUSTICE SAYS HOMOSEXUALS UNFIT AS PARENTS

The Alabama Supreme Court decided on February 15 that a heterosexual father is better suited to raise three children than their homosexual mother, with Chief Justice Roy Moore adding that homosexuality shouldn't be tolerated.

The Supreme Court ruled 9-0 in favor of a Birmingham man and against his ex-wife, who lives in a domestic partnership in southern California.

"No matter how much society appears to change, the law on this subject has remained steadfast from the earliest history of the law, and that law is and must be our law today. The common law designates homosexuality as an inherent evil, and if a person openly engages in such a practice, that fact alone would render him or her an unfit parent," Moore wrote in a concurring opinion.

Moore is known as "Alabama's Ten Commandments judge" because of his

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fight to keep a handmade plaque of the Ten Commandments in his courtroom when he was a judge in Gadsden and his decision to place a washing machine-size monument of the Ten Commandments in the State Judicial Building after he became chief justice last year.

David White, state coordinator for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Alabama, said Moore's opinion reflected outdated thinking.

"It's unfortunate Alabama is going to be embarrassed once again by a religious fanatic in a position of power in Alabama. It's obvious he cannot judge a gay person fairly and he should be removed from office,"

White said.

John Giles, state president of the Christian Coalition, applauded Judge Moore's decision, saying it protected the institution of marriage and strengthened the traditional family.

The child custody case involved a divorced couple with three children, ages 15, 17 and 18. The father had held custody since 1996, but the mother petitioned for custody in June 2000, contending the father had been abusive.

A Jefferson County circuit judge ruled for the father, but the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals ruled 4-1 for the mother in June 2001. The appeals court said the father had a history of

calling the mother vulgar names in front of the children and of hitting the children. The appeals court also said there was no indication the mother's homosexual relationship would be detrimental to the children.

The state Supreme Court, in a decision written by Republican Justice Gorman Houston, said the appeals court impermissibly reweighed the evidence in the case, and the circuit judge was in a better position to evaluate the claims of abuse than the appeals court.

Moore's 35-page concurring opinion said Alabama, unlike California, does not recognize domestic partnerships. Instead, Alabama law makes homosexuality a crime.

"The effect of such a lifestyle upon children must not be ignored, and the lifestyle should never be tolerated," Moore wrote.

Throughout his opinion, Moore quoted scripture, historical documents and previous Alabama court rulings that he said backed his view.

"Homosexual conduct is, and has been, considered abhorrent, immoral, detestable, a crime against nature, and a violation of the laws of nature and of nature's God upon which this nation and our laws are predicated. Such conduct violates both the criminal and civil laws of this state and is destructive to a basic building block of society — the family," Moore wrote.

[This article adapted from an Associated Press article by Phillip Rawls.]

Study on Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Workplace

- Are you lesbian, gay, or bisexual?
- Have you ever experienced discrimination, oppression, unfair treatment, or hostility in your place of employment?
- Would you like your story to be heard confidentially?
- Are you interested in participating in a study about sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace?

If you answered yes to the above questions, please contact Wendi Williams or Dr. Barry Chung, researchers at Georgia State University, at 404-810-0009 or GSUstudy@aol.com. All inquiries and participation will be confidential.

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"The liberty I contend for is more than toleration. The very idea of toleration is despicable; it supposes that some have a pre-eminence above the rest to grant indulgence; whereas *all* should be equally free, Jews, Turks [Muslims], Pagans [nonbelievers] and Christians. Test oaths and established creeds should be avoided as the worst of evils."

(Baptist minister John Leland, 1820, as quoted by Samuel Rabinove, "Church and State Must Remain Separate," in Julie S. Bach, ed., *Civil Liberties: Opposing Viewpoints*, St. Paul: Greenhaven Press, 1988, p. 53.)

Clipped

Letters to the Editor from AFS Members

Donna Gore's letter was in the *Times Daily* of Northwest Alabama on March 5. Ried Crowe's letter was in the *Huntsville Times* on February 19.

Heed amendment

Where do people get the idea that it's illegal for students to pray in school?

Many schools have morning prayer groups and afternoon Bible studies. My son attended high school in Alpharetta, Ga., a few years back. Every morning there was a circle of students on the front lawn holding hands and praying. This continued every single day the entire time he attended that school.

Nobody interfered. If it's illegal, can you cite the bill, and the date it was passed into law? Can someone name a specific instance when a child prayed at school and was arrested?

The teacher, as a government employee, may not initiate prayer. This is due to the establishment clause of the First Amendment. In simple terms, the government may neither endorse nor deny any religion; in matters of religion the government must remain neutral. This is what makes our country great, and this is what makes our country NOT Iran or Afghanistan.

Before the O'Hair lawsuit, prayer was mandated by the schools for all students. Now it is optional, and up to the students themselves. The only people who seem to have a problem with it being optional are the parents who want ALL children indoctrinated into THEIR religion.

On the gay issue, has Judge Moore made a public statement about the Catholic Church in Boston, where they are molesting boys? Has he called the Catholic priests "evil"? And it's not just the Catholics -- clergy from the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Baptists have all been in the news lately for child molestation. Maybe it's OK for men to molest little girls - as long as they are not gay.

As for Rep. Holmes, I have one question: If someone is against "anything" atheists represent because they believe in God, does it follow that this person would be against anything whites represent if he is black, or against anything Jews or Muslims represent, if he is Christian?

Lifestyles? For some of us, hatred and bigotry do not make an acceptable lifestyle. I am proud to be unassociated with that fountain of eternally bubbling poison that is organized religion.

Donna Gore
Roswell, Ga.

Framers did it

In Donald Dunlap's Feb. 15 letter ("Trying to destroy"), he states that "(liberals) will next go after the Constitution of the United States to remove all references to God."

Too late, Mr. Dunlap. The Framers already did that for us! Yes, that's right. The Constitution does not contain, nor has it ever contained, one single reference to "God". (Or to "god," "The Almighty," "Jehovah," etc.)

This is because the Framers designed America to be a secular state. They did this to protect people like me from Bible thumpers like Mr. Dunlap.

Ried Crowe
Powder Springs, GA

Roy Moore's shenanigans

I would like to offer my wholehearted thanks to all those Alabamians out there who voted for Roy Moore as their Supreme Court Chief justice. This is because, as a Georgian, I am no longer worried that the rest of the nation will see my state as the biggest laughingstock; they will now look straight to "God's Country" (Alabama).

Moore's latest shenanigans include his Feb. 15 court decision that includes this Bible-thumping gem: "The common law designates homosexuality as an inherent evil." Oh really? Would you care to cite the section of Alabama's state's legal code where this can be found?

America has already been well introduced to Moore's flagrant disrespect for the Constitution via his little back-door Decalogue display episode. Alabamians will soon be feeling the financial effects of this when their tax dollars are used to defend this bigot's wanton violation of the First Amendment.

And now we Georgians rest easier at night knowing that the Peach state is in no danger of being ridiculed as much as the "Ten Commandments in Every School" and the "No Gays Rule" state.

Ried Crowe
Powder Springs, GA

Results of religious bias

In Dean Young's Jan. 12 letter ("Acknowledge God again"), he states that "war, famine, drought, disease (and) financial ruin" are the result of "a nation turning its back on God." If this is so, then how did our beloved country make it through the last 200-plus years in such great shape? After all, there is not one single mention of any deity, much less Young's Christian god, in the Constitution that serves as the cornerstone of American government.

Young goes on to state that he wants his children to "live in a nation that acknowledges God." Then he says that he wants the same for mine. How dare he?

The fact is that display of the Ten Commandments on public school property is unconstitutional because it favors one religion over another (as well as religion over non-religion). And, as one studies history, it is obvious that when nations exhibit religious bias in any way, the results tend to be war and financial ruin. (Do I even need to mention Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, the USSR, Israel, etc.?)

If Young wants his children to be religious, that's fine. He simply needs to do it on his own time and property, not on that which is shared and financed by all of us.

Ried Crowe
Powder Springs, GA

Ried Crowe's letter (above) was printed in the *Huntsville Times* on February 26.

Ried's letter (at left) was printed in the *Birmingham Post-Herald* on February 20.

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Letters to the Editor from AFS members (*continued*)

Larry Darby's letter was in the *Florence Times Daily* on February 22.

Blair Scott's letter was in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on March 5.

Not so different

Concerning his promised ethics complaint against Roy Moore, Rep. Alvin Holmes said, "The statutes of Alabama, the Constitution of Alabama and the Constitution of the United States do not designate blacks, Hispanics, gays, Jews, lesbians, Asians, Muslims or others as evil. It's almost inconceivable the chief justice of the state would take a position like that."

I agree Moore should be removed from office. The Judeo-Christian principle that homosexuals are inherently evil has no place in our representative republic. But Moore looks to primitive Jewish law for guidance, not the more enlightened law found in our Constitution.

Following Moore's nocturnal skullduggery last August, when he effectively established theism as our state religion, atheists staged a protest at the state Judicial Building and shouted "Impeach Moore!"

Subsequently, Holmes told reporters, "I'm against anything atheists represent because I believe in God." Such a sentiment makes Holmes just as immoral as Moore.

Not too long ago Judeo-Christian principles prevented blacks from being treated as equals under the law. It is curious that Holmes, a black lawmaker, acts to perpetuate atheists' undeserved status as outcasts in society.

Larry Darby
Alabama state director, American Atheists Inc.
Montgomery, AL

Tony King's letter was in the *Toccoa Record* on Feb 23.

Time for Moore to resign

I condemn Judge Moore for his recent behavior. Contrary to his proponents' beliefs, Moore is walking and talking violation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article I, Section 3, of the Alabama Constitution.

Moore is heading two recent spectacles: Decalogue tonnage in the Supreme Court and using Scripture in a court opinion. Both of these are direct violations of the U.S. and state constitutions.

His bigoted add-on in the Supreme Court opinion against a lesbian mother was religious bigotry and an example of why church and state must be separate. Those without Moore's particular religious beliefs cannot expect a fair and just trial in Moore's court.

Moore's lawless escapades are an embarrassment to the justice system, the state of Alabama and should be an embarrassment to Christians everywhere. Moore is unable to uphold the laws of the land because of his religious zealotry and bigotry; therefore he should resign from his position.

If Moore doesn't resign, he should be removed by the ethics commission or taken away in handcuffs by the attorney general. If neither happens, voters should remove him.

Moore is a disgrace to Alabamians. Thanks to Moore, Alabama is again in the national spotlight with the words "religious bigots live here" emblazoned upon our foreheads. We can all thank him for proving, once again, that Alabama stereotypes aren't that far from the truth.

Blair Scott
Mobile, AL

Freethinkers needed in northeast Georgia to form a non-religion group

It now seems that since the Sept. 11 faith-based atrocity those who could be considered right-wing extremist conservatives have been trying to use the moment of a so-called religious renewal of fervor to impose their agenda across the nation in many areas with great vigor.

In Alabama, State Chief Justice Roy Moore secretly whisked a 5,000 lb. stone of the Ten Commandments into the capital rotunda, without so much as a mention to the other State Justices. His move is now rightly being challenged by Americans United for the Separation of Church and State and the ACLU, all the while High Priest Judge Moore is being financially supported by the evangelist James D. Kennedy. Representative Ernest Istook of Oklahoma proposed a constitutional amendment requiring organized prayer in public schools, and there are efforts in various states to bring creationism (a mythological view of origins, and therefore unscientific), sometimes in the guise of "Intelligent Design," in public school curricula. Not only that, but members of Congress hold prayer breakfasts and bible studies on government property! Throw in the fact that many businesses spend their funds and efforts to throw religion in your face with phrases such as "God Bless America" and "One Nation Under God" on their doors, signs, and billboards, and "Smile! God Loves You" on their cash registers. It is bad enough to have religion mistakenly correlated with patriotism; one has to have the general culture awash in it too! Brushfires of fervor would seem to be popping up all over.

Apparently, according to Charles Haynes, a scholar of the First Amendment Center, though the new tolerance for public religious statements has gained a new hold, tolerance for the nonreligious is less than forthcoming.

Nevermind that in a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association in Jan. 1, 1802, he stated that the "American people ... declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibit the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State." The devout would have us to believe that separation of religion from government was never meant to be, and that is a lie!

According to very recent surveys, church attendance and other indicators of public religiosity are now "back to normal," and secular attitudes remain strong in the national consciousness. Clearly, unsupported claims about religious fervor are being used as an excuse to promote political and theological agendas.

Many Freethinkers are not taking these things lying down. Many have spoken up and continue to do so. I am curious though. How many of the readership of the *Toccoa Record* do not consider themselves religious? Perhaps it is time for those of us in northeast Georgia who subscribe to no religion to make efforts of gathering together as a group. But until that time, as a member and Vice President of Internal Communications for the Atlanta Freethought Society, I would like to invite anyone interested in attending our monthly meetings to please do so. The AFS is located at Suite 500, 1170 Grimes Bridge Rd, Roswell, GA. The next meeting is on March 10, and the speaker will be Andrea Lynn Steele, author of *Your Preacher May Not Want You to Read This*. She will speak on "Raising Independent Thinkers."

William A. King
Toccoa, GA

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(Or renew your membership with this form!)



If you've enjoyed what you've read, we enthusiastically invite you to join the Atlanta Freethought Society. Every month you will get our acclaimed monthly newsletter the *Atlanta Freethought News*, voting rights in the organization—and enjoyment of the superb speakers we have coming up, as well as the social and activist events that we sponsor!

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"Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect" - James Madison, 1774

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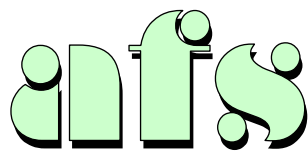
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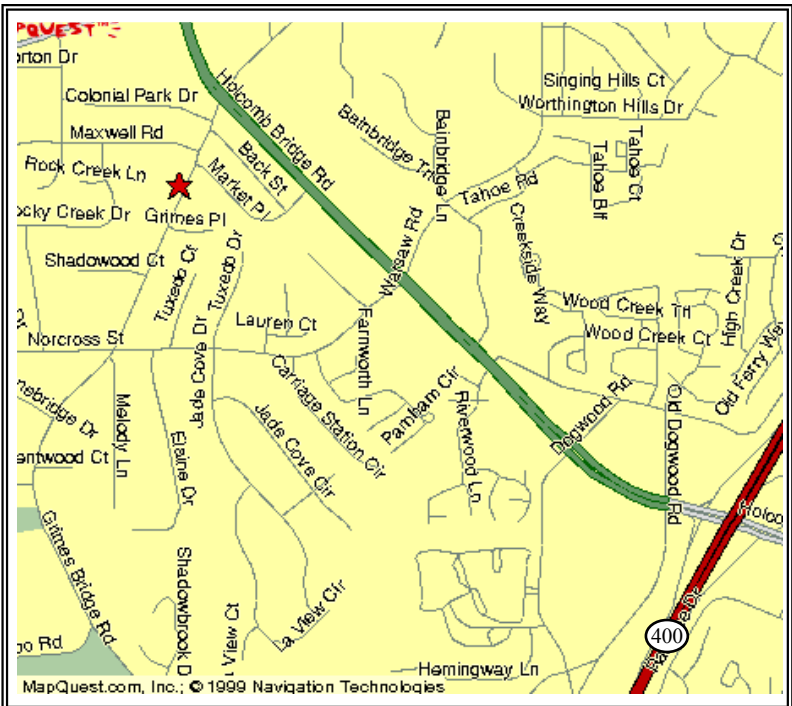
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**The March Meeting:
Sunday, March 10
1:00 PM at the AFS Center
1170 Grimes Bridge Road,
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
Andrea Lynn Steele**



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