

Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication • Volume 9 Number 6 • June 2003

Our June Meeting

Our June 8 meeting will feature **Dr. Hervey Cunningham Peoples** of Longboat Key, FL, who will speak on "Evolutionists vs. Creationists." Hervey is a doctor of genetics, and recently published her book *The Human Question*, which is now the first place winner of the Florida Writers Association Book Awards for Nonfiction.

The meeting will be at 1:00 at the **Atlanta Freethought Center**, Suite 500, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, in Roswell, GA. To get there from Atlanta, take I-400 north 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.

Hervey will also give a short talk and sign books on Friday, June 6 at 7:00 PM at the **Chapter 11 Bookstore** (Emory Commons) at the corner of North Decatur and Clairmont Road.

AFS Activities

The **AFS Hike** will be at 11:00 on Saturday, June 7, 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 at 770-509-8272.

The next **AFS Social** will be at Las Margaritas Restaurant at 1842 Cheshire Bridge Road (Atlanta) on Friday, June 13, at 7:00 PM. To get there, take I-85 to the Cheshire Bridge Road exit (Exit 88) on the north side of Atlanta. Turn east at the light and go about 1.5 miles. The restaurant will be on the right.

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet on Sunday, June 15, at 4:00 to 6:00 PM at the Atlanta Freethought Center.

The **Tuesday Lunch Bunch** meets every Tuesday for lunch at Panahar Restaurant. Please note the **new meeting time: 12:30 PM**. The address is 3375 Buford Hwy, Suite 1060, in Atlanta. Come on down and enjoy the Bangladeshi food buffet and the great company.

AFS Meetings and Activities

June 7: AFS Hike at Chattahoochee River, 11:00 AM.
June 8: AFS General Meeting at AF Center, 1:00 PM.
June 13: AFS Social, Las Margaritas Restaurant, 7:00 PM.
June 15: AFS Discussion Group, AF Center, 4:00 PM.

Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the Atlanta Freethought Center at 12:30 on Sunday, June 22. Stephen Burnett will speak on "Creationist Arguments, Old and New."

SOS Meets at AF Center

The **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** meets at the Atlanta Freethought Center every Tuesday evening at 7:30 PM. SOS is the secular replacement for AA (Alcoholics Anonymous).

The North Georgia Freethinkers

There's now a new Freethought group in Georgia! The **North Georgia Freethinkers**, started by Tony King, is for Georgia freethinkers who live north of the metro Atlanta area. Tony emphasized in an email on the AFS Forum recently that the new group is not in competition with and is not a splinter group of the Atlanta Freethought Society; many secularists/freethinkers live north of Atlanta and just can't attend AFS meetings because they are too far away.

The goals of the North Georgia Freethinkers are:

1. To inform individuals within North Georgia that they are not alone in their unbelief.
2. To form an online community of active freethinkers in North Georgia.
3. To make contacts among those without religious beliefs for the purpose of establishing and maintaining friendships, camaraderie, sharing of information, networking, socializing, and to discuss and debate within a friendly, respectable atmosphere any issues of concern such as the separation of religion from government or the promotion and maintenance of science education.
4. To promote activism in our respective counties to buttress the wall of separation between church and state.

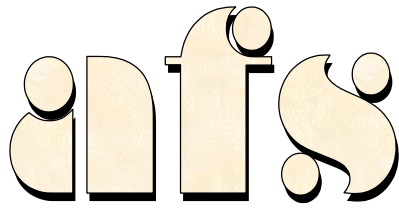
The new group has a website and a message board. See <http://www.freehomepages.com/mrsecular/> and <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/northgeorgiafreethinkers/> for more information.

AFS at Atlanta Pride Festival

The Atlanta Freethought Society will have a booth at the June 28/29 Atlanta Pride Festival in Piedmont Park. Come on by and help out at the booth and enjoy the festivities!

(If you can help operate the booth, please contact Laura Jacobs via email at cecilj@mindspring.com.)

The festival is an annual celebration of support for the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered community. The festival attracts over 300,000 participants and is the largest of its kind in the southeast.



**Atlanta
Freethought
Society**

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.

June 8: Dr. Hervey Cunningham Peoples of Longboat Key, FL, will speak on "Evolutionists vs. Creationists." Hervey recently published her book *The Human Question*, which is the first place winner of the Florida Writers Association Book Awards for Nonfiction.

July 13: TBD

Aug 10: TBD

To join the AFS Forum e-mail list, send a blank message to AFSforum-subscribe@yahoo.com. To join the AFS Announcements list, send a blank email to afs-announce-subscribe@yahoo.com. To join the Georgia Freethinkers Letter Writing Cooperative, send a blank email to flwc-ga-subscribe@yahoo.com.

You can unsubscribe by sending an email to xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoo.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 AFS 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

How to Contact the Editor

Send correspondence to AFS at:
1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500
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The Atlanta Freethought News

Vol. 9, Number 6, June 2003

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For membership and subscription
information, contact AFS at:
1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite
500, Roswell, GA 30075-3905

Membership in AFS is \$25 / year for
individuals, \$35 for households, and \$10
for students/low income/under 21.

Sustaining members (individual) \$100
and sustaining members (households)
\$125. Subscriptions alone are \$20 for
12 issues, \$25 to Canada/Mexico, \$30
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Visit our World Wide Web site at

www.atlantafreethought.org.

Send E-mail to

afs@atlantafreethought.org.

AFS Webmaster: Ken Cummings

Call the **AFS Infoline:** 770-641-2903

Religious Sect May Have Motivated Bombing Suspect

ERIC ROBERT RUDOLPH, SUSPECTED IN A SERIES OF BOMBINGS IN GEORGIA AND ALABAMA,
WAS CAPTURED ON MAY 31 IN NORTH CAROLINA.

The arrest of alleged Olympic bomber Eric Robert Rudolph may finally allow authorities to answer a question that has loomed since the beginning of the five-year hunt for him, but that has taken on deeper resonance since Sept. 11, 2001: Is he a "Christian terrorist"?

The question is not just whether Rudolph is a terrorist, or whether he considers himself a Christian. It is whether he planted bombs at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, two abortion clinics and a gay nightclub to advance a religious ideology – and how numerous, organized and violent others who share that ideology may be.

In a June 2 Washington Post article, reporter Alan Cooperman noted that Federal investigators believe Rudolph has had a long association with the radical Christian Identity movement, which asserts that North European whites are the direct descendents of the lost tribes of Israel, God's chosen people. Some investigators also think he may have written letters that claimed responsibility for the nightclub and abortion clinic bombings on behalf of the Army of God, a violent offshoot of Christian Identity.

"We declare and will wage total war on the ungodly communist regime in New York and your legaslative bureaucratic lackey's in Washington. It is you who are responsible and preside over the murder of children and issue the policy of ungodly preversion that's

destroying our people," one of the letters said, in childish penmanship riddled with errors.

"Based on what we know of Rudolph so far, and admittedly it's fragmentary, there seems to be a fairly high likelihood that he can legitimately be called a Christian terrorist," said Michael Barkun, a professor of political science at Syracuse University who has been a consultant to the FBI on Christian extremist groups.

Investigators have said, however, that it is unclear whether Rudolph genuinely was part of an Army of God or merely claimed to belong to an organized group. According to Barkun, most Christian Identity followers are nonviolent, and the movement's militants generally adhere to the principle of "leaderless resistance," believing that government surveillance is so pervasive that organized groups are bound to be penetrated and it is wiser to act alone.

Another expert on such groups, Idaho State University sociology professor James A. Aho, said he is reluctant to use the phrase "Christian terrorist," because it is "sort of an oxymoron."

"I would prefer to say that Rudolph is a religiously inspired terrorist, because most mainstream Christians consider Christian Identity to be a heresy," Aho said. If Christians take umbrage at the juxtaposition of the words "Christian" and "terrorist," he

added, "that may give them some idea of how Muslims feel" when they constantly hear the term "Islamic terrorism," especially since the Sept. 11 attacks.

"Religiously inspired terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon, and every major world religion has people who have appropriated the label of their religion in order to legitimize their violence," Aho said.

Not only in Rudolph's case, but also in the case of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh and Muslim suicide bombers, "there's always the question of what comes first, is it the religious belief or the violent personality?" Aho said. "I'm inclined to think that people who are violent in their inclinations search out a religious home that justifies their violence."

FOUND EXTREMISM EARLY

Rudolph, 36, appears to have found his religious home during his impoverished family's wanderings in his fatherless teenage years.

The FBI believes he was exposed to Christian Identity's ideology in the early 1980s when his mother brought him to live for four months with the Church of Israel, a congregation in Schell City, Mo. Federal investigators have said that after that experience, when he was about 14, Rudolph periodically made contact with Christian Identity groups, including the Aryan Nations, an Idaho-based group that has been influential in the militia



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Eric Rudolph (continued)

movement.

But the Church of Israel's pastor, Dan Gayman, strongly disassociated himself from Rudolph in a telephone interview on June 1.

"We very clearly and emphatically teach that all Christians have a duty and an obligation to respect all law enforcement authorities. If Eric Rudolph had listened to his lessons here, he would have learned that acts of violence were absolutely and completely out of order and something this church would never have condoned," Gayman said.

Gayman recalled that Rudolph's mother arrived at the church in the Missouri Ozarks in about 1981 or '82 with Eric and Jamie, one of his four brothers, and presented herself as a "widow in very destitute condition, with two boys to feed and without money to buy food or gas." He said his congregation took them in "just long enough for them to get back on their feet."

The Church of Israel does not call itself a Christian Identity congregation. But its teachings echo the movement's, which are generally traced to two 19th-century British ministers, John Wilson and Edward Hine, who justified colonialism on the grounds that the British nation was descended from the 10 lost tribes of biblical Israel.

Asked to explain the Church of Israel's racial views, Gayman said,

"We teach that God is the creator of all races, that He created them separately and distinctly with their own unique talents and characteristics, and that every race has a purpose in God's plan."

As to the purpose of whites, he said: "I would simply say that we believe that the Caucasian people are the literal descendants of the lost 10 tribes of Israel, and they would occupy a place of prominence in the plan of God."

Because the Christian Identity movement is loosely organized and keeps no membership rolls, its numbers have been estimated at anywhere from 2,000 to 100,000, including many informal chapters in prisons. Many adherents are strongly anti-Semitic, considering themselves to be the true Israelites and Jews to be impostors.

RUDOLPH STILL A MYSTERY

Barkun said the anti-gay and anti-abortion positions that may have motivated Rudolph's alleged bombings "are a rather subordinate theme" in Christian Identity. He noted, how-

ever, that members of Rudolph's extended family have said he viewed abortion not just as the taking of life, but as a threat to the white race.

"The notion that there are significant numbers of white mothers having abortions, and therefore the race is being endangered, is interesting, because racial genocide is a major theme in Christian Identity," Barkun said.

A deeper mystery, perhaps, is the motive for the Olympic bombing, which took place at a rock concert in downtown Atlanta, killing a 44-year-old woman and injuring more than 100 others. Barkun speculated that the Olympics "may have symbolized for Rudolph the mixing of races and cultures." Or, he said, the Games may have triggered "pervasive fear of a global tyranny run from the United Nations and destroying American independence and so on."

But, he added, "anti-Olympic sentiment is not a motif in Christian Identity, and it still strikes me as an odd target."

[From a June 2 *Washington Post* article.]

Can't find it at the AFS bookstore? No problem! You can now order EvolveFish items through the AFS website! Just click on the [EvolveFish](#) logo.



Minutes for May AFS Board Meeting

In attendance: Judy Thompson, Kate Miller, Lew Southern, Steve Yothment, Harriet Harris, Bill Burton

Minutes taken by: Harriet Harris

Time/Date of meeting: 2:00 PM, May 18, 2003

- ▶ The minutes of the April Board Meeting were approved as they appeared in the May newsletter.
- ▶ Bill reported that the AFS treasury current balance is \$566, with outstanding bills of \$1,600.
- ▶ Sources of income were discussed. Kate will contact Amazon — through whom we sell copies of the book, *Tales of the Rational* — for the purpose of increasing our portion of each sale.
- ▶ Lew Southern, our chief fund raiser, has set up a sched-

ule for reaching each member, with an aim of securing pledges or commitments for sustained contributions. Possibilities of various methods of automatic payment — some suggested by members already contacted by Lew — were discussed, such as Pay Pal, credit card, etc.

- ▶ Steve agreed to check and verify if AFS has a Pay Pal account.
- ▶ Steve reported that Dr. Tu has agreed to renew his rental contract through December 2004. Steve has generated the new contract and will have Dr. Tu sign it.
- ▶ The board agreed to have no Board Meeting in June. The next Board Meeting will be on July 20.

The Lake Hypatia July 4th Celebration

Every year, freethinkers from across the country travel to attend the Alabama Freethought Association's annual Independence Day Celebration, which takes place in July at beautiful Lake Hypatia, Alabama.

Like None Other

The Lake Hypatia Celebration is a conference and a vacation. There is free time to enjoy the lake and socialize with fellow freethinkers; you won't have to skip parts of the program to enjoy the scenery or visit with friends.

You won't just be sitting around listening to boring lectures, either. Each day there are ample opportunities to take part in fun, interactive programs not traditionally found at other conferences, such as the freethought trivia game, the annual "Atheists vs. Agnostics" softball game, open-mike poetry readings, bonfires, and more.

Each year, they have a program with great speakers.

Hotel Accommodations

There are several reasonably priced hotels in the area. The following hotels are within 10 miles of Lake Hypatia:

Super 8 Motel - \$55 + tax	Budget Inn - \$45 + tax
2200 Haynes Street	65600 Hwy 77 North
Talladega, Alabama	Talladega, Alabama
256-315-9511	256-362-0900

These hotels are 15 to 20 miles from Lake Hypatia:

Holiday Inn - \$69 + tax	Days Inn \$52 + tax
Exit 168, Hwy 77	Exit 168, Hwy 77
Lincoln, Alabama	Lincoln, Alabama
205-763-9777	205-763-8080

This Year's Program

Speakers this year will include:

- **Kimberly Blaker**, syndicated writer and columnist, author/editor of *The Fundamentals of Extremism*
- **Mel Lipman**, a Nevada lawyer, former supervising examiner for the Federal Reserve Board, currently President of the American Humanist Association
- **James A. Haught**, Editor for the *Charleston Gazette*, author of 5 books and over 50 magazine articles
- **Dan Barker**, author, song writer, accomplished musician, currently Public Relations Director for the Freedom From Religion Foundation
- **Steve Benson**, Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist for the *Arizona Republic*, his cartoons appear in 120 papers across the country
- **Faye Girsh**, Ed. D., formerly a clinical and forensic psychologist in San Diego, had a radio program, currently Senior Vice President of the Hemlock Society USA

Camping

Lake Hypatia is happy to provide areas for primitive camping and RVs/campers at no charge. Showers and bathrooms are available for campers; however, there are no electricity or water connections available for RVs. If you do plan to camp, please check the appropriate box on your registration form. (See next page.)

AFS highly encourages its members to participate in the Lake Hypatia Celebration. This event provides unique opportunities to meet fellow freethinkers, to speak your mind freely and without fear of discrimination, and to relax in Lake Hypatia's serene natural setting.

Schedule - Lake Hypatia Celebration

Friday July 4

11:00 a.m. Registration - Fearn Park
Noon - Lunch - Big Salad Bar - Lakeside Pavillion
1:00 p.m. Welcome - Pat Cleveland, AFA President
1:30 p.m. Speaker - Kimberly Blaker - author and columnist, "The Fundamentals of Extremism"
3:00 p.m. Poetry Reading - Auditorium - Bring your poems!
4:30 p.m. Activist Workshop & Open Forum, led by Patsyann Pitts, with C. Adams, K. Blaker, A.L. Gaylor, J. Haught, M. Lipman
6:00 p.m. Dinner - Southern Bar-B-Q - Lakeside Pavillion
7:30 p.m. Speaker - Mel Lipman - AHA President, "The Future of Humanism"
8:00 p.m. Speaker - Clark Adams - "The Increase of Atheism & Religious Satire in Popular Media"
9:00 p.m. Bonfire and Marshmallow Roast - Lower Campground

Saturday July 5

Noon - Lunch - Big Salad Bar - Lakeside Pavillion
1:30 p.m. Freethought Trivia Game, led by Adam Butler and Clark Adams - Auditorium
3:00 p.m. Speaker - James A. Haught - "Holy Horrors" - an eye opening slide show
4:30 p.m. Softball Game - Bring your gloves!
6:00 p.m. Dinner- Broiled Chicken with Vegetable Medley - Lakeside Pavillion
7:00 p.m. Speaker - Dan Barker and Steve Benson - "Toons and Tunes"
9:00 p.m. Young Adult Activities - Games in the hall

Sunday July 6

11:00 a.m. Non-Prayer Brunch - Lakeside Pavillion
1:00 p.m. Speaker - Faye Girsh - "What Can You Do If It Happens To You? - Your Rights & Choice"
2:00 p.m. Wrap-up and Farewell - Pat Cleveland, AFA President

Directions to Lake Hypatia:

From Atlanta, take I-20 West towards Birmingham. Go 90 miles to the Anniston/Oxford Exit #185. Turn left onto Hwy 21 South and go 14 miles to County Road 321. Turn left and go 4 miles to the second stop sign. Turn left onto Woolfolk Road, which is also County Road 303. Go ½ mile to the Lake Hypatia sign. Turn right into the driveway and follow it to the Freethought Hall.

Here's an application form for the Lake Hypatia Freethought Celebration.
 For more information, please see www.alfreethought.org.

LAKE HYPATIA FREETHOUGHT CELEBRATION

255 Lake Joan Circle
 Munford, Alabama 36268
 Telephone: 256-362-7590/256-362-8729

Friday, July 4th - Sunday, July 6, 2002

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NOTE:
 LATE REGISTRATION MUST BE DONE AT THE DOOR.
 THERE IS A LATE FEE OF \$5.00 PER PERSON AFTER JUNE 15, 2003.
 NO MEAL ORDERS WILL BE TAKEN AFTER JUNE 15TH.
 REGISTRATION CANNOT BE DONE VIA PHONE OR E-MAIL.
 LIST CHILDREN'S NAMES AND AGES:

Floods hit Lake Hypatia

Back on May 5th, the folks at Lake Hypatia experienced a heavy downpour of rain (over 12 inches), which soon turned into flooding conditions the following day.

Even though Roger Cleveland had the gate valve on the nearby dam wide open, Lake Hypatia rose at a tremendous rate. Water gushing down from the ridges surrounding the lake resulted in a mini Niagara Falls.

By morning, the pavilion was completely immersed under several feet of water. Rev. Hank Shiver took shots of it a few days later. (See the pictures below.)

The lake level rose up and covered half the walkway to Freedom Hall, leaving debris behind as the lake receded.

Several days later, all looked about normal. Other than needing new electrical wiring, the pavilion is OK. Pat Cleveland says the pavilion will be ready for the July 4th Celebration!



Public Funding of “Historic” Churches

BUSH ADMINISTRATION POLICY CHANGE ALLOWS PUBLIC FUNDING OF “HISTORIC” CHURCHES. Placing Tax Dollars In Church Building Fund Violates Constitution, Says Americans United.

The Bush administration has announced that houses of worship deemed “historic” can get direct government support courtesy of the taxpayer, even if they have an active congregation and are still used regularly for worship services.

Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced the new policy at an event at Boston’s Old North Church on May 27. The church, built in 1723 and famous as the signaling post for Paul Revere at the start of the American Revolution, remains an active Episcopal congregation.

“Somebody needs to spread the alarm that the Bush administration is taxing people to support houses of worship,” said the Rev. Barry W.

Lynn, executive director of Americans United. “Government funding for the repair and upkeep of houses of worship clearly violates the Constitution.”

Lynn said the new policy amounts to little more than taxpayer-funded religion.

“This is a shocking abuse of taxpayer rights,” said Lynn. “Church congregations ought to pay for the maintenance and repair of churches, historic or otherwise.”

Lynn said the Bush administration is exploiting the famous Old North Church to advance its “faith-based” agenda and assault separation of church and state.

“Old North Church is historic,” Lynn said. “But it’s a church, not a

museum, and it is still used for services every Sunday. Its repair and upkeep ought to be paid for by the people who worship there. Those congregants have no right to pass the collection plate to the taxpayer.”

Lynn noted that the Supreme Court in 1973 rejected the concept of government grants for church upkeep. In the *PEARL v. Nyquist* decision, the court observed, “If the State may not erect buildings in which religious activities are to take place, it may not maintain such buildings or renovate them when they fall into disrepair.”

[From a May 27 press release by Americans United for Separation of Church and State. See www.au.org for updates on this and other issues.]

The “Federal Marriage Amendment”

The Alliance for Marriage, a newly formed coalition of religious groups, has launched a campaign to amend the U.S. Constitution to define marriage as strictly between a man and a woman, invalidate all state and local domestic partnership laws and nullify civil rights protections based on marital status. Representative Ronnie Shows (D-MS) has advanced their goal by introducing H.J. Res. 93, the “Federal Marriage Amendment.”

In many states, unmarried persons – including unmarried relatives, heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian couples and even unrelated clergy members – have some of the same rights as married persons. The proposed amendment would eliminate these protections by nullifying domestic partnership laws in eight states and in more than 100 counties, cities and towns. The proposal would also undermine state adoption, foster care and kinship care laws. If enacted, the amendment would even prohibit state and local governments from making

their own decisions on providing benefits to their employees.

The Federal Marriage Amendment would wipe out every single law protecting nontraditional families no matter what their sexual orientation.

The amendment would invalidate all legal protections for unmarried couples – gay or straight.

By denying unmarried persons all legal protections for any of the “legal incidents” of marriage, the amendment would destroy a wide range of other rights that are important to the lives of unmarried persons. Those legal protections include state and local civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination based on “marital status,” state laws protecting unmarried elderly couples who refrain from marrying in order to hold on to their pensions, and even state laws allowing a person, in the absence of a spouse, to oppose the autopsy of a close friend because of the deceased person’s religious beliefs.

Amending the Constitution is an

extreme act.

The first sentence of the proposed constitutional amendment would bar all same-sex marriages. However, gay and lesbian couples cannot now marry anywhere in the United States. Moreover, Congress already enacted the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, which was an earlier response to the fear of same-sex marriages that have never been recognized.

The Federal Marriage Amendment would reverse the constitutional tradition of protecting, not harming, individual freedoms.

None of the current constitutional amendments restricts individual freedoms. In fact, the amendments to the Constitution have been the source of most of the Constitution’s protections for individual liberty rights. The proposed amendment, by contrast, would deny all protection for the most personal decisions made by millions of families.

[From the American Civil Liberties Union website. See www.aclu.org for details.]

“I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours.” – Stephen Roberts

Clipped

Letters to the Editor from AFS Members

Ried Crowe's letter was in the *Florence Times Daily* on May 25.

Blair Scott's letter was in the *Biloxi Sun Herald* on May 25.

Vote not needed

In Harry Underwood's May 19 letter ("Let's vote on it"), he proposes that the people of Alabama vote on the appropriateness of Roy Moore's Ten Commandments monument.

In response to this outlandish idea, I would like to ask Mr. Underwood if he thinks that the appropriateness of slavery should have been voted on in the same fashion. How about the "separate but equal" provisions of the Jim Crow laws?

I can only hope that Mr. Underwood is sane enough to understand that accepted violations of civil liberties (such as slavery or segregation) are not subject to the whims of the populace. That is why the Constitution – and, especially, the Bill of Rights – was written.

This document serves to protect the civil liberties of each and every American, regardless of the desires of the population at large.

There are those who feel that their First Amendment civil liberties are being violated by the placement of the Decalogue in the Supreme Court building.

People like Mr. Underwood may not agree with these people, but the Constitution guarantees that Mr. Underwood's opinions, as well as those of everybody else, have absolutely nothing to do with determining whether or not these litigants' claims are valid.

I am proud to live in a country where my civil liberties cannot be voted into oblivion by the likes of people like Mr. Underwood.

*Ried Crowe
Powder Springs, GA*

Call us an overweight, couch-potato nation

A recent letter-writer ("Americans bristle at demands from those who despise us," May 19) was upset because some Muslims complained about America being labeled a "Judeo-Christian" nation.

America is not a Judeo-Christian nation. America is not a theocracy under the rule of Christian or Jewish dogma and doctrine.

America, under the law of the Constitution, is a nation of religious freedom. The religious diversity of this country mandates that no single religious group can claim such a label, especially since the government cannot establish a religion and we're not a theocratic state.

This gives us two options: a really long hyphenated word to include all religions practiced in America, or call it what it is: America, where freedom of religion is the law of the land.

The reason people refer to America as "Judeo-Christian" is because Christianity is the majority religion. If we're going to label ourselves based on majorities then let's look at some other majority labels.

"The White Man Nation" or "High-School-Education-Only Nation" or "Department of Corrections Nation"

The list could go on forever of silly names based on the majorities.

Thank goodness we have the Constitution, which is clear about such matters. The majority cannot rule with disregard to the minority, the government cannot establish a religion, and all – Christian and non-Christian – have religious freedom.

*Blair Scott
Mobile, AL*

David Peterson's letter was in the *Beaufort (SC) Gazette* on May 9.

Dear Editor

Kathy Qualls' reply to my recent letter, "Is man trying to play God?", quickly diffuses into a welter of unsubstantiated opinion not worth debating except for one piece of calumny that needs a reply. She says: "I believe the practice of abortion is due to believing the unscientific evolution theory, which is based upon the religion of humanism in which man makes himself out to be God. Humanism has no absolutes except to absolutely gratify one's self."

I won't deal with the "unscientific evolutionary theory" which is accepted by virtually all scientists; nor the fact that women have practiced abortion since the beginning of time, long before evolution or humanism was even thought of. I do want to comment on her description of humanism, though.

As it happened, on the same day Qualls' letter appeared, I received in the mail a copy of the new "Humanist Manifesto III", a worthy successor to HMI of 1933 and HMII of 1978. It may be viewed and, if you wish, signed at www.americanhumanist.org. I note that of the initial list of 105 signers, 19 were Nobel Laureates. Also there is one of our own, Dr. Howard Radest, who teaches philosophy at USC and

advises Hilton Head Hospital on medical ethics.

Far from being a religion (although some humanists are religious) or an excuse for unbridled gratification, the manifesto explicitly states that, "Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity." It further states: "Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility."

Humanism is the ultimate in personal responsibility; no wishing for divine intervention to "fix" things here. I would hope that as we get away from the myths and superstitions of the last millennia, more and more people will investigate humanism as a philosophy for improving both ourselves and the world around us.

David D Peterson

"Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blind-folded fear." – Thomas Jefferson

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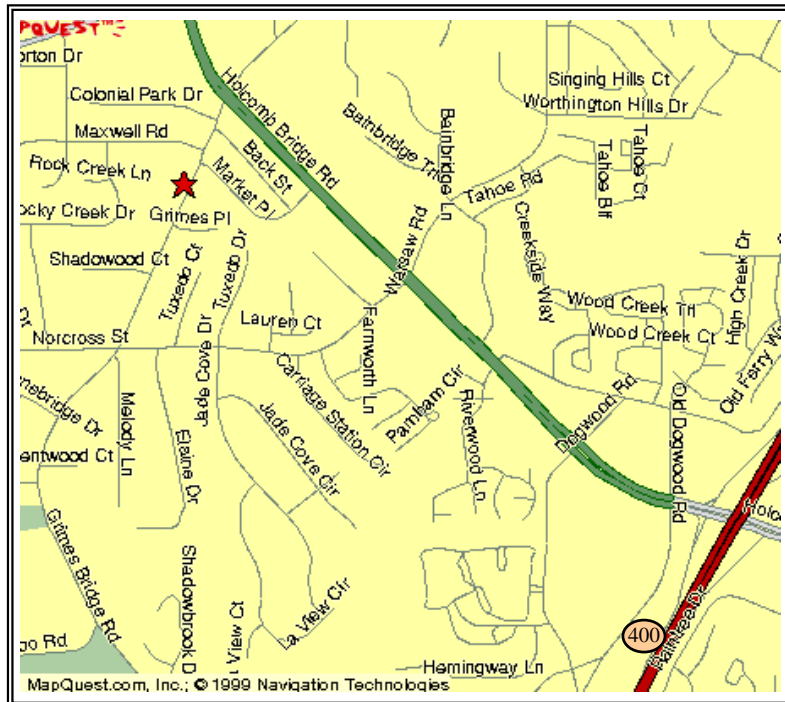
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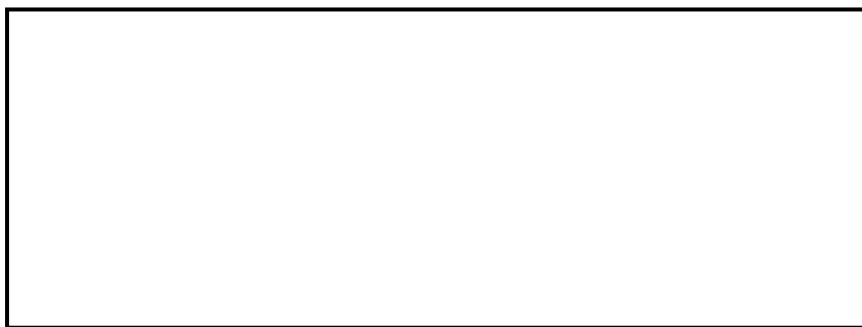


The June Meeting:
Sunday, June 8
1:00 PM at the AFS Center
1170 Grimes Bridge Road,
Roswell, GA

This Month's Speaker:
Dr. Hervey Peeples



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