

Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication

• Volume 9 Number 7

• July 2003

Our July Meeting

Our July 13 meeting will feature **John Henderson M.D.** of Asheville, NC, who will speak on his newly-published book *God.com: A Deity for the New Millenium*. (See the book review on page 7.)

God.com: A Deity for the New Millenium

Throughout history, man has worshipped many gods and deities. Each of these represented the values and culture of the society. So who will God be in the new millennium? Author John A. Henderson M.D. believes it is time for God.com. This new God does away with many of the constraints and outgrown traits of gods in the past. Henderson asserts that man has become too sophisticated and intelligent and is therefore not as reliant on traditional religion. By examining the role of religion in society, *God.com: A Deity for the New Millenium* evaluates the reasons people believe as they do and how this can fit into modern life. Fascinating, informative, and innovative, *God.com* looks at religion in a whole new light.

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.

Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the Atlanta Freethought Center at 12:30 on Sunday, July 27.

Fellowship of Reason Meeting

The **Fellowship of Reason** meets every first Sunday of the month at 12:30 PM at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Hwy, in Atlanta. For details, see www.fellowshipofreason.com.

"All my life I have made it a rule never to permit a religious man or woman take for granted that his or her religious beliefs deserved more consideration than non-religious beliefs or anti-religious ones. I never agree with that foolish statement that I ought to respect the views of others when I believe them to be wrong."

— Chapman Cohen, "The Credo of Empowerment"

AFS Activities

The **AFS Hike** will be at 11:00 on Saturday, July 12, 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, July 18, 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, July 20, 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.

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).

Sad News

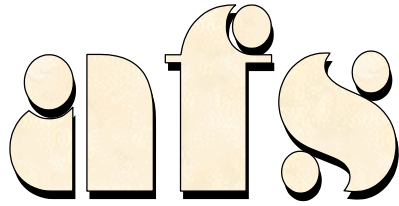
We are saddened to announce that AFS member **Mike Myjak** passed away on May 23rd. He was 78 years old, and had been battling congestive heart failure for the past 5 years. Three weeks prior to his death, doctors informed his family that he also had mesothelioma.

Mike's daughter, Karen Myjak Rice, informed the AFS board that Mike always enjoyed AFS meetings and AFS people, and that he was a "great daddy."

Karen and Mike's wife, Irene, are also AFS members.

AFS Meetings and Activities

July 12: AFS Hike at Chattahoochee River, 11:00 AM.
July 13: AFS General Meeting at AF Center, 1:00 PM.
July 18: AFS Social, Las Margaritas Restaurant, 7:00 PM.
July 20: AFS Board Meeting at AF Center, 2:00 PM.
July 20: AFS Discussion Group, AF Center, 4:00 PM.



**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.

July 13: John Henderson MD of Asheville, NC, will talk about his new book, *God.com: A Deity for the New Millenium*.

Aug 10: TBA

Sept 14: TBA

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

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Appeals Court Rules Monument Must Go

Alabama Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore has lost again in his battle to keep a monument of the biblical Ten Commandments prominently displayed in the state Judicial Building in Montgomery.

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta ruled on July 1 that the monument must be removed because its display violates the Constitution.

Chief Justice Roy Moore placed the granite monument in the rotunda of the building in August 2001.

In a unanimous opinion, the three-judge appeals court wrote that if it allowed the monument to remain, "the chief justice would be free to adorn the walls of the Alabama Supreme Court's courtroom with sectarian religious murals and have decidedly religious quotations painted above the bench."

"Every government building could be topped with a cross, or a menorah, or a statue of Buddha, depending upon the views of the officials with authority over the premises," the judges wrote.

Ayesha Khan, an attorney for three lawyers who want the monument removed, said she was not surprised at the ruling, in part because of Moore's argument that the Constitution does not prohibit religious symbols, just the establishment of a religion.

"The Ten Commandments are too personal, too holy, too sacred to be used as a political football by Justice Moore," said Khan, legal director for

Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "What Justice Moore did in this case is so egregious that we felt confident all along that we would prevail."

A spokesman for Moore said the chief justice would appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. "This case is far from over," said the spokesman, Tom Parker.

Last year, U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson cited "overwhelming" evidence that the monument violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment by promoting religion in a public building. He ordered it removed.

But the judge also put the order on hold to give the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals time to issue a ruling, which could establish an important precedent for future such cases in the district that encompasses Georgia, Alabama and Florida.

Moore, 56, has established himself as a lightning rod for religious issues since he was a circuit judge in Gadsden. In 1995 the American Civil Liberties Union announced its intention to sue the judge because he displayed a carving of the Ten Commandments in his courtroom. Moore rode the notoriety from that case to election to the Alabama Supreme Court in 2000.

THE APPEALS COURT HEARING

Questions from a panel of federal appellate judges the previous Wednesday seemed to indicate that Chief Justice Roy Moore had "a hard day's work" ahead of him to convince them

that his Ten Commandments monument should stay in the rotunda of the state Judicial Building.

Judge Ed Carnes, a member of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals from Alabama, attacked Moore's contention that the monument doesn't establish any law but merely reflects the chief justice's decision to decorate the courthouse he presides over to acknowledge the role the Ten Commandments played in the founding of America and its legal system.

"I'm trying to understand your argument. Its implications are staggering," Carnes told Moore's attorney, Herb Titus. "If we buy this argument, the chief justice can decorate the courthouse in any religious manner he pleases and it won't violate the Constitution?"

"He could decorate the Supreme Court with a mural depicting the life, Crucifixion and resurrection of Christ? In big block letters behind his bench, for all the lawyers and everyone else to see, he could spell out 'What Would Jesus Do?' That doesn't violate the Constitution?"

Titus responded that such examples would not amount to establishing a law concerning religion.

Outside the courtroom after the hearing, Moore suggested there will also be serious implications if the court does not rule in his favor.

"What if the court declines the appeal in this case?" Moore asked reporters, before answering: "Every mention of God will be stricken from



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Appeals Court Rules Monument Must Go (*continued*)

from your public life. 'Under God' will be taken from The Pledge. 'In God We Trust' will be taken off money."

AMERICANS UNITED RESPONSE

In a press release issued on July 1, Americans United for Separation of Church and State hailed the ruling by the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.

"This is a clear message from the courts: Thou shalt not merge church and state," said Americans United Legal Director Ayesha Khan, who argued the case in the courts. "Justice Moore is fighting a losing battle, and it's time for him to stop wasting Alabama taxpayers' money on this case."

In its July 1 ruling, the court rejected Moore's assertion that government acknowledgements of religion have a long history in America. "Chief Justice Moore has pointed to no evidence that the Ten Commandments in any form were publicly displayed in any State or Federal courthouse, much less that the practice of displaying them was widespread at the time the Bill of Rights was proposed and adopted," declared the court.

The court also soundly rejected Moore's contention that as chief judicial officer of Alabama, he is not bound by Federal court rulings, comparing it to "the same position taken by those southern governors who attempted to defy Federal court orders during an earlier era."

The court made it clear that it expects Moore to abide by its decision. "The rule of law does require that every person obey judicial orders when all available means of appealing them have been exhausted," wrote the court. "The chief justice of a State supreme court, of all people, should be expected to abide by that principle. We do expect that if he is unable to have the district court's order overturned through the usual appellate process, when the time comes Chief Justice Moore will obey that order. If necessary, the court order will be enforced. The rule of law will prevail."

"This is a slam dunk for our side,"

said the Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United. "The court dismissed every argument Moore and his attorneys raised, one by one, and made it clear that defiance on his part will not be tolerated. This is a total defeat for Moore."

AMERICAN ATHEISTS RESPONDS

In a July 1 press release, American Atheists said that the ruling was a victory for all American citizens, atheists and religious. Larry Darby, Alabama State Director for American Atheists, said in the press release that "the religion clauses in the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution dictate government neutrality in matters of religion, meaning the United States is a free nation, not a Jewish-Christian nation as Judge Moore contends... Absolute separation between religion and government is the best way for the Federal and State governments to protect the rights of not only atheists, but also the rights of citizens professing non-Christian religions."

MOBILE ATHEISTS PLEASED

In a press release, Blair Scott, President of the Mobile Atheists, said, "It was wonderful to hear that the court upheld the Constitution. This reaffirms the constitutional view that the Alabama Supreme Court is supposed to uphold justice for all - not just Christians... Moore is living in a world that he has made up. In his world there is no separation of church and state and Christianity is the official government of Alabama and the United States. Hopefully the 11th Circuit Court gave Moore a reality check."

EDITORIALS ARE AGAINST MOORE

In a scathing editorial in the *Annis-ton Star* on July 4, the editors noted that "Moore is not above 'the rule of law'" and that "the Ten Commandments monument he placed in the Alabama Judicial building must be removed."

"The government cannot promote a form of religion and religious people cannot use government to force their beliefs on others. Judge Moore was doing both. Through his position as

chief justice, he was using the government to force a particular religious belief on both the people and the state. He was wrong and the federal judges told him so."

"The appeals court rejected the notion that the First Amendment, and indeed the Constitution itself, was somehow based on certain religious principles, and therefore it was proper for the state to acknowledge this for all to see and heed... [Judge Moore's] freedom to believe is what our system is all about. But he is not free to force others to believe as he does. Our system is about that as well."

TABLETS REMOVED IN OHIO

In a related story, ten people were arrested back on June 9 after hundreds of protesters tried to prevent work crews from removing granite tablets displaying the Ten Commandments from four public schools in Ohio.

The arrests took place at West Union High School in Adams County, where about 400 people gathered to oppose the removal. Once the arrested protesters were taken to the local police station and charged with trespassing, the 800-pound tablets were removed by crane, as were the displays at the other county high schools.

A resident of Peebles who objected to the tablets sued the school district in 1999, and the American Civil Liberties Union argued that showing the Ten Commandments on public property was an unconstitutional violation of the separation of church and state. U.S. Magistrate Timothy Hogan agreed, ruling a year ago that the displays had to be removed the first business day after the end of the school year.

[From a July 2 article by Steve Visser in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, a June 30 article by Todd Kleffman in the *Montgomery Advertiser*, a July 1 press release by Americans United, a July 1 press release by American Atheists, a July 4 editorial in the *Annis-ton Star*, and a June 9 article on CNSNews.com.]

Supreme Court Sodomy Decision Reaffirms Principles of Secular Law, Personal Autonomy

Ruling Is Reminder That Criminal Law Can't Be Based On Religious Beliefs, Says Americans United's Lynn

The Supreme Court's decision to strike down a Texas sodomy law on June 26 reaffirms the principles of secular government and individual rights, according to Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

In the 6-3 ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas*, the justices overturned a Texas statute that made it a crime for two persons of the same sex to engage in sexual relations. The court majority said the law violated the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment. The decision overturned a 1986 Supreme Court ruling *Bowers v. Hardwick* that upheld a similar Georgia law.

"This decision is a strong reaffirmation of the principles of secular government and personal freedom," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director. "The court made it clear that religious belief cannot serve as the basis of criminal law."

"This sends a strong message to the Religious Right and its allies that our Constitution does not permit government to enforce religious dogma or ride roughshod over the rights of minorities."

Justice Anthony Kennedy, writing for the court majority, observed, "Liberty presumes an autonomy of self that includes freedom of thought, belief, expression and certain intimate conduct."

Kennedy said former Chief Justice Warren Burger and other members of

the high court were wrong to base their 1986 decision in part on centuries of societal disapproval of homosexual conduct. (Burger, in his opinion in that ruling, cited legal proscriptions on homosexuality "throughout the history of Western civilization" and said "condemnation of those practices is firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards.")

But Kennedy and the court majority took issue with Burger's analysis.

"The condemnation [of homosexual conduct] has been shaped by religious beliefs, conceptions of right and acceptable behavior, and respect for the traditional family," Kennedy noted. "For many persons these are not trivial concerns but profound and deep convictions accepted as ethical and moral principles to which they aspire and which thus determine the course of their lives. These considerations do not answer the question before us, however. The issue is whether the majority may use the power of the State to enforce these views on the whole society through operation of the criminal law."

Quoting court precedent, Kennedy added, "Our obligation is to define the liberty of all, not to mandate our own moral code."

Kennedy said Burger did not take into account other developments in Western civilization that point in an opposite direction. Kennedy noted legal developments in Britain and the

European Court of Human Rights upholding the right of consenting adults to engage in private sexual conduct without suffering criminal penalties.

Citing court precedent safeguarding reproductive rights, Kennedy insisted that the Due Process Clause broadly protects individual liberty.

"The Casey decision again confirmed that our laws and tradition afford constitutional protection to personal decisions relating to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, child rearing, and education," the justice insisted. "In explaining the respect the Constitution demands for the autonomy of the person making those choices, we stated as follows: 'These matters, involving the most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime, choices central to personal dignity and autonomy, are central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.'"

Concluded Kennedy, "The Texas statute furthers no legitimate state interest which can justify its intrusion into the personal and private life of the individual."

[From a June 26 press release by Americans United for Separation of Church and State.]

Regional Atheists Meet – Birmingham, AL – Saturday, 9 August 2003

Where: Embassy Suites Hotel, 2300 Woodcrest Place, Birmingham, AL

When: August 9, 2003, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Speakers: **Ellen Johnson**, President of American Atheists

Larry Darby, attorney and activist, American Atheists Atheist of the Year

Pamela Sumners, a constitutional lawyer, involved in several Church/State cases

Dr. Delos B. McKown, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Auburn University

Conrad Goeringer, Director for Public Policy for American Atheists, Editor of AANews

Registration: \$25 for AA members, \$30 for non-members

For more information, see www.atheists.org/ram/ or email Larry Darby at ldarby@atheists.org.

An Independence Day Reflection — and what it *doesn't* mean to some

By Kimberly Blaker

What is the meaning of Independence Day? For most, it's a reminder of the hard-won freedoms our Founding Fathers effected, and that generations since have managed, not without toil and bloodshed, to fully actuate (equal rights for women and African-Americans), and to maintain for more than two centuries.

Despite the slow and agonizing process to fully incorporate all of our Constitutional freedoms into real life circumstance, the meaning behind Independence Day is not only the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the freedom from oppressive rule that it represents, but the beginning of a new era in which a government would be established honoring the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness (or property) of all Americans.

Though the Constitution of the United States had not yet evolved, it was this momentous event that set it in motion.

Certainly Independence Day is to celebrate our liberation from a tyrannical ruler and to reflect upon the brave men and women who stood up to this force. But equally, it's a celebration of the Constitutional freedoms that societies around the globe envy us for and that, despite often taking them for granted, we have come to respect, love, and rely upon.

Given the current course of this nation, I think it pertinent to review what this great national holiday does

not mean to our President, his administration, and their Christian Right allies.

To them, Independence Day does not mean acceptance of all beliefs and true religious freedom for all Americans; it means freedom of religion for those who practice according to conservative Christian views.

Attorney General John Ashcroft's exclusionary statement to Christian broadcasters on February 18, 2002, that: "Civilized people—Muslims, Christians and Jews—all understand that the source of freedom and human dignity is the Creator," is but one of a multitude of examples. Apparently, to Ashcroft, Hindus, Pagans, Buddhists, Confusions, and the nonreligious don't fit the mold of civilized peoples.

To Bush and his accomplices, Independence Day is not about a government deriving its "just Powers from the Consent of the Governed." For Bush, those powers are derived from God; not unlike the Taliban's and Osama bin Laden's powers that are derived from Allah in waging Jihad on a rival religion.

Proof is in Bush's June 27, disclosure that: "God told me to strike at al Qaida and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did, and now I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East."

Nor to our President is Independence Day about the First Amend-

ment's freedom of speech and the press. What was his response in May 1999 to a lawful parody web site in which he was the oaf? "There ought to be limits to freedom."

To the Christian Right and our current Administration, Independence Day is not about reproductive freedom, the right to die with dignity, or the right to harmless scientific inquiry (stem cell research); it is not about racial equity, gay-and-lesbian rights, or women's equality; it is not about the protection of children and their freedom from parental assault; it is not about the freedom to read, artistic expression, and to a free and unbiased (religious neutral) education.

To them, what Independence Day truly represents is opportunity—to project a false Patriotism to the American public in an effort to conceal their true agenda, one that was already in motion when President Bush first took office and immediately proclaimed a National Day of Prayer on January 20, 2001, that soon escalated into an ambush against the First Amendment and a slew of other Constitutional protections.

Kimberly Blaker is editor and coauthor of The Fundamentals of Extremism: the Christian Right in America. Visit <http://www.NewBostonBooks.com> for details. Send your comments to kblaker@TheWall-onChurchandState.com © 2003, Kimberly Blaker. Reprinted by permission.

Supreme Court Should Leave Pledge Decision in Place, Says Americans United

The U.S. Supreme Court should refuse to hear an appeal of a lower court decision barring government-sponsored recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools, according to Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed June 26, Americans United asserted that the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals faithfully applied Supreme Court precedent when it held that teacher-led recitation of the Pledge in public schools violates the constitu-

tional separation of church and state.

"Children are bound to perceive the phrase as affirming a belief in the existence of God and national subordination to God, and as expressing commitment to a nation defined by religious devotion," argues AU's brief. "To this extent, teacher-led classroom recitation of the Pledge is a religious exercise - an exercise in religious affirmation - and hence forbidden, even if student participation is not formally required, because of the special risk of indirect coercion."

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, said the government has no business pressuring children to affirm religious beliefs.

"In America, we don't let the government meddle in our religious lives," said Lynn. "The Constitution strictly forbids politicians and school authorities to intrude into matters of faith. Parents, not government officials, should make the decisions about the religious upbringing of children."

[From a June 26 AU press release.]

God.com: A Deity for the New Millennium

A Book Review by Wolf Roder

(from the March 2003 issue of FIG Leaves, the newsletter of the Free Inquiry Group of Cincinnati, OH)

God.com: A Deity for the New Millennium by John A. Henderson is a simple, very common sense refutation of the claims for god. Henderson has detailed the objections to the claims of the Christian religion and of other supernatural beliefs. The author is not a professional philosopher or theologian, but a retired medical doctor who speaks from lifelong thinking and experience of human folly.

Henderson's thesis is fairly straightforward. The gods and goddesses of the world are not real but were created by humans, who invented not only modern religions, but also the most ancient ones. Religions tend to be simple, dogmatic, and vague enough so most people, even the most ignorant can understand them and be convinced. Henderson thinks such beliefs may have served a purpose in the primitive past to hold the various tribes, bands, and other communities together. "In those simple and rudimentary social groups the dogmatic, easy-to-understand rules of the old God may help to control a society where might and brute force would otherwise prevail." (p. ix)

Modern knowledge of science and technology has forced a certain degree of updating of the ancient dogmas, and have called into being some weird new religions. But, on the whole, religious teachings do contradict in many ways the current state of

knowledge, or else is out of tune with the logic of modern rational thinking. It is time to jettison all these ancient superstitions.

The book asks many questions of god and about religion to which there seem to be no answers satisfactory to unbelievers. Henderson suggests a modern god would be able to give rational answers to queries. Such new and improved god he has termed "God.com" a perfect website which should contain and exhibit all the moral attributes accepted by society without the need for a fictitious supernatural overseer.

In 41 brief chapters the author lays out objections to religion, especially to Christianity. All religions urge us to pray, although there never is any evidence of results. Religions preach peace but support war. God cannot be seen or heard. When advisors told Lincoln that god wanted him to do this or do that, he maintained in that case god ought to speak to him directly. If god is good, why do floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and tornados wreak havoc and destruction on the believers. Newspapers should headline airliner crashes as: "God Kills 200, Allows None to Survive." Or, "God Feeds Millions of Fat Americans, Starves Drought Stricken Africans." Does it make sense for any god to send his son to be crucified to redeem mankind? Can't he do it on his own?

Doc Henderson lives in the Bible

Belt, where they like to post the Ten Commandments in schools and court-houses. Like most unbelievers he points out half of these have nothing to do with morality, but with the worship of a very jealous, evil tribal god. Challenged to write better commandments, he replies, "Sure." Here they are, from page 37:

1. You will accept responsibility for all your actions.
2. You will honor and respect those individuals who have nurtured, cared for, taught, and have been kind to you.
3. You will not commit murder.
4. You will not steal.
5. You will not lie.
6. You will be charitable with those assets that are not necessary for your health and well being.
7. You will use your sexuality in such a manner as to not hurt yourself or others.

The doctor suggests we criticize and improve this list.

Unbelievers will in general have heard or thought out many of these questions and oppositions about god themselves. The book is an apt kind of summary of all the objections to the god idea voiced by thoughtful people. Here is a paperback to lay into the hands of any young person or teenager who seriously asks about god belief and unbelief, a short, common sense brief against the superstitions of the common person.

Victim Begins to Heal After Church Settles Nearly 250 Lawsuits

The sexual abuse scandal that swept the Archdiocese of Louisville, KY weighed heavily on the victims. But to victims and the church alike, the \$25.7 million settlement announced on June 9 means they can begin to heal.

"They can't sweep it under the table anymore," said Mike Turner, whose personal revelation last year sparked the public scandal for the Catholic

Church in Louisville that resulted in the settlement. "They're not dealing with 243 kids anymore. They're dealing with 243 adults, their spouses and their kids."

The archdiocese has until July 10 to put the settlement amount into a court-controlled escrow account. A judge will determine how much goes to each plaintiff.

It began last year, when Turner, who was thinking of adopting a child, broke down during a mandatory parental education class about "inappropriate touch."

For the first time, he told his wife he had been sexually abused by his childhood priest.

On April 19, 2002, Turner became the first of 243 victims to sue the Arch-

diocese of Louisville claiming they were abused as children. The victims (now adults) said the church was aware of the abuse but moved accused priests to different parishes. That allowed at least one priest to abuse dozens of children.

Once Turner's suit made headlines in *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal*, other victims began calling his home three to four of them daily for several weeks.

"It was shocking to hear of the other victims," said Turner, 45, who owns a construction company. "A guy from Florida called me and said he was abused too. I was reliving it everyday after filing my suit."

The priest who abused Turner, the Rev. Louis E. Miller, recently pleaded guilty to multiple counts of molesting children in two counties and is serv-

ing a 20-year prison term.

"It was real hard for me when he pleaded guilty, to hear him say in a courtroom that he remembered me," Turner said.

A bishop from the Diocese of Lexington resigned after being accused in three lawsuits; a retired priest was sentenced to 20 years in prison; and two other priests, a former priest and two teachers await trials after pleading innocent.

Some members of the Catholic community called for the resignation of Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly, but the church rejected that during the settlement negotiations.

"It has all just been too overwhelming. Picketing the church was not easy, and it was hard asking Archbishop Kelly to step down. If you're Catholic, you just don't do that,"

Turner said.

Turner now attends an Episcopal church with his wife and 20-year-old daughter from a previous marriage.

Victims and their families say they will continue to fight for changes within the Church.

"We still want to see the people step down that allowed this to happen," said Turner's wife, Babs. She is involved with Linkup, a Louisville-based national group for victims of sexual abuse by clergy.

The Turners said they are trying to adopt children, something they put on hold while he sought counseling and pursued the lawsuit against the Church. Turner said that through the ordeal he found a support system.

[From a June 14 AP article by Lori Burling. See www.thelinkup.org.]

Clipped

Letters to the Editor from AFS Members

Larry Darby's letter was in the *Auburn Plainsman* on June 9.

Hank Shiver's letter was in the *Decatur Daily* on June 26.

Pryor must be stopped

Bill Pryor's nomination to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals must be stopped.

Those who care about individual liberties recognize that Pryor's past statements and actions regarding religion and government clearly indicate he would use his position to facilitate theocratic interpretations of law, undermining our constitutional republic form of government.

That the Legislature's best-known bigot, Rep. Alvin Holmes, supports Pryor should not be a surprise. In Oct. 2001, Holmes stated, "I'm against anything atheists represent because I believe in God."

I recently sought a party nomination to run for the office of attorney general. My only encounter with Pryor was outside the Statehouse when he sneered, "You don't think people will vote for an atheist, do you?"

Pryor and Holmes may represent religious bigotry that seems endemic to Alabama, but this disease must not be allowed to spread from the attorney general's office to the Eleventh Circuit.

Pryor has used his power, position and taxpayer money to promote the Vatican's faith-based political agenda. The Vatican is a foreign, subversive sovereign nation with its agents, priests and bishops, embedded across America.

Pryor's views on women's rights, bedroom activities of consenting adults, and the constitutional principle of separation between religion and government are lock-step with the Pope's.

Pryor even supports legislation that would protect clergy rapists!

The National Catholic Reporter in May reported that the Vatican is cracking down on Catholic politicians who do not follow Vatican's dogma. Pryor has no worries in that regard.

But patriotic Americans should be fearful.

Larry Darby
Montgomery

Coalition vs. compassion

When the Teen Transformation Ministries, a Christian children's home in Oviedo, Fla., was closed for inhuman treatment of children, what did the Christian Coalition do? It tried to get the Florida Legislature to pass a law banning abortion. It is obvious that born children are of no interest to the Christian Coalition.

Once again, the Bethel Children's Home in Lucedale, Miss., has been raided and closed by the police. Again, violence against children is the reason. What legislation did the Christian Coalition propose to solve the problem of child abuse by clerics? It wants the Protestant Ten Commandments posted in all public buildings.

What did Alabama's Christian Coalition say when Archbishop Lipscomb disclosed [that] the Mobile Archdiocese had several pedophile priests working with children? It introduced the Ten Commandments legislation for all public schools.

Then along comes the darling of the Christian Coalition, Gov. Bob Riley and his tax package. One would think the Battle of Armageddon had been declared. The CC knows educated people are less likely to attend conservative churches and more likely to support social issues. Positive progress and compassion are the enemies of the Christian Coalition. The CC will tell any lie to promote its agenda. Think not? Watch its advertisements opposing Gov. Riley's tax program. And don't worry about the poor, because if Jesus really loved them, they would be rich.

Hank Shiver
Munford

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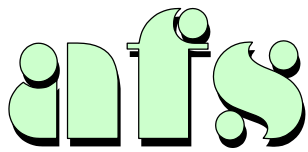
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“Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect.” - James Madison, 1774

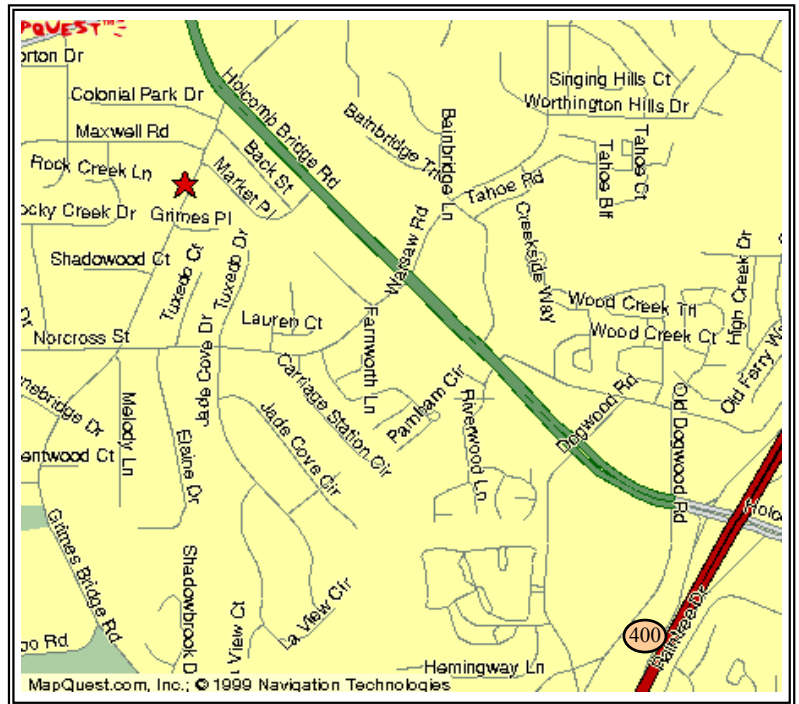
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**The July Meeting:
Sunday, July 13
1:00 PM at the AFS Center
1170 Grimes Bridge Road,
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
John Henderson MD**



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