

Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication • Volume 10 Number 6 • June 2004

The June Meeting

The June 13 AFS meeting will NOT be at the Atlanta Freethought Center! It will be at Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy, Atlanta, GA. A Fundraising Lunch Buffet starts at 11:30 AM and will last until 1:00 PM, when the meeting starts. Our program will be "Vintage Ingersoll," a lecture by Robert Ingersoll, as performed by Ross Sloan.

The Fundraising Lunch is \$20.00 per person. If you can't attend the lunch, please come to the AFS meeting at 1:00! Ross Sloan provided his portrayal of Ingersoll at the Atheist Alliance 2001 convention in Atlanta, and his performance was a real crowd pleaser!

Directions to Panahar Restaurant: Get on I-85 north of the downtown area and exit at North Druid Hills Road. Go west 0.3 miles to Buford Hwy. Turn right and go a mile to the North East Plaza Shopping Center on the right. Turn into the shopping center and look for Planet Fitness. Panahar Restaurant is across the parking lot from Planet Fitness. The phone number is 404-633-6655.

In case you would like to learn about Robert Ingersoll before this meeting, here are some great websites to visit:

http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/robert_ingersoll/index.shtml

http://www.abettertoday.com/robert_ingersoll.htm

<http://www.atheists.org/Atheism/roots/ingersoll/>

<http://www.secularhumanism.org/ingersoll/>

<http://www.jdigs.com/inger.htm>

AFS Activities

The next **AFS Social** will be at **Las Margaritas Restaurant** at 1842 Cheshire Bridge Road (Atlanta) on Friday, June 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, June 20, at 4:00 to 6:00 PM at the AF Center.


The **Tuesday Lunch Bunch** meets every Tuesday for lunch at Panahar Restaurant at 12:30.

AFS at Atlanta Pride Festival

The Atlanta Freethought Society will have a booth at the June 26/27 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 ljacobs@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.



"Vintage Ingersoll"

*A lecture by Robert Ingersoll
(as performed by Ross Sloan)*

1:00 PM, June 13, 2004

*Panahar Restaurant
3375 Buford Hwy
Atlanta, GA*

*Sponsored by
Atlanta Freethought Society*

Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, 1894

Lake Hypatia July 4 Celebration

Every year many freethinkers get together at beautiful Lake Hypatia, Alabama for a fun filled Fourth of July Weekend!

Primitive camping is available on the upper and lower campgrounds. Local motels are a few miles away. There is swimming in the lake or at Cady Creek lagoon, fishing, paddle boats, dining at the lakeside Pavilion, great speakers and, most of all, the experience of making new friends, renewing old friendships and mingling with fellow freethinkers.

The Celebration will be Friday through Sunday, July 2-4. See www.alabamafreethought.org/pages/july4/index.html for details. Speakers will include:

Bob Truett, M.A., on *Nature*

Barbara Forrest, Ph.D, *Intelligent Design—The Wedge Strategy*
Delos McKown, Ph.D, *Facts About Religion You Probably
Should Know...But Don't*

Susan Sackett, M.A., on *Humanism in Star Trek*

Ed Buckner, Ph.D, *We're Mad As Hell and We're Not Going
To Take It Any Moore...Roy!*

John Henderson, MD, on *Fear, Faith, Fact & Fantasy*

Bernard Bray, Ph.D, on *Theatre and Politics*

Fred Whitehead, Ph.D, *The Freethought Heritage of Germany*

Page 4 has a registration form for this event.

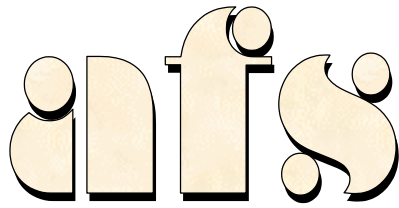
Meetings and Activities

June 13: AFS General Meeting at Panahar Rest., 1:00 PM.

June 18: AFS Social, Las Margaritas Restaurant, 7:00 PM.

June 20: AFS Board Meeting, AF Center, 2:00 PM.

June 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.

June 13: Ross Sloan will perform multiple Robert Ingersoll speeches at Panahar Restaurant at our Meeting and Fundraising Dinner.

July 11: Dr. Fred Whitehead will speak on "The Freethought Heritage of Germany."

August 8: TBA

September 12: TBA

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

You can unsubscribe by sending an email to xxxx-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 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
Roswell, GA 30075-3905
or phone Steve at 678-364-8703
or send e-mail to SteveYoth@aol.com.

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The Atlanta Freethought News

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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 in-
dividuals, \$35 for households, and \$10
for students/low income/under 21. Sus-
taining members (individual) \$100 and
sustaining members (households) \$125.

Subscriptions alone are \$20 for 12 is-
sues, \$25 to Canada/Mexico, \$30 for
other addresses. Please make checks
and money orders payable to
Atlanta Freethought Society, Inc.

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

AFS Fundraising Lunch Buffet Menu

Sunday June 13, 2004 11:30 AM

Entrée selection

SHRIMP KODOO

Shrimp cooked with 'Kodoo' (Opo Squash).

LAMB DHAANSHAAG

Cubed Lamb, cooked with 'Moshoorer Daal' (orange lentils), with herbs and spices --- slightly spicy. The chef's special recipe creates a hot, sweet & sour combination taste.

CATFISH DOPIAZZA

Catfish fillet, boneless, sautéed in a 'korai' (Bangladeshi wok) with green bell pepper, sliced tomatoes, chopped cilantro, lime juice and Chef's selection of spices.

CHICKEN TIKKA MOSHOL-LA

Succulent pieces of Chicken marinated in special 'Tandoori' sauce, ground herbs & spices, and barbecued on skewers in a Tandoori Clay Oven. Cooked again in a herb tomato sauce.

ALOO BHAJI

Potatoes sautéed with turmeric, onions, etc.

BROCCOLI BHAJI

Broccoli cooked with 'Paach-foron', grilled onions, and spices. Cooked Bangladeshi style.

SHAAG DAAL

'Paalong Shaag' (spinach) sautéed with 'Moog-Daal' (yellow lentils), with grilled onions, turmeric, garlic, and other herbs & spices.

VEGETABLE BIRIYANI

Aromatic Baash-motee rice, sautéed with mixed vegetables, consisting of carrots, green peas, cauliflower, yellow squash, green beans, potatoes, zucchini, celery, etc.

Soup

KOOMRA SHOBBEE DAAL

Spicy vegetarian soup with 'Mishtee Koomra' (calabasa), five different kinds of lentils, and mixed vegetables with Chef's blend of spices.

Salad

GARBANZO BEANS SALAD

Garbanzo Beans salad, very lightly dressed with lime juice, fresh tomatoes, chopped fresh ginger, chopped cilantro, onions, and a touch of green pepper.

Bread

NAAN

Soft unleavened bread made in a Tandoori Clay Oven.

Condiments

MINT SAUCE

Slightly spicy mint-yogurt sauce.

RAITA

Condiment made with homemade plain yogurt, whipped with ground black pepper, and blended with chopped carrots and cucumbers.

Dessert selection

LAAL MOHON

Milk whey and homemade cheese balls, lightly fried, and dipped in honey-sugar syrup.

FIRNI

Bangladeshi rice pudding with Bash-motee rice, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and raisins.



PANA HAR Bangladeshi Cuisine

3375 Buford Highway, Suite: 1060 Atlanta, GA 30329

(inside Northeast Plaza Shopping Center)

phone: 404-633-6655 e-mail: panahar@aol.com

www.panahar.com

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 2200 Haynes Street Talladega, Alabama 256-315-9511	Budget Inn \$45 + tax 65600 Hwy 77 North Talladega, Alabama 256-362-0900
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These hotels are 15-20 miles from Lake Hypatia:

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

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.

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 July 4th Celebration. For more information, please see www.alabamafreethought.org.

LAKE HYPATIA FREETHOUGHT CELEBRATION

255 Lake Joan Circle
Munford, Alabama 36268
Telephone: 256-362-7590/256-362-8729
Friday, July 2nd - Sunday, July 4, 2004

YOUR NAME: _____

YOUR ADDRESS: _____

YOUR CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

YOUR PHONE OR EMAIL: _____

___ FFRF MEMBER REGISTRATION @ \$25/PERSON \$ _____

___ NON-MEMBER REGISTRATION @ \$30/PERSON \$ _____

___ STUDENT MEMBER REGISTRATION @ \$10/ " \$ _____

___ FRIDAY DINNER @ \$9 PER ADULT \$ _____

___ FRIDAY DINNER @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ _____

___ SATURDAY LUNCH @ \$7 PER ADULT \$ _____

___ SATURDAY LUNCH @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ _____

___ SATURDAY DINNER @ \$9 PER ADULT \$ _____

___ SATURDAY DINNER @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ _____

___ SUNDAY BRUNCH @ \$7 PER ADULT \$ _____

___ SUNDAY BRUNCH @ \$4 PER CHILD UNDER 12 \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED ----- \$ _____

PLEASE CHECK HERE _____ IF YOU PLAN TO CAMP AT LAKE HYPATIA.

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: AFA

P.O. Box 571

TALLADEGA, AL 35161

NOTE:

LATE REGISTRATION MUST BE DONE AT THE DOOR.

THERE IS A LATE FEE OF \$5.00 PER PERSON AFTER JUNE 20, 2004.

NO MEAL ORDERS WILL BE TAKEN AFTER JUNE 20TH.

REGISTRATION CANNOT BE DONE VIA PHONE OR E-MAIL.

LIST CHILDREN'S NAMES AND AGES:

Freethought Revival

Susan Jacoby dissects the history of secularism in the U.S., and argues the time is right for a new secular hero. An interview by Rebecca Phillips. (This article appeared originally on www.beliefnet.com, the leading multifaith website for religion, spirituality, inspiration & more. Used with permission. All rights reserved.)

Journalist Susan Jacoby is the director of the Center for Inquiry Metro New York, a rationalist research and advocacy organization. She is the author of seven books, including *Wild Justice: The Evolution of Revenge*, which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Jacoby's latest book is *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*. Jacoby spoke with Beliefnet about America's secular beginnings, freethought heroes, and the battles ahead between secularists and the religious right.

► What does "freethinker" mean?

Freethinker and freethought are terms that date from the end of the 17th century. Freethinker basically meant someone who did not believe in the received word of the bible or the authority of religion. Freethinkers have often been described as people who didn't believe in God, but it's more accurate to see freethought as a kind of a broad continuum, ranging from those who really didn't believe in God at all to deists who believed in a God who set the universe in motion but afterwards didn't take an active role in the affairs of men.

By the end of the 19th century, freethinkers even included liberal Protestant denominations and Unitarians. Even though they believed in God and in some form of Christianity, they did not believe in any hierarchy of religion. So there was a spectrum of people in the freethought community, but all were opposed to the religious orthodoxies of their day.

► Who would the term freethinker encompass today?

I would say my definition of freethinker from the past is just as good a definition of freethinker today. I prefer it to agnostic or atheist or deist or anything else you might come up with. It also encompasses the belief that if God did create man, he created rationality as the supreme instrument for understanding the natural world.

Freethinker is kind of an archaic word, but it's very descriptive.

► More descriptive than Bright, for example?

I think Bright is an idiotic term. It did not exactly get a rousing response, even from the non-believing community.

► You categorize liberal Protestants as a type of freethinker. Do you think a liberal Protestant today would accept being called a freethinker by you?

That's an interesting question. It's a kind of archaic word, so I don't know. I know Unitarians would be happy to be called freethinkers. It's hard to tell when you're using a word which once had a very strong meaning and now is just sort of being revived.

► Let's turn to the history of secularism. How does this history fit into American religious history? The secularist strain in American culture has been very strong since the beginning, but the nation's secular heritage is virtually unknown to people. A secular government was developed to protect the rights of religious minorities. Most Americans don't know that God is not mentioned in the Constitution. It was a coalition of religious Evangelicals and freethinkers or deists who joined together to get this ratified. And why did the Evangelicals want this then? Because they were a minority and they deeply feared government interference with religion. This Constitution basically placed the Episcopal Church, the established religion in the South before the Revolution, on a level playing field with all of the Evangelical Protestant denominations that were sprouting up. The effect of this was to enable them to proselytize for their own religion in ways that if there had been a union of established church and state they never would have been able to do. Ironically, it's the separation of church and state that

has probably enabled religion to flourish throughout the 20th century in this country in ways that it doesn't in other developed nations.

The history of secularism is also the history of a certain kind of religion. One of the interesting things that happened in this country is, between roughly 1780 and 1825 in New England, more than half of all of the once orthodox Calvinist churches transformed into the much more liberal Unitarian churches, a development the orthodox of the day hated as much as the religious right hates secularists today. In fact, they referred to Unitarians as infidels and atheists. But those people led to a transformation of American religion. They were influenced by freethought and freethinkers were influenced by them. And later on when evolution came along, this part of American Protestantism accommodated itself to evolutionism, as it had accommodated itself to Enlightenment thought in the 18th century.

► What was the period you call the "Golden Age of Freethought?"

The Golden Age of Freethought lasted from about 1870 to the first World War. It was an era in America when the influence of science was expanding and a lot of people were looking for answers to the meaning of life, which religious orthodoxy didn't satisfy. The Golden Age of Freethought was very closely connected to the dissemination of Darwin's theory of evolution.

Evolution was part of the process that drove the Golden Age of Freethought, but many other things were happening as well that were related to this.

Certainly the supreme poet and the supreme novelist of the era, Walt Whitman and Mark Twain, were freethinkers, so there also was a great expansion of thought in art and litera-

Freethought Revival (*continued*)

ture. At the turn of the century, there was agitation for women's rights, which was opposed to the orthodox religious view of women and their proper place in the universe.

► What do you mean when you say the orthodox religious view?

I stress the orthodox or right wing religious view because I don't like it when people talk about religion versus secularism. What they really mean is a particular kind of religion versus secularism. The general press has a tendency to say religious as if all religions were alike and all religious believers had the same beliefs.

► The different eras that you write about all seem to have their own freethought hero of the time, like Tom Paine or Robert Ingersoll. Do you feel like we have anyone like that today?

No.

► Do freethinkers need a hero today?

Yes. Robert Ingersoll was one of the most famous and influential men in America in his time, but he's virtually unknown today. Ingersoll stood up for secular values and explained that fundamentalist religious values have no place in running a civil government. There is no figure today who is courageous and influential in the way Ingersoll was, who makes it his business to challenge religion. What we tend to have is people challenging right wing religion on narrow issues, like creationism or school vouchers for religious schools or abortion.

► What are the main battles ahead between secularists and the religious right?

First of all, I believe that this election is a battle between these groups. The religious right has a champion who is the president of the United States. This election is a battle about many things, but one of those things is between a secular view of public affairs, between people who believe in the separation of church and state, as secularists and freethinkers do, and people who don't. And the religious

right does not believe in separation of church and state really. What they believe in is that their religious principles are the ones that ought to dominate government policy.

There are so many other issues. Will we depart from American tradition and provide tax support in the form of vouchers, for religious schools? Will we drain off support from public schools and provide support for schools operated by everyone from the Christian right to ultra-Orthodox Jews? Number two, will we push for laws to regulate people's private lives, such as gay marriage laws, in ways that are in accordance with the principles of the Christian right? Will we appoint judges—which is, I think, arguably the most important issue in this election—who don't believe that there should be any separation of church and state?

One of the more astonishing and dismaying public statements ever made was made by Antonin Scalia several years ago in an address about capital punishment to the University of Chicago Divinity School, which received very little publicity at the time, in which he said that God has the power of life and death and therefore governments, who derive their power from God, have the right to dispense life and death too. This is a horrifying thought.

The idea of having judges who look to God for instructions in their decisions, not to we the people," as our secular constitution says, it's a terrible idea. When you look to God for instruction, well everybody's God says something different to him. We can't decide government policy on the basis of people who think they have a pipeline to God.

► You also address the importance of secularists defending science. How do some religious groups undermine science?

The perfect example is when the fundamentalist superintendent of schools in Georgia announced they were going to take evolution out of

the high school biology textbooks, Jimmy Carter, who is himself a devout Baptist, just not that kind of Baptist spoke up and said, "This is nonsense. There's nothing in evolution which effects my religious faith. We don't have to believe that space aliens are landing on a flat earth in order to practice our religion."

Fundamentalist religion undermines science, and any attempt to codify a particular set of religious values in law undermines science. We're seeing that in stem cell research. Basically, the restrictions established by the Bush administration are inspired by the belief held by the Catholic Church hierarchy—I don't say Catholics because polls show that the majority of Catholics disagree with the Church hierarchy. But the Catholic church hierarchy and fundamentalist Protestants hold the belief that any research on embryos, even if they are five days old, is a form of abortion and abortion is murder and therefore we can't have it. And certainly having these kinds of religious views written into restrictions on science so as to impede any investigation of these things, is an example of the way, again in which a particular kind of religion impedes science.

I think Americans are increasingly ignorant about science and how it helps us understand the world. I don't mean that science is a god, but it's one of the tools for understanding how the world really is. And it's important to understand that it isn't only the religious right that's anti-science.

New Age beliefs are also dangerous for science because it's an irrational view of the world. It leads to people who believe in space aliens abducting people and taking them into space and sexually assaulting them and sending them back to earth. It looks for supernatural explanations whereas science looks for natural explanations. It prevents us from looking for the explanation that could lead to cures for cancer and things like that.

These New Age-y beliefs are an in-

Freethought Revival (*continued*)

credible example of the deterioration of American education. Polls show that a majority of Americans believe it's possible to communicate with the spirits of the dead. Europeans don't believe that. America is a hotbed of totally irrational beliefs.

I believe in rationalism as the free-thinkers of the 18th and 19th century believed in it. I don't believe in explaining things by space aliens and crop circles, and I don't believe that the way you cope with death and suffering is by saying it's God's plan,

or we could talk to those people we've lost on the other side. I think that these are dangerous beliefs for society as a whole because they discourage any real critical thinking about anything. It's not just a political issue, it's a larger cultural issue.

► So with all of these battles, why hasn't another Robert Ingersoll emerged for the secularist cause?

Well I think the financial power, and the power to intimidate, of the religious right is enormous. I think people are scared of it. That's why

most political candidates step around this issue. In the early days of the Democratic primaries, Howard Dean was tarred with the dreaded S—the scarlet S I call it—for secularist. Suddenly, he discovers that he prays every day.

How refreshing would it be to have a candidate saying, "I believe in a secular approach to public affairs, and if anyone doesn't like it, tough."

Rebecca Phillips is a Beliefnet editor. Copyright (c) 2004 Beliefnet, Inc. All rights reserved.

Christians Look to Form 'New Nation' Within U.S.

Calling the approval of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts "the straw that broke the camel's back," a group of Christian activists is in the beginning stages of an effort to have one state secede from the United States to become its own sovereign nation.

"Our Christian republic has declined into a pagan democracy," says Cory Burnell, president of ChristianExodus.org, a non-profit corporation based in Tyler, Texas. "There are some issues people just can't take anymore, and [same-sex marriage] might finally wake up the complacent Christians."

Burnell is leading the charge for a peaceful secession of one state from the union, and after originally considering Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina due to their relatively small populations, coastal access, and the Christian nature of the electorate, Burnell says South Carolina has been selected as the target location.

The plan initially calls for at least 12,000 Christians willing to be active in political campaigns to move to the Palmetto State.

"We're not an invading force, we're reinforcements," Burnell told WorldNetDaily, saying it would be a waste to move to liberal-minded states such as Massachusetts, New York or California where conservative votes

would be diluted.

According to the ChristianExodus website, which is slated for a major re-launch next month, "Christians have actively tried to return our entire land to its moral foundation for more than 20 years. We can categorically say that absolutely nothing has been achieved. If you disagree, consider this:

- Abortion continues against the wishes of many states
- Children may not pray in our schools
- The Bible is not welcome in schools except under strict *federal* guidelines
- The 10 Commandments remain banned from public display
- Sodomy is now legal *and* celebrated as 'diversity' rather than perversion
- Preaching Christianity will soon be outlawed as 'hate speech'
- Gay marriage will be foisted upon us in the very near future."

"All these atrocities continue in spite of the fact that we now have the 'right' people in places of power. Indeed, the occupant of the White House is a professing Christian. The U.S. attorney general is believed to be a devout Christian. 'Conservatives' control both Houses of Congress, and Republican presidents appointed seven of the nine Supreme Court justices."

Burnell, a math teacher and cell-phone dealer, stresses he's not looking for bloody battles that took place in the American Revolution and the Civil War, but is rather seeking a "political divorce."

"It's got to be different today," he says. "It has to be peaceful, brokered."

But he admits if the federal government decides to use military force to stop the effort, "Then it can't happen."

Already a dozen people are actively working on the project, and some 1,500 e-mails of support have been received.

If all goes according to plan, Burnell is hoping to have a constitutional convention by 2014, with a president of the new nation – still to be known as South Carolina – elected in 2016, which is also a presidential election year in the U.S.

He says the nation would be founded on Christian principles, and the people writing its constitution would have to hash out details to safeguard it as a Christian republic.

For now, Burnell prefers to shy away from specifics on the precise laws governing the country. "Independence first, details later," he says.

[From a worldnetdaily.com article by Joe Kovacs, posted on May 24, 2004.]

Letters to the Editor

Ed Buckner's letter was in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on May 7, 2004.

Responses to Shaunti Feldhahn's column "Our prayers can protect our freedom," @issue, May 5

Liberty, not Christianity

Shaunti Feldhahn can support a National Day of Prayer, but government officials should have no role in these matters.

Feldhahn misrepresents the views of the Founders, who chose liberty, not Christianity, as the guiding principle for government. John Adams, whom she quoted, wrote: "It will never be pretended that any persons employed in [writing the Constitution] had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the influence of heaven . . . it will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses."

Americans are always free to pray, but we are equally free to believe that there is no God to hear either the frequent prayers of Muslim fundamentalists to destroy America or the prayers of Christians seeking a theocracy here. Freedom requires that governments stay out of the prayer business.

ED BUCKNER

Buckner, of Smyrna, is Southern director of the Council for Secular Humanism.

May Board Meeting Minutes

Present: Steve Yothment (presiding), Judy Thompson, Lew Southern, Bill Burton, Kelly Wilhoit, Sue Garland, Joel Kollin, Harriet Harris

Minutes taken by: Harriet Harris

Time/Date of meeting: 2:00 PM, May 16, 2004

- ▶ The Minutes of the previous (April) meeting were approved as they appeared in the newsletter.
- ▶ Treasurer Burton presented a detailed report of our financial status, followed by a discussion of when we can expect to be able to remove the wall between our two units and thus expand our meeting and storage space. (We purchased the property in 2000.) Based on our past average annual income, our past annual expenses, and our debts, we estimated that we should be able to remove the wall in about 1.5 years – when the mortgage on our rental unit is due to be paid off.
- ▶ The board discussed our upcoming fundraiser at Panahar Restaurant. Lew and Kelly will make phone calls to remind members of the event. Sue will act as MC for the event. There will be door prizes.
- ▶ Judy will contact Laura Jacobs to determine if we are signed up to participate in the Atlanta Gay Pride Festival the last week in June.
- ▶ Steve will reactivate our Pay Pal account, which will facilitate the payment of pledges.

Barrow Considers Ending Ten Commandments Legal Battle

The Associated Press reported on June 7 that Barrow County commissioners plan to soon meet to decide whether dwindling funds will force the county out of a legal battle with the American Civil Liberties Union over a Ten Commandments plaque.

Commission Chairman Pro-Tem Bill Brown said the county has not been able to make its last monthly payment to Herb Titus, the Virginia Beach, VA, lawyer acting as the county's lead attorney in the case. Brown said Friday that Titus gave them an extension, allowing them to push back the meeting while fund-

raising efforts continued over the weekend.

Ten Commandments-Georgia Inc., a non-profit group that has raised all the money (\$110,000) for the county's legal defense, needs at least \$30,000 as soon as possible to continue the fight, the Rev. Jody Hice said.

At issue is whether county funds would be used.

Brown said he'd prefer to drop the case rather than use county funds without voter approval.

"We made a commitment to our taxpayers not to do that," he said.

Brown said he hoped the money

would be given by private individuals instead.

"We don't want to give up the fight," he said.

Hice said the dwindling donations could be attributed to the February death of commission chairman Eddie Elder, who was a vocal proponent of the display.

Barrow County was sued last year by the ACLU for refusing to remove a Ten Commandments plaque hung by Brown at the county courthouse. The lawsuit is pending in U.S. District Court in Gainesville.

"The doctrine of eternal punishment is in perfect harmony with the savagery of the men who made the orthodox creeds. It is in harmony with torture, with flaying alive, and with burnings. The men who burned their fellow-men for a moment, believed that God would burn his enemies forever." – **Robert Green Ingersoll**, "Crumbling Creeds"

"The notion that faith in Christ is to be rewarded by an eternity of bliss, while a dependence upon reason, observation and experience merits everlasting pain, is too absurd for refutation, and can be relieved only by that unhappy mixture of insanity and ignorance, called 'faith.'" – **Robert Green Ingersoll**, *The Gods*

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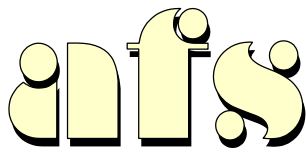
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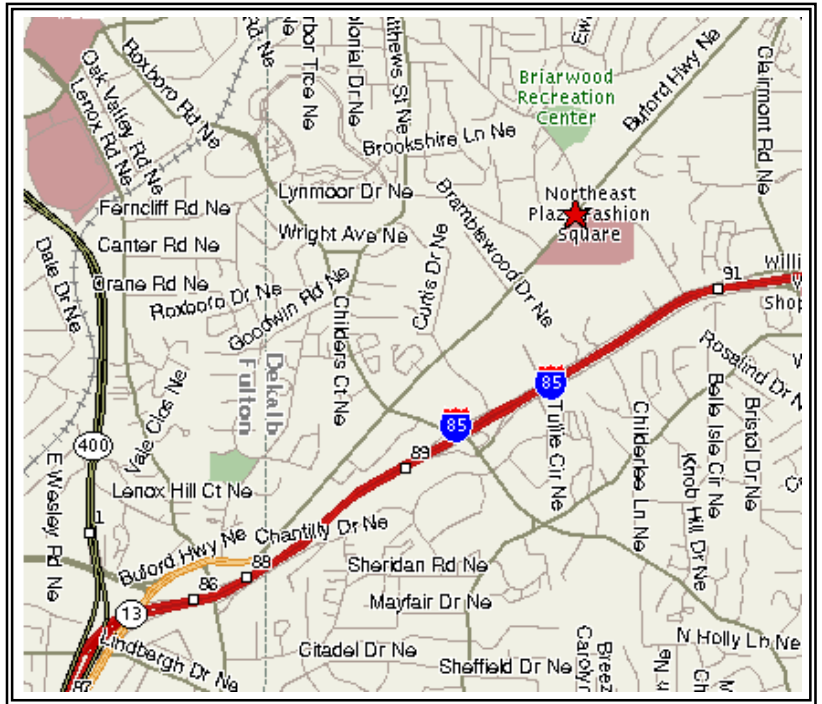
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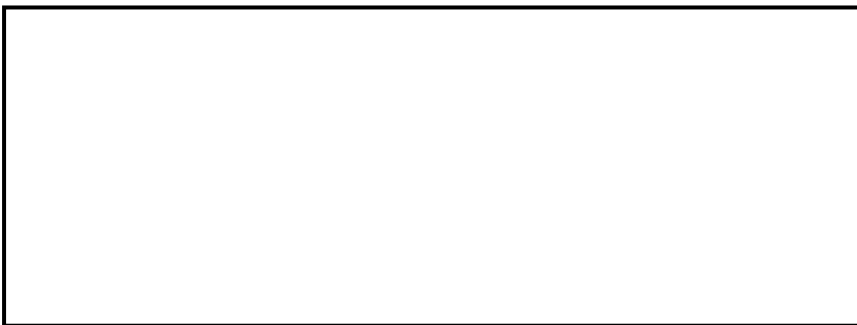
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**The June Meeting:
1:00 PM, Sunday, June 13
at Panahar Restaurant
3375 Buford Hwy
Atlanta, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
Ross Sloan**



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