

Atlanta Freethought News

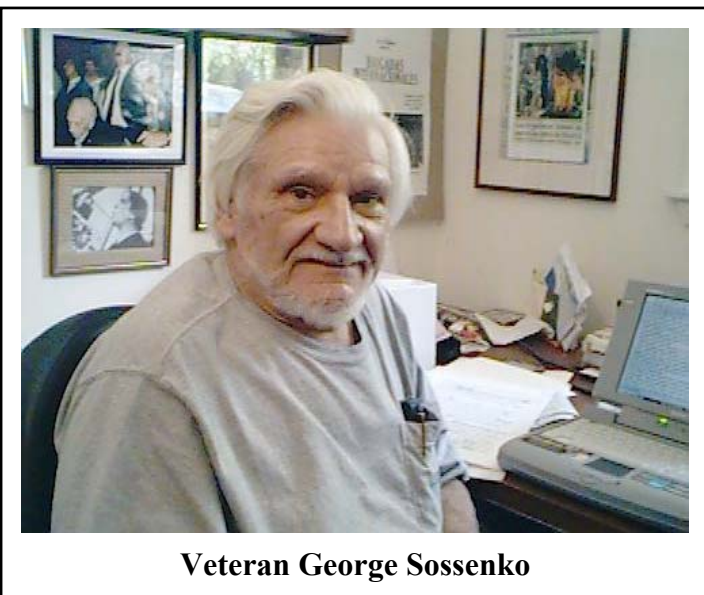
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The March Meeting

The March 13 AFS meeting will feature AFS member **George Sossenko**, speaking on "Atheists in Foxholes."

Mr. Sossenko was a *Brigadista* in the Spanish-American War and a tank crewman in World War II. He also served in several conflicts in South and Central America as a freedom fighter. He is a member of Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and author of the book *Aventurero Idealista*, published in Spain by Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.

The meeting is at 1:00 at the Atlanta Freethought Center, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, 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.



Veteran George Sossenko

AFS Activities

The next **AFS Social** will be at **Las Margaritas Restaurant**, 1842 Cheshire Bridge Road (Atlanta) on Friday, March 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 to the restaurant.

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet at 4:00 to 6:00 at the AF Center on Sunday, March 20.

The **Tuesday Lunch Bunch** meets every Tuesday at 12:30 at Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy in Atlanta.

Humanists of Georgia Meeting

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the Atlanta Freethought Center on Sunday, March 27, at 12:30. Dr. John Henderson will talk about his book *Fear, Faith, Fact, Fantasy*.

SOS Meets at AF Center

The **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** meets at the Atlanta Freethought Center every Tuesday evening at 7:30pm. SOS is the secular substitute for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Fellowship of Reason Meeting

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

Atheist Meetup in Sandy Springs

Atlanta Atheists will have a "meetup" on Sunday, March 27, at 4:00 PM. The informal gathering will be at Summits Wayside Tavern, 5830 Roswell Road, in Sandy Springs. They're located just 100 yards north of I-285 at Exit #25. See details at atheists.meetup.com.

AFS Motto Contest

The Atlanta Freethought Society is having a motto contest. Members are asked to submit a motto that concisely defines the society's mission. Jack McKinney has already suggested "Dare to Think For Yourself" and "Dare To Think – It's Not Fatal."

If you have an idea for a motto, please submit it to any AFS officer. The winner of the contest will receive a T-shirt of their choice from the AFS Bookstore.

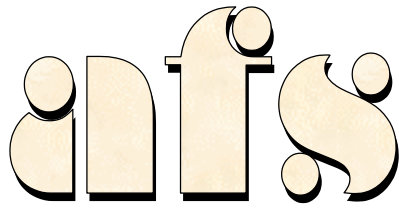
Reggie Finley and Family on ABC

On Wednesday, March 16, at 10:00 PM, ABC-TV's "Wife Swap" is scheduled to feature the atheist family of Amber and Reggie Finley of Georgia (co-hosts of the internet radio program "The Infidel Guy" <http://www.infidelguy.com>) and the religious Stonerock family of Michigan.

Late-breaking news: This episode of "Wife Swap" is delayed! We don't know why, yet. Check your listing.

"The national government will maintain and defend the foundations on which the power of our nation rests. It will offer strong protection to Christianity as the very basis of our collective morality. Today Christians stand at the head of our country. We want to fill our culture again with the Christian spirit. We want to burn out all the recent immoral developments in literature, in the theatre, and in the press—in short we want to burn out the poison of immorality which has entered into our whole life and culture as a result of liberal excess during the past years."

—Adolph Hitler; from *The Speeches of Adolph Hitler, 1922-1939*, Vol. 1, Michael Hakeem, Phd. (London, Oxford University Press, 1942), pp.871-872.



**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.

March 13: George Sossenکو will speak on Atheists in Foxholes.

April 10: TBD

May 8: TBD

June 12: TBD

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 living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

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 lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an 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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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 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.

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AFS Webmaster: Ken Cummings
Call the **AFS Infoline:** 770-641-2903

Yes, Evolution is a Theory. It's Religion and Politics that are the Problems

By Ed Buckner

Students in Cobb County, Georgia, are being told by the school board that scientific material should be approached “with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered.” And this has irritated some so much that a lawsuit was filed, demanding that this outrage be stopped. U.S. District Court Judge Clarence Cooper ruled that the outrage should be stopped. His ruling demonstrated what the Cobb County School Board called “unnecessary judicial intrusion into local control of schools”—judicial activism run amok, according to full page ads in the local paper. The school board has voted to appeal the judge’s decision. Local writers of letters to the editor have made it abundantly clear that the ACLU and those who support the case are anti-freedom, anti-science, anti-religion, socialists, and atheist devils to boot.

This specific brouhaha began in 2002, when the Cobb school board, bowing to pressure from local fundamentalist activists, voted to paste a sticker into the front of certain science textbooks. The approved sticker did not say “Evolution should rightly be called ‘Evil-ution’ and is a communist plot” or even “Intelligent Design deserves careful consideration as an alternative to evolution.” What it did say seems remarkably innocuous and commonsensical. Ending with the language quoted above, it started, “This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things.” The board no doubt thought, “Now who could argue with that?” No mention of religion or God. No attack on science.

Of course all these loud voices insisting that the sticker is properly educational or harmless are wrong. They ignore the facts:

- In science, unlike in common usage, a successful “theory” is an overarching explanation that accounts for all known facts, hypotheses, and ob-

servations.

- It is a fact, supported by millions of observations over at least 150 years that life has evolved on this planet. This fact of evolution did not have a scientifically satisfactory overarching explanation—a theory—until Charles Darwin developed his complex ideas. His explanation rapidly convinced the scientific minds of his own age and of every generation since then.
- No scientifically supported theory of why life on this planet evolved rivals basic Darwinian theory. If there was a legitimate alternative, scientists would go to great lengths to win prestige by testing and developing the alternative.
- The surest evidence that the Cobb School Board was using the sticker to mollify a religious minority in the county, rather than to improve science education or to encourage critical thinking, is the much better sticker they rejected. While no sticker at all is needed, the board was presented with one that encouraged students to reflect critically and thoughtfully on all scientific theories in all fields, and that acknowledged that, while most scientists realize that Darwinian theory is well supported, some people do not. The board rejected that broader and more accurate advice to students.
- Evolutionary theory is not the only part of science subject to religious dispute and controversy. The germ theory of disease, while overwhelmingly supported by scientists—as is evolution theory—is not accepted by Christian Scientists or by some other religious groups. The board did not put a sticker in high school health texts about this, for good reason.
- Tempting as the solution presented by a local letter writer may seem to some, avoiding all the controversy by not teaching about evolution at all, or only in elective courses, would seriously cheat students. Almost everything in modern biology and much of astronomy, geology, chemistry, and

other scientific disciplines cannot be well understood except in light of evolutionary theory. Young people would suffer greatly in colleges and universities, including in most religious schools, if their education was so inadequate. Their understanding of life itself would be severely hampered.

- Science classes and textbooks should be restricted to scientific inquiry. There is much that evolutionary theory cannot explain, and the compatibility or conflict of science and religion, while controversial, cannot be determined by science.
- The case is not part of “the ongoing controversy between atheists and Christians.” Many scientists, including the Cobb high school science department chair and the textbook author who both testified eloquently against the sticker, describe themselves as deeply religious. Some Christians may be threatened by science, but most are not.

The court held that the sticker is unconstitutional because it “conveys an impermissible message of endorsement and tells some citizens that they are political outsiders while telling others that they are political insiders” and because it violates the Georgia constitutional provision regarding “Separation of Church and State” (yes those words are in the Georgia Constitution).

The full-page newspaper ads cited above that supported the school board and attacked the sticker decision also attacked the separation of church and state—and the ads were sponsored by a local Christian church. This supports a key claim of the plaintiffs in the stickers case; this is a controversy about religion, not about science.

[From an article in the 18 Feb 2005 edition of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine. Ed Buckner is Southern Director for the Council for Secular Humanism and is Treasurer of the Atlanta Free-thought Society.]

Ten Commandments Get Some Support at Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court suggested on March 2 it might permit some depictions of the Ten Commandments on public property as the justices debated the constitutionality of displays in Texas and Kentucky.

Several justices signaled they may let Texas keep a 6-foot-tall monument on its state Capitol ground. They noted that the high court itself has a decorative frieze that shows Moses, holding a tablet depicting the commandments, among other historical lawgivers.

"You don't object to that," Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said to Duke University law professor Erwin Chemerinsky, representing homeless lawyer Thomas Van Orden of Austin, who challenged the monument. Later in the argument, though, she told the Texas attorney general that every monument on the Capitol grounds "conveys a message of endorsement."

O'Connor has been the court's piv-

otal vote in past religion cases, saying that displays are unconstitutional if an "objective observer" would see them as a government endorsement of religion.

She and other justices questioned the motivations behind two Kentucky courthouse displays that include a framed copy of the commandments alongside other documents considered foundations of U.S. law. Originally, county officials displayed the commandments alone, adding the other documents only after being sued. Lower courts ordered the displays removed.

"Isn't it the case that there's no sensible reason to believe that there's any objective here other than the display of the Ten Commandments?" Justice David H. Souter asked.

Display proponents, including the Bush administration, say the commandments are a foundation of secular U.S. law and placing them on pub-

lic property doesn't violate the Constitution's ban on government establishment of religion. Critics say they are a government endorsement of religion.

Justices Anthony M. Kennedy and Antonin Scalia spoke in favor of keeping the Texas monument on the Capitol grounds.

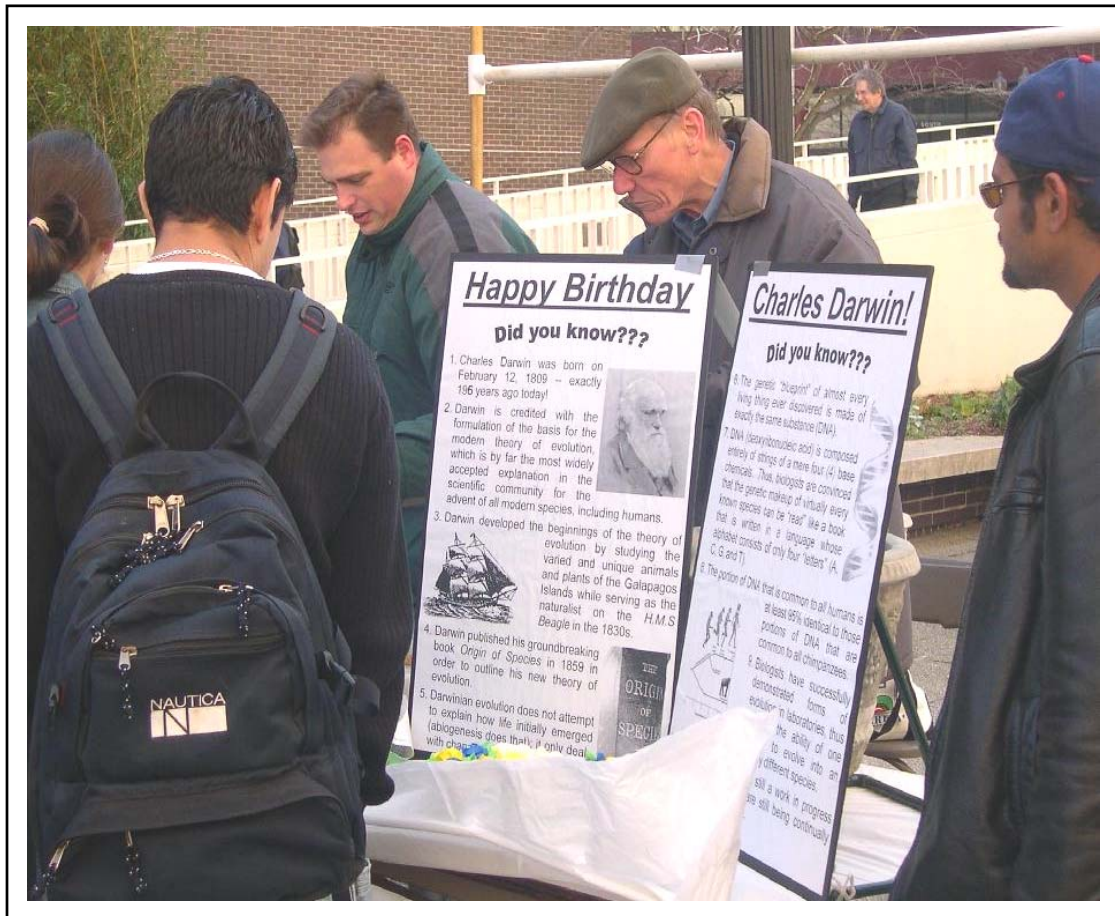
"If an atheist walks by, he can avert his eyes," Kennedy said. Saying the government can't accommodate religion is "hypocritical and it's asking religious people to surrender their beliefs," he said.

The commandments are "a profound religious message believed in by a vast majority of the American people," Scalia said. "There's nothing wrong with the government reflecting that."

Rulings by the Supreme Court on the two cases are not expected until mid-June of this year.

[From a Mar. 2 Bloomberg.com article]

Ried Crowe and Jim Middleton serve birthday cake at the Darwin Day Celebration at Georgia State University on a cool Thursday, February 10. (Thanks to Ed Buckner for the picture.)



Moses Didn't Write The Constitution

By Thom Hartmann

Two main arguments are being put forward these days about state-sponsored displays of the Ten Commandments. The first is that they are the basis of Anglo-Saxon law, leading to ancient British law, leading to American law. The second is that sometimes the displays of them are purely decorative, part of a larger display of other legal and/or religious symbols (as is seen in the Supreme Court chamber itself).

The decorative/art argument is a reasonable one, and probably the one the Supreme Court will adopt with relation to the Texas display. As the nations' most competent word police, conservatives have apparently focus-group tested the word "museum" and found that it works best to frame this argument (expect to see more of that word soon) and in the real context of a real museum the argument would have legitimacy. Religion—which the Ten Commandments symbolize—is, after all, a very real part of the history of America, for better or worse (just ask the women hanged as witches for over a century in Massachusetts).

But the real issue here is a "camel's nose under the tent" plan of religious conservatives and the new American Christian Taliban to convince the American people that the Ten Commandments are the very basis of American law, and thus should be both displayed in public places and taught in our schools.

The next step from this argument is the assertion that religion is the basis of America itself, and that twisted half-truth that the Founders and Framers did not write a "wall of separation between church and state" into the First Amendment of the Constitution. And then, conservatives will say, religion should inform the decisions of government; government should be subsidizing religion (as it is already with tax breaks and "faith based initiatives"); and religion-based legal perspectives (particularly on issues like abortion, euthanasia, and homo-

sexuality) are necessary, since the basis of American law is religion.

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams disagreed.

In a February 10, 1814 letter to Dr. Thomas Cooper, Jefferson addressed the question directly. "Finally, in answer to Fortescue Aland's question why the Ten Commandments should not now be a part of the common law of England we may say they are not because they never were." Anybody who asserted that the Ten Commandments were the basis of American or British law was, Jefferson said, mistakenly believing a document put forth by Massachusetts and British Puritan zealots which was "a manifest forgery."

The reason was simple, Jefferson said. British common law, on which much American law was based, existed before Christianity had arrived in England.

"Sir Matthew Hale [a conservative advocate for church/state 'cooperation'] lays it down in these words," wrote Jefferson to Cooper: "Christianity is parcel of the laws of England."

But, Jefferson rebuts in his letter, it couldn't be. Just looking at the timeline of English history demonstrated it was impossible:

"But Christianity was not introduced till the seventh century; the conversion of the first Christian king of the Heptarchy having taken place about the year 598, and that of the last about 686. Here, then, was a space of two hundred years, during which the common law was in existence, and Christianity no part of it..."

Not only was Christianity—or Judaism, or the Ten Commandments—not a part of the foundation of British and American common law, Jefferson noted, but those who were suggesting it was were promoting a lie that any person familiar with the commonly-known history of England would recognize as absurd.

"We might as well say that the New-

tonian system of philosophy is a part of the common law, as that the Christian religion is," wrote Jefferson. "...In truth, the alliance between Church and State in England has ever made their judges accomplices in the frauds of the clergy; and even bolder than they are."

In a January 24, 1814 letter to John Adams, Jefferson went through a detailed lawyer's brief to show that the entire idea that the laws of both England and the United States came from the Ten Commandments rests on a single man's mistranslation in 1658, often repeated, and totally false.

"It is not only the sacred volumes they [the churches] have thus interpolated, gutted, and falsified, but the works of others relating to them, and even the laws of the land," he wrote. "Our judges, too, have lent a ready hand to further these frauds, and have been willing to lay the yoke of their own opinions on the necks of others; to extend the coercions of municipal law to the dogmas of their religion, by declaring that these [Ten Commandments] make a part of the law of the land."

It was a long-running topic of agreement between Jefferson and John Adams, who, on September 24, 1821, wrote to Jefferson noting their mutual hope that America would embrace a purely secular, rational view of what human society could become:

"Hope springs eternal," wrote Adams of the preachers trying to take over government. "Eight millions of Jews hope for a Messiah more powerful and glorious than Moses, David, or Solomon; who is to make them as powerful as he pleases. Some hundreds of millions of Mussulmans expect another prophet more powerful than Mahomet, who is to spread Islamism over the whole earth. Hundreds of millions of Christians expect and hope for a millennium in which Jesus is to reign for a thousand years over the whole world before it is burnt up. The Hindoos expect another

Moses Didn't Write... (continued)

and final incarnation of Vishnu, who is to do great and wonderful things, I know not what."

But, Adams noted in that letter to Jefferson, the hope for a positive future for America was—in his mind and Jefferson's—grounded in rationality and government, not in religion. "You and I hope for splendid improvements in human society, and vast amelioration in the condition of mankind," he wrote. "Our faith may be supposed by more rational arguments than any of the former."

As Thomas Jefferson wrote in a June 5, 1824 letter to Major John Cartwright, "Our Revolution commenced on more favorable ground [than the foundation of the Ten Commandments]. It presented us an album on which we were free to write what we pleased. We had no occasion to search into musty records, to hunt up royal parchments, or to investigate the laws and institutions of a semi-barbarous ancestry. We appealed to those of nature, and found them engraved on our hearts."

After all, only two of the Ten Commandments have long been enshrined in our law—don't kill and don't steal—and those have been part of human society since the stone age (and are even today part of the rules of "stone age" cultures, who have never had contact with modern religion). These two are clearly part of "nature's law," as Jefferson often noted.

Thomas Jefferson was perhaps the most outspoken of the Founders who saw religious leaders seizing political power by claiming religion as the basis of American law to be a naked threat to American democracy.

One of his most well known quotes is carved into the stone of the awe-inspiring Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny imposed upon the mind of man."

Modern religious leaders who aspire to political power often cite it as proof that Jefferson was a Bible-thumping Christian.

What's missing from the Jefferson memorial (and almost all who cite the quote), however, is the context of that statement, the letter and circumstance from which it came.

When Jefferson was Vice President, just two months before the election of 1800 in which he would become President, he wrote to his good friend, the physician Benjamin Rush, who started out as an orthodox Christian and ended up, later in his life, a Deist and Unitarian. Here, in a most surprising context, we find the true basis of one of Jefferson's most famous quotes:

"DEAR SIR, ...I promised you a letter on Christianity, which I have not forgotten," Jefferson wrote, noting that he knew to discuss the topic would add fuel to the fires of electoral politics swirling all around him. "I do not know that it would reconcile the genus irritabile vatum [the angry poets] who are all in arms against me. Their hostility is on too interesting ground to be softened.

"The delusion ...on the [First Amendment] clause of the Constitution, which, while it secured the freedom of the press, covered also the freedom of religion, had given to the clergy a very favorite hope of obtaining an establishment of a particular form of Christianity through the United States; and as every sect believes its own form the true one, every one perhaps hoped for his own, but especially the Episcopalians and Congregationalists.

"The returning good sense of our country threatens abortion to their hopes, and they [the preachers] believe that any portion of power confided to me [such as being elected President], will be exerted in opposition to their schemes. And they believe rightly: for I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man. But this is all they have to fear from me: and enough too in their opinion."

Let us hope that the Supreme Court will affirm that decorative displays of

the Ten Commandments—or any religious iconography—are fine in the context of art or, as Sandra Day O'Connor said in a previous decision, as "ceremonial Deism." This will probably allow for the display in the Texas case, as they're part of a much larger display of Texas historical icons, and will also prevent both conservative hysteria or anti-religious witch-hunts in which every last symbol of religion is scraped away from our institutions. (The Greek goddess John Ashcroft covered up with fabric is, after all, an ancient religious symbol. We need rationality here.)

But, more importantly, let's hope that the Court will take this opportunity to affirm the absolute separation of church and state in the United States, and to note, as Jefferson so well pointed out and as this nation's Founding generation so well knew, that the Ten Commandments have nothing whatsoever to do with American law, or even its history. And, thus, they need not be displayed as major, focal-point monuments on public property (Judge Moore in Alabama); in classrooms next to the flag (a better display would be that subversive document, the Declaration of Independence, or the Constitution of the United States [which never once mentions "God"]); or taught in our schools (next on the Christian Taliban hit-list).

History—and our nation's Founders—teach us that religion is best left to religion, and governance best left to a government answerable to We The People, rather than to Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, or their self-appointed contemporary spokesmen. [Thom Hartmann is a Project Censored Award-winning best-selling author and host of a nationally syndicated daily progressive talk show. See www.thomhartmann.com. His most recent books are *Unequal Protection*, *We The People*, *The Edison Gene*, and *What Would Jefferson Do?*, in which parts of this article first appeared.

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Proposal: A Political Activism Committee

AFS member Pierce Mahony sent the following letter to the AFS Board on February 18, and his idea was discussed in the February 20 Board Meeting. Although AFS is a non-profit organization (which means we cannot endorse political candidates or parties), we can (and we think are *obligated* to) support or protest political issues.

Most AFS members would agree that freethought and other groups with progressive agendas did not fare well in the 2004 November election. Some portion of this adverse effect could be attributed to political activism on the part of two tax-exempt organizations that violated the spirit of the law if not the letter. I'm speaking of the Christian Coalition and the Southern Baptist Convention, neither one of which has supported church/state separation since the 1960s. They were extremely partisan in that election and, short of having a nomination convention, did everything a political party would do. The result was the re-election of a born-again Christian as President of the United States for primarily religious reasons, with little concern about the comprehensive best interests of the country. I consider this to be a serious matter now and for the future for the United States as a secular nation and people who believe in freedom of religion as well as other civil liberties.

Our organization and its members as a group did little politically except to vote. My opinion is that the time has come to fight fire with fire even if it's just a small one. We should form a Political Activities Committee as an arm of AFS, support it, and seek allies to form a coalition with at least one concrete objective, to support the ideals of secular government according to the U.S. Constitution, free of religious entanglements.

Recent polls have indicated that in the nation as a whole, religion has suffered some setbacks and the number of non-believers has increased. If you look at the percentages, 13 to 15%, it doesn't seem all that great, but the number of Southern Baptists is not much larger than that amount. What's even more impressive is that when you convert those percentages into real numbers, that's more than

forty million people! Where are these people? Even if we could organize a quarter of them, a tremendous impact could be possible. We have to work to get them out of the closet.

I have very little in the way of preconceived ideas of what we should do except that we should do something, do it now and do it on a continuing basis and seek outside support. Certainly there are enough issues that we and others like us can agree on so that we can move forward. One thing AFS_PAC can start is a website that says where we're coming from and what we'd like to accomplish. We should also establish links to other sites for groups that are sympathetic to our cause.

Feel free to disagree with me on this, but personally, I don't see any very good prospects for aligning ourselves with any political party. For example, the Democratic Party, under Rep. Pelosi's leadership, is trying to recapture religious votes. That's not going to happen. Statewide, the Democratic Party is dominated by African-Americans who are very deeply split on the gay marriage issue, so it doesn't seem likely we'll get much help there.

However, I think there are some groups that have a common cause with us that we should at least approach.

The environmentalists have really caught hell the last four years. The current administration's environmental policies have been a disaster, and the environment hasn't gotten much help from the Democrats either. I call this group the "Greens".

Another group that has caught Hell from religion this past year is the homosexuals, especially on the gay marriage issue. These are the "Gays".

Women have not fared well from this administration. From partial birth abortion to over-time, they have been the losers. I designate them the "Gals"

or the "Girls".

As I have already mentioned free-thinkers. I'll call them the "Godless".

So, maybe these are the four groups that we should work with: the Greens, the Gays, the Gals and the Godless. The coalition I envision would be with interested parties that represent these groups. Initially, it would probably be informal with emphasis on networking and communications.

Perhaps we could share this idea with organizations we swap newsletters with. Maybe they have some ideas and/or would like to participate in the networking.

After working relationships have been established and stabilized, joint efforts on common interest and issues could be undertaken. Could we do this organizing on our own or should we seek outside political help? I don't know. What do you think?

At the last meeting, Jack McKinney, our new Membership Chairman, mentioned seeking members among people who write letters to the editor in various newspapers. This is an excellent idea. In addition, the paper occasionally has op-ed articles on various subjects: three or four recently have been on modernizing primary and secondary education in Georgia. People like these could possibly help our cause.

In summary, without change, the future looks bleak for all of these groups. For change to occur, some people are going to have to work at it. We have everything to gain if we do and could lose a lot more if we don't.

Hitler was legally elected head of Germany in the early 1930s and by mid-decade, people who weren't like them were disappearing in the night. This included freethinkers and homosexuals as well as Jews. It can't happen here? I didn't use to think so, but after Ashcroft and the Patriot Act, I'm not so sure!

Clipped

Letters to the Editor from AFS Members

Jack McKinney's letter was in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on March 2, 2005.

Ed Buckner's letter was in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on March 7, 2005.

Shades of Taliban; show him the door

Worse than Dan McLagan's tirade and accusations is that he revealed his own zealotry — and he is the official voice of our governor, who is supposed to represent all Georgians.

Since McLagan is willing to have his religiosity appear in public print, I cringe to imagine what he must say and do behind closed doors. (All the more reason for keeping secrecy out of government — and he has the gall to hint that they are already violating the U.S. Constitution to get taxpayer money into the hands of religious organizations.)

He says "Let's get beyond the hyperbole" and then has the audacity to accuse Democrats of being willing to "throw poor people in the street and kick Cub Scouts to the curb." This dangerous man's vituperation is better suited to the Taliban. There is no place for him in our government.

JACK MCKINNEY
Kennesaw

Ten Commandments

Responses to Zell Miller's op-ed article, "Rules for life ought to be in full view," @issue, March 4

It's about religion, not history

While the religious extremists claim displaying the Ten Commandments is about history, those of us who want religious liberty know it is about religion.

The Ten Commandments and Judeo-Christian ideas certainly have a place in our history. The displays in the U.S. Supreme Court building accurately and properly allude to that, with Moses among friezes depicting dozens of influences — including Mohammed, Solon, Hammurabi, Confucius, Napoleon and others — on our laws. But nowhere in or on the building is to be found any version of the text of the Ten Commandments. If the court were asked to approve displays similar to what is present in its own courtroom, the justices undoubtedly would unanimously agree.

Those demanding the right to post the Ten Commandments violate at least two of them as they pretend to honor history: They want a graven image made, and they bear false witness in trying to impose their religious beliefs on others.

ED BUCKNER

Buckner, of Smyrna, is secretary of the Georgia chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Jack was responding to Dan McLagan's tirade a day earlier, a letter to the editor titled "Thwart anti-religion zealots," in which McLagan said that "Left-wing organizations and activist judges have bypassed, trampled and overturned laws on same-sex marriage, the Pledge of Allegiance and the Ten Commandments. Their anti-religion zeal will lead them to our doorstep."

Volunteers Needed

Jack McKinney, chairman of the AFS Membership Committee, is asking for help from AFS members in a new project. The project reaches out to those who write Letters to the Editor or op-ed pieces in various local newspapers, both print and online, whose actions or comments indicate a philosophy compatible with ours.

What we need are volunteers in out-

lying areas having local newspapers, such as Decatur, Conyers, Douglasville, Gainesville, etc., who will assist in the project. When a volunteer reads a letter to the editor or op-ed piece in their local newspaper from someone with a view similar to ours, the volunteer will try to find that person's address, and forward it to Jack McKinney. Jack will then send a nice letter

to the person inviting them to an AFS meeting or event.

If you are interested in supporting this project, please contact Jack by phone or email. His email address is papadaddybob@aol.com. His phone number is 770-424-5004.

Many AFS members have indicated a strong interest in the project. Please help to ensure its success!

Become a Member!

(Or renew your membership with this form!)



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

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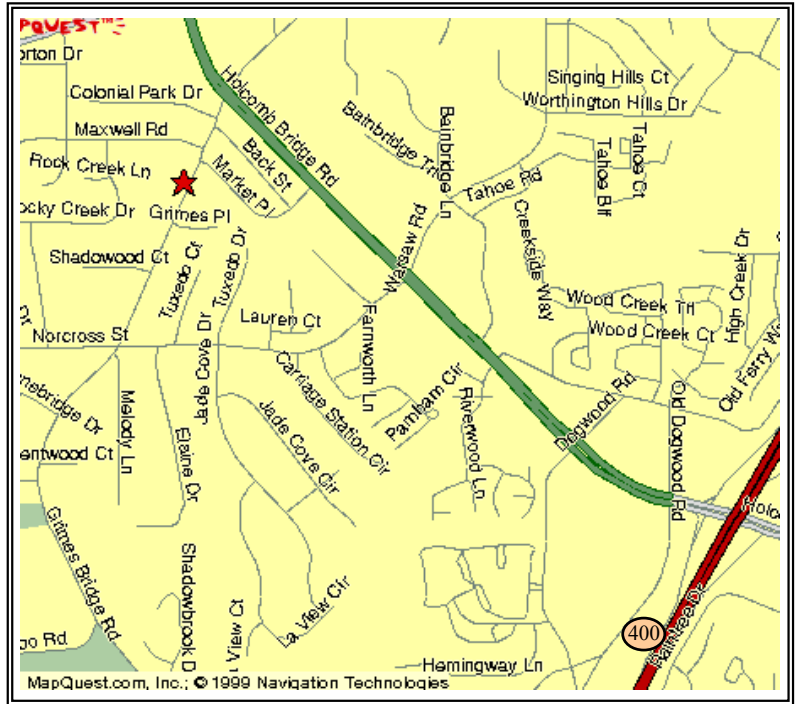
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Atlanta Freethought Society

**The March Meeting:
Sunday, March 13
1:00 at the AF Center
1170 Grimes Bridge Road
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
George Sossenکو**



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