

Atlanta Freethought News

Dare to Think for Yourself

An AFS Publication • Volume 11 Number 8 • August 2005

The August Meeting

The August 14 AFS meeting will feature Johnna Gardner and attorney Burke Johnson speaking on "Advanced Directives, Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare and the Living Will."

The AFS meeting will be at 1:00 at the Atlanta Freethought Center, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Roswell, GA. (Feel free to arrive early for discussion and snacks.) 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.

AFS Activities

The next **AFS Social** will be at **Las Margaritas Restaurant**, 1842 Cheshire Bridge Road (Atlanta) on Friday, August 19, 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 watch the new documentary "The God Who Wasn't There" at 4:00 to 6:00 at the AF Center on Sunday, August 21. (We were going to watch it last month, but the DVD had not yet arrived! Steve will announce on AFS email lists when the DVD has arrived.)

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 August 28 at 12:30 PM.

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.

The August Atheist Meetup

Atlanta Atheists will have a "meetup" on Sunday, August 28 at 4:00 PM at Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy, in Atlanta. The phone number there is 404-633-6655.

SOS Meets at AF Center

The **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** meets at the Atlanta Freethought Center every Tuesday evening at 8:00pm. SOS is the secular substitute for Alcoholics Anonymous.

A Painting Party

AFS will do some re-painting of the AF Center on Saturday, August 27, at 2:00. Volunteers are needed. We will provide all necessary equipment and paint. If you can help out, please contact President Steve.

AFS Meetings and Activities

Aug 13: Highway Cleanup, Glenridge Ramp, 10:00 AM.

Aug 14: AFS General Meeting at AF Center, 1:00 PM.

Aug 19: AFS Social, Las Margaritas Restaurant, 7:00 PM.

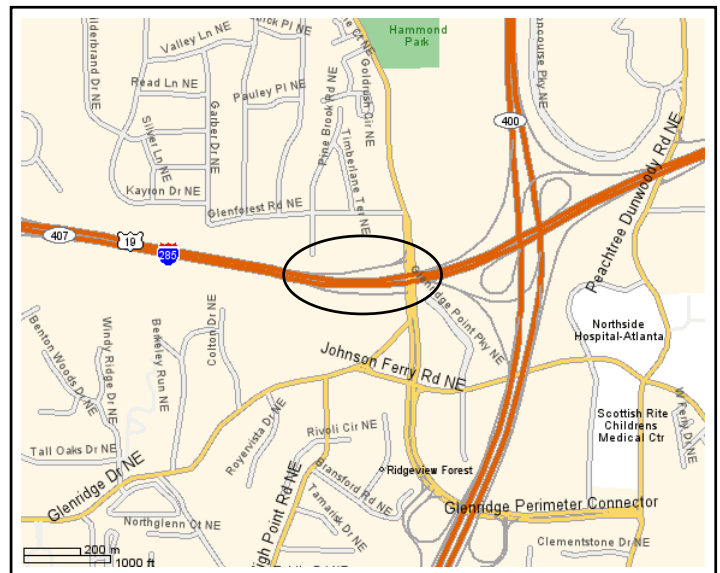
Aug 21: AFS Board Meeting at AF Center, 2:00 PM.

Aug 21: AFS Discussion Group at AF Center, 4:00 PM.

Highway Cleanup is This Saturday

The Atlanta Freethought Society will participate in its third Adopt-A-Highway cleanup on Saturday, August 13, at 10:00 AM. The cleanup work will be on the Glenridge Ramp at Exit 26 of I-285. This is the long ramp that connects Glenridge Drive to I-285 near GA400. We will clean the ramps on the north side and the south side of I-285.

Please park along the north ramp. We will have drinks, safety vests and trash bags for volunteers. More volunteers are needed! If you haven't help out yet, please consider it now. With enough volunteers, the cleanup should take only about 2 hours.



"Organized atheism supports the right to hold religious beliefs but vigorously opposes religious behavior that is politically and socially predatory or harms innocent people."

—Marie Castle, President, Atheists for Human Rights



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.

Aug 14: Johnna Gardner and attorney Burke Johnson will speak on "Advanced Directives, Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare and the Living Will."

Sept 11: (tentative) Dr. Jacobs, a linguist, will speak on "Language and Religion."

Oct 9: TBD

Nov 13: 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
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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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Ten Commandments Come Down in Barrow County

Barrow County Sets a Precedent for Other Counties in Displaying the Ten Commandments in a Courthouse

Attorneys and County Commissioners for Barrow County agreed to comply with a court order by U.S. District Court Judge William O'Kelley to remove a Ten Commandments display from the courthouse in Winder, GA and pay \$150,000 in legal fees to resolve the matter.

"I think that the county has realized that this is an issue they could not prevail in," Gerry Weber, legal director of the ACLU of Georgia, said of the court order. "We think that this will make Barrow County a more inclusive community where folks don't feel like outsiders in their own homes."

The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit against Barrow County in September 2003 on behalf of "John Doe," an anonymous resident who wanted a Ten Commandments display removed from a breezeway in the Barrow County Courthouse. The county refused and a nearly two-year legal battle ensued.

Barrow County will pay John Doe \$1 in damages and by Aug. 10 pay the \$150,000 in legal fees John Doe has incurred as a result of the lawsuit. Under the agreed order, Barrow County cannot hang similar displays on public property.

But Barrow County employees or officials are allowed to display the Ten Commandments "in any form or any place on his or her person or in his or her personal office so long as

such display is not in any public area of any building or property under the authority of the Barrow County Board of Commissioners."

In March, O'Kelley granted the county's request to put the lawsuit on hold until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last month on a pair of cases — one from Kentucky and a second from Texas — over the legality of Ten Commandments displays on public property.

Barrow County hung its hopes on the two cases. However, when the high court ruled that displays in two Kentucky courthouses went too far in endorsing religion and must come down, county officials began to show signs of weakening in their stance.

At a pre-trial hearing July 7, Barrow County attorneys hinted they would be willing to settle the case rather than take it to trial. Attorneys for John Doe filed the motion for the judgment and proposed settlement on August 5, according to court records.

Virginia-based attorney Herb Titus, the lead counsel for Barrow County, saw the proposed order and did not object to it, according to court records. Titus did not return a telephone call Monday.

The county has spent more than \$264,000 defending the lawsuit, not including the \$150,000 the government must pay in the settlement. The county has recovered more than \$212,000 from private donations, mostly from Ten Commandments-

Georgia Inc.

The cost to the county will be \$51,311.40 for their legal fees, \$150,000 for the settlement, and \$1 to John Doe, totaling \$201,312.40.

County officials haven't decided where the money will come from to cover the legal fees required by the court order. The county does not have the money budgeted as an expected expense for the fiscal year, according to County Commission Chairman Doug Garrison. "At this point, I don't know of any funds it can come out of other than our reserves," he said.

In a similar story, Monroe County, Tennessee removed a framed poster of the Ten Commandments from the wall of the Monroe County Courthouse on July 22.

Knoxville attorney and ACLU member Kelly O. Herston brought the lawsuit last year that resulted in the removal of the display.

County commissioners unanimously voted to give up the one-year court fight after advice from Francis Manion, an attorney with the American Center for Law and Justice and co-counsel for Monroe County, Watson said.

The legal costs were overwhelming for a small county with "tough budget restraints," he said.

[From an August 8 article by Todd DeFeo in the *Athens Banner-Herald* and a July 22 article by Lola Alapo in the *Knoxville News.*]

School Says Bench Stays Where It Is

Despite one parent's questions about its "overtly religious" content and a possible constitutional violation, Marietta City Schools officials say they have no plans to remove a bench from the Marietta High School campus inscribed with the words "Jesus Loves You!"

Marietta Superintendent Dr. Emily Lembeck said in a response letter to parent David Bernknopf on July 29 that the bench would stay. "On the

advice of legal counsel, there are no plans to do anything regarding the bench," Dr. Lembeck stated.

Smyrna resident Ed Buckner, secretary of the local chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said the bench message clearly violates state and federal law, which regulates religious content on public property. "It implies to anyone who sees it that the government is endorsing that particular point of view," he

said.

According to Buckner, the school should remove the bench or face the potential of a costly lawsuit. "I think they'll move it," he said. "I think it may require court action to do it, but I think they'll move it."

Buckner said his group was not planning to file a suit but said the school system is leaving itself open for other groups, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, to do so.

School Bench (*continued*)

"It's a bad idea to get into the business of which religion is right and which is wrong," he said. "What if the Atlanta Freethought Society wanted to put up a bench that said, 'There is no God?'" Buckner added. "Do you think they'd say 'Yes?' I don't."

For now, district spokesman Bill

Doughty said the bench would stay where it is because no one has specifically asked the school to remove it. If a formal request were made, he said, school officials would need to reconsider the issue.

The bench, located outside the high school's cafeteria and near the school

bus drop off area, was installed in 2001. Private donations from the school's PTA paid for it as part of a large fund-raising campaign conducted before the new Whitlock Avenue school was built.

[From an August 2 article by C. Cunningham in the *Marietta Daily Journal*.]

Gov. Bush Touts Christian-based Program for Schools

Back on June 18, just before Father's Day, Gov. Jeb Bush announced that he wanted every public school in Florida to host a Christian-based program designed to increase fathers' participation in their children's lives.

The program, All Pro Dad, combines a biblical foundation with the draw of popular professional athletes to promote the belief that "the father is the head of the household" and that men should rely on God to help them be better parents and keep their marriages intact. It also encourages Bible reading.

"This is a really great program," Bush said at the news conference, though he did not make any reference to the project's Christian foundation. "The response of this program has been a success, and I hope it expands throughout the entire state to every school in every school district."

But critics say the program, which has a direct link on the Florida Department of Education Web site, clearly has Christian overtones and is part of a national effort by evangelicals who view public schools as recruiting fields.

An official state Web site should not be linked to such an organization, said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Lynn said the link violates the First Amendment, which prohibits government from establishing a state religion and at the same time prohibits government from interfering with religious practices.

"This has a very clear religious

message, so that's wrong and that should be stopped immediately," Lynn said from his office in Washington. "This is an overtly fundamentalist Christian worldview that's being promoted."

Florida K-12 public school Chancellor Jim Warford touted the program to the state's 67 school superintendents. "I encourage you to go to <http://www.allprodad.com/yourneighborhood.asp> to get a free introductory DVD about the program and how you can get fathers more involved in your schools," Warford wrote in a June 17 memo.

But Howard Simon, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, said Bush's endorsement of the program is indicative of the governor's disregard for the state constitution, which prohibits spending state money, directly or indirectly, on religious programs.

"It may be a wonderful program, but a program that encourages Bible reading and strengthening your relationship with God is not the kind of program that should be sponsored by the public schools, nor should it be the kind of program that is organized and facilitated by the public schools," Simon said.

"From vouchers, from faith-based initiatives, to the nation's first faith-based prisons, this governor has a blind spot when it comes to the constitutional requirement on separation of church and state. He's completely uncritical. He doesn't believe that reading the Bible and strengthening your relationship with God is a faith-

based message."

The Florida Supreme Court is now considering whether Bush's 6-year-old Opportunity Scholarship Program is constitutional. The program gives vouchers for students at failing schools to attend private schools, including religious schools.

Two lower courts have struck down the voucher program, declaring it violated the constitutional provision barring state tax dollars from being spent on religious institutions.

One of the marriage-saving lessons, written by All Pro Dad Director Bryan Davis, coaches men to pray with their wives. "God has joined you and your wife together. He is the Author of love and marital harmony. Deepening your relationship with Him is the key and foundation of a successful marriage. If you haven't cracked open a Bible in a while, start. Find I Corinthians 13 and give it a read. It's the perfect blueprint for your marriage," the lesson advises.

A video introduction by Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy, All Pro Dad's national spokesman, lays the groundwork for good parenting by establishing the father as the "head coach" of the family.

"That's the biblical way it's set up. Mom and Dad directing the family together, with the dad being the head of the household," Dungy instructs participants. "Now that doesn't always happen... but that's the ideal way and the best way, and that's the way we're going to function the best."

[From a July 6 article by Dara Kam in the *Palm Beach Post*.]

Congratulations to atheist Lance Armstrong, who won his seventh consecutive Tour de France on July 24.

Bo Turner, AU of Ga. President, Deceased

The Reverend Charles “Bo” Turner, a minister known in north Georgia for his philanthropy and outspoken opposition to the mix of politics and religion, died on July 16 at his home. He was 72.

Turner was the president of the Georgia chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. He was an opponent of the placement of the Ten Commandments display in Habersham County. For two years, Turner successfully battled the county over the issue with support from the American Civil Liberties Union.

Turner was unconventional by most standards. He rode a motorcycle and had a tattoo that read, “Jesus was a liberal.” He served as a pastor at Tallulah Falls Baptist Church, where he celebrated his 25-year anniversary with the congregation in March.

Turner was the co-founder of the Northeast Georgia Habitat for Humanity. He worked with the group’s founder, Millard Fuller, and former President Jimmy Carter in the foundation’s early years.

He served on Clarkesville’s city council and as mayor from 1979-88.

Turner, a military veteran and graduate of Piedmont College, is survived by his wife, Emma, three sons and seven grandchildren.

In an editorial on July 19 in the Gainesville, GA *Times* newspaper, editors wrote that “Turner was practically the only local public voice of the

religious left. He often wrote columns for *The Times*, frequently quoting the Bible and aiming his comments directly at the religious right. He fully believed what he was saying, but he sometimes was short and did not explain his reasoning. He operated like a flame-thrower, and his words created plenty of heat.”

“While some people found his views believable, others became fighting mad. Bo would say, ‘It’s OK if you disagree with me, but why are you so angry?’ ... Bo Turner was a man who wanted to change the thinking of radical religious conservatives.”

When the Habersham County Commission posted the Ten Commandments in the courthouse, Turner sued with backing of the American Civil Liberties Union. The court ruled against the commission, and the commandments were taken down.

Turner said he could not understand why other Baptist preachers did not join him because the church “has always been separation-of-church-and-state people.”

In a book he authored in 1996, Turner wrote about his respect for President Thomas Jefferson. “Jefferson was a strong advocate for separation of church and state. He believed that where either was totally in control, the minority would suffer persecution at the hands of the majority,” Turner wrote.

Turner listened to the needy and

the underdogs. “I believe it is a contradiction to claim kinship with God, and then ignore the very people that the Bible identifies as being God’s primary concern – the poor and oppressed among us,” he said.

He was heavily involved in Habitat for Humanity. Millard Fuller, the organization’s original founder, went to the Tallulah Falls Baptist Church last March 20 to speak on the occasion of Turner’s 25th anniversary as pastor.

People who influenced Turner included Clarence Jordan, a Christian civil rights activist who founded Koinonia in 1942, a racially mixed commune near Americus where Habitat for Humanity was born. Jordan later wrote the Cotton Patch Gospel that was turned into a musical with Jesus being born today in Gainesville, then going head to head with the governor of Alabama, the IRS, televangelists and the Ku Klux Klan. A related documentary, “Briars in the Cotton Patch,” was shown on most of the nation’s public television channels this past February and has won a number of awards.

There is no doubt that Bo Turner spoke from his heart. He made some people think and he made some people mad, but they all had one thing in common: they paid attention when he had something to say.

[From a July 19 editorial in the (Gainesville) *Times* and a July 17 AP article.]

Remembering the Humanism of Martin Luther King

Written by Jeff Nall

Today it’s fashionable to recall Martin Luther King Jr. as a civil rights hero and passionate reverend. But sadly, amidst his legacy the entirety of his intellectual prowess and vast philosophical wisdom often goes unrecognized. Particularly troubling, King has become a tool for a variety of causes wrongly associated with him, including the attack on the separation of church and state.

In 2003 George W. Bush said,

“There’s still a need for us to hear the words of Martin Luther King to make sure the hope of America extends its reach into every neighborhood across this land.” But considering the president’s efforts to combine God and government, it seems that Bush himself is ignorant of King’s words and at least two of his salient ideas. King was a proponent of the separation of church and state and was also one of religion’s most ardent critics.

In a 1965 interview with *Playboy*, King was asked how he felt about the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision ruling school prayer unconstitutional. In response he said:

“I endorse it. I think it was correct. Contrary to what many have said, it sought to outlaw neither prayer nor belief in God. In a pluralistic society such as ours, who is to determine what prayer shall be spoken, and by whom? Legally, constitutionally, or

Martin Luther King (*continued*)

otherwise, the state certainly has no such right. I am strongly opposed to the efforts that have been made to nullify the decision. "

In another clear endorsement of church-state separation, King stated that the church "is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool."

Though King's legacy is often inextricably linked to his faith in God, he was hardly a cheerleader for the church as he found it and is best understood as a philosopher and social leader who happened to be a Christian minister. For example, King believed the church had failed to fight for peace and social and economic justice. He also chided churches across the United States for having done little to fight segregation and racism. "It is to their everlasting shame," he said, "that white Christians developed a system of racial segregation within the church and inflicted so many indignities upon its Negro worshippers that they had to organize their own churches."

King also blamed organized religion for its willing support of violent resolutions:

"In a world gone mad with arms buildups, chauvinistic passions, and imperialistic exploitation, the church has either endorsed these activities or remained appallingly silent. During the last two world wars, national churches even functioned as the ready lackeys of the state, sprinkling holy water upon the battleships and joining the mighty armies in singing, 'Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.' A weary world, pleading desperately for peace, has often found the church morally sanctioning war."

By this we see that King didn't advocate that the Christian church take the reigns of government, as the Bush administration seems determined to do. He believed, rather, that "the contemporary church" is "often the arch-supporter of the status quo."

Moreover, King was hardly a pro-

ponent of contemporary dogma—the kind that insists on favoring creationism over evolution. King berated what he called softmindedness. "Softminded individuals," he said, "are prone to embrace all kinds of superstitions... The soft-minded man always fears change." More specifically, King wrote:

"Softmindedness often invades religion. This is why religion has sometimes rejected new truth with a dogmatic passion. Through edits and bulls, inquisitions and excommunications, the church has attempted to prorogue truth and place an impenetrable stone wall in the path of the truth-seeker."

He goes on to criticize soft-minded persons for having "revised the Beatitudes to read, 'Blessed are the pure in ignorance: for they shall see God.'"

Defending the importance of science, King wrote, "Science keeps religion from sinking into the valley of crippling irrationalism and paralyzing obscurantism." This appreciation of science, though hardly acknowledged by most, isn't surprising. In arguing against notions of black racial inferiority, he frequently cited current anthropological research that revealed what he called "the falsity of such a notion." And on more than one occasion, he even lauded "the philological-historical criticism of biblical literature," saying it "has been of immeasurable value and should be defended with religious and scientific passion." We don't hear much today about how King was positively influenced by such atheistic, existentialist philosophers as Friedrich Nietzsche and John Paul Sartre. Yet King said, while "finding things to question in each, I nevertheless learned a great deal from study of them."

Yes, Martin Luther King Jr. was much more than just a reverend or just a civil rights champion; he was a learned philosopher who understood the importance of reason and balance in society. Unlike some of the Christian extremists who use his name for their cause and political gains, King

valued the pluralism of American society and respected the U.S. Constitution. He never would have supported the corrupt motivation behind continual efforts to unite church and state—particularly the current attempt to pass the so called 'Religious Freedom' amendment, which, according to Americans United for Separation of Church and State, would "allow officially sanctioned prayer in public schools, display of religious symbols at public buildings and other governmental promotions of religion." King would have recognized such an effort as nothing more than a ruse to pour a particular brand of religion into every crevice of secular society.

Moreover, King would have seen the proposed 'Religious Freedom' amendment as yet holy subterfuge, aimed at blinding people from the real problems our society continues to face. There is no doubt that King was a devout Christian man, but unlike today's religious radicals, King understood that his duty was to first care for his fellow humans, his neighbors. As he put before a group of striking sanitation workers, in his last speech, the day before he was assassinated:

"It's alright to talk about 'long white robes over yonder,' in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's alright to talk about 'streets flowing with milk and honey,' but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's alright to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preachers must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis Tennessee."

(Jeff Nall lives in central Florida. He has written for various publications including *The Humanist*, *Clamor*, *Online Journal*, and *Impact Press*.)

[This article previously published by www.TowardFreedom.com, a progressive perspective on world events. It is reprinted here by permission.]

Clipped

Letters to the Editor from AFS Members

Ed Buckner's letter was in the *Marietta Daily Journal* on August 2, 2005.
Steve Yothment's letter was in Fayette County's *Citizen News* on August 3, 2005.
Ray Knisley's letter was in the Knoxville, TN *News Sentinel* on July 9, 2005.

Price should pay heed to his denomination's history

The Rev. Dr. Nelson Price has written in several recent MDJ columns about the "misunderstood" First Amendment, but it is he, not others, who misunderstands. Jefferson, Madison, the ACLU, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and many others supported and support separation of church and state as crucial for liberty. None of these has ever tried to suppress public religious expression - only to prevent governmental support for religious or irreligious ideas. Restrictions on government, not on religious expression, are what the First Amendment requires.

Hundreds of quotations from Jefferson, Madison, and other framers can be used to show that this is what they had in mind. Indeed, a great source of such quotations is the Web page of the Joint Baptist Committee for Religious Liberty. But, since Price is a Baptist and has quoted Baptists, here's a fair and accurate summary of some Baptist viewpoints.

John Leland, who Price quoted, wrote explicitly that the idea of government support for religion was wrong and that everyone - Christian, Jew, Muslim, or nonbeliever - should be free of religious instruction coming from government. He insisted that a Christian government was a dangerous mistake.

Isaac Backus, a colonial Baptist leader from New England, demanded separation of state and church specifically because the state is incompetent to make any religious decisions for citizens.

And, from the source that should probably be most interesting of all to Price, his own Southern Baptist Convention adopted a statement of faith in 1980, reaffirmed in 2000, that stated clearly that, "Church and state should be separate." That statement went on to denounce attempts by any church to get government to do their work for them, and it declared that, "The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion."

I would urge Price - and other Baptists - to pay heed to their own history and their leaders' own words.

Ed Buckner
Secretary, Georgia Chapter
Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Court right to halt fed funds for Scouts

How is it that Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee has a letter to the editor in *The Citizen*? Does he live in Fayette County? No. Does he live in Georgia? No.

Why does Senator Frist lie, saying that the ACLU said that the Boy Scouts of America violate the Establishment Clause because they require members to "privately exercise their religious faith as directed by their families and religious advisors." The ACLU court complaint said nothing of the sort!

All U.S. citizens have the right to freely exercise their faith as they see fit. That's a constitutional right. What the Boy Scouts do not have is the right to receive \$7 million dollars per year from the federal government for funding of their activities.

That's how U. S. District Court Judge Blanche Manning in Illinois ruled in the ACLU case against Boy Scouts of America back on June 22.

The ACLU argued that the Boy Scouts are a private religious group, since they do not allow non-religious people or gays to be members or leaders in their organization. And since they are a private religious group, the government should not fund their activities. Federal Judge Manning agreed.

So the Boy Scouts may freely discriminate as a private religious group, denying the non-religious and gays access to employment or membership in their organization. But as a private religious group, they do not have access to federal funds to pay for their activities.

The judge's ruling was correct.

If Senator Frist wants the Boy Scouts to receive federal funding, the Scouts will have to stop their discrimination against gays and non-religious people.

Steve Yothment
Peachtree City, Ga.

[Yothment writes that he is president of the Atlanta Freethought Society.]

Faith-based fever can be detrimental

A letter of June 25, "Heinous acts committed by terrorists, murderers" points out too clearly and irrefutably what is wrong with religious fundamentalism. It is incredible that the writer doesn't see his own shortsighted, pot-calling-the-kettle-black, dogmatic position.

He is transparently astute in his logic that the 9/11 terrorists were religious fanatics whose faith-based hatred drove those airplanes into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center towers.

It is just as clear, just as plain, that the faith-based fever that afflicts our president with misshapen, monstrous religious revenge drove him to tell a pack of lies for an excuse to invade Iraq.

And it is clear that the letter writer supports "heinous acts committed by terrorists, murderers." But just those approved by his own version of holy books and, perhaps, of Halliburton and Co.

Ray Knisley
Rockmart, GA

July Board Meeting Minutes

Present: President Steve Yothment, presiding
VPI Judy Thompson, acting recording secretary
VPE Freya Harris, Treasurer Ed Buckner, Diane Buckner, Bill Burton, Lew Southern, Jack McKinney

Date/Time: July 17, 2005, 3:00 PM

- ▶ Minutes of the May meeting were unanimously approved as published in the newsletter.
- ▶ Ed Buckner provided a Treasurer's Report for the period of Jan 1, 2005 through June 30, 2005. Ed noted that the pledge drive ended on June 30. Fewer donations and pledges were received than anticipated. However, through Ed's efforts, we have replaced some of our high-

interest debt with lower-interest unsecured loans from members.

- ▶ After some discussion, the board agreed to decide by October 1 if we can afford to terminate Dr. Tu's lease for Suite 400.
- ▶ Steve agreed to research the terms of our agreement with the GA Humanists.
- ▶ Steve agreed to schedule needed building maintenance.
- ▶ Freya will cull the used book inventory.
- ▶ The board was concerned about rumors regarding Larry Darby, but will take no formal position at present.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.

AFS Treasurer's Report, 1 January 2005—30 June 2005

[Summary—details available to members from treasurer]

Ed Buckner, AFS Treasurer

CUMULATIVE REPORT—Covers all of first six months of 2005; starting balance was -\$74.

INCOME

Book Sales (mostly <i>Baubles of Blasphemy</i>)	\$4,550
Donations and pledge payments	10,184
Dues	1,550
Loans received	17,000
Merchandise sales	425
Other/unknown	61
Rebate/refund of real estate taxes, City of Roswell	161
<u>Rent, Suite 400</u>	<u>5,250</u>
TOTAL INCOME	\$39,181

EXPENSES

Condo assn. fees (were \$100/month/suite; now \$125/month/suite)	\$1,450
Administrative expenses (copies, insurance, fund-drive letter, etc.)	716
Loan payments	13,761
Maintenance and repairs, Suites 400 and 500	142
Newsletter, printing and postage	674
Publishing	4,635
Sales tax paid to State of Georgia	30
Speakers/programs	519
<u>Utilities</u>	<u>589</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$22,516

BALANCE as of 30 June 2005

PayPal Account (now earning interest—first dividend on 1st July 2005)	\$1,165
<u>Checking</u>	<u>\$15,427</u>

ENDING BALANCE **\$16,592**

*Note: Among other expenses paid in the first week or two **after** the close of this report, \$11,400 was paid on outstanding loans; \$10,000 of the income shown, above, was a loan agreed specifically to reduce other, higher-interest, debt.*

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Household memberships: A household is defined as two members sharing one newsletter, and is available for \$35 per year. Since some of our households have additional members, there will be a \$5 per year charge for each additional voting household member.

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Annual dues are:

Membership	Dues	# of mems	Total
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Household (2 members)	\$35	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional household mems	\$5 ea	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Low income/Student/Under 21	\$10	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Subscription only	\$20	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member	\$100	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Household	\$125	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Postage for Canada/Mexico	\$5	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Postage for other foreign addresses	\$10	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra donation (thank you!)		_____	\$ _____
TOTAL			\$ _____

Please send this form with payment to:
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 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500
 Roswell, GA 30075

Baubles of Blasphemy

By Edwin F. Kagin

ORDER FORM

Purchaser: _____ Tel. _____

E-mail address: _____

If company or organization, representative: _____

Ship to address: _____

Billing address: _____

(if different) _____

Copies: 1 copy \$20 _____ (gross)

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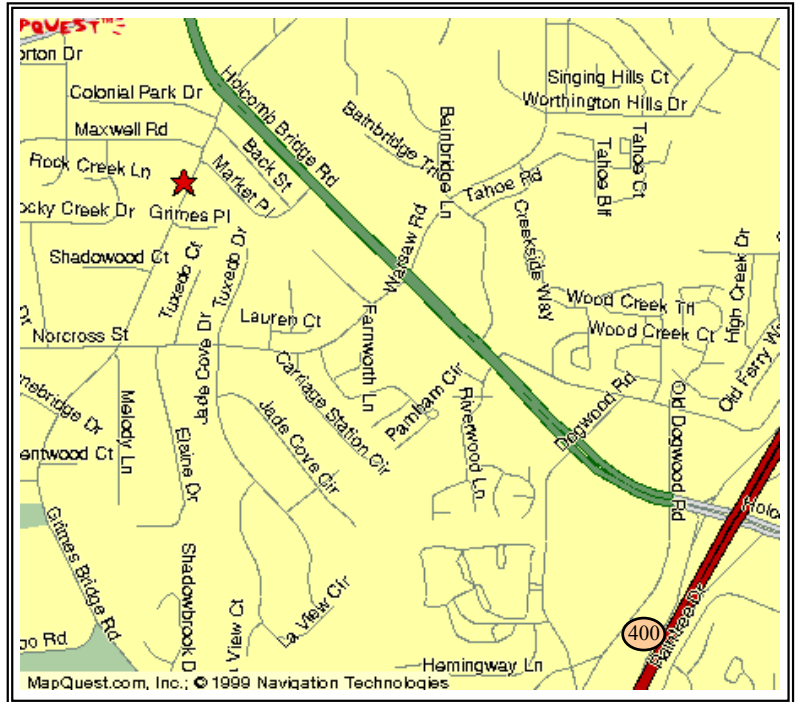
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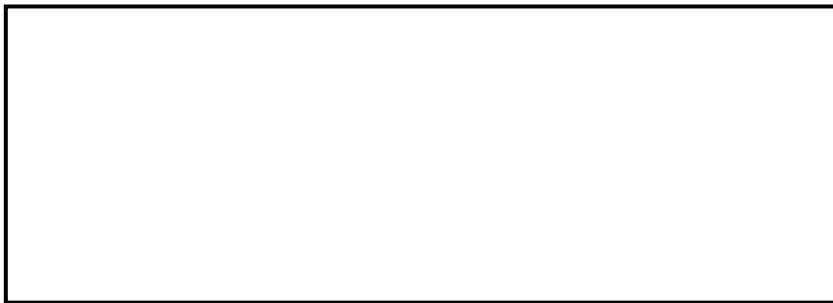


**The August Meeting:
 Sunday, August 14
 1:00 at the AF Center
 1170 Grimes Bridge Road
 Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speakers:
 Johnna Gardner, Burke Johnson**



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