

# Atlanta Freethought News

*Dare to Think for Yourself*

An AFS Publication • Volume 14 Number 8 • August 2008

## The August 10 AFS Meeting

The August 10 AFS meeting will include a talk by **Denis Martin** on "What Does 'Free' in 'Free-thinking' Mean?"

Dr. Martin received his PhD in Philosophy from Emory University in 1983, and was an education administrator for St. Leo University from 1985 to 2000. He has also taught at Georgia Military College, Shorter College, Georgia State (GSU) and Emory University.

The meeting will be at our new property, **Atlanta Freethought Hall**, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Smyrna, GA, at 1:00 PM. (Please feel free to arrive early for snacks and conversation.)

To get there, take I-285 (the perimeter road around Atlanta) to Exit 16 (Atlanta Road). Turn toward Atlanta. Go ½ mile and then turn right onto N. Church Lane. Go only 300 feet to Atlanta Freethought Hall, which is on the left.

### AFS Meetings and Activities

Aug 10: AFS General Meeting at AF Hall, 1:00 PM.

Aug 15: AFS Social, Panahar Restaurant, 7:00 PM.

Aug 27: Ben Radford at AF Hall, 7:00 PM.

## Ben Radford at AFS on August 27

**Benjamin Radford** will speak at the AF Hall in Smyrna, GA on Wednesday, August 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. The topic: "Sea Monsters I Have Loved and Almost Known." The meeting is FREE and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. Ben will also have T-shirts for sale.

Ben Radford is an investigator and editor of two science magazines, author of three books, and columnist for *Skeptical Inquirer* and LiveScience.com. He has appeared on the History Channel, Learning Channel, CNN and others. See his website at <http://www.radfordbooks.com/>.

## The August AFS Social

The next **AFS Social** will be at Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy, Atlanta, on Friday, August 15, at 7:00 PM.

## No August Reading Group Meeting

The **AFS Reading Group** will NOT meet in August. (It's summertime! Enjoy the great outdoors!) The group will return in September, meeting at Wordsmiths Books, 545 N. McDonough St., in Decatur, GA, to discuss the book *The Blood of the Lamb: A Novel* by Peter De Vries. Order the book now so you can read it before this meeting!

## Other Meetings of Interest

The **Fellowship of Reason** meets on the first Sunday of every month at 1:00 PM at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Hwy, in Atlanta. For details, see <http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at the Atlanta Freethought Hall on July 20 at 1:00 PM. Dr. Richard Bennett will speak on "Middle East Affairs." For more information, see <http://www.geocities.com/gahumanists/>.

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

**GUST** (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Gwinnett (12

Bethesda Church Road, in Lawrenceville) on Wednesday, August 13, at 7:00 PM. For details, see <http://gust.domek.org/>.

A **Freethought Discussion Group** meets in Fayetteville, GA on Wednesdays at 7:30 PM at Starbucks on Hwy 54. The group also meets for lunch on the first and third Saturday of the month. For more information, contact Shelby Weddle, the group's leader, at [freediscussion@hotmail.com](mailto:freediscussion@hotmail.com).

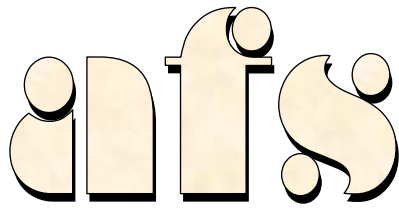
There will be a "**meetup**" for Atlanta atheists on Sunday, August 10, at 6:00 PM at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur, GA.

Yet another **meetup** for Atlanta atheists is scheduled for Sunday, August 24, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Atlanta.

The Atlanta Freethought Society will have some cabinets for sale at the August meeting. These would be a nice addition to any garage or basement. Please see Mark Banks at the meeting if you would like to purchase them.

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." – Ben Franklin

Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free people and who would preserve what is good and fruitful in our national heritage. – Dwight D. Eisenhower



**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.

Aug 10: Dennis Martin will speak on "What Does 'Free' in 'Free-thinking' Mean?"

Sept 14: Chris Wilson will speak on his new book *Healing The Unhappy Caveman*. (See <http://www.enlightenedcaveman.com/>.)

Oct 12: Dr. Niall Shanks will speak on his new book *God, the Devil, and Darwin: A Critique of Intelligent Design Theory*.

Nov 9: TBD

## AFS Email Lists

The **AFS eNews** Announcement list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities and news. The **AFS Forum** is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation, and religion. Visit the AFS website at <http://www.atlantafreethought.org> for more info or to subscribe.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of free-thinkers, 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

**Editor**

Steve Yothment

**How to Contact the Editor**

Send correspondence to AFS at:  
4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Smyrna, GA 30080-7224  
or phone Steve at 678-364-8703  
or send e-mail to [SteveYoth@aol.com](mailto:SteveYoth@aol.com).

**Atlanta Freethought Society**

**President**

Steve Yothment – 678-364-8703

**VP for Internal Communication**

Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020

**VP for External Communication**

Freya Harris – 404-845-2276

**Secretary**

Dennis Martin – 404-817-0413

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Bill Burton – 770-469-1228

Tony King – 706-886-9224

Jack McKinney – 770-424-5004

Lew Southern – 770-509-8272

**The Atlanta Freethought News**

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**AFS Webmaster:** Walter Bell

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# Skeptic Track at Dragon\*Con is Coming!

Skeptic Track is a celebration of skeptical thought, freethinking and science at Dragon\*Con in Atlanta

This year, 2008, will be the beginning of the new Skeptic Track segment of the Dragon\*Con convention in Atlanta on the weekend of August 29-31. All of the main Skep-track content will be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Atlanta Downtown Hilton in the Fayette/Newton rooms unless otherwise noted on the schedule.

The Skeptic Track will host an amazing line-up of top guests for its first year. Organizers plan to record all of the panel discussions via a podcast feed, and plan to do live blogging from the convention floor. The podcasts and blogs are fun if you can't make it to the convention, but the best way to know what is going on is to

come to the party yourself!

Some of the highlights will be a second year of the Believers vs. Skeptics Debate, and a live Million Dollar Challenge on the convention floor.

AFS member Derek Colanduno is a major organizer of the event. Find out more at <http://www.skeptrack.org/>. Then, register at <http://www.dragoncon.org/>.

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## Skeptrack Schedule 2008

This schedule is subject to change, so check the website for updates.

### Friday, August 29th Program and Speakers

- 1:00PM - 2:00PM [Skeptics 101](#) with James Randi, Michael Shermer, DJ Grothe, Phil Plait, Ben Radford, Jeff Wagg and Richard Saunders
- 2:30PM - 3:30PM [Why Magic Is Important](#) with James Randi, DJ Grothe and Jeff Wagg
- 4:00PM - 5:00PM [Lake Monsters I Have Known](#) with Ben Radford
- 5:30PM - 6:30PM [Skeptics and Nontheists: A Politically Powerful Alliance](#) with Lori Lipman-Brown
- 7:00PM - 8:00PM [Skepticism vs. Dogma](#) with Jeff Wagg
- 8:30PM - 9:30PM [SAPS Investigates: On The Trail Of Ghosts](#) with Alison Smith
- 10:00PM - 11:00PM [Selling The Impossible](#) with Pamela Gay
- 11:30PM - 12:30AM [Beamed Aboard a UFO by a Psychic Sasquatch](#) with Rick Wood

### Saturday, August 30th Program and Speakers

- 10:00AM - 11:00AM [Get A Life! Keeping a Sense of Fun in Non-Theist Politics](#) with Lori Lipman-Brown
- 11:30AM - 12:30PM [Point of Inquiry - LIVE!](#) with DJ Grothe
- 1:00PM - 2:00PM [Bad Astronomy and Death from the Skies](#) with Phil Plait
- 2:30PM - 3:30PM [Science Based Medicine](#) with Steven Novella
- 4:00PM - 5:00PM [2nd Annual Skeptics vs. Believers Debate](#) with Skeptics Ben Radford, Alison Smith, Steven Novella and Michael Shermer, Believers Graham Watkins and Patrick Burns, and Moderator Michael Stackpole (*Hyatt Regency 6-7*)
- 5:30PM - 6:30PM [American Freethought - LIVE!](#) with AFS members David Driscoll and John C. Snider
- 7:00PM - 8:00PM [Issues in Education](#) with Michael Shermer, Karen Stollznow, Phil Plait, Lori Lipman-Brown
- 8:30PM - 9:30PM [Reflections on a Decade of Paranormal Investigation](#) with Ben Radford
- 10:00PM - 12:30AM [An Evening With George Hrab](#) with George Hrab, and possibly, SoccerGirl

### Sunday, August 31st Program and Speakers

- 10:00AM - 11:00AM [Supernatural How-To](#) with Richard Saunders
- 11:30AM - 12:30PM [Skeptics Guide To The Universe - LIVE!](#) with Steven and Bob Novella, Evan Bernstein
- 1:00PM - 2:00PM [The TANK - LIVE!](#) with Richard Saunders, Karen Stollznow and Kylie Sturgess
- 2:30PM - 3:30PM [The Truth About Psychic Detectives](#) with Ben Radford
- 4:00PM - 5:00PM [Pastafarian? Zoroastrian? Atheist? Can't We All Get Along?](#) with Lori Lipman-Brown
- 5:30PM - 6:30PM [The JREF Million Dollar Challenge](#) with James Randi, Jeff Wagg and Alison Smith (HR6-7)
- 7:00PM - 8:00PM [Shermers Last Law](#) with Michael Shermer (Marriott A601/602)
- 8:30PM - 9:30PM [The Future of Skepticism - Where Do We Go From Here?](#) With James Randi, Ben Radford, Michael Shermer and DJ Grothe
- 10:00PM - 11:30PM [Audio Martini - LIVE!](#) with Rick Wood

### Monday, September 1st Program and Speakers

- 10:00AM - 11:00AM [Practical Techniques in Public Skepticism](#) with Michael Stackpole
- 11:30AM - 12:30PM [Global Skepticism](#) with Richard Saunders, Kylie Sturgess and Karen Stollznow
- 1:00PM - 4:00PM [Skeptrack Sign-Off Party](#) A talk about what happened over the weekend



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## Preacher Killed Wife, Stuffed Body in Freezer, Police Say

**A** Mobile, Alabama evangelical preacher killed his wife several years ago and stuffed her body in a freezer after she caught him abusing their daughter, according to police and court documents.

Anthony Hopkins, 37, was arrested on July 28 at the Inspirational Tabernacle Church of God in Christ in Jackson, Alabama, just after he had delivered a sermon to a congregation that included his seven other children, officials said.

He faces charges of murder, rape, sodomy, sexual abuse and incest.

The case began on July 28, when the daughter, now 19, went to the Mobile Police Department's Child Advocacy Center and reported that she had been sexually abused by Hopkins since she was 11 years old, according to an affidavit filed in support of a search warrant of the preacher's home in Mobile.

The affidavit related the daughter's story as follows:

Her mother, Arletha Hopkins, 36, caught her father abusing her in a bathroom in November 2004. After-

ward, her parents argued, and her mother locked her father out of the house. The father came to the daughter's window and asked her to let him in, and she did so.

The next morning, her father asked her to help him hide her mother's body in the freezer in the laundry room of the home.

The girl said she moved out of the home about two weeks ago and was living with a neighbor. She told police that her mother's body was still in the freezer.

When authorities went to the home, no one was there, as Hopkins and the other children were at the church. A body was found in the freezer, the affidavit says.

Although police thought the body was that of Arletha Hopkins, an identification was not expected until early the next week.

At the Inspirational Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, Hopkins was preaching at a revival. Police allowed Hopkins to finish his sermon before arresting him. Pastor Beverly Jackson asked police why they were arresting

him and was told, "He murdered his wife."

She said Hopkins had told her his wife died four years ago while giving birth to their youngest son.

Mobile Police Chief Phillip Garrett said authorities moved quickly on the daughter's accusations to make sure the children still in the household were OK. They were placed in the custody of child welfare authorities. The next-oldest child is a 17-year-old female, he said.

All eight were the children of Arletha Hopkins, and Anthony Hopkins fathered six of them, he said.

Garrett said Hopkins did not have a regular church but preached in various areas around the South.

"Part of the mystery here is that, apparently, none of these children were in school" but were being home-schooled, Mobile County District Attorney John Tyson said. "Home schooling, under this situation, removes almost any chances of us catching up with these kinds of things until there is a catastrophe."

[This article is from multiple sources.]

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## Police Say Man Shot Churchgoers Over Liberal Views

**An** out-of-work truck driver apparently opened fire at a Unitarian church in Knoxville, TN on July 27, killing two people. The man left behind a note saying that he targeted the congregation out of hatred for its liberal policies, including its acceptance of gays, authorities said.

A four-page letter found in Jim D. Adkisson's small SUV indicated he intentionally targeted the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church because, Police Chief Sterling Owen said, "he hated the liberal movement" and was upset with "liberals in general as well as gays."

Adkisson, a 58-year-old truck driver on the verge of losing his food stamps, had 76 rounds with him when he entered the church and pulled a semi-automatic shotgun from a guitar case during a children's performance of

the musical "Annie."

Witnesses said the attack was cut short after some church members tackled the gunman and held him until police arrived.

The Unitarian-Universalist church advocates for women's rights and gay rights and has provided sanctuary for political refugees. It also has fed the homeless and founded a chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, according to its Web site.

About 200 people from throughout the community were watching 25 children performing "Annie" when the suspect entered the church.

Church member Barbara Kemper said the gunman shouted "hateful words" before he opened fire.

A burly usher, 60-year-old Greg McKendry, was hailed as a hero for shielding others from gunfire as other

church members rushed to wrestle the gunman to the ground. Police arrived at 10:21 a.m., three minutes after getting the 911 call and arrested him.

No children were hurt, but eight people were shot, including the two who died — McKendry and Linda Kraeger, 61.

Adkisson was a loner who hated "blacks, gays and anyone different from him," acquaintance Carol Smallwood told the local News Sentinel.

Amy Broyles, who was visiting the church to see her daughter in the play, said Adkisson "was a man who was hurt in the world and feeling that nothing was going his way. He turned the gun on people who were most likely to treat him lovingly and compassionately and be the ones to help someone in that situation."

[This article is from multiple sources.]

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# Prescription For Controversy: Bush Endorses Move To Curtail Access To Birth Control

By Sandhya Batrhija, from an August 1 entry at <http://blog.au.org>

The Bush administration is at it again—that is, pushing its religious agenda, this time by limiting reproductive freedom.

In the final months of his administration, President Bush is trying to force through a draft regulation that will “deny federal funding to any hospital, clinic, health plan or other entity that does not accommodate employees who want to opt out of participating in care that runs counter to their personal convictions,” the *Washington Post* reported<sup>1</sup> on July 30. In other words, if a pharmacist doesn’t want to fill a birth control prescription, he doesn’t have to.

Advocates of this regulation, of course most coming from religiously-based organizations, are painting this as an anti-discrimination measure—ensuring that people who oppose contraceptives and abortion do not have to go against their religion in order to work for a hospital or health care entity. The report cites to “numerous cases in which health-care workers had to violate their consciences by providing birth control pills and other controversial medicine and conducting controversial procedures.

This concern over discrimination and religious liberty is the Religious Right’s continual strategy to push its very narrow viewpoint on the rest of the country. But this time it is quite

clear, even to medical experts and scientists, where this regulation stems from.

A National Institute of Health researcher told the *Post*, “It’s a redefinition of abortion that does not match any of the current medical definitions. It’s ideologically based and not based on science and could interfere with the development of many new therapies to treat diseases.”

Jill Morrison of the National Women’s Law Center told the *Post*, “You could imagine a group of people with less than honorable intentions seeking to get hired at a family planning clinic with the specific objective of obstructing access. Under this regulation, there is little you can do about it.”

And that is just what Bush and these religious-based organizations want.

Tom McClusky, a strategist with the Family Research Council, told the *Wall Street Journal*<sup>2</sup> that it “would be fantastic,” if the draft regulation prompted some insurance companies to drop coverage for prescription birth control.

I don’t understand how this can be done in the name of religious liberty. If a female pharmacist is opposed to birth-control pills on religious grounds, she doesn’t have to take them herself. But she doesn’t have the religious freedom to force others to

agree with her moral convictions by denying them access to medicine that has been prescribed by a doctor.

It is imperative that the government respects American diversity by not imposing one tradition’s narrow view (that of the Religious Right) on the entire country.

Thankfully, more than 100 members of Congress signed a letter<sup>3</sup> to Bush to stop this regulation. The letter says the draft regulation’s “definitions are so broad as to go far beyond abortion politics and threaten virtually any law or policy designed to protect women’s access to safe and effective birth control.”

There is a great irony here. Religious Right groups complain constantly about the abortion rate in America. Birth control, if properly and consistently used, could reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies. Yet these groups are so extreme they stand in the way of that by limiting Americans’ access to artificial contraceptives—all because of their narrow reading of the Bible or religious decrees.

Let’s hope pressure from Congress puts an end to what is hopefully one of the last of Bush’s ridiculous “faith-based” schemes.

[Reprinted with the permission of Americans United for Separation of Church & State.]

<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/30/AR2008073003238.html?nav=rss\\_health](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/30/AR2008073003238.html?nav=rss_health).

<sup>2</sup> See <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121745387879898315.html>.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Vote2008/story?id=5421109&page=1>.

Listen to Skepticity, the official podcast of Skeptic Magazine, by AFS members Derek and Swoopy at [http://www.skepticity.com/p\\_listentopast.php](http://www.skepticity.com/p_listentopast.php). On July 15, they interviewed Mel Lipman (president of American Humanist Association) and Lori Lipman-Brown (director of the Secular Coalition for America).

“[Organized religion can be] violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children.”  
— Christopher Hitchens, from *God Is Not Great: How Religion Spoils Everything*, 2007, page 56.

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## Bush Edits Out Jefferson's Religious Views

**Ed** Brayton noted in his weblog at <http://scienceblogs.com/> that President Bush's speechwriters made a serious edit to a famous quote by Thomas Jefferson.

Bush was at Monticello for a 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration and he delivered an address. But it's quite telling that his speechwriters, in quoting Jefferson, cut out an anti-religious statement from a long and famous quote. Here's the way Bush put it:

"Thomas Jefferson understood that these rights do not belong to Americans alone. They belong to all mankind. And he looked to the day when all people could secure them. On the 50th anniversary of America's independence, Thomas Jefferson passed away. But before leaving this world, he explained that the principles of the

Declaration of Independence were universal. In one of the final letters of his life, he wrote, 'May it be to the world, what I believe it will be—to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all—the Signal of arousing men to burst the chains, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government.'"

Now let's look at the full quote, including the part that was cut out. This is from a letter Jefferson wrote to Roger Weightman reflecting on the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence (which, it turns out, was the day both he and John Adams died):

"May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the

chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government."

To Jefferson, it was the rejection of the religious notion of divinely appointed leaders that allowed Americans "to assume the blessings and security of self-government." But the rejection of religious ideas, especially when called "monkish ignorance and superstition," was not acceptable for inclusion by Bush's speechwriters.

Brayton concluded his blog entry by saying "Jefferson made many such statements, of course. Clearly they are best edited out by those who advocate nothing if not monkish ignorance and superstition."

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"All eyes are opened, or opening to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of god. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them." — Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826, regarding the upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence



Here are some AFS members at the Lake Hypatia (Alabama) July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration. From left to right, Joel Kollin, William Baker, John Henderson, Karon Park, Ruth Henderson, Ed Buckner, Roberto Moraes, Lew Southern with Hallie, Steve Yothment, Laura Philips, Jack McKinney, Steve Lewis, Judy Thompson, Charles Shapiro. The photographer was Eric Pepke.



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# Marriage Myth: Family Research Council Ramps Up Pastor Scare Campaign

By Rob Boston, from a July 15 entry at <http://blog.au.org>

The Family Research Council has been busy trying to scare pastors all over America by telling them that their churches will soon be forced to perform same-sex marriages.

Recently, the FRC held a panel discussion<sup>1</sup> on this topic. Most of the panelists were the same-old homophobic crowd, except for Chai R. Feldblum, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center, who is a lesbian. I'm surprised that the FRC's Tony Perkins didn't faint upon meeting an actual gay person. (During the meeting, one attendee actually did faint, and an ambulance was summoned.)

An AU staffer attended the event and noted that Feldblum criticized the nightmare scenarios peddled by the Religious Right. Churches won't be forced to perform same-sex ceremonies, and pastors won't be tossed in jail for anti-gay sermons.

"That's probably unlikely to happen in this country," Feldblum said. "So it ends up having not a lot of credibility."

I agree—but I'd go beyond what Feldblum said and argue that jailed ministers and churches forced to provide same-sex unions aren't "probably unlikely." They are impossible.

That's because under the First Amendment, churches have an absolute right to determine which couples they will join together. Protestants have no right to demand to be married in a Catholic church. Atheists can't walk into the local Presbyterian church and demand a service. Churches are free

to place numerous conditions on couples seeking to marry, such as mandatory counseling, and most do. I am not aware of any legal case that has ever chipped away at church autonomy in this arena.

Feldblum pointed out that there will be conflicts in other arenas. For example, the FRC and allied groups love to point to a case pending in New Mexico that deals with a photography studio that is being sued because it denied services to a same-sex couple.

The Religious Right thinks this is a great horror story for their side, but they overlook one salient fact: a photography studio and a church are not equivalent entities from a legal perspective. Generally speaking, a secular business holds itself out as a "public accommodation" and pledges to serve all people. A church does no such thing. Churches, by dint of the First Amendment, have the right to refuse membership or services to anyone. Most businesses do not.

There was a time when blacks could not eat in certain restaurants, and when a wedding photographer could have refused service to an interracial couple. Anti-discrimination laws put a stop to that. Now, some gay-rights activists are arguing that secular businesses should be required to treat them equally as well. Such an argument might carry the day when applied to a business. It will fail every time when applied to a church.

Stories abound in the media of "pro-life pharmacists" who refuse to fill birth-control prescriptions and Mus-

lim taxi drivers who will not transport people carrying bottles of liquor. In one case, a Muslim grocery store clerk refused to ring up customers' packages of bacon.

Are these legitimate religious freedom claims? The courts will sort that out. In any case, it's important to remember that none of these services—the pharmacy, the taxi and the grocery store—is in the religion business. A house of worship is and thus can claim First Amendment protection. Perkins and his pals are trying to take rules that apply to businesses and say they will be imposed on churches as well. That is not going to happen.

The FRC is very worried about the November elections and is looking for any issue it can to stir up the Religious Right's shock troops and scare pastors. In that sense, the California high court ruling in favor of same-sex marriage was actually a gift for the group. Based on the number of fundraising appeals the FRC has sent out about it, I'd say it has been a lucrative one, too.

Near the end of her remarks, Feldblum expressed the hope that advocates on both sides would "stay in a reasonable conversation." I appreciate the sentiment, but having followed the Religious Right for more than 20 years, I must conclude that if Feldblum is looking for a reasonable conversation, she came to the wrong place.

[Reprinted with the permission of Americans United for Separation of Church & State.]

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.frc.org/panel/california-same-sex-marriage-the-impact-on-religious-liberty>.

In a July 31 "Washington Update" email, Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council complained about a new Planned Parenthood website (<http://www.takecaredownthere.org/>) that includes detailed and sometimes humorous information about birth control and STD prevention. The website has several videos of people talking about these issues. Even with no graphic information, it's too much for Perkins, who called it "the ins and outs about the ins and outs," and "highly inappropriate for adults, let alone young children." It makes you wonder where he expects people to receive education on these matters, if at all! — The Editor

The Atlanta Freethought Society is pleased to have the following books for sale at the next AFS meeting:



### **GOD.COM - A Deity for the New Millennium (2nd edition)**

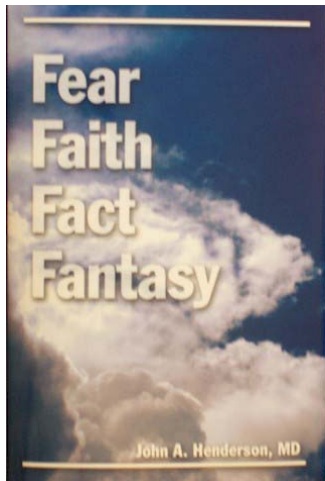
**By: Dr. John Henderson, MD**  
(ISBN: 1-887905-91-X)    **\$16 each**

This book may allow some people to overcome their fear of a vengeful, cruel God that they have been taught to believe in childhood.

It may encourage some people to speak out when they hear religious leaders employ their gods to incite cruelty and hatred.

The author believes that harmful, intolerant religious beliefs, which are the causes of so much strife and warfare, must be contained.

If there is ever to be peace in the world, religions must be kept in the churches, synagogues, and temples.



### **Fear Faith Fact Fantasy**

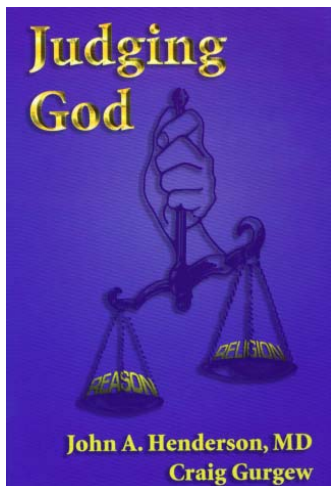
**By: Dr. John Henderson, MD**  
(ISBN: 1-887905-77-4)    **\$18 each**

The Jewish, Christian, Muslim (JCM) God is considered by millions of people to be the one and only God. The concept of the JCM God took shape at the time of Abraham and all three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, arose from the same geographic area. Most people who respect and worship the JCM God believe that they must answer to it for their afterlife. The JCM God is an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-righteous, and all-perfect being.

However, for centuries, atrocities were committed in the name of the JCM God. The most recent one that shook the civilized world was the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York where thousands of people perished. This bombing was done in the name of God.

As a result of the WTC bombing, Dr. Henderson wished that more people would begin to question the beliefs concerning the JCM God. He notes that the French philosopher Denis Diderot said, "The most dangerous madmen are those created by religion..."

In this book, Dr. Henderson examines the role of God and religion in our lives. He examines the concept of God, immortality, morality, and good and evil. He discusses the good and bad sides of religion and points out that religions are competitive businesses. He recommends that people examine religions skeptically and develop critical thinking skills; he proceeds to subject purported miracles of God to critical examination. He notes that God, ultimately, is ignorance and points out, despite claims to the contrary, that the word of God is not unchanging. Witness the current discussion on gays and lesbians in religious circles. Dr. Henderson closes his book with a proposal for a Bill of Religious Rights. Fear Faith Fact Fantasy is a witty, accessible, provocative book that encourages readers to use their critical thinking and logical skills in looking at religions and observe the catastrophic effects of mindless faith on humanity.



### **Judging God**

**By: Dr. John Henderson, MD and Craig Gurgew**  
(ISBN: 1-933251-42-4)    **\$18 each**

Religions and their gods have been judging man since man created his first god thousands of years ago. It is now our turn to judge gods. We cannot afford a god who does not live up to our standards of justice and morality. No longer can we afford a god who incites and condones intolerance, hatred, and killing. If there is to be peace on earth, we and we alone must define morality and strive to enforce justice among human societies. Gods have failed to do so. This book does not create another god but it dares to criticize the god in common usage today.



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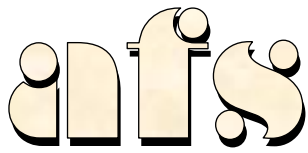
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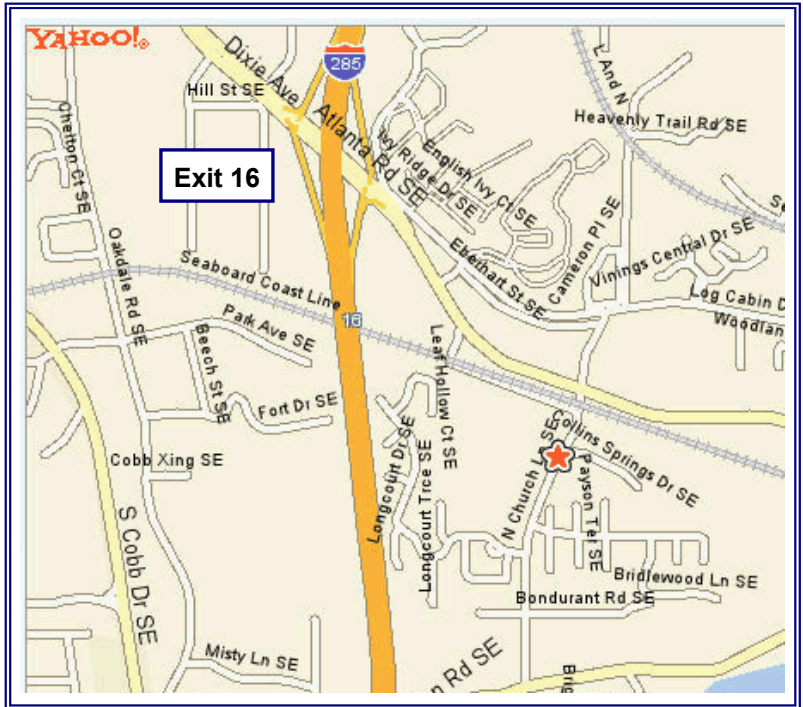
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1:00 at our New Location  
4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Smyrna, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
Dennis Martin, PhD**



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