

# Atlanta Freethought News

*Dare to Think for Yourself*

An AFS Publication • Volume 14 Number 9 • September 2008

## The September AFS Meeting

The September 14 AFS meeting will include a talk by **Chris Wilson** on his recently-published book, *Healing The Unhappy Caveman: Why The Human Mind Was Not Designed For Happiness And What You Can Do About It*. (You can see details of the book, an author biography and years of blog posts at <http://www.enlightenedcaveman.com/>.)

Chris will discuss rationality in modern society – specifically asking how rational we really are and whether there are limits to how rational we can (and should) be. The first 20 attendees will receive a free copy of his book.

The meeting will be at our new property, **Atlanta Freethought Hall**, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Smyrna, GA, at 2:00 PM, right after the Potluck Lunch.

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.

## The September Potluck Lunch

Before the September meeting, we will have a **Potluck Lunch**, starting at 1:00. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name as follows:

A-G: Bring a side dish;

H-P: Bring a main dish;

Q-Z: Bring a dessert.

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

Folding chairs are not needed. (We now have painted seating benches along three sides of the pavilion.)

## The AFS Social

The next **AFS Social** will be at Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy, Atlanta, on Friday, September 19, at 7:00 PM.

## The AFS Yard Sale: September 20

The Atlanta Freethought Society will have a **Yard Sale** from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM on Saturday, September 20, at Atlanta Freethought Hall. Bring your stuff and be ready for some good deals. See the article on page 4 for details.

## The AFS Reading Group

The **AFS Reading Group** will meet on Thursday, September 25, at 7:30 PM at Atlanta Freethought Hall. The group will discuss any books read in the past few months. (We've not met for the past 2 months). On the reading list especially for this meeting was the book *The Blood of the Lamb: A Novel* by Peter De Vries.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Steve Yothment or Brian Shriver at [bookclub@atlantafreethought.org](mailto:bookclub@atlantafreethought.org).

## AFS Meetings and Activities

- Sept 14: AFS Board Meeting at AF Hall, 11:00 AM.
- Sept 14: AFS Potluck Lunch at AF Hall, 1:00 PM.
- Sept 14: AFS General Meeting at AF Hall, 2:00 PM.
- Sept 19: AFS Social, Panahar Restaurant, 7:00 PM.
- Sept 20: AFS Yard Sale at AF Hall, 10:00 to 3:00.
- Sept 25: AFS Reading Group at AF Hall, 7:30 PM.

## 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 AF Hall Pavilion on September 21 at 1:00 PM for their annual picnic. For details, 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

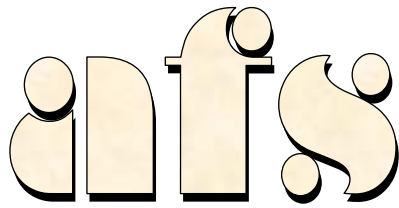
Bethesda Church Road, in Lawrenceville) on Wednesday, Sept. 10, at 7:00 PM. For details, see <http://gust.domek.org/>.

A **Freethought Discussion Group** meets in Fayetteville, GA on Wednesdays at 7:00 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, September 14, 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, September 28, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Atlanta.

“Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge: it is those who know little, and not those who know much, who so positively assert that this or that problem will never be solved by science.” —Charles Darwin, from *The Descent of Man*



**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.

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

Dec 14: 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

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Steve Yothment

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Call and leave messages on the

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# Americans United Hails Florida Supreme Court Ruling Removing Deceptive Amendments From Florida Ballot

The Decision Preserves Florida Constitution's Religious Liberty Protections, Says Church-State Watchdog Group

Americans United for Separation of Church and State issued a press release on September 3 hailing the ruling by the Florida Supreme Court that removed two ballot amendments that would have erased religious freedom safeguards and harmed public schools in the state.

The lawsuit, *Ford v. Browning*, filed by Americans United and other civil liberties and education groups in June, asserted the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission exceeded its authority by approving both ballot amendments and that one of the amendments is worded misleadingly.

"This ruling puts an end to a dangerous assault on the religious liberty

rights of all Floridians," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director. "These reckless and deceptive amendments had no business being on the ballot in the first place, and we're glad to see them go."

Lynn noted that former Gov. Jeb Bush engineered the placement of the amendments on the ballot. If approved, they would have permitted voucher subsidies for religious and other private schools in Florida and eliminated the state constitution's language barring tax aid to religion, opening up massive new streams of public funding to private religious schools and houses of worship.

"Religious liberty and public edu-

cation are two cornerstones of the American way of life, and these amendments would have badly damaged both of them," said Rabbi Merrill Shapiro, a plaintiff in the lawsuit and vice president of Americans United. "We're glad the Florida Supreme Court did its duty and put a stop to it."

In addition to Americans United, groups who backed the lawsuit include the Florida Education Association, the Florida School Boards Association, the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, the Florida Association of School Administrators, the Florida ACLU, the Anti-Defamation League and People For the American Way.

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## Fundamentalist Group Drops Public Funding Windfall After Americans United Protest

Kentucky Arm of "Teen Challenge" Gives Up \$50,000 Federal Grant

A fundamentalist Christian group that claims to help people overcome drug and alcohol addiction through Bible study and prayer has given up a federal grant after Americans United for Separation of Church and State protested the funding.

Attorneys with Americans United wrote a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in June, noting that a \$50,000 grant to Teen Challenge of Kentucky raised serious constitutional issues. The money was allocated through the Compassion Capital Fund, a special program created as part of President George W. Bush's "faith-based" initiative.

Teen Challenge, Americans United pointed out, requires participants to take part in prayer, worship, Bible study and other religious activities. Program participants must sign a "Civil Rights Waiver" in which each surrenders the right to "exercis[e] the religion of my choice."

Applicants for the program are required to describe their Christian faith

and agree to conduct themselves in a "Christ-like manner." The organization vows to offer "deliverance from addiction through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and practical application of Biblical principles."

Public funding of such activities, Americans United asserted, would clearly violate the First Amendment.

In response to Americans United's letter, an official with HHS wrote to say that Teen Challenge "voluntarily terminated" its participation in the program.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, said he was pleased with the outcome but noted that Teen Challenge should never have received public funds in the first place.

"Teen Challenge boasts about its program being saturated with fundamentalist Christianity and makes it clear that required participation in religious activities is key to its approach," Lynn said. "I cannot imagine a worse candidate for tax funding."

"Bush administration officials have claimed that they do not fund religious activities, but this grant suggests otherwise," he continued. "Apparently their policy is to do it until they get caught."

Lynn noted that while fundamentalist groups like Teen Challenge often claim high rates of success, no empirical data backs up the claim.

"Tax funds were being funneled to this organization even though it openly boasts about its religious content, and there's no evidence its approach even works," Lynn said. "This incident is a perfect example of what's so wrong with faith-based initiatives."

AU Senior Litigation Counsel Alex Luchenitser, who handled the AU complaint about the funding, said, "This was a clear example of unconstitutional support of religious coercion and discrimination. I'm glad we were able to bring the matter to an appropriate conclusion."

[From an August 22 press release by Americans United: <http://www.au.org>.]



# The AFS Yard Sale: Saturday, September 20

By Ed Buckner

The Atlanta Freethought Society's Board of Directors has seen fit, after only a brief struggle, to name me as Chief Administrator for Sale in September for a Yard Sale (Chief Yard Sale A.S.S. Officer, for short). I therefore hereby announce that AFS will have a yard sale worth driving to from Alabama or Alaska:

10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, 20 September (six days after our next regular meeting).

You have, I know, been wondering how to help your beloved AFS—you realize that we need money, that a contribution of \$85,000 would really help, but you cannot manage to do that just now (cash flow problems and what have you), so what, not in God's name, can you possibly do?

Well, first of all, even \$84,500 would help, it really would.

But second, even if you cannot afford a dime, you can give us serious help and have a seriously good time

while you're at it:

1. Donate items for the yard sale. Anything of even modest value that can be sold will be welcome. Bring items to the 14 September (Sunday meeting) or on Friday morning, 19 September. (If neither time will work, call Ed at 770-432-3049.) Please, please, if you can, put a price sticker on your items—remember that we actually want to sell it, but we want as much as we can get for it at a one-day yard sale. Remember, too, that we'll reduce prices during the sale, probably twice—and that we'll bargain with Satan or anyone else. And remember, also, that we do not have any long-time storage space and that we will haul all leftover goods to Goodwill afterwards.

2. Come on Friday, 19 September from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and help us organize, price, sort, etc.

3. If you have stuff you want to sell and you want to keep the proceeds

and if you are a paid up member of AFS, come and set up a booth or table and sell your stuff on Saturday. You will not get the best sales spaces (AFS gets those) and you have to be responsible for your own table, chairs, and stuff, but it will only cost a generous donation (maximum \$84,500, of course—but otherwise, it'll be up to you) after the sale.

4. Tell your friends—and remember, even non-heathens like bargains. While we will probably have some newsletters and other information on AFS available, the purpose of this event will be dollars, not education.

5. On Saturday, come buy—and come help us sell, too.

I'll prepare and put out some signs before the sale and send an e-mail out to neighborhood associations nearby. We will not, this time, buy any ads.

Call (770-432-3049) or e-mail Ed at [ed@buckners.us](mailto:ed@buckners.us) if you have complaints or suggestions.

A last minute update: Jack McKinney has volunteered to haul items in his truck for a reasonable distance to the Yard Sale as needed, so, if you have things to donate but can't transport them, call Jack at 770-424-5004.



Here is Donna Gore posing with James Randi at Dragoncon in Atlanta. Donna remarked on the AFS Forum email list that "Randi was so sweet. I always had this image of him as a bad ass for going after the Sylvia Brownes of the world. So I guess I figured he would be kinda gruff. But he was so friendly and kind... He gave me a big hug and said, 'You aren't by chance a wealthy widow, are you?' I replied, 'No, unfortunately not.' He said, 'Oh drat, I'm looking for a rich widow.'"

(Thanks to Ken for taking the picture.)

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# The President is Confused Again

By Gary Whittenberger<sup>1</sup>

Standing at the entrance of a Protestant church in Beijing during the China Olympics, with his arm around the minister and surrounded by his wife and a throng of children from the church, President George Bush said to the news cameras: "Laura and I just had the great joy and privilege of worshiping here in Beijing, China. You know, it just goes to show [looking upward] that God is universal and God is love. And no state [shaking head side to side], man, or woman should fear the influence of loving religion. I want to thank the pastor for his hospitality. I want to thank this beautiful choir for singing Amazing Grace and Edelweis. It was a touching moment. It's been a joy to worship here. And again I want to thank you sir, and God bless you. God bless you." You can watch the video of this speech for yourself.<sup>2</sup>

Among his many inadequacies, the Current Occupant of the Presidency just doesn't understand the difference between endorsing freedom of religion and endorsing religion itself. His confusion is demonstrated in this brief declaration he made to the world earlier this morning, August 10, 2008. Maybe we could have excused him if he had said something like this: "Laura and I just had the opportunity to attend the religious service of this church. I thank the pastor here for inviting us. And I thank the government

of China for making great progress on religious freedom during the last decade and for allowing this service to take place. I look forward to the day when other religious freedoms are implemented here. As a member of the community of nations, the United States supports the right of all people to devote themselves peaceably to their own worldviews, believing in a divinity or not, unencumbered, as they see fit. Thank you."

But no, Mr. Bush just could not restrain himself from deliberately antagonizing the host country and endorsing his own religious views which resembled those held by the congregants of the Chinese Christian church he visited. Unfortunately, he seems to have crossed a constitutional line and in his official capacity as President of the United States has favored one religious belief system over others and over no belief at all. In doing this he has abused his power and authority. I assume that he was on this trip to China on the tax-payer dime, and if so, then he is misusing our money to promote his own religious views. This is exactly the kind of thing Thomas Jefferson was trying to prevent when he helped to draft the Constitution's First Amendment.

Let us briefly look at the religious propositions which our dear President has propounded in his little act of evangelizing: 1) God exists. How does

Mr. Bush know this? What is the objective evidence to support it? 2) God is universal. Really? For being universal, there seems to be a great deal of confusion and disagreement about God's existence, nature, and wishes. 3) God is love. How often do we hear this trite refrain? Where was this loving God when the recent earthquake occurred in China, killing at least 60,000 people? Did God cause this or allow it to happen? 4) Nobody should fear the influence of loving religion. Perhaps, but shouldn't we fear the influence of hating religion, and this type has caused much trouble recently. Might there be something about the nature of religious belief itself which too easily leads to division, strife, and aggression? 5) God blesses some people when asked to do so by other people. Really? Several well-designed experimental studies seem to argue against this hypothesis. What evidence does Mr. Bush have that his all-too-frequent requests for God's blessing have any effect at all? These propositions are on very shaky ground, untuned to the evidence, and perhaps merely speculations. This is part of the reason they are classified as "religious beliefs."

When acting as President of our country and visiting another, Mr. Bush is obligated to keep his religious beliefs to himself. Both Reason and our constitution demand it.

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Whittenberger Ph.D. is a semi-retired psychologist, living in Tallahassee, Florida, who belongs to several freethinking groups and supports the Atlanta Freethought Society. You may contact him at <http://www.TallySkeptic.com>.

<sup>2</sup> See the video of the speech at <http://tinyurl.com/59fcky>, which is a shortened URL for [http://www.comcast.net/data/fan/html/popup.html?v=818949932&pl=apfannews.xml&config=&launchpoint=Link&cid=fanlink&attr=news\\_sidebar&tab=news](http://www.comcast.net/data/fan/html/popup.html?v=818949932&pl=apfannews.xml&config=&launchpoint=Link&cid=fanlink&attr=news_sidebar&tab=news).

"When I became convinced that the Universe is natural – that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood, the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom ... For the first time, I was free ... I stood erect and joyously faced all worlds. And then my heart was filled with gratitude, with thankfulness, and went out in love to all the heroes, the thinkers who gave their lives for the liberty of hand and brain ... And then I vowed to grasp the torch that they had held, and hold it high, that light might conquer darkness still."

– Robert Ingersoll, from "Why I Am An Agnostic," chapter XI (See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_G.\\_Ingersoll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_G._Ingersoll).)

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# Louisiana Enacts ‘Science Education’ Act

By Sheldon F. Gottlieb

Recently, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal signed into law Louisiana Senate Bill 733 (the “Science Education Act”), which gives teachers the right to introduce into the classroom “supplemental textbooks and other instructional materials” about evolution, the origins of life, global warming, and human cloning. This material is not required to meet even the minimal standards of academic legitimacy set by scientifically respected agencies or be approved by the state’s Department of Education. By adopting this bill, the governor and state legislature, under the tutelage of the Discovery Institute of Seattle, Washington—the country’s leading think tank for intelligent design—are undermining the state’s K-12 science standards and forcing religion into the public schools.

This legislation was enacted despite the advice and efforts of teachers and scientists in Louisiana. I myself appeared on the Jeff Crouere radio talkshow for almost an hour arguing against the passage of the Science Education Act. What this law permits is unconscionable. Allowing any material in the classroom that discredits empirically derived knowledge is inane. Pandering politicians have been allowed to abjure the First Amendment and destroy what Jefferson termed the “separation of church and state”—just to further the political agenda of the fundamentalist religious segment of society.

One cannot help but wonder whether this is Louisiana’s delayed response to the defeat it suffered in the Supreme Court in 1987 when it lost the *Edwards v. Aguillard* case, in which Louisiana’s “Creationism Act” was held to be unconstitutional. The Creationism Act prohibited the teaching of evolution in public schools except when it was accompanied by in-

struction in “creation science.” The Court also found that a comprehensive science education program is undermined when evolution cannot be taught except alongside creation science. It was in that case that Justice Scalia wrote a dissenting legal/political (not scientific) opinion in which he argued for the teaching of religion to be coequal to science in the public school system. He showed himself to be a scientific illiterate and supporter of religiously based anti-intellectualism.

Concern about the appointment of Supreme Court justices and their rulings in the future should not be limited to subjects such as the reproductive rights gained in *Roe v. Wade*. Science education is also at risk. Issues of science are supposed to be settled in the laboratory, not a court of law. However, since curricula development has a political component associated with it, religious fanatics will strive to win in the political arena. That is why the fundamentalist Religious Right wants more justices like Anton Scalia and Clarence Thomas appointed to the Supreme Court.

The consequences will be severe if this comes to pass. The American and global economy is dependent on advances in science and technology. Any country that does not maintain a high standard of science education will be undermining its economy and world status by failing to have the necessary scientific and technological base required for its support. Also in the Christianizing of American politics, especially since the 1980s and rapidly escalating with President George W Bush’s “faith-based” agenda, there is the danger of the rise of the Christian Taliban. Unless the citizenry is vigilant, it will be upon them with virtually no way to undo it.

The role of the Discovery Institute

in enacting Louisiana’s law is interesting for two reasons. First is because the Discovery Institute declined to testify in the *Dover v. Kitzmiller* case—the first major constitutional test of intelligent design. District Judge E. John Jones III ruled against the Dover Area School District by stating that “ID cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents.” With respect to whether intelligent design is science, Judge Jones wrote that ID “is not science and cannot be adjudged a valid, accepted scientific theory as it has failed to publish in peer-reviewed journals, engage in research and testing, and gain acceptance in the scientific community.” Second, despite this major constitutional defeat, the Institute is still the prime mover in promoting similar legislation in other states.

The failure of the Institute to participate in the *Dover v. Kitzmiller* case could cause one to conclude that the Institute’s administration and scientists did not want to disgrace themselves in public. That way, they could continue to promote public ignorance and raise money to support their anti-social and anti-intellectual agenda.

Should the Discovery Institute be successful in its endeavors of forcing religion into science education and, by extension, all public education, the United States will have entered the slippery slope of becoming a Third World nation in science and technology. Citizen rights may also suffer. But, Americans should have no fear—they may then be poor, but they will have become a more religious nation.

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Sheldon F. Gottlieb, Ph.D is a retired Professor of Biological Sciences and the author of *The Naked Mind*. He lives in Boynton Beach, FL. His email address is [sheldongottlieb@gmail.com](mailto:sheldongottlieb@gmail.com).

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Don’t miss the movie *Religulous* by Bill Maher, in theaters starting October 3<sup>rd</sup>.



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# Sad News: Dr. John Henderson Has Died

Written by Ed Buckner

**J**ohn Arthur Henderson, M.D., a retired Air Force Flight Surgeon and General Surgeon from Asheville, North Carolina, died on 31 August, 2008. He was 85.

Henderson graduated with honors from the University of Illinois College of Medicine in 1945. He interned at the Research and Educational Hospital, Chicago, Illinois; and was surgical resident at Scott and White Clinic, Temple, Texas. During his Air Force career, he served in England, Spain, and Japan. Within the United States, he was stationed in various states from New York to California.

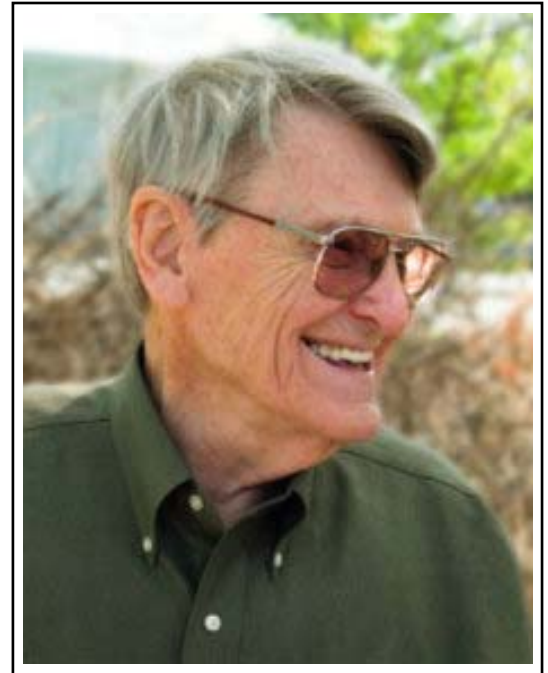
Dr. Henderson, well respected in the medical community, gained national respect and affection for his powerful freethought words, heard and read by many people across the nation. He had improved steadily as an effective speaker, charming audiences even as he inspired them to think. His wit and easy manner as a speaker, along with his popular constant traveling companion, his wife Ruth, made him increasingly in de-

mand as a speaker, with repeat performances at venues where he had spoken earlier increasingly the norm. He had addressed both local freethought groups, like Atlanta Freethought Society and the Secular Humanists of the Low Country (in Charleston), or at Furman University, and national events like the Freethought Advance in Alabama or other atheist conferences. He served on the speaker's bureau for Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers. His talks, his books, and his letters to the editor forced many to think and to laugh, often simultaneously. Henderson's philosophical reputation grew steadily as well in recent years, with each of his books presenting a deepening complexity without sacrificing his sharp wit. He touched the lives of countless people, first as a doctor, then as a writer and speaker. He will be much missed.

His books included *God.com: a Deity For the New Millennium*

(2005), *Fear Faith, Fact, Fantasy* (2004), and *Judging God: It Is Time to Judge Religions and Their Gods* (2007; with Craig Gurgew).

Condolences can be sent to his wife Ruth at [jrh828@webtv.net](mailto:jrh828@webtv.net).



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## Virgin Births, Ascensions, and All That

by Ronald Crowe

**H**ow many people know that the idea of a virgin birth, in Jesus' day, was about as common as Coca Cola at a Tennessee country store? I didn't know it when I was young. Like my friends and acquaintances, I just assumed Jesus' supposed virgin birth was the first and only one.

Later in life, as I read more, I was quite surprised to discover that virgin birth stories (people conceived by gods) had been circulating up to 2000 years before Christ. By Jesus' time most if not all the surrounding pagan religions contained some version of a virgin birth myth. Not only that, but almost any great man, real or mythical, had stories floating around about

his miraculous conception by a god. This was apparently an attempt to explain why certain famous men had achieved great wisdom or performed great feats. To be so great, it was reasoned, they must have in them the stuff of the gods.

Virgin births were claimed for: Alexander the Great; various Roman Emperors like Augustus and Claudius; as well as such pagan gods as Zoroaster or Dionysius.

We can even find in Genesis a reference to the sons of God who came down and got the daughters of men pregnant (Gen. 6:1-4). This was apparently an attempt by a Genesis writer to explain why certain biblical

characters lived so long, like Noah who conceived a child at age 500 and Methuselah who lived 969 years.

My point is: the idea of women being made pregnant by a god and giving birth to extraordinary men had for centuries before Jesus been the common explanation for the origin of occasional great men (some of whom supposedly became gods) on earth.

The claim that Jesus had been fathered by a god, and had undergone such a miraculous birth, rather than being an exception, was just one of a long series. This ancient, long-enduring belief inspired a poem that I published several years ago in *American Rationalist* magazine: (See page 8.)

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“Faith in God necessarily implies a lack of faith in humanity.”

— Barbara G. Walker, in *Women Without Superstition* (ed. Annie Laurie Gaylor, Madison, WI: FFRF, 1997)

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## AND THE GODS YAWNED by Ronald Crowe

Christians have been taught to think Jesus's virgin birth unique, but history shows more than a few to those who would the record seek.

Fifteen centuries before Mary's crisis in seeking a room at the inn, Horus was born of the Virgin Isis and received gifts from three wise men.

And Krishna, one of the gods Hindu, born twelve hundred years before, was birthed of Devaki, a virgin too — and thus became eighth avatar.\*

Adonis of Babylonian birth, whom the goddesses would adore, was born of Ishtar virgin queen of earth, goddess of heaven, love and war.

Eight hundred years ere Christ's advent came Indra from a virgin in Tibet. And like Jesus when he came to die, also ascended into the sky.

Six hundred years before "the Son," Buddha was born of Maya the pure; virgin-born also was Quirrnus of Rome, Zoroaster of Persia, and Mithra for sure.

The last virgin birth before J.C.'s, according to our miracle lore, Attis was born of the virgin Nama in Phrygia, two hundred years before.

So by the time Joe and Mary found shelter and amid oxen their tired bodies sat, virgin births, wise men, and ascensions, had become, for the most part, old hat.

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\*Avatar: Hindu mythology, the descent to earth of a deity in human or animal form.

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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 \$16 each

This book was written to help people overcome their fear of a vengeful, cruel God that they have been taught to believe in in childhood. It also encourages the reader to speak out when they hear religious leaders 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 \$18 each

The Jewish, Christian, Muslim (JCM) God is considered by millions of people to be the one and only God. 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.

As a result of the WTC bombing, Dr. Henderson wished that more people would begin to question their belief in the JCM God. So, in this book he examines the role of religion in society, and discusses the good and bad sides of religion, calling attention to the catastrophic effects of mindless faith.

Fear Faith Fact Fantasy is a witty, accessible, provocative book that encourages readers to use their critical thinking and logic skills in looking at religion.



### Judging God

By: Dr. John Henderson, MD and Craig Gurgew \$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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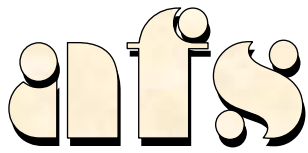
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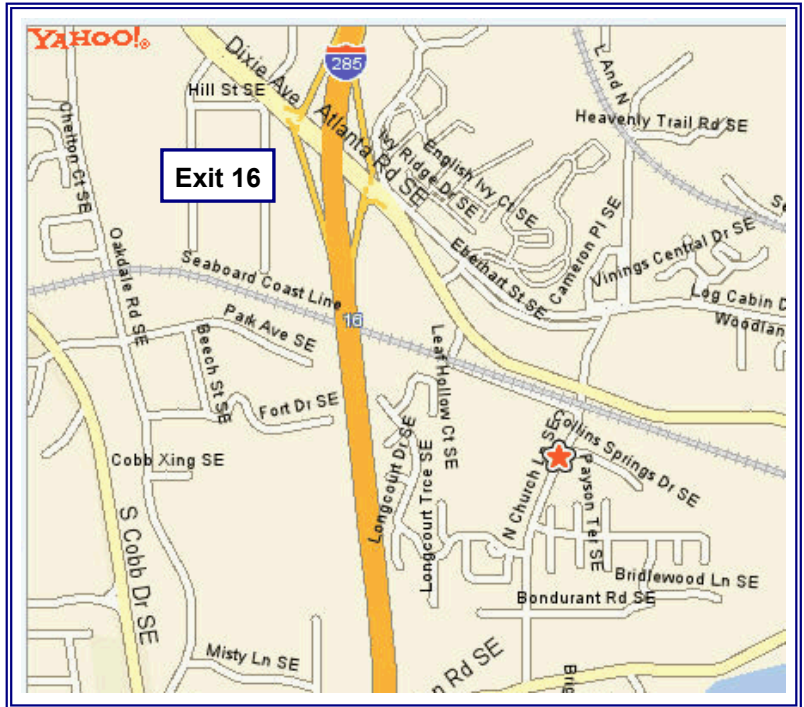
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**The Sept. 14 Meeting:  
1:00 at our New Location  
4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Smyrna, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
Chris Wilson**



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