

# Atlanta Freethought News

*Dare to Think for Yourself.*

An AFS Publication • Volume 16 Number 5 • May 2010

## The May AFS Meeting

The May 9 AFS meeting will feature podcasters Derek Colanduno and Robynn McCarthy (the hosts of Skepticity, the official podcast of Skeptic Magazine) speaking on "The Intersection of the Skeptical and Freethought Communities." (See their website at <http://www.skepticity.com/>.) The talk will be followed by a group discussion on the changing roles of Freethinkers, Skeptics and Humanists.

The meeting will be at 1:00 at Atlanta Freethought Hall, but please feel free to arrive early for refreshments and conversation with other freethinkers.

**Atlanta Freethought Hall** is located at 4745 N. Church Lane SE, in Smyrna, GA. 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. Atlanta Freethought Hall is on the left.

### AFS Meetings and Activities

May 9: AFS General Meeting, AF Hall, 1:00 PM.

May 16: AFS Social: a Fish Fry, AF Hall, 2:00 PM.

## The AFS Social

The next **AFS Social** will be a Fish-Fry on Sunday, May 16, at 1:00PM at the AF Hall Pavilion. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. This time, AFS will provide all the food, drinks, plates, etc. (Lew Southern is the chef for the fish-fry.) Come hungry!

Please RSVP to [afs@atlantafreethought.org](mailto:afs@atlantafreethought.org) so that we can get a head-count.

## An AFS Yard Sale

The Atlanta Freethought Society will have a **Yard Sale** on the first Saturday in June (June 5) at the AF Hall Pavilion. It will start at 10:00AM, and will probably be over by 2:00PM. We are looking for lots of things to sell, so please bring any unneeded items that you have been looking to get rid of anyway! Bring your stuff to the May AFS meeting and we can store it in the building until the Yard Sale.

We also need helpers for the Yard Sale. Please contact Steve if you would like to help.

We expect this to be a nice fundraiser for our group, and it's always nice to meet our neighbors in a setting like this.

## Other Meetings of Interest

The **Fellowship of Reason** meets on the first Sunday of every month at 10:30 PM at AF Hall. They also have meetings for book discussion, philosophy, a classic film course, and other events. See <http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.

The **Humanists of Georgia** will have an all-day party along the Flint River at John Barnes' place on Saturday, May 15. The address is 155 River Cove Rd., Woodbury, GA. All Infidels, Humanists and Freethinkers are invited.

The **Fayette Freethinkers** host a lunch that is open to the public at El Reposo Restaurant in Peachtree City, GA, on every first and third Saturday at 12:00 noon. For details, visit their website at <http://www.fayettefreethinkers.org>.

The **Fayette Freethought Society** meets on the first and third Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Mellow Mushroom on Hwy 74 in Peachtree City, GA. For details, send an email to [fayfreethinkers@gmail.com](mailto:fayfreethinkers@gmail.com).

**GUST** (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Gwinnett (12 Bethesda Church Road, in Lawrenceville) on Monday, May

10, 7:00 PM. (<http://brights.meetup.com/295/calendar/13235142/>)

**GUST** will also meet on Saturday, May 22 at 7:00PM at the Olde Towne Tavern & Grill, 835 Lawrenceville/Suwanee Road, in Lawrenceville.

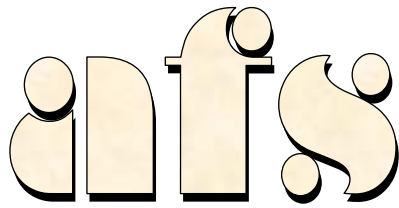
The **Atlanta Science Tavern** meetup will be at 7:00 PM on Saturday, May 22, at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave NE in Atlanta. Maryn McKenna will talk on "Superbug, all you dare to know about multi-drug resistant staph." Details: <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern/>.

The Atlanta Skeptics will have a **SkepticCamp** on Critical Thinking on Saturday, May 15, at 10:00 to 6:00 at Lake-side Commons, 990 Hammond Drive NE, #400, in Atlanta. For details, see <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics/>.

There will be a **meetup** for Atlanta atheists on Sunday, May 9, at 6:00 PM at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur, GA. (<http://www.meetup.com/>)

And another **meetup** for Atlanta atheists is scheduled for Sunday, May 23, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Atlanta. (<http://www.meetup.com/>)

"Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and state forever separate." —Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885), 18th President of the United States



**Atlanta  
Freethought  
Society**

## Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at the AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Smyrna, GA, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

May 9: Derek and Swoopy of the Skepticity podcast will talk on Skepticism.

Jun 13: Mike Ledo will tell us about his new book, *On Earth As It Is In Heaven: The Cosmic Roots of the Bible*

July 11: Dr. Scott Lilienfeld will give a talk.

Aug 8: John Snyder and David Driscoll of AmericanFreethought.org will speak.

Sept 12: TBD

Oct 10: 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

### Treasurer

Diane Buckner – 770-432-3049

### Board of Directors

Mark Banks – 770-354-1546

Michael Buckner – 404-633-2486

Steven Fant – 678-793-5662

Doug Hattersley – 770-971-1562

Tony King – 706-886-9224

Lew Southern – 770-509-8272

## Atlanta Freethought News

Vol. 16, Number 5, May 2010

Copyright © 2010 by the  
Atlanta Freethought Society, Inc.  
Signed articles are all copyright ©  
2009 by their respective authors.

Membership in AFS is \$25/year for  
individuals, \$35 for households, and  
\$10 for students/low income/under 21.  
Membership includes AFNews by email.

**Add \$15 to receive AFNews by mail,**  
\$20 to Canada/Mexico, \$25 elsewhere.

Sustaining Members (individual) \$100.

Sustaining Members (households) \$125.

Life Membership is \$1000.

Subscriptions only are \$10 for 12 issues.

Please make checks and money orders  
payable to Atlanta Freethought Society.

**Visit our World Wide Web site at**  
[www.atlantafreethought.org](http://www.atlantafreethought.org).

**Send E-mail to**  
[afs@atlantafreethought.org](mailto:afs@atlantafreethought.org).

**AFS Webmaster:** Freya Harris

---

---

# FFRF Celebrates National Day of Prayer Victory

**From an April 15 Press Release by the Freedom From Religion Foundation**

**I**t is not every day that the president of the United States gets enjoined – prohibited by judicial order from a certain action – but it happened on April 15, 2010.

U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb decided in favor of the Freedom From Religion Foundation in a ruling that the federal law designating a National Day of Prayer and requiring a National Day of Prayer proclamation by the president violates the establishment clause of the Constitution's First Amendment.

In her ruling, Judge Crabb wrote: "The same law that prohibits the government from declaring a National Day of Prayer also prohibits it from declaring a National Day of Blasphemy."

The Foundation filed its groundbreaking suit in October 2008. Plaintiffs besides the Foundation are Anne Nicol Gaylor, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Dan Barker, Paul Gaylor, Phyllis Rose and Jill Dean, who are all Foundation officers or board members. Defendants are President Barack Obama and Robert Gibbs, his press secretary. Original defendants were President George Bush and Dana Perino, his press secretary at the time.

All presidents since 1952 have issued proclamations designating the National Day of Prayer each year. Since 1988, the National Day of Prayer has been held on the first Thursday in May. The president's proclamations are released by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Judge Crabb enjoined Obama from enforcing the National Day of Prayer law, but stayed the injunction until the appeals process is completed. The law setting the first Thursday in May as a National Day of Prayer passed Congress in 1952 after an intensive campaign led by Rev. Billy Graham.

A Twitter from the White House went out Thursday afternoon soon after the decision was announced: "As he did last year, President Obama

intends to recognize a National Day of Prayer." The Twitter links to the 2009 presidential NDP proclamation.

Foundation Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor expressed surprise and disappointment at the White House's response to "tweet" over a constitutional issue of this magnitude. "President Obama is a constitutional scholar, and knows the issues at stake. He couldn't possibly have read the 66-page historic ruling by Judge Crabb at the time of this Tweet," Gaylor said.

In 1952, religious leaders like Graham lobbied Congress heavily to pass the law. Graham's culminating speech included this: "We have dropped our pilot, the Lord Jesus Christ, and are sailing blindly on without divine chart or compass, hoping somehow to find our desired haven. We have certain leaders who are rank materialists; they do not recognize God nor care for Him; they spend their time in one round of parties after another. The Capital City of our Nation can have a great spiritual awakening, thousands coming to Jesus Christ, but certain leaders have not lifted an eyebrow, nor raised a finger, nor showed the slightest bit of concern. Ladies and gentlemen, I warn you, if this state of affairs continues, the end of the course is national shipwreck and ruin."

Sen. Absalom Robertson of Virginia – Rev. Pat Robertson's father – introduced the bill in the Senate, stating that it was a measure against "the corrosive forces of communism which seek simultaneously to destroy our democratic way of life and the faith in an Almighty God on which it is based."

Signed into law by President Truman, the law said: "The President shall set aside and proclaim a suitable day each year, other than a Sunday, as a National Day of Prayer, on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals."

In 1988, an amended statute was approved setting a specific day for national prayer. Vonette Bright, founder of the Campus Crusade for Christ and the National Day of Prayer Committee, lobbied Congress to amend the law because Bright "believed that we should have a day in this country where we cover this nation in prayer and the leaders." Singer Pat Boone, co-chair of the prayer committee, testified, and Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina introduced the bill in the Senate, noting the floating date made it "difficult for religious groups." Sen. Jesse Helms sermonized on behalf of the bill that "God in heaven will hear and forgive our sins and heal our land."

As signed into law by President Reagan, the law said: "The President shall issue each year a proclamation designating the first Thursday in May as a National Day of Prayer on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals."

The National Day of Prayer Task Force, created in 1989, offers a "draft" proclamation to the president and chooses a theme each year with supporting scripture from the bible.

Judge Crabb took pains in several passages of her 66-page decision to point out that "a conclusion that the establishment clause prohibits the government from endorsing a religious exercise is not a judgment on the value of prayer or the millions of Americans who believe in its power."

She rejected the Obama administration's argument that the NDP is a longstanding tradition: "No tradition existed in 1789 of Congress requiring an annual National Day of Prayer on a particular date. It was not until 1952 that Congress established a legislatively mandated National Day of Prayer; it was not until 1988 that Congress made the National Day of Prayer a fixed, annual event." She pointed out

---

that presidents Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Andrew Jackson did not believe presidents should issue prayer proclamations.

Major political divisions have been created by the NDP, such as complaints by a national Jewish group in 2008 that the event had been “hijacked by Christian conservatives,” Judge Crabb noted.

In her ruling, Judge Crabb said that the NDP “serves no purpose but to encourage a religious exercise, making it difficult for a reasonable observer to see the statute as anything other than a religious endorsement.” Judge Crabb also wrote: “It bears emphasizing that a conclusion that the establishment clause prohibits the government from endorsing a religious exercise is not a judgment on the value of prayer or the millions of Americans who believe in its power. No one can doubt the important role that prayer plays in the spiritual life of a believer... However, recognizing the importance of prayer to many people does not mean that the government may enact a statute in support of it, any more than the government may encourage citizens to fast during the month of Ramadan, attend a synagogue, purify themselves in a sweat lodge or practice rune magic.”

Judge Crabb also ruled that the law “does not have a secular purpose or effect” and does not “survive scrutiny under Lemon and the endorsement test... The statute does not use prayer to further a secular purpose; it endorses prayer for its own sake.”

Foundation Attorney Richard Bolton said the decision says the government shouldn’t take sides on religious issues. “For those who think this decision means the sky is falling, it’s not. Judge Crabb is simply saying ‘Do these things privately if you want to, but do not expect the president to lend the credibility or prestige of the office to the effort.’”

Judge Crabb cited former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s “concise” framing of the issue in another case: “Government cannot endorse the religious practices

and beliefs of some citizens without sending a clear message to nonadherents that they are outsiders or less than full members of the political community.”

Dan Barker, Foundation co-president, said: “It’s nice to see that the judge agrees with us the government should be neutral about religion and should not be taking sides – which is an issue of fairness.”

Annie Laurie Gaylor said she was “euphoric” over the decision. “It is such a profound violation of conscience for Congress to direct our president to tell all citizens to pray, and that they in fact must set aside an entire day for prayer once a year. We are so gratified and delighted that Judge Crabb in her solid decision rejected revisionist history and decided this case on the merits.”

Gaylor said the victory was particularly sweet, because this case has been the most time-consuming and difficult of the Foundation’s cases. “The 1952 law was predicated on bad history – the lie that our founders prayed at the Constitutional Convention – and defending our lawsuit involved a major debunking of bad history presented by the Obama administration.”

#### **EXCERPTS FROM THE RULING:**

“It goes beyond mere ‘acknowledgment’ of religion because its sole purpose is to encourage all citizens to engage in prayer, an inherently religious exercise that serves no secular function in this context. In this instance, the government has taken sides on a matter that must be left to individual conscience. When the government associates one set of religious beliefs with the state and identifies nonadherents as outsiders, it encroaches upon the individual’s decision about whether and how to worship.”

“The Supreme Court has noted often that the establishment clause is the result of the lesson learned from history that, when the government takes sides on questions of religious belief, a dangerous situation may be created, both for the favored and the disfavored groups. To those whose

beliefs comport with the message sent by the government, it is difficult to understand why anyone would object to the message.”

“However, religious expression by the government that is inspirational and comforting to a believer may seem exclusionary or even threatening to someone who does not share those beliefs. This is not simply a matter of being “too sensitive” or wanting to suppress the religious expression of others. Rather,... it is a consequence of the unique danger that religious conduct by the government poses for creating ‘in’ groups and ‘out’ groups.”

“A reasonable observer of the statute or a proclamation designating the National Day of Prayer would conclude that the federal government is encouraging her to pray.”

“One might argue that the National Day of Prayer does not violate the establishment clause because it does not endorse any one religion. Unfortunately, that does not cure the problem. Although adherents of many religions ‘turn to God in prayer,’ not all of them do. Further, the statute seems to contemplate a specifically Christian form of prayer with its reference to ‘churches’ but no other places of worship and the limitation in the 1952 version of the statute that the National Day of Prayer may not be on a Sunday. Even some who believe in the form of prayer contemplated by the statute may object to encouragements to pray in such a public manner. E.g., Matthew 6:5 (‘You, however, when you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you.’)”

“[T]he 1988 amendment does not serve any purpose for the government or the country as a whole, but simply facilitates the religious activities of particular religious groups. Although those groups undoubtedly appreciate that assistance, they are not entitled to it. [T]he Establishment Clause prohibits precisely what occurred here: the government’s lending its support to

---

the communication of a religious organization's religious message."

"If the government were interested only in acknowledging the role of religion in America, it could have designated a 'National Day of Religious Freedom' rather than promote a particular religious practice."

"With or without a statute, private citizens are free to pray at any time. Private citizens are also free to join together to hold celebrations of their faith, including by proclaiming their own day of prayer."

"That is not an accommodation under Supreme Court precedent; it is taking sides on a matter of religious belief. Because supporters of the National Day of Prayer have no need for the machinery of the State to affirm

their beliefs, the government's sponsorship of that day in §119 is most reasonably understood as an official endorsement of religion and, in this instance, of theistic religion."

**RESPONSE BY OTHER GROUPS:**

Americans United for Separation of Church and State praised the federal court decision. The Rev. Barry Lynn, their executive director, said in an April 15 press release, "This decision is a tremendous victory for religious liberty. Congress has no business telling Americans when or how to pray... The Constitution forbids the government to meddle in religious matters. Decisions about worship should be made by individuals without direction from elected officials. That's what freedom is all about."

David Niose, president of American Humanist Association, also praised the ruling in an April 15 press release and called upon President Obama to recognize a **National Day of Reason**, also scheduled for May 6, instead of the National Day of Prayer. He noted, "The National Day of Reason includes all Americans and calls attention to a value that's essential to effective democracy."

The stated purpose of the National Day of Reason is "to celebrate reason--a concept all Americans can support--and to raise public awareness about the persistent threat to religious liberty posed by government intrusion into the private sphere of worship."

---

## Historic Marker Finally Placed at AF Hall

The State of Georgia finally placed a historical marker on the AFS property on about April 20! Our building is now an official historical site! And what better purpose for the building than to be a Freethought Hall?! (Picture by Ed Buckner)



---

---

# Who's Really to Blame? By Mary E. Williams

Excerpted from "Catholic Priest Molestation: The Blame Game" at Salon.com, 4/12/2010

**T**he Catholic Church wants you to know who the real culprits are regarding their problems with priests molesting children:

## THE JEWS

What's Catholicism without a little Jew baiting? On the Catholic Web site Pontifex, Italian Monsignor Giacomo Babini was quoted as saying of the whole hullabaloo, "I think that it is primarily a Zionist attack, in view of its power and refinement. They do not want the church; they are its natural enemies. Deep down, historically speaking, the Jews are God-killers." Babini has subsequently denied he made the statements.

## WORKING WOMEN

Speaking to the *Times* (UK) last month, the Vatican's chief exorcist, Father Gabriele Amorth, connected the dots by saying, "Compare the world of today to when I was a boy in Modena: families and parish communities were strong, women did not go out to work. Now they have to because one income cannot support a family. So young people are left to their own devices, they get into bad company, they have lost their roots and replaced them with the negative influences of television and the internet, or the occult."

## THE MASONS

In a March 26 story on the war "be-

tween the church and the world," Italian Democrat Maurizio Ronconi told the *Guardian* (UK) that, "For years, a Masonic-secularist offensive against Catholics has been under way." And in his Pontifex interview, Giacomo Babini took a brief break from dissing the Jews to mention those other "eternal enemies of Catholicism... the free-masons."

## HOMOSEXUALS

In late March, the Catholic League's Bill Donohue took it upon himself to take out an ad in *The New York Times* to declare that "*The Times* continues to editorialize about the 'pedophilia crisis' when all along it's been a homosexual crisis... Most of the molesters have been gay." And just in case there was any ambiguity there, he followed up by telling CNN that "there's a connection between homosexuality and the sexual abuse of minors."

## THE NEW YORK TIMES

In March, following a scathing series on the ever-evolving scandal, the American Cardinal William J. Levada wrote on the Vatican's own Web site, "I am not proud of America's newspaper of record, *The New York Times*, as a paragon of fairness" and asked the paper "to reconsider its attack mode about Pope Benedict XVI and give the world a more balanced view of a leader it can and should count on."

## SECULARISM

After a horrifying report by the Commission of Investigation into how the Archdiocese of Dublin mishandled decades of sex abuse in churches, Pope Benedict issued a letter profusely apologizing for the epic failure. He also, however, noted "the rapid transformation and secularization of Irish society," observing that while all this molesting was going on, "All too often, the sacramental and devotional practices that sustain faith and enable it to grow, such as frequent confession, daily prayer and annual retreats, were neglected."

## SATAN

Who but the Vatican exorcist would tell CNN that "The devil tempts everyone—people in politics, in economics, in sport. And naturally, he tempts, above all, the religious leaders, so you shouldn't be surprised if the devil tempts those in the Vatican. That's his job... Pedophiles are not possessed by the devil... they are tempted by the devil."

But with all the blaming going on, I wonder if there is another possibility:

## PEDOPHILES HIDING WITHIN A POWERFUL INSTITUTION PROTECTING ITS OWN INTERESTS

It's just a crazy theory I'm working on.

---

[See article at <http://tinyurl.com/ya3r53u>.]

---

## Interesting new Videos and Links on the Internet:

Jon Meacham on "The Religious Case for Church-State Separation": <http://www.newsweek.com/id/236904>

Sam Harris on Human Values (March 26): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEC6LFIWE-0>

Sam Harris on Why We Should Ditch Religion (March 25): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ic3TkUZ9phw&feature=related>

Austin Dacey on "The Death of Another Deathbed Conversion": <http://tinyurl.com/2brwz2k>

Acharya S debunks the latest supposed Noah's Ark discovery:

<http://www.examiner.com/examiner/x-17009-Freethought-Examiner~y2010m4d28-The-Great-Noahs-Ark-Hoax>

The Theory of Evolution and its Creationist Enemies:

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/04/18/the-theory-of-evolution-and-its-creationist-enemies/>

The Supreme Court says a religious cross can have more than one meaning:

<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/double-cross-separation-church-state-10503510?clipId=10503510&playlistId=10503510&cid=siteplayer>

---

---

# SCOTUS Strikes Down Lower Court Ruling, Upholds Scheme to Preserve Mojave Desert Christian Cross

**In** a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that a federal judge erred when he invalidated a federal law authorizing a land transfer from the government to a private group on which a Christian cross had been placed, ostensibly as a “war memorial.”

The cross is perched on a high rock outcropping in Southern California’s Mojave Desert.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars erected the original structure in 1934 along with a plaque honoring deceased American soldiers. The plaque is now gone, and the present cross which has been rebuilt several times, is about 6-feet high and visible from a nearby road.

When a federal judge ruled that the monument was an impermissible establishment of religion, Congress responded in 2004 by passing a law ordering the Department of the Interior to convey ownership of the small parcel of land to the VFW in exchange for a private plot of nearby real estate. Critics charged this was a scheme to keep the cross standing in the midst of public land. Similar land transfers have been used across the country to preserve religious monuments, such as San Francisco’s notorious Mt. Davidson Christian Cross.

The justices struggled with a number of important legal questions, including whether the Latin cross was always a purely religious symbol. Writing for the court majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy (a frequent swing vote on the bench), opined that lower courts should have taken less drastic steps than striking down the transfer

statute, and suggested that the cross could be something other than a sectarian religious icon.

“The goal of avoiding governmental endorsement (of religion) does not require eradication of all religious symbols in the public realm. A Latin Cross is not merely a reaffirmation of Christian belief. It is a symbol often used to honor and respect those heroic acts, noble contributions and patient striving (to) help secure an honored place in history for this nation and its people...”

Justice John Paul Stevens, who will be retiring from SCOTUS at the end of the current term, authored an official dissent joined by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor. He challenged Kennedy’s opinion, stating: “A Latin cross necessarily symbolizes one of the most important tenets upon which believers in a benevolent Creator, as well as nonbelievers, are known to differ.”

Ironically, the plaintiff in the case, Arizona resident Frank Buono, is Catholic. In court filings early in the case, Mr. Buono argued that government had a long track record of favoring the Christian religion, and cited a 1999 incident where the National Park Service refused a request to have a small Buddhist symbol erected near the cross.

The SCOTUS ruling may not be the end of the Mojave cross case, however. The justices ordered the dispute sent back to the lower court, and ordered judges to revise their earlier decision to strike down the federal law. That could mean another appeal to the Supreme Court, which by then

may have new justices sitting on the bench. That is sure to focus more public attention and political pressure on those President Obama may name to serve on SCOTUS.

[From the April 28 issue of AANews, a free newsletter of American Atheists. To subscribe, send a blank message to [aanews-on@atheists.org](mailto:aanews-on@atheists.org).]

---

Americans United for Separation of Church and State said in an April 28 press release that the Supreme Court decision was disappointing.

“I’m very disappointed,” said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director. “The court majority was clearly determined to find any bogus reason to keep this religious symbol in a public park.”

Added Lynn, “It’s alarming that the high court continues to undermine the separation of church and state. Nothing good can come from this trend.”

Lynn said the ruling in *Salazar v. Buono* will likely encourage further assaults on the church-state wall.

“This decision lets Congress bypass the Constitution and devise a convoluted scheme to keep a cross on display in a federal park. That’s bad law and bad public policy,” said Lynn.

“The court majority seems to think the cross is not always a Christian symbol,” Lynn continued. “I think all Americans know better than that.”

“The cross is a Christian religious symbol,” said AU’s Lynn, “not a war memorial that honors all veterans. Our veterans come from different faiths, and some follow no spiritual path at all.”

---

“Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, and imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch toward uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion?

To make one-half the world fools and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth.”

-- Thomas Jefferson, from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1781-1782

“During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less, in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy; ignorance and servility in laity; in both, superstition, bigotry, and persecution.” – James Madison, from *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*, Section 7, 1785

---

---

# Atheists Hail California Decision

## Nonbelievers Cannot be Sentenced to Faith-Based Rehab Programs as Parole Condition

American Atheists praised a U.S. District Court Judge in California for defending the constitutional rights of a prison inmate who was compelled to attend religion-based drug and alcohol rehab sessions in order to qualify for parole.

Judge Garland E. Burrell Jr. ruled that California officials erred when they forced 41-year-old Barry A. Hazel Jr. to enroll in Alcoholics Anonymous after serving a one-year sentence for drug possession. Hazel, a computer programmer, demanded that he be given access to an alternative secular program instead, and was mistakenly informed that one was not available. After refusing to participate

in the faith-based 12-step regimen, Mr. Hazel was re-arrested and had to serve another three months in jail.

Dr. Ed Buckner, President of American Atheists, praised the court for its finding in the case. "It is outrageous that any citizen be coerced into attending religious services or programs that 'push' religion in any form."

Buckner noted that just weeks after Mr. Hazel protested the violation of his rights, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation issued an order to all parole agents pointing out that they "cannot compel" a parolee to participate in any religion-themed program.

Dave Silverman, Vice President and

Communications Director for American Atheists said that "While Atheists and other non-believers make up a very small percentage of prison populations—by some studies far less than one percent<sup>1</sup>—violating someone's religious liberty and freedom from religion is not some kind of a numbers game."

"There are secular programs for drug and alcohol rehabilitation that are available, and the government has an obligation to respect the rights of any incarcerated individual to refuse religious 'treatment'."

[From an April 21 press release by American Atheists ([www.atheists.org](http://www.atheists.org)) and [www.americanatheists.org](http://www.americanatheists.org) ]

<sup>1</sup>See [http://freethoughtpedia.com/wiki/Percentage\\_of\\_atheists#Atheists\\_In\\_Prison](http://freethoughtpedia.com/wiki/Percentage_of_atheists#Atheists_In_Prison)

---

## Georgia Senate Bill: License Plates to Show "In God We Trust"

What does it matter what county your car is registered in if God is on your side? The Georgia Senate voted 44-1 on April 26 to allow drivers to affix an "In God We Trust" decal on their license plate. The decal would go in the space where the county sticker currently is.

"The bill says, *if* you want one," said Sen. Bill Heath (R-Bremen). "They still have to pay the cost to ship or produce them."

Heath said the decals would work like most prestige tags in the state, which do not have the county names included.

"Some people don't want their county's name on their tag," Heath said. "You go to a high school football game. You don't want your county on your plate. Especially, if you win."

Heath's bill was an amendment to HB 1005, authored by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Rome) that created a plate for Zoo Atlanta. That plate features a panda.

The lone vote against the bill was Sen. Emanuel Jones (D-Decatur), who later joked that he voted against the panda.

"Who is going to vote against a cute panda," Jones said, explaining Heath's

strategy.

But Jones, who also owns a series of car dealerships, said that the county names on tags are crucial in law enforcement.

The license plates are for law enforcement. They should not be used for political statements," Jones said. "We are making it more difficult for them to do their jobs."

The bill now goes back to the House, since the amendment was approved.

[From an April 27 blog by Ernie Suggs at <http://blogs.ajc.com/> .]

---

"The God of hell should be held in loathing, contempt and scorn. A God who threatens eternal pain should be hated, not loved; cursed, not worshipped. A heaven presided over by such a God must be below the meanest hell." — Robert Ingersoll

"Live a good life. If there are gods and they are just, then they will not care how devout you have been, but will welcome you based on the virtues you have lived by. If there are gods, but unjust, then you should not want to worship them. If there are no gods, then you will be gone, but will have lived a noble life that will live on in the memories of your loved ones. I am not afraid." — Marcus Aurelius

"Religious controversies are always productive of more acrimony and irreconcilable hatreds than those which spring from any other cause. Of all the animosities which have existed among mankind, those which are caused by the difference of sentiments in religion appear to be the most inveterate and distressing, and ought most to be depreciated. I was in hopes that the enlightened and liberal policy, which has marked the present age, would at least have reconciled Christians of every denomination so far that we should never again see the religious disputes carried to such a pitch as to endanger the peace of society." — George Washington, letter to Edward Newenham, October 20, 1792; from George Seldes, ed., *The Great Quotations*, Secausus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1983, p. 726



# Become a Member!



(Or renew your membership with this form or online at [www.AtlantaFreethought.org](http://www.AtlantaFreethought.org)!)

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

**Individual memberships:** One person can become a member for \$25 per year.

**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.

**Paper Newsletters:** Due to printing and mailing expense, we add a surcharge of \$15 for members to receive a paper newsletter in the mail rather than our email version newsletter. We encourage all members to receive the newsletter by email to save on paper, postage and printing expenses.

**International members:** Because of international postage rates and special handling, we have been forced to add a surcharge of \$5 for members in Canada or Mexico, and \$10 for other foreign addresses for members who receive the paper newsletter.

Thank you for all your support! We look forward to your being with us in the coming months!

Annual dues are:

Membership	Dues	# of mems	Total	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25	_____	\$_____	Name _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Household (2 members)	\$35	_____	\$_____	Address _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional household mems	\$5	_____	\$_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Low Income/ Student/under 21	\$10	_____	\$_____	Phone H: _____ W: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Paper version of newsletter	\$15	_____	\$_____	Email addr: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Subscription only	\$10	_____	\$_____	Please list names of additional household members: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member	\$100	_____	\$_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Household	\$125	_____	\$_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Life Member	\$1000	_____	\$_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Postage for Canada/Mexico	\$5	_____	\$_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Postage for other foreign addresses	\$10	_____	\$_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra donation (thank you!)		_____	\$_____	
<b>TOTAL:</b>			\$_____	

Please send this form with payment to:

Atlanta Freethought Society  
4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Smyrna, GA 30080-7224

## Atlanta Freethought Society

4775 N. Church Lane SE Smyrna, GA 30080-7224

[www.atlantafreethought.org](http://www.atlantafreethought.org) [afs@atlantafreethought.org](mailto:afs@atlantafreethought.org)

“Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect.” —James Madison, 1774

### *Why I Am Not A Christian* — \$8

Lucid, comprehensive, engaging answer to Christian apologists by **Keith Parsons**. Respectful but devastating to all Christian claims. A wonderful follow-up to Bertrand Russell's great essay with the same title.

### *An Uppity Old Atheist Woman's Dictionary* — \$8

By the late, great **Carol Faulkenberry** (illustrated by Amanda Faulkenberry); like Ambrose Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary* —but better: more biting, funnier. Guaranteed to make you laugh out loud and to challenge at least one idea you hold.

### *Quotations That Support the Separation of State and Church (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)* — \$11

Compiled by **Edward M. Buckner** and **Michael E. Buckner**; ammunition against Christian-nation mythologists. Quotes from America's revolutionaries, constitution framers, Presidents, court decisions. Sources carefully documented; extensive index. Comb-bound—lies flat for easy copying.

*Please add:*

**\$4 TOTAL S&H Charge for up to 2 books.**

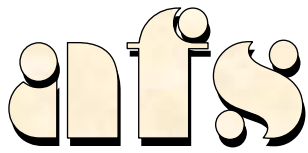
**\$1.50 EACH S&H Charge for 3 to 9 books.**

**No S&H Charge for 10 Books or more.**

*(All Merchandise will be shipped USPS Priority Mail)*

*Send check or money order to:*

**ATLANTA FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY**  
4775 N. Church Lane SE Smyrna, GA 30080-7224



Atlanta Freethought Society

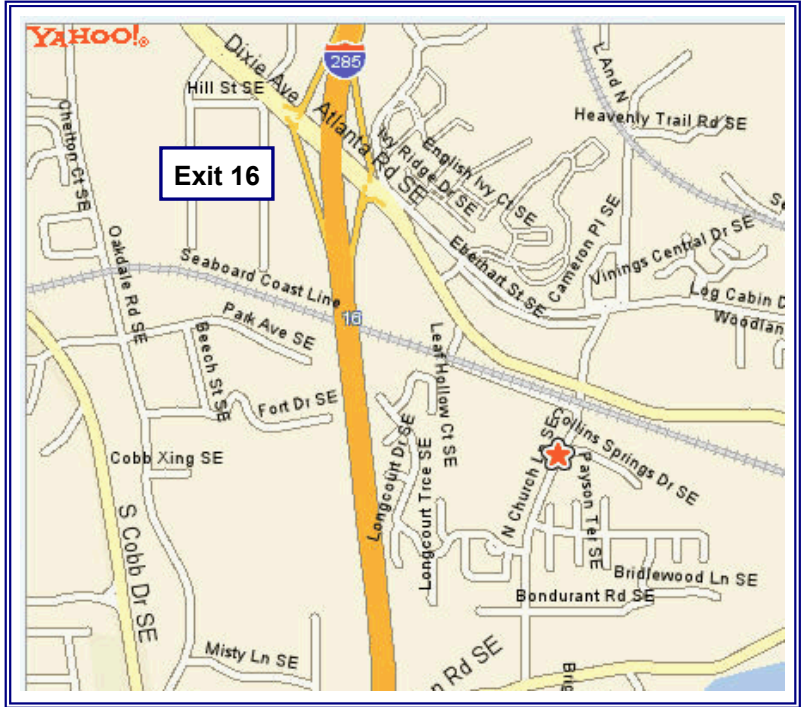
**The May 9 Meeting:**

**1:00 at AF Hall**

**4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Smyrna, GA**

**This Month's Speakers:**

**Derek and Swoopy**



*Atlanta Freethought News* is produced by the Atlanta Freethought Society, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit, member-run, educational organization created to advance freethought and protect freethinkers. Any freethought, atheist, secular humanist, agnostic, or rationalist group is granted permission to reproduce anything from our newsletter not expressly labeled otherwise (acknowledgement of AFS and author appreciated). Articles published represent the official opinion of AFS only when that is clearly stated; all other opinion is that of the individual author.



If your label indicates "4 2010" or earlier, please renew. Thanks.

Atlanta Freethought News  
Atlanta Freethought Society  
4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Smyrna, GA 30080-7224