

Atlanta Freethought News

Dare to Think for Yourself.

An AFS Publication • Volume 18 Number 3 • March 2012

The March AFS Meeting

The March 11 AFS meeting will include a talk by **Sharon Carruthers**, Treasurer of the Atlanta Astronomy Club, on "2012: Doom or Dumb?" The talk is about doomsday scenarios dreamed up by various people based on observation of the stars and planets. Sharon points out that the "Seven Signs of Bogus Science" help to show the flaws in each argument.

The meeting will be at 1:00 at **Atlanta Freethought Hall**, located at 4775 N. Church Lane, Smyrna, GA. Come early if you like for snacks and conversation with other free-thinkers. Visitors are always welcome at AFS meetings.

The March AFS Social

The March AFS Social will be a lunch on Saturday, March 17, at 1:00 at Lin Buffet, 3201 S. Cobb Dr., Smyrna.

Join us for good food and great conversation with other freethinkers.

Sam Singleton at AF Hall

He's back! We had **Sam Singleton** at AF Hall before, and his show was a real treat. Now he will be accompanied by Chris Saunders on the keyboard for his performance of REVIVAL. This show was performed at Skepticon IV in November and was a big hit. (See the ads below.)

Tickets for the March 30 or 31 shows can be ordered in advance for \$10 each. They are \$15 at the door. The show is the same on each evening.

Don't miss this hilarious and irreverent program!

AFS Meetings and Activities

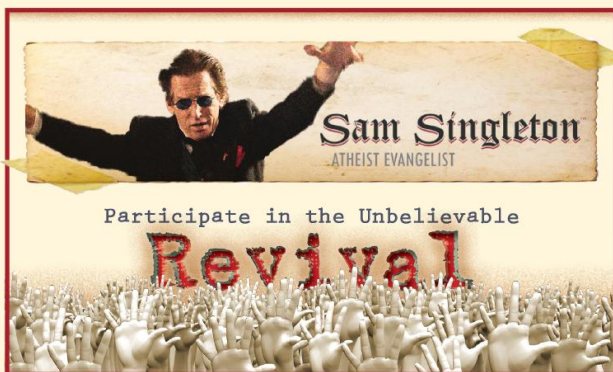
March 11: AFS General Meeting, AF Hall, 1:00 PM

March 17: AFS Social at Lin Buffet, 1:00 PM

March 30: Sam Singleton Revival, AF Hall, 7:30PM

March 31: Sam Singleton Revival, AF Hall, 7:30PM

DB&S and the Atlanta Freethought Society



March 30, 2012, 7:30 pm
Atlanta Freethought Hall

4775 North Church Lane Southeast
Smyrna, Georgia

"This is a much more participatory show than his previous ones, and it's even more wildly fun. It is a hoot and a holler. . . laced with serious ideas, wild humor, and invective that's like a razor blade dipped in venom. If Brother Sam comes to your area, I urge you to drop everything and make room in your calendar to see him. Especially if he's doing REVIVAL. I would happily see this show again and again. Goddamn!" *Greta Christina*

TICKETS: samsingleton.com

DB&S and the Atlanta Freethought Society



March 31, 2012 7:30 pm
Atlanta Freethought Hall

4775 N Church Ln SE Smyrna, GA

A fully participatory satirical send-up of a Sunday morning meeting— Brother Sam superintending. Bible Class, awards, testimonies, and a rousing sermon, not to mention signs and wonders.

TICKETS: samsingleton.com



Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at 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.

Mar 11: Sharon Carruthers will speak on "2012, Doom or Dumb."

Mar 30, 31: Brother Sam Singleton Revival (!!!) at AF Hall, 7:30PM.

Apr 8: Jim Chastain of Final Exit Network will speak.

May 13: TBD

June 10: Gina Colaianni, a blogger and Secretary of the Philosophy Student Association will talk on Philosophy.

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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Georgia House to Consider Free ‘In God We Trust’ Sticker

From a Feb. 28 article by Kristina Torres in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

Georgia car owners could get “In God We Trust” stickers free of charge under a bill passed On Feb. 28 by the state Senate, which adopted the measure after initial plans to make the motto mandatory on all Georgia license plates fell short in committee.

Motorists already can buy a sticker with the motto for \$1. The sticker can be placed over the county name decal that Georgia license plates usually display.

Sen. Bill Heath, R-Bremen, who sponsored Senate Bill 293, has said it was “unconscionable” for the state to profit from what he considered an expression of faith and respect.

According to the Georgia Department of Revenue, there were 339,186 “In God We Trust” stickers sold in 2011 at \$1 each.

Heath originally proposed the motto would be the default on any license plates manufactured after July 1, but

he dropped that mandate in committee to gain passage for his bill.

Heath’s efforts follow a minor controversy last spring. The state was forced to redo a public contest to pick a new license plate design after the Revenue Department’s website displayed entries with the “In God We Trust” motto without making clear it was not a part of each design.

SB 293 passed on a 48-3 vote. It now goes to the House for consideration.

Ten Commandments Bill Passes Georgia House

The new bill seeks to get 10 Commandments displays (with 9 other documents) in public schools

A copy of the Ten Commandments could be posted in all Georgia government buildings and schools under a bill¹ passed unanimously on Feb. 28 by House lawmakers.

Representative Tommy Benton, R-Jefferson, is seeking to expand a 2006 law that already permits the passage from the Old Testament to be displayed in judicial buildings and courthouses when accompanied by other historical documents deemed to have influenced the U.S. legal system. Georgia lawmakers passed that original law one year after the U.S. Supreme Court in 2005 struck down Commandment displays in two Kentucky courthouses, ruling they appeared to be a government endorsement of Christianity.

Benton’s latest bill is H.B. 766. It expands current law by allowing the “Foundation of American Law and Government” display at all public buildings rather than only at courthouses and judicial facilities.

The bill passed by a vote of 161-0 and now heads to the state Senate. It has few vocal opponents and has a strong chance being passed.

“If you look at the law of the United States, we have a lot of laws that are based on the Christian and Jewish Ten Commandments, so I felt that was a very appropriate item to be put in there,” Benton said.

His opponents argue the bill would allow the Ten Commandments to be posted in school buildings, an area where courts typically draw a sharper line in favor of the secular in disputes over church and state.

“There’s a faulty premise there and that is that The Ten Commandments has anything to do with the civil laws of the United States—it does not, of course,” said Barry Lynn, a Christian minister and the executive director of the Washington-based Americans United For Separation Of Church and State. “We don’t make it illegal to dishonor our mother and father. We don’t have blasphemy laws.”

Lynn predicted that expanding the displays could provoke a lawsuit. Lawyers for his group last year counted at least five other states—Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, South Dakota and Oklahoma—that passed resolutions or

laws promoting the display of the Commandments in public buildings.

“This is the kind of thing that raises a gigantic red flag and on that flag are the words, ‘Sue us,’” he said.

Georgia lawmakers say they have non-religious reasons for displaying the Ten Commandments. Under state law, the commandments can only be put up in courthouses when side-by-side with eight other same-sized texts that lawmakers say educate the public about the history of American law. Few people have publicly clamored for widespread study of some of those more obscure documents on that list, like the 1215 Magna Carta from King John of England.

The display also includes the 1620 Mayflower Compact, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, “The Star-Spangled Banner,” the national motto (“In God We Trust”), the U.S. Bill of Rights, the preamble of Georgia’s constitution, the U.S. Bill of Rights and a description about the image of Lady Justice.

[From a Feb. 28 story by Ray Henry in the *Gwinnett Daily Post*.]

¹See the bill at <http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/Display/20112012/HB/766>.

In the News:

Indiana creationism bill passes the Senate: <http://ncse.com/news/2012/01/indiana-creationism-bill-passes-senate-007182>

The Declaration of Independence – A Christian Document?:

<http://galileounchained.com/2012/02/10/the-declaration-of-independence-a-christian-document/>

Pray to Play Politics in Kentucky

Governor Urges All State Employees to Attend His Prayer Breakfast

The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a second letter of complaint¹ on Feb. 29 contesting Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear's use of public resources to promote the March 6 Governor's Prayer Breakfast at the Frankfort Convention Center.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor's letter follows up her earlier letter² on Feb. 23.

FFRF is a nonprofit educational organization advocating for state-church separation and has more than 17,000 members across the country, including members in Kentucky.

Gaylor's first letter noted numerous constitutional violations: "This event is clearly an official government event. It is consistently referred to as the 'Governor's Prayer Breakfast.' It is touted on the governor's official website³, the state seal appears on the Web page and the reservation form, and your invitation is as 'the governor.' Nowhere is there a suggestion that the event is private; it is explicitly official. This is an unconstitutional endorse-

ment of religion by the government, and it must cease."

The follow-up letter reiterates the original concerns and brings another violation to light, an email (see Feb. 29 complaint letter) that Beshear, a Democrat and a member of the Disciples of Christ, sent Feb. 15 from his state email address to urge all state employees to attend the breakfast.

According to official state policy on executive branch Internet and email use, "Internet and E-mail resources, services and accounts are the property of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. These resources are to be used for state business purposes in serving the interests of state government."

The policy also prohibits "soliciting money for religious or political causes, advocating religious or political opinions and endorsing political candidates."

Both letters state it's unconstitutional for a governor to officially endorse a religious event. "If you wish to attend religious ceremonies, it is

necessary to do so in your personal capacity and to leave the title, prestige and power of your political office at the door. It is equally unconstitutional to use government resources, such as the Kentucky.gov website, official state email and the state seal to endorse religious rituals and solicit attendance by state employees."

Gaylor urged cancellation of the event and its removal from the state website. "We would also ask you to send an email apology to all state employees who were pressured by their government to take part in a religious ritual and avoid this improper use of government resources in the future."

"Although you claim that the prayer breakfast 'is a long standing tradition in Kentucky dating back to 1965,' we would urge you to uphold the Establishment Clause of our First Amendment, dating back to 1791," Gaylor added.

FFRF is also considering filing an ethics complaint.

[From a Feb. 29 FFRF press release.]

¹See the second letter here: http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/kentucky_breakfast2.pdf

²See the first letter here: http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/kentucky_breakfast1.pdf

³See the governor's website here: <http://governor.ky.gov/Pages/prayerbreakfast.aspx>

Letters to the AFNews Editor

This is a new column for *Atlanta Freethought News*. In it, we would like AFS members to write in with their views about current freethought issues and AFS activities. Consider it a sounding board for members on their views. Please submit your thoughts of 50 to 200 words for publication.

We will start with a note by Jack McKinney.

I was searching the AFS website for something to forward to a friend. At the bottom of the page I saw a notice that orders to Amazon under the AFS name will result in a commission for AFS. Coincidentally I was about to place an order to Amazon so I did so using the AFS connection. It was a small order, but every bit helps.

Jack McKinney

"Freethinkers reject faith as a valid tool of knowledge. Faith is the opposite of reason because reason imposes very strict limits on what can be true, and faith has no limits at all. A Great Escape into faith is no retreat to safety. It is nothing less than surrender." — Dan Barker, *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist* (Madison, WI: FFRF, 1992), p. 103.

"Faith is a cop-out. It is intellectual bankruptcy. If the only way you can accept an assertion is by faith, then you are conceding that it can't be taken on its own merits." — Dan Barker

"Fear is the main source of superstition." — Bertrand Russell, "*Unpopular Essays*"

"They [the clergy] believe that any portion of power confided to me, will be exerted in opposition of their schemes. And they believe rightly: for I have sworn upon the altar of god eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." — Thomas Jefferson

Major March Events

Big Events Occur Between Washington, DC and Atlanta This Month

THE REASON RALLY

The Reason Rally is a major event sponsored by many of the country's largest and most influential secular organizations. It will be free to attend and will take place in Washington, D.C. on March 24th, 2012 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM at the National Mall. There will be music, comedy, speakers, and so much more. Speakers include:

- Richard Dawkins, famous biologist
- Adam Savage, host of *Mythbusters*
- Tim Minchin, musician, comedian
- Jessica Ahlquist, highschool activist
- Taslima Nasrin, author of *Shame*
- James Randi, magician
- Lawrence Kraus, astrophysicist
- Paul Provenza of The Green Room

Music will be provided by the legendary rock band Bad Religion.

See more about the Reason Rally at <http://www.reasonrally.org/>.

AMERICAN ATHEIST CONVENTION

The annual Convention of American Atheists will be held on March 25 and 26 (following the Reason Rally) at the Bethesda North Marriott and Convention Center in Bethesda, MD.

This year's theme: "Come out! Come out! Wherever you Are!" The convention will include much information on all aspects of coming out of the atheist closet to your friends, family and co-workers. Tickets are \$199. Students with ID can come for \$30 and get a free T-shirt and membership in AA.

Speakers include:

- Richard Dawkins, famous biologist
- Greta Christina, author and blogger
- Dr. Elisabeth Cornwell
- Jerry DeWitt
- Victor Harris
- P.Z. Myers
- Talisma Nasrin

- Sam Singleton
- Eddie Tabash

See more on the AA Convention at <http://atheist.org/events/>.

ROCK BEYOND BELIEF

Rock Beyond Belief is an all-day event at Fort Bragg, NC on March 31.

Speakers for this event include:

- Dan Barker of FFRF
- Richard Dawkins, famous biologist
- Margaret Downey, founder of Free-thought Society
- Dale McGowan, author of *Parenting Beyond Belief & Raising Freethinkers*
- Hemant Mehta of FriendlyAtheist.com
- Mikey Weinstein, MRFF president
- Nathan Phelps, son of Pastor Fred
- Al Stefanelli of United Atheist Front
- Ed Brayton, Mich. Citizens for Science
- Todd Steifel, secular philanthropist

This event also has lots of music by live bands. Read more about it at <http://rockbeyondbelief.com/>.

And don't forget Richard Dawkins speaking at Gwinnett Center on March 27 (see page 8) and Sam Singleton at Atlanta Freethought Hall on March 30, 31 (see page 1)!



Marshall County (Ala.) Schools Warned About Prayers

Arab City Schools got a letter last fall. The Huntsville City Council received one last week¹.

Now the Freedom from Religion Foundation has written letters to Marshall County Board of Education President Terry Kenamer and Superintendent Tim Nabors listing five steps they must take to comply with the U.S. Constitution in regard to prayers at board meetings, religious language in the student handbook and on the district's website, an e-mail from Nabors encouraging participation in the National Day of Prayer in May and other instances of promoting religion.

The letter to Kenamer does not directly threaten a lawsuit, but the hint is heavy.

"Court battles can be costly and cripple the school system you are working so hard to improve," writes Patrick Elliott, a staff attorney with FFRF, located in Madison, Wis. "In one case of religion intrusion into public schools... the school district had to pay over \$1 million."

Frank Reed, board member for county schools on Brindley Mountain, said he expects the matter will be discussed during a board workshop on March 1.

Reed said he heard about the FFRF's notification on WAFF news.

"It sounds like they (FFRF) did a lot of research and have it all pretty well covered," Reed said.

Considering the case law against prayers in schools - and school board meetings - and the county's financial condition, he said he hopes the board handles the matter like Arab Superintendent John Mullins did last year when he ceased his 10-year tradition of allowing student-led prayers over the PA system before home football games.

"We don't have money to go to the Supreme Court or a federal judge," Reed said.

"This is probably one of the most blatant (school systems) that I have dealt with," FFRF attorney Andrew

Seidel told WAFF. "There's not even an attempt to keep church and state separate."

The five-page letter to Kenamer is "to alert you to numerous severe constitutional violations occurring in the Marshall County Schools," Elliott wrote. "Concerned district parents contacted us regarding multiple constitutional violations occurring at the hand of the Marshall County Schools administration."

The group cites prayers that Nabors leads before every board meeting.

"We understand that the prayers are always overtly and explicitly Christian," Elliott wrote. "It is beyond the scope of a public school board to schedule prayer as part of its meetings."

"(A recent case) emphasized that school board prayer is analogous to other school prayer cases when it comes to protecting children from the coercion of school-sponsored prayer, which is highlighted in the context of public schools."

"Prayer at school board meetings is unnecessary, inappropriate and divisive," Elliott continued. "Board members are free to pray privately or worship in their own time and own way. They do not need to worship on taxpayers' time."

Kenamer's letter said it is "well settled that public schools may not advance or promote religion, which it alleges that Nabors did by including a quote from Max Lucado's "Grace for the Moment" in the student handbook, which reads in part "If someone does wrong to you, forgive that person because the Lord forgave you."

"This amounts to religious instruction and is strictly prohibited," Elliott wrote. "It is particularly unacceptable that Marshall County Schools chose to include religious indoctrination in the official rulebook for students."

He also notes the school system's "belief" statement on its website that reads: "God gives meaning and purpose to life."

"This statement clearly demon-

strates that the school not only prefers religion over non-religion but also religious students over non-religious students," the letter reads. "The district's promotion of religion over non-religion impermissibly turns any non-believing Marshall County Public School student, parent, teacher or staff member into an outsider."

Elliott wrote that Nabors allegedly sent an e-mail to all principals, supervisors and central office staff encouraging participation in the National Day of Prayer on May 3.

"As you are likely aware, the Supreme Court has continually struck down school-sponsored prayer in public school," Elliott wrote. "Superintendents should be trying to uphold the Constitution, not actively seeking to violate it."

He also wrote that reports of Nabors using his position to attempt to change or influence the religious beliefs of students or staff, if true, "amounts to a serious violation of the Constitution."

The solutions are simple, the FFRF wrote, calling for the school system to:

- Discontinue school board prayers;
- Remove religious language from the handbooks;
- Remove all religious references in the statement of beliefs and from school websites;
- Send an e-mail rescinding Nabors' promotion of plans for National Day of Prayer;
- Investigate reports of Nabors proselytizing, witnessing and reading the Bible to students, parents and employees.

All of these actions, Elliott wrote, should be taken immediately.

According to WAFF, the FFRF sent out similar letters to 13 other government municipalities about two weeks ago, one of them being the Huntsville City Council, which opens its public meetings with prayer.

The council defied the request to cease its meeting prayers last week.

[From an article by David Moore in the Feb. 29 issue of the *Arab Tribune*.]

¹See the letter here: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/82721505/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-Letter-to-Huntsville-City-Council>

The Truth About America's Religious Heritage

This 'heritage' is not always a basis for pride

by Dave Niose

When religious conservatives use the apparatus of government to promote their religious views, they typically do so under the guise of "acknowledging religious heritage."¹ This rationalization has been used to justify the national motto of "In God We Trust," for example, and inclusion of the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

There is plenty of reason to suspect that the "acknowledging heritage" argument is untrue, a disingenuous cover for an agenda of promoting religion. To acknowledge a heritage is fine, but it seems odd that we must do so by *asserting religious truth claims* (since the wording of both the Pledge and the motto assume that a God in fact exists). And isn't it puzzling that such efforts to "acknowledge heritage" are always led by religious organizations, not legitimate historical or educational societies?

But just for the fun of it, let's go along with the façade of "acknowledging our religious heritage." If we do so, what exactly are we *acknowledging*? Here again, we see that misinformation clouds the issue, because common understandings of America's religious heritage more often reflect mythology, not facts.

Elementary school children, for example, are often told of how the Pilgrims left England in search of religious freedom, only to find it on the shores of New England. This, however, is false, as the Pilgrims were not at all interested in religious freedom, and in fact vehemently opposed it. After leaving England they settled in Amsterdam, a relatively free society, but they couldn't tolerate the openness and diversity there. In deciding to leave the Netherlands, Pilgrim leader William Bradford wrote that he wanted to shield the community's children from being "drawn away by evil examples into extravagance and dangerous courses."²

Bradford envisioned the American settlement as a "great hope... for propagating and advancing the Gospel of the kingdom of Christ..." Properly translated, this meant he wished to establish a theocracy, which is precisely what happened. To suggest that early New Englanders were a group that longed for a society of religious freedom is an absurdity; harsh intolerance and cruel piety were the rule.

If indeed we are supposed to be thinking of America's religious heritage when we place our hand over our heart and declare that the nation is "under God," there is little need to be consumed with nostalgia. We should instead ponder with somber regret the victims of that religious heritage, such as Mary Dyer, a Quaker woman who was hanged on Boston Common in 1660 for the crime of religious nonconformity. For holding religious views that were just slightly unaligned with those of her Boston neighbors, Dyer was strung up and killed along with several others, becoming a permanent symbol of America's rich "religious heritage" for which we now have our children Pledge daily.

Dyer and her fellow victims are not to be confused with the targets of the Salem witch hunts, which came a few decades later—yet another chapter in America's proud religious tradition. Once again, a confluence of fear, ignorance, and intolerance resulted in the early demise of innocents.

Ironically, although religious conservatives argue so aggressively for America's religious heritage, the most remarkable thing about the birth of the new nation was its secularity. The framers were most influenced philosophically by the Enlightenment, which was the first period in European history where we see thinkers openly rejecting Christianity. Reason and empiricism, not religious dogma, were seen as the avenue to truth, and for the first time we see a non-

Christian religious view, Deism, becoming openly acceptable, particularly among the educated.

Because the framers were so secular, religious conservatives give great weight to the Declaration of Independence reference to "nature's God" and men being "endowed by their Creator" with rights. These phrases, they insist, are evidence that America is a Christian nation. This is ironic, because the Declaration is notable for its intentional omission of any mention of Christianity or Jesus. "Creator" and "nature's God" are common deistic references, obviously an intentional effort to avoid Christian rhetoric. Thus, almost a century before Darwin's discoveries, in an era when outright atheism was still a crime, the framers took careful steps to avoid validating Christianity. In fact, when they finally drafted the Constitution the resulting text was entirely god-free. Religion is mentioned in the original Constitution only once, and that is in the negative: to ensure that there is no religious test for holding office.

Religious advocates will cherry-pick occasional quotes and actions by the framers paying respect to religion, but such examples hardly prove a "heritage" that deserves exaltation. Indeed, to the extent the nation has a religious history, that heritage often provides more reason for shame than pride. Take, for instance, the proud religious tradition that justified slavery³. Citing both Old and New Testament passages, preachers and slave-owners insisted that God was on their side as they subjected their fellow humans to the ultimate inhumanity.

Even the occasional "Great Awakenings" of religious fervor that have dotted America's history, though surely an important part of America's religious heritage, are rather embarrassing if considered honestly. At the height of such revivals, apocalyptic religious leaders had convinced their

¹See <http://ratify.constitutioncenter.org/education/ForEducators/Viewpoints/WhytheSupremeCourtShouldProtectthePledgeofAllegiance.shtml>.

²See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilgrims_\(Plymouth_Colony\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilgrims_(Plymouth_Colony)).

³See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bible_and_slavery.

followers, some of whom had relinquished all possessions, that the Second Coming of Jesus was imminent. Such “awakenings” all ended with great disappointment⁴, when the day of reckoning passed unremarkably.

Venomous religious bigotry is another part of America’s proud religious heritage. Almost all of the framers were strongly anti-Catholic⁵, for example. John Adams wrote that he was glad that in New England Catholics were “as rare as a comet or earthquake.” John Jay, the first chief justice of the Supreme Court, promoted a law in New York that would allow

anyone except Catholics to hold office. When Catholics finally began immigrating in large numbers to America in the 1800s, the anti-Catholic backlash was violent and extreme⁶.

All countries have a religious heritage of some kind or another, and America is no exception. And like other countries, America has a religious heritage that should not necessarily be an object of pride. Though of course there have been some good works done in the name of religion—deeds of charity, support for civil rights, etc.—to suggest that America’s religious heritage is so great that we

should subject all the nation’s citizens, believers and nonbelievers, to constant indoctrination via religious truth claims (i.e., that the nation is “under God” or that we all trust in God) is to distort history and disregard freedom of conscience.

[This article is from a Feb. 27 blog by Dave Niose at PsychologyToday.com. **Dave Niose** is an attorney, activist and president of the Washington-based American Humanist Association. His book, *Nonbeliever Nation: The Rise of Secular Americans*, is scheduled for release in July 2012.]

⁴See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Disappointment.

⁵See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Catholicism#cite_ref-24.

⁶See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia_Nativist_Riots.

Other Meetings of Interest in the Atlanta Area

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet on Sunday, March 18, at 12:30 PM at AF Hall. Speaking at the meeting: Al Stephanelli, Georgia State Director for American Atheists.

The **Black Nonbelievers of Atlanta** will meet on Sunday, March 18, at 2:00 at the Tenth Amendment Media Group’s Conference Room, 2245 Godby Road, Ste. 111, in College Park, GA. See <http://blacknonbelievers.org/> for details.

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

The **SOS** (Secular Organizations for Sobriety) meets on Tuesdays at 7:30PM in Roswell. For more information, send an email to donnaigore@yahoo.com.

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet on Monday, Mar. 12, at 7:00PM at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, in Lawrenceville, GA. <http://gust.domek.org/>

The **Fayette Freethought Society** hosts a lunch at El Rancho Restaurant in Peachtree City, GA, on every first and third Saturday at noon. They also meet on other days for Book Club, philosophy and science discussions and civic

activities. <http://www.meetup.com/Fayette-Freethought-Society/>

The **Fayette Freethought Society** Adopt-A-Highway cleanup in on Saturday, March 17 at 10:00AM. The cleanup is along Hwy 54 from City Hall to Peachtree Pkwy.

The **Peachtree City Humanists** meet often for discussions at Starbucks, lunch, dinner at She’s Bistro, and more. See <http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/>.

The **Atlanta Skeptics** will meet at 7:00 PM on Saturday, March 17, at Manuel’s Tavern. Bob Blaskiewicz will talk on the Maria Monk Conspiracy. <http://www.atlantaskeptics.com/>

The **Atlanta Science Tavern** will meet on Sat., March 24, at 7:00PM at Manuel’s Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave NE, in Atlanta. Georgia Tech Physicist Dan Goldman will talk on methods that show how a sandfish can swim so rapidly under the sand. <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern/>

There will be a **meetup** for Atlanta atheists on Sunday, Mar. 11, at 6:00 PM at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

Another **meetup** for Atlanta atheists is scheduled for Sunday, March 25, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Atlanta. (<http://www.meetup.com/>)

Richard Dawkins to Speak at Gwinnett Performing Arts Center

The Science History Club of Georgia Gwinnett College proudly presents “An Evening with Richard Dawkins” at the Gwinnett Performing Arts Center in Duluth, GA, on Tuesday March 27 at 7:00PM. The address is 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway, in Duluth.

Richard Dawkins is a world famous evolutionary biologist and New York Times best-selling author.

Fans of Dawkins are invited to attend and celebrate the release of his most recent work, *The Magic of Reality* with a book signing and reception.

Jerry Coyne, distinguished professor of biology at the University of Chicago, will also be there and is scheduled to introduce Dawkins.

“Selling eternal life is an unbeatable business with no customers ever asking for their money back after the goods are not delivered.” –Victor Stenger

Become a Member!



(Or renew your membership with this form or online at 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!

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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.

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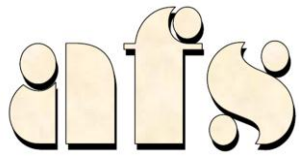
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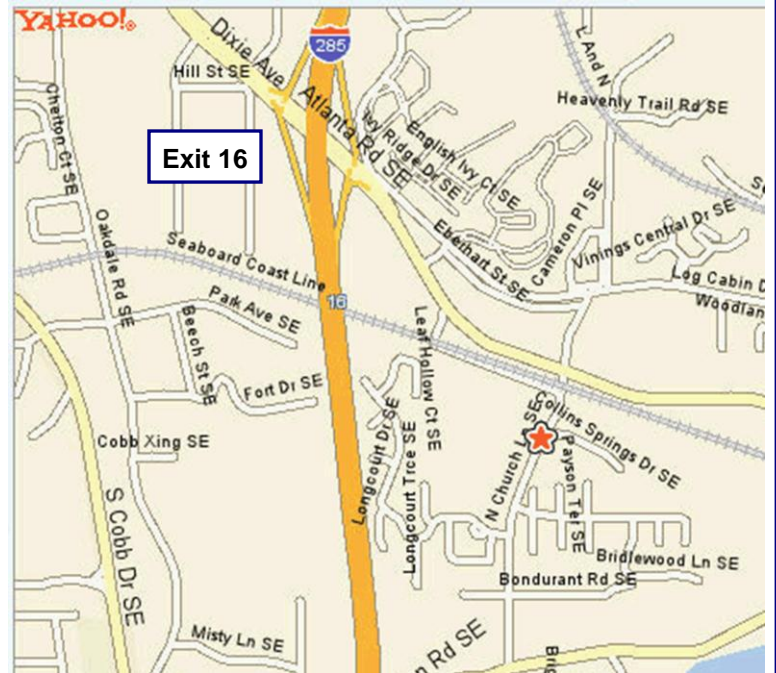
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Atlanta
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Society

The March 11 Meeting:
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Smyrna, GA
This Month's Speaker:
Sharon Carruthers



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