

The February AFS Meeting

Steven C. Lowe gives a talk about Robert Ingersoll

Our speaker for the February 8th AFS meeting will be **Steven C. Lowe**. Steve grew up in Winchester, Virginia, graduated from the University of Virginia in 1972 and joined the Peace Corps where he taught high school math in French in Zaire in central Africa. He had a 20 year career with the telephone companies (C&P, AT&T, Lucent, and AVAYA) where he worked in sales and business operations across the US and around the world. He is now retired and lives in Washington, DC.



Steven C. Lowe

He is a member of the Board of Directors of Washington Area Secular Humanists and a member of several Humanist organizations such as the American Humanist Association, the Council for Secular Humanism and the Center for Inquiry, as well as American Atheists, the Freedom From Religion Foundation and he supports Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Secular Coalition for America.

He gives guided tours about Robert Ingersoll's time in Washington, DC. (<http://www.ingersoll.wash.org/>)

"The Great Agnostic": Robert G. Ingersoll was a 19th Century champion of Freethought, women's rights, civil rights, and DC voting rights. This famous orator and critique of religion toured the US and delivered over 1,300 speeches to packed houses. Ingersoll lived and worked in Washington, DC. He argued cases before the Supreme Court, lobbied Congress and consulted with Presidents. This talk will cover his two DC homes, one on Lafayette Square, and the places where he worked and spoke in downtown Washington, DC.



Robert Ingersoll

Be sure to come at noon for the potluck lunch and see the notice for what you need to bring. The program will start at about 1:00 p.m. Hope to see you there!

The February Potluck

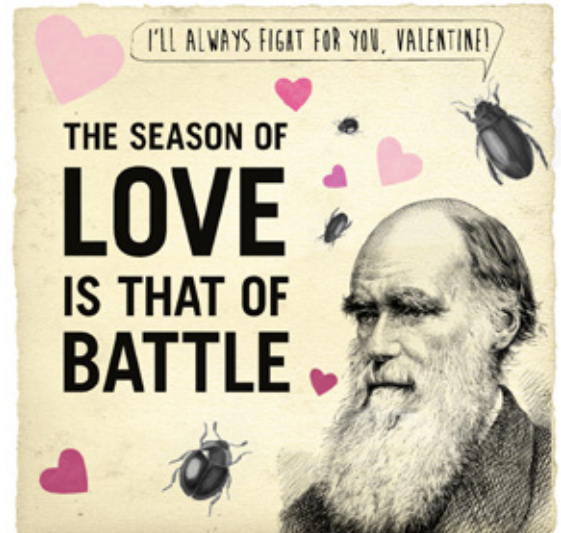
Before the February 8th meeting we will have a Potluck Lunch, starting at noon. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name:

A-G: Bring a dessert

H-P: Bring a side dish

Q-Z: Bring a main dish

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.



Calendar

2/8 Potluck Lunch. 12:00 p.m.

2/8 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.

2/13 Darwin Day Lectures 10:00-3:00
GA State Student Center Auditorium

3/8 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 a.m.

3/8 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.

All events are at AF Hall unless noted and are subject to change.

Be sure to like AFS's Facebook page for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought>

AtlantaFreethought

Programs and Speakers

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

The views and opinions expressed by speakers at AFS do not necessarily reflect those of AFS members or its policy.



Feb 8: Steven C. Lowe

Mar 8: TBA

Apr 12: TBA

May 10: TBA

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoo.com to subscribe. The AFS Forum email list is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation and religion. To subscribe to this list, send an email to AFSForum-subscribe@yahoo.com. The AFS Facebook page is at <http://www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought>. For information on other AFS email groups, visit the AFS website at <http://www.atlantafreethought.org>.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists.

We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

We define freethought as “the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.”

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other’s company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

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Atlanta Freethought News

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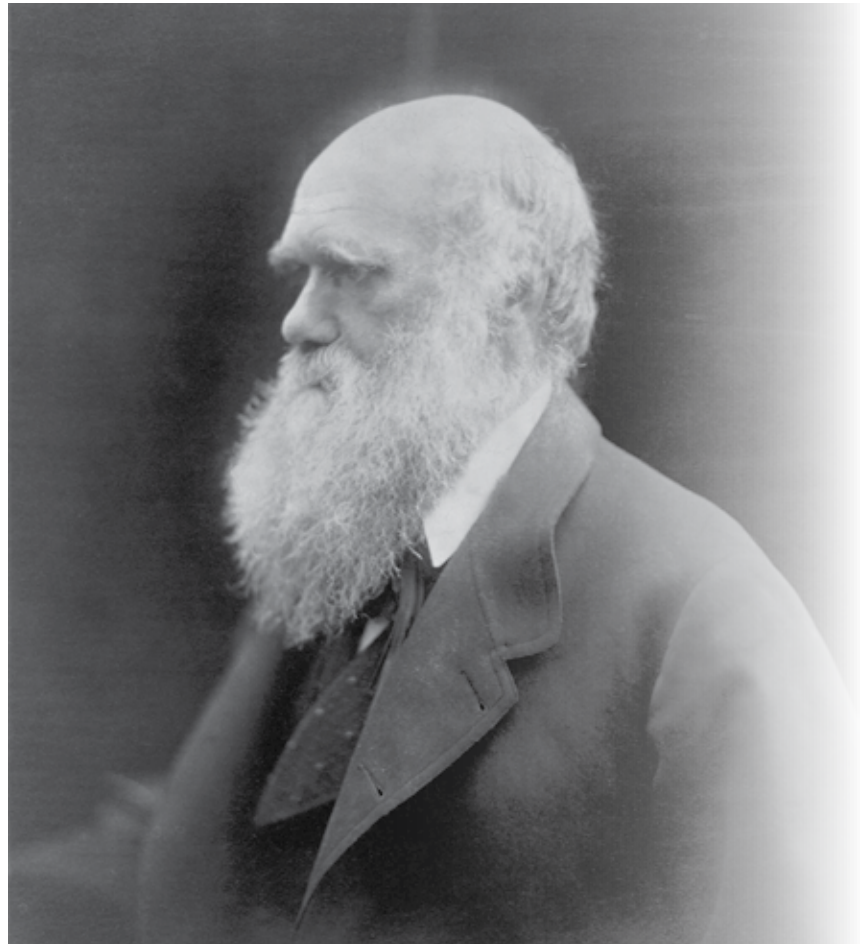
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Darwin Day • February 12, 2015

Darwin Day is observed on February 12, 2015 and intends to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of **Charles Darwin** in 1809. The day is used to highlight Darwin's contribution to science and to promote science in general. Charles Darwin was an English naturalist, who established that all species of life have descended over time from common ancestry, and proposed the scientific theory that this branching pattern of evolution resulted from a process that he called natural selection.

In the late 1990s, two Darwin enthusiasts, Chesworth and Stephens, co-founded an unofficial effort to promote Darwin Day. In 2001, Chesworth moved to New Mexico and incorporated the "Darwin Day Program." In 2004, the New Mexico Corporation was dissolved and all its assets assigned to the "Darwin Day Celebration," a non-profit organization incorporated in California in 2004 by Dr. Robert Stephens and others and the Mission Statement was expanded.

Some celebrants combine Darwin Day with a celebration of Abraham Lincoln, who was also born on February 12, 1809. Still others like to celebrate the many noted individuals that influenced or were influenced by Darwin's work, such as Thomas H. Huxley, Charles Lyell, Alfred Russel Wallace, Carl Sagan, and Ernst Mayr. (*With material from: Wikipedia*)



“Religious liberty” bill is misleading—at best

Second Opinion • Marietta Daily Journal • Wednesday, January 14, 2015

Dear Editor:

State Rep. Sam Teasley (R-Marietta), along with fired Atlanta Fire Chief Kevin Cochran and Concerned Women for America of Georgia, is misleading about the purpose and effects of legislation Teasley is pushing. His “Religious Liberty” bill, HB 29, is presented as needed to protect the religious liberty of conservative Christians, but that is not the aim. The religious liberty of all Christians, and of all the rest of us, is protected by the First Amendment.

What Teasley's bill would do is downright un-American: it would protect the “rights” of some—but only some—religious believers to use the power of government to promote their religious beliefs.

There are many examples that would make this point, but just consider these:

1. Chief Cochran published a book expressing his religious beliefs and used the power and title of his office to give those beliefs credibility and a captive audience. He passed out copies of his book to Atlanta firefighters who served under him. The chief has, under the First Amendment, every right to whatever religious beliefs seem right to him and to express those in whatever ways that suit him—but he does not have the right to use his secular, tax-funded job to proselytize. If you're not convinced, imagine a Muslim fire chief publishing a book on

the need for sharia law and distributing it to his firefighters.

2. Tanya Ditty, in her letter to the *Marietta Daily Journal* (Jan. 9), cited three Georgia cities where she claimed religious expression had been curtailed—Savannah, Ellijay, and Pine Mountain. In all three cases, the restrictions imposed were on governments, not on individual citizens. Every American citizen has an unrestricted right to support Christianity, Islam, or atheism. No American citizen has the right to use governmental power to support religious or irreligious beliefs.

Ironically, to truly protect religious liberty of all Americans, we have what we need: the First Amendment. “Adding” a state law pretending to expand rights in fact endangers those rights.

Ed Buckner
Smyrna

What If God Doesn't Want It?

Ala. Town Declares Itself Property Of The Almighty by Rob Boston

<https://lau.org/blogs/wall-of-separation/what-if-god-doesn-t-want-it-ala-town-declares-itself-property-of-the>

Officials in the town of Winfield, Ala., passed an interesting resolution last month: They declared that God owns their community (http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2015/01/reaction_mostly_positive_after.html).

“Whereas we acknowledge God is the owner of the City of Winfield and that it is a City under God. We acknowledge that at all times, He is in control,” reads a resolution that passed the city council unanimously.

It goes on like this for several more sentences. The town officially endorses prayer and acknowledges that “the City of Winfield is where it is today because of God’s grace and mercy.”

The town’s mayor, Randy Price, told the news website *AL.com*, “I feel like we need to stand up

the Ten Commandments at his business. Sounding more like a preacher than a politician, he remarked, “I’m going to step on a lot of people’s toes but there’s not but one God and, that one God, to Him be the glory. There’s no other way; there’s no other God. There are a lot of religions out there but only one God.”

Glad we got that cleared up.

Now, I’ve never been to Winfield, a town of about 4,500 in northwest Alabama. I think the chances that I will ever get there are slim – although the town’s annual Mule Day Festival (<http://winfieldsmuleday.com/>) sounds like fun for the whole family. But I do have some questions for Mayor Price and the city council: If God owns the town, does that mean he’ll be picking up the property taxes? Should residents just pray if they need a pothole filled? Where does God stand on the burning zoning issue, which I read about in the local newspaper, of the Winfield man who wants to open a store selling guns and musical instruments out of his house?

More to the point: Did anyone ask God if he really wants to own this town?



Mule Day Festival • Winfield, Alabama

<https://saragal.wordpress.com/2007/09/22/mule-day-winfield-alabama/>

for what is right. Our forefathers said ‘One nation under God’ and we went so far away from that. There are not enough godly people involved in day-to-day decisions.” (http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2015/01/reaction_mostly_positive_after.html)

Price owns a towing service in town and displays

Look, I’m sure that officials in Winfield don’t literally believe that God owns their town – at least I hope they don’t. But these folks need a history lesson. Price speaks of “forefathers” who declared America one nation under God.

Who exactly were these people? I challenge Mayor Price to name them.

The phrase “under God” was slipped into the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954. Before then, we were simply “one nation, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” The “forefathers” had nothing to do with that change – unless President Dwight D. Eisenhower counts as a forefather.

The members of the city council could also use a lesson in tolerance. Their job is to represent everyone – even the lonely atheists who

may reside in Winfield. Right now, they’re not doing that. City officials are wading into theological matters and elevating one version of faith over others as well as over non-faith. That’s not part of their job description.

I did a quick search online, and it looks like there’s no shortage of houses of worship in Winfield. Let the men and women who pastor those facilities handle the God stuff. The city council can stick to issues like zoning, taxes, public services – and, of course, planning this year’s Mule Day Festival.

Oppose Religious Electioneering: Contact Your Representative Now

<http://americanhumanist.org/news/details/2015-01-oppose-religious-electioneering>



That didn't take long. Congress is only in its first month, but religious right government officials are wasting no time in trying to tear down the wall of separation between church and state.

Earlier this month, Rep. Wal-

ter Jones (R-NC) introduced a bill, H.R. 153, which would "restore the Free Speech and First Amendment rights of churches and exempt organizations by repealing the 1954 Johnson Amendment." The Johnson Amendment being referred to is a piece of legislation that prohibits churches from endorsing or opposing political candidates.

If pastors are given the right to endorse candidates from the pulpit, their

parishioners may be coerced into supporting specific candidates because of a perceived religious obligation. This is fundamentally un-American, and weakens the state of our democracy by giving religious leaders untold influence.

Stand up for church-state separation by opposing this harmful bill! (http://action.americanhumanist.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=17059)

Church and state are separate for a reason, and attempts to de-secularize our government must be opposed by humanists just like you. Won't you take a moment to make your humanist voice heard by contacting your Representative?

We have a long congressional session ahead of us, but the American Humanist Association is dedicated to helping local humanists leave their mark on public policy. Thank you for defending the separation of church and state.

FFRF ends Georgia teachers' proselytizing

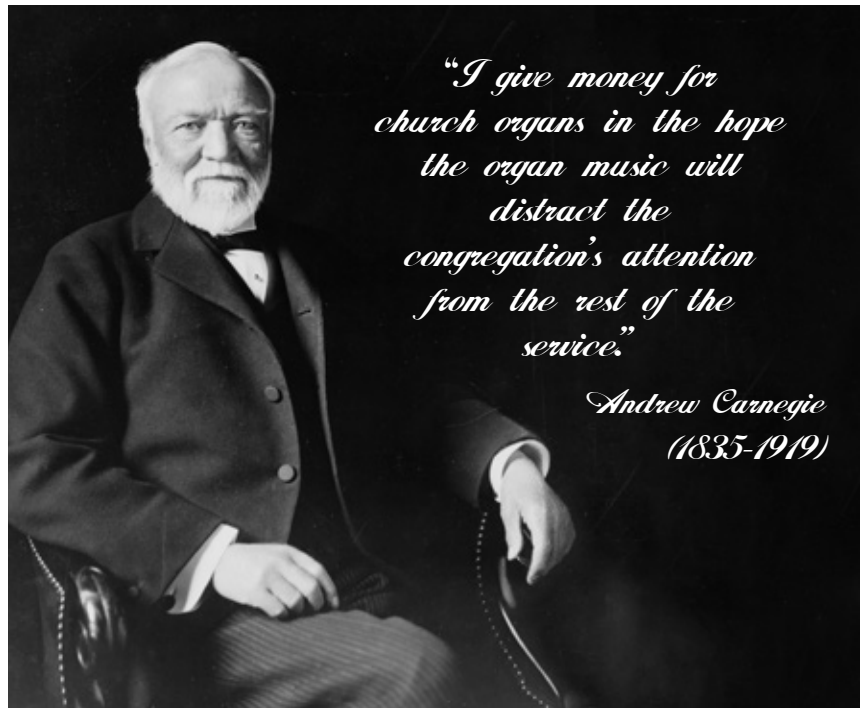
<http://ffrf.org/legal/other-legal-successes/item/22232-ffrf-ends-georgia-teachers-proselytizing-jan-5-2015>

Elementary school faculty in the Whitfield County School District, Georgia, will no longer teach their young students religion thanks to a letter sent by the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

FFRF received a report from a parent whose Antioch Elementary School kindergartener was informed that Christmas was "Jesus's Birthday" and that "Jesus is the reason for the season." A project in the child's class involved making a nativity scene from construction paper while a teacher read students the story of the biblical nativity. When the parent contacted the school to complain, the solution offered was to remove the student "whenever anything religious was brought up," and to ask the parent what she should do with the child "when they do activities for Easter."

Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel sent a letter to Superintendent Judy Gilreath on December 23, 2014. "Public schools have a constitutional obligation to remain neutral toward religion. When District staff assign children the task of making a project depicting a religious story, read students the nativity story, and tell students that Christmas is 'Jesus's birthday' and that Jesus is 'the reason for the season,' the District has unconstitutionally entangled itself with a religious message, specifically a Christian message," wrote Seidel.

Gilreath responded on January 5, explaining that she met with the Antioch principal and "made her aware of the complaint and the legal restrictions concerning teaching of religion in a public school." She instructed the principal to speak with the teacher who did the nativity project to "make sure she understand she is not to celebrate religious holidays with her students."



Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

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

The Fayette Freethought Society hosts lunches, dinners, book discussions, civic activities and more. (<http://www.meetup.com/Fayette-Freethought-Society/>)

The Peachtree City Humanists meet often for discussions at Starbucks, lunch, dinner at She's Bistro, and more. Several upcoming events in January. (<http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/>)

Fellowship of Reason meets on the first Sunday of every month at 10:30 AM at AF Hall. There are meetings for book discussion, philosophy, a classic film course, and other events. (<http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta atheists** on Sunday, Feb. 8, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) has their monthly meeting at UUGC, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, GA on Monday, Feb 9 at 7 p.m. The topic is "What Are Your Top Secular Causes?" (<http://www.meetup.com/brights-295/>.)

Atlanta Astronomy Club meets on the second Saturday of each month. For more information, check out the website (<http://www.atlantaastronomy.org>)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets on Sat. Feb 14 at 1 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA.

There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and resources, please visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (<http://www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter/>)

IIG Atlanta will tentatively have its monthly meetup on Sat. Feb 21 at 4:30 at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N Highland Avenue Northeast, in the Crows Nest. Check the meetup group or contact Shaune Beattie at shaune.beattie@gmail.com for more information: <http://www.meetup.com/IIG-Atlanta/>.

Atlanta Skeptics is will have its Sat. Feb 21 regular meeting at Manuel's Tavern in the North Avenue room (come in the front door, turn right and head all the way back). The topic is **2014 Psychic Predictions Scorecard** given by **Laura Ross**. Social and dinner starts at 6 pm. Be sure to check with the Meetup page. (<http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics/>)

Black Nonbelievers will meet on Sun, Feb 15 from 2-4 pm

at East Point Library, 2757 Main Street, East Point. It will be their first General Meeting for 2015, and for those who have been here since the beginning, this is the very day they held their first General Meeting four years ago! Come for fellowship, recaps, and updates on future projects and events. As always, there will be refreshments and merchandise for sale. Donations are always appreciated too. (<http://www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/>)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will meet at First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta, 470 Candler Park, Atlanta, GA 6:00 p.m. Sun, Feb 15. The topic is **The Science of Love**.

Dr. Larry Young, director of Emory University's Center for Translational Social Neuroscience and author of *The Chemistry*

Between Us (<http://amzn.to/1y3uYYO>) will be joining SA to share his research about the chemistry underlying love, sex, and attraction. As always, there will be a potluck supper held at the meeting.

Please ask one of their volunteer helpers if you need assistance in any way. Their venue is wheelchair accessible.

Besides their Sunday meeting, this month, SA also has a range of other events, such as *Mindfulness Meditation*, *Help Often: MedShare*, *Wonder Club: Free Will*, *Jane Austin: Game Theorist*, and *Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions Lecture Series*.

For more about the global movement, check out: <http://sundayassembly.com/about/> (<http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly/>)

Freedom From Religion

Foundation will tentatively meet on Sunday, Feb 22 at 2:00 at Atlanta Freethought Hall. The speaker will be **Dr Jill Dermeyer**. She is a Clinical Psychologist and specializes in helping people deal with the trauma of coming out as an atheist to family, friends & co-workers. Check Meetup for more info. <http://www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia/>

Another **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** is scheduled for Sun., Feb. 22 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Sandy Springs. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists>)

The Atlanta Science Tavern is having a meeting at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave NE, Atlanta, GA from 7-10 p.m. Sat. Feb 28 but at press time, the topic has not yet been announced. The cost is \$3.00 per non-student. See the meetup page for more info. Note that Science Tavern also has other listed events. (<http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern>)

Atlanta Atheists has first Sunday meetups each month: the place varies. Check Meetup for info on the March get-together. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)



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(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 newsletter: We encourage members to receive the newsletter by email. This avoids the printing and mailing expenses. But if you really want the paper version of the newsletter, just let us know and we will send it to you at no additional charge. (You can also pick up a paper newsletter at any AFS meeting.)

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"Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect."

—James Madison, 1774

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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

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By the late, great Carol Faulkenberry (illustrated by Amanda Faulken-berry); 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.

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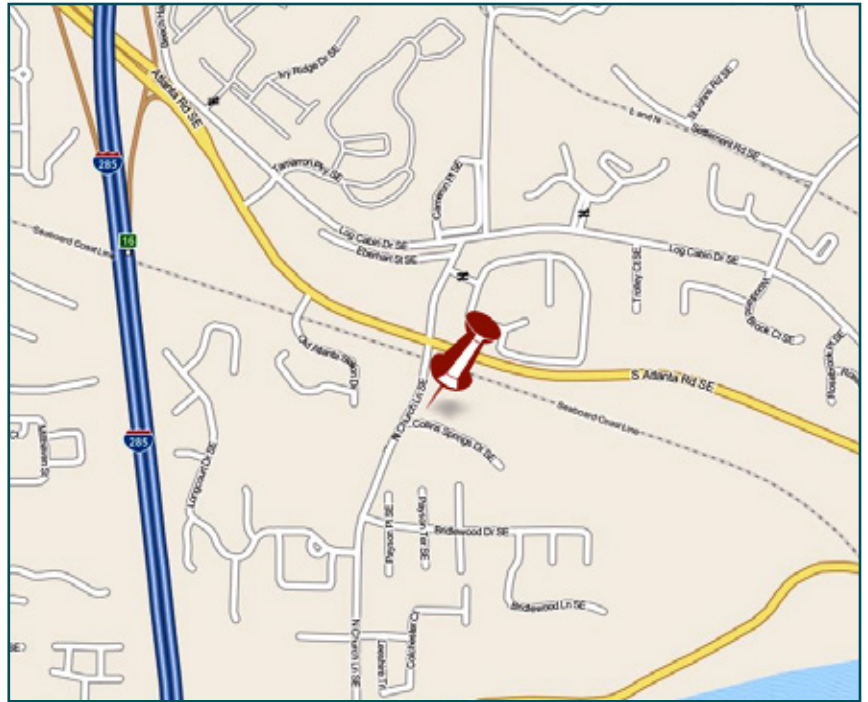
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*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**The February 8th
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1:00 at AF Hall,
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Atlanta, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
Steven C. Lowe**



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