

The April AFS Meeting



The AFS program on Sunday, April 14, will feature **Dr. Jeffrey B. Perry**, nationally famous historian of the American race, class, progressive, atheist, and freethought movements, speaking on Theodore W. Allen's seminal two-volume work called *The Invention of the White Race*.

The interplay between race, progressivism, radicalism, and freethought will be the subject of Perry's talk, also called "The Invention of the White Race." More on the republication of Allen's book and on Jeff Perry can be found at websites such as <http://www.jeffreyperry.net> and <http://billfletcherjr.com/2013/jeff-perry-at-the-brecht-forum/>.

Perry is well-known as a lively and engaging speaker, as well as a scholar of the first order. Few people can claim both the wisdom derived from being a hard-working postal worker and that built from careful scholarly pursuits. We're proud to bring our members and other interested people

in the Atlanta area the chance to see and hear programs of this importance and quality.



Jeffrey B. Perry is an independent, working-class scholar formally educated at Princeton, Harvard, Rutgers, and Columbia.

The program, free and open to the public, will be preceded by conversation and socializing—and a meal at a local eatery will follow the program, for those interested.

Calendar

- 4/13 GA Renaissance Festival Opening Day (tickets 2 for 1), Fairburn, GA
 - 4/14 AFS Board Meeting, 11:00 a.m.
 - 4/14 AFS General Meeting, 1:00 p.m.
 - 4/26-28 Booth at Inman Park Festival
- All events at AF Hall unless noted.*

April Social at GA Ren Fest

This Saturday, April 13th, Atlanta Freethought Society members are going to the Georgia Renaissance Festival for our April social event. As this is opening weekend, tickets are 2 for 1.

GATE PRICES

Adult Tickets: \$19.95

Senior Tickets (60+): \$17.95

Child Tickets (6-12): \$8.95

Children 5 and under are free

2-for-1 Adult Tickets* \$19.95

**opening weekend only*

On I-75/I-85: Travel southbound through downtown Atlanta on the I-75/85 Connector. Exit onto I-85 south toward Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and continue south on I-85 to exit 61-FAIRBURN/PEACHTREE CITY. Turn right off the exit and travel west 2 miles to the Festival entrance on the right. Hours: 10:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Free parking.

If you've never been before you'll be amazed by the sheer size of the magnificent 32-acre 16-Century Kingdom. Here you'll find Knights in shining armor and Maidens Faire, King Henry VIII and his Court, and a World Bazaar full of elaborate treasures created by over 150 artisans who perform

demonstrations of their crafts. Feast like royalty on hundreds of gourmet delights including their popular giant roasted turkey legs washed down with frothy ales served in four jolly pubs. Endless entertainment awaits with 150 thrilling shows daily featuring juggling, music, comedic storytelling and feats of incredible physical skills. Your whole family will enjoy the Royal Petting Zoo and the thrilling rides in the unique medieval amusement park. The original extreme sport – The Jousting Tournament of Kings, and the magnificent highflying Birds of Prey and Animal Show are not to be missed.



Those of us who have been suggest that you be sure to bring good walking shoes, a water bottle, sunscreen, a camera, and a sense of humor.



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.

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

April 14: Dr. Jeffrey B. Perry will speak on Theodore Allen's new two volume set *The Invention of the White Race*.

May 12: Perry Mitchell of Compassion and Choices of Georgia will speak on "Are You Good to Go?"

June 9: AFS Board Member **Paul Broman** will speak on his encounter with the Church of Scientology.

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-groups.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@yahoogroups.com. For information on other AFS email groups, visit the AFS website at <http://www.atlantafreethought.org>.

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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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Open seat

Atlanta Freethought News

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Membership in AFS is \$50/year per person,
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Sustaining Membership is \$100.

Life Membership is \$1000.

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Website Help: Paul Broman
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Leu Southern Pavilion In Honor of Lew Southern (1932-2013)

Wikipedia defines Pavilion this way:

In architecture a pavilion (from French, "pavillon", from Latin "papilio") has two primary meanings. It can refer to a free-standing structure sited a short distance from a main residence, whose architecture makes it an object of pleasure.

Large or small, there is usually a connection with relaxation and pleasure in its intended use.

Lew Southern died March 17th due to complications of his surgery for cancer. Lew's death has been quite a loss for all of us at AFS. He was pretty much THE major volunteer at AFS. He did more work than anyone on the current and previous AFS properties. The brick-work on the steps at AF Hall are all his work. Organizing the refinishing of the benches and most of that work was all his. After doing the research, he saved AFS a great deal of money on floor refinishing.

Lew was our rental agent, pest controller, primary painter, fish fryer, and main idea man for improvements. If he didn't do the work himself he at least had a major hand in it and managed to get everything done at amazingly low cost to the rest of us. There was nothing done that if he didn't do it himself he at least had a major hand in it. He was also the idea man



for the improvements. And he fought the various insects, including fire ants.

Much of the maintenance work that you never hear about being done was done by him. But beyond that, he was a great conversationalist, with a rich knowledge and understanding of history which helped to shed light on how we got to where we are on current issues. He was also a stained glass artist, a winemaker, and we all enjoyed his toffee.

We'll suffer in narrow, practical ways like not having someone we can all count on to get the building open, shipshape, clean, and maintained; that part may in due course seem manageable, as a bunch of people are found to "replace" him on these matters. But his friendship and lively interest in us and in ideas will be far harder to get past. He will be sorely missed by many.

Before Lew passed away, the board of directors already voted to name the Pavillion after him.

Student activist awards given to Milwaukee-area brothers

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/17033-student-activist-awards-given-to-milwaukee-area-brothers>

Mayan and Balen Essak have each received a \$1,000 scholarship from the Freedom From Religion Foundation. The brothers attend Shorewood High School in Shorewood, Wis., a Milwaukee suburb.

The brothers received the awards for speaking out in their community and taking action that got religious symbols removed from their public high school football team's helmets.

Last fall, Mayan and Balen read in their school's newspaper that their football team, which partners with a Catholic school, had changed its logo to incorporate a Catholic bishop's hat with a cross on it. The brothers jumped into action and contacted their school's principal and attended a school board meeting.

The school's principal and school board acknowledged the mistake, apologized and removed the religious decals before the next game. Mayan and Balen had successfully ended the state/church violation at their school, but continued to deal with the fallout from their peers and community.

"We had to explain countless times to oblivious peers why having a cross on a public school's football helmet isn't acceptable," the brothers wrote.

They come from a family of active freethinkers. Their parents, Jennifer and Sam Essak, were part of FFRF's lawsuit in 1996 which declared Wisconsin's Good Friday holiday unconstitutional.

Mayan and Balen wrote that they will continue to fight for their freedom from religion and hope other people will continue to join them.

"America was not founded on Christian values but on moral principles," they wrote. "Working to remove the cross from our school's helmets was a rewarding experience, but also an eye-opening one."

FFRF gave out several student activist scholarships in 2012. Twelve-year-old Maia Disbrow spoke out against government prayer in her Tennessee community. Shawna Scott, a doctoral student at the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, got graduation prayer stopped. Matthew Nielson, a high school senior in South Carolina, challenged his public high school's graduation prayer. Jeff Shott, a Tennessee high school student, was forced to change clothes by school officials after dressing up as Jesus on Fictional Character Day. Tennessee high school student Krystal Myers wrote a school newspaper article discussing atheism that school officials banned from publication. Jessica Ahlquist, a Rhode Island high school student, successfully led a lawsuit to remove a prayer banner from her public school's hallway amid attacks and verbal abuse from her community and government officials.



The Freedom From Religion Foundation, based in Madison, Wis., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational charity, is the nation's largest association of freethinkers (atheists, agnostics), and has been working since 1978 to keep religion and government separate.

Are the Westboro Baptists Right?

Michael E. Buckner, VP, Atlanta Freethought Society

Co-author, *In Freedom We Trust* (Prometheus Books, 2012)

The Westboro Baptists do seem to be right in claiming that the Bible depicts God as judgemental, domineering, inflexible, sadistic, obsessed with humans' sex lives, and petty. For example:

"If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to



Ed Buckner

death; their blood will be on their own heads." Leviticus 20:13

(Of course in the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy the same word in Hebrew which translates to "abominable" or "detestable" is used to describe eating pork or shellfish as is used in Leviticus to describe man-on-man sex).

"Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and

served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error."

Romans 1:24-27

Again according to the Bible, I can't see God being too fond of rich preachers like the aptly-named Rev. Dollar:

"Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'" Matthew 19:21-24

Heck, Jesus seems to be against not just being "rich," but even against simply being prudent with money:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp

of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes



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AFS participated in the protests against WBC on April 7th.

the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matthew 6:19-34

Now, as for most freethinkers, we don't think two consenting adults who love each other (or, heck, just two consenting adults who lust for each other) are necessarily doing anything "detestable" or "abominable." We don't like Creflo Dollar and his ilk, but we don't hate all rich people just for being rich—there are rich people who have become rich not just by fleecing the gullible but because they've done things at least some of which are admirable, like found companies that employ thousands of people and provide goods and services that enrich people's lives. While we agree it's good to take a somewhat philosophical attitude towards life and material goods, to literally take no thought for

the morrow is dangerously imprudent (and if someone is claimed to be the Son of God, there's a real danger people will take his words—sorry, His Words—all too literally). We also don't think we should hate our families or hate our own lives (Luke 14:26).

Of course, all the sane Christians and even the most of the crazy ones "interpret" this and everything else in the Bible in some way or another that lets them off this or that hook—

those on the right ignore (or re-interpret) the parts about the sinfulness of the rich and those on the left ignore (or re-interpret) the parts about the sinfulness of gays; pretty much everyone ignores (or re-interprets) the parts about slaves obeying their masters or women being silent and obeying their husbands or about the need to put worshippers of false gods to death. Most 21st century American Christians don't take any of this stuff from the Bible literally (even increasingly including the gay-bashing). Most American Christians nowadays are basically humanists—they believe in democracy, equal rights for women, freedom of religion, and even gay marriage—but too many of them still feel

Photos are from that event.



Ed Buckner

some need to try to contort these ancient texts into agreeing with what people nowadays believe in, regardless of what the words actually say.

All of which is far too long-winded to easily fit on protest signs, alas. There are bizarre and goofy Bible verses that don't necessarily say anything about homosexuality, or even Creflo Dollar, like the one about hating your family—a particularly pernicious one.

Or the very anti-American verse, Romans 13:1-2, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." We're glad to be Americans, freethinkers who can celebrate the Fourth

of July without having to feel guilty about it.

And when it comes to verses like Leviticus 20:13, as atheists and freethinkers, we don't have to hate people just because of who they love.



Amy Vasinko



Ed Buckner



Amy Vasinko

Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

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 Fayette Freethought Society hosts lunches, dinners, book discussions, civic activities and more. See details at <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. See <http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/>.

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) meet often for discussions, etc. For more information, see <http://gust.domek.org/>.

The Atlanta Science Tavern and Atlanta Skeptics are having a joint meeting this month at 7:00 p.m. on April 20th, entitled **Is It All in Your Head? Neuroscience, Belief and Illness: What we can learn from the neuroscience of placebo and psychogenic movement disorders** given by Karen Rommelfanger, Director, Neuroethics Program of the Center for Ethics, Emory University.

Constituting one of the largest populations of patients who visit general practitioners, one in five patients are affected by "medically unexplained illnesses" (MUS). Patients with MUS present physical symptoms, but lack a detectable "organic" pathology, and are generally considered to be psychological in origin, leaving many patients to feel that they are being told their symptoms are "all in your head."

The challenges in diagnosing and treating MUS are largely a consequence of concepts that "real" medicine works by a physiological mechanism for "real" disorders with known physiological origin, affecting the body; whereas, treatments or conditions with a psychological origin are non-physiological or non-specific and are somehow considered less "real" and perhaps, "all in your head." However, advances in neuroscience continue to remind us that there is no bright line, but a gray zone, between the mental and the physical.

In this talk, neuroscientist and neuroethicist, Karen Rommelfanger, will use a neurological disorder paradigmatic of MUS, psychogenic movement disorders (a movement disorder often considered to have a mechanism rooted in a "belief" in being sick), and placebo therapy, (an intervention often considered to have a mechanism rooted in a "belief" in getting well) to demonstrate how neuroscience might inform healthcare for conditions

and treatments exemplary of this gray zone.

See more at <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern/> and <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics/>

The Black Nonbelievers of Atlanta meet often for discussions, social events, etc. For more info see <http://blacknonbelievers.org/>.

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

The Atlanta Skeptics will be presenting Skepticamp 2013. This event will take place the weekend of May 4 & 5 at MD Tech Pro's office, 3580 Pierce Drive, Suite 160, Atlanta, GA, 10:00AM to 5:00PM Saturday and 10:00AM to 4:00PM Sunday, though details are still being worked out.

The event is free to attend and everyone is welcome. If you wish to help out in any way, or even give a presentation, please contact myself (Shaune) on meetup.

Note, this event will be catered - yes you even get free food! So please express any particular food preferences in your RSVP.

This year we will be offering official Atlanta SkeptiCamp T-Shirts for a small donation of \$5, you can either pay via meetup or at the door. Please indicate your size (and pre-pay if you wish) via your RSVP - NOTE: No need to do this twice if signing up for both days, only do it here is you are only attending Sunday.

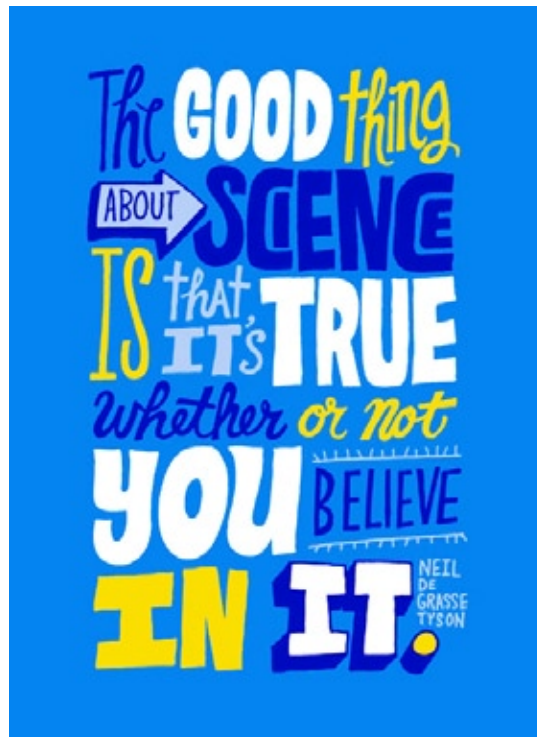
Make sure to follow details as they are being worked out. <http://lanyrd.com/2013/atlskepticamp/>

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta atheists** on Sunday, April 14, at

6:00PM at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

Another **meetup for Atlanta atheists** is scheduled for Sun., April 28, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Sandy Springs. (<http://www.meetup.com/>)

IIG Atlanta will maybe have a general meeting Saturday, March 20 at 4:30 p.m. at Manuel's Tavern (602 N Highland Avenue Northeast, Atlanta, GA 30307). Call for info. We're a new, ambitious group affiliated with IIG-West and exist to promote critical thinking about the paranormal, supernatural and unexplained. We also offer \$50,000 for anyone who can demonstrate evidence of the occult or paranormal under properly controlled conditions. We look forward to meeting you! Questions? Visit IIGAtlanta.com or contact Shaune Beattie by email: shaune.beattie@gmail.com. <http://www.meetup.com/IIG-Atlanta/>.



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!

Individual memberships: One person can become a member for \$50 per year.

Sustaining memberships: One person can become a sustaining member for \$100 per year.

Life memberships: Avoid the hassle of renewing every year. A life membership lasts a lifetime.

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.)

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

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

—James Madison, 1774

We still have these great books for sale:

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 (2nd 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.

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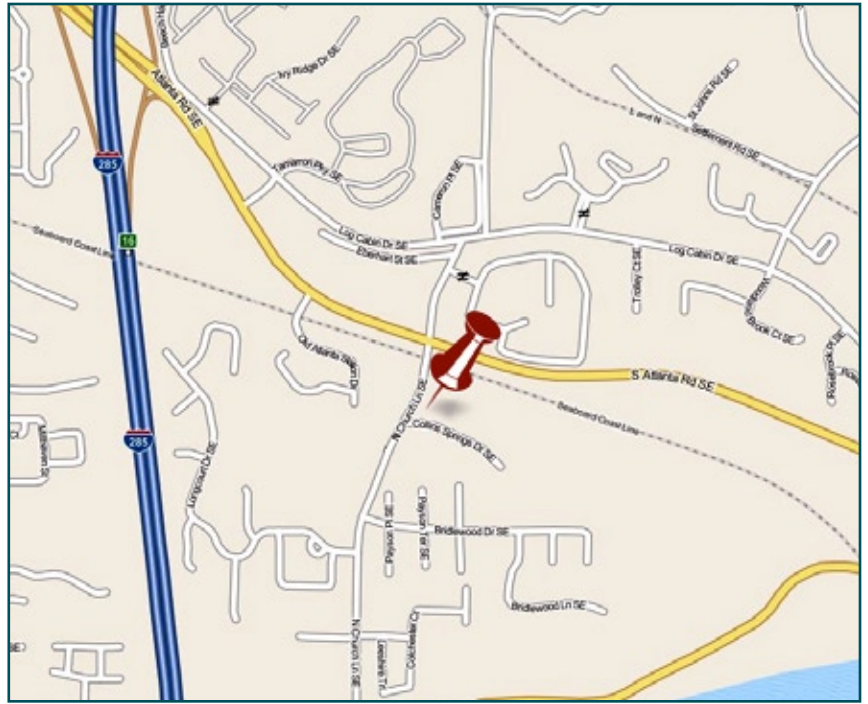
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Dare To Think For Yourself!

**The April 14 Meeting:
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Smyrna, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
Dr. Jeffrey B. Perry**



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