AFS

November AFS Meeting

Jonathan Burman, "Overcoming the Allergy to Truth"

Jonathan Burman is our speaker for November 11th. He is an Industrial/Organizational psychologist with 25 years of leadership and talent



Jonathan Burman

management experience. As a consultant and employee he has worked with such firms as CIGNA, MASCO Corporation, Johnson & Johnson, Pep Boys, and Koch Industries. Most recently he was the VP of Talent Acquisition & Development for Mondi, a global paper, packaging, and managed forestry company

headquartered in Vienna, Austria.

He received his Masters Degree in I/O psychology from LaSalle University, is a Lean/Six Sigma Black Belt, Project Management Professional, ProSci Change Management consultant, and Certified Master Coach. He was an adjunct professor at Rosemont College and has written numerous articles and many presentations about psychology and talent management.

For his entire career Jonathan has focused on creating fulfilling and productive work cultures through leadership alignment and accountability. He has created and facilitated hundreds of employee training programs in such areas as leadership, change management, positive psychology, motivation, employee engagement, succession planning, interviewing, performance development and coaching.

As an executive coach he has worked with leaders in Fortune 500 companies to increase leader-

ship capability and productivity. He also works with many nonprofit organizations in the mental health



sector and is active in child-advocacy groups and volunteers for youth mentoring programs.

Calendar

Nov II	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 a.m.
Nov II	AFS General Meeting	I:00 p.m.
Nov 17	FFRF/AFS Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Dec 9	Potluck Lunch	12:00 p.m.
Dec 9	AFS General Meeting	I:00 p.m.

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

Be sure to like AFS's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought

FFRF/AFS joint meeting

Instead of watching a video Sat., Nov 17, 7:00 pm, **Stewart Odendhal** will talk about his book, Why I am a Happy Agnostic: Enlightened Episodes of a Lifetime.

The book presents the powerful anecdotes of eureka moments, critical observations and international experiences which allowed his transition from the tightly controlled clutches of religious indoctrination to the exhilarating freedom of Agnosticism. This auto-biographical journey from religious dogma to reason & self enlightenment follows the author on a lifetime of international travel & discovery. The central thread interwoven through the text is that Science does not aim to discredit religion: many religions do it to themselves.

Stewart earned a BA at UCLA (1960), DVM at U.C. Davis (1967), and Ph.D at Univ. of Missouri (1977). He taught and did research at John Hopkins Univ., Pfizer Inc., Univ. of Missouri, and UGA. His work has been supported by N.I.H, N.S.F., National Academy of Sciences and National Geographic.

Please join us for this very enlightening talk. Q & A will follow the talk.

FFRF will provide coffee & soft drinks. Please bring snacks (chips & dip, cookies, appetizers) and your favorite beverage.

For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group! meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society

Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, 30339 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.

Dec 9: Nick Fish, President, American Atheists

Jan 13: TBA

Feb 10: TBA

Mar 10: TBA

Apr 14: Scott O. Lilienfeld, PhD - "Intellectual Humility: Research, Theory, and Implications for Skepticism"

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.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. The AFS Facebook page is at facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought. For calender information on AFS activities, please join the Meetup group. The AFS website is www.atlantafreethought.org.

To keep up to date on the Atlanta Freethought Society calendar of upcoming events, please join our Meetup group: meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

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 friend-ships, 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. Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

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

Views, opinions, positions or strategies expressed by authors are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, positions or strategies of the Atlanta Freethought Society or any member thereof. The editors of Atlanta Freethought News reserve the right to edit or alter in any manner it sees fit any articles deemed to be obscene, offensive, defamatory, threatening, in violation of trademark, copyright or other laws, or is otherwise unacceptable; and also to correct grammar and to conserve space.

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Atlanta Freethought News

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See AFS events and member views at: facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought.

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AFS Facebook page: Laura Ross



Note from **Ed Buckner**: I have quite a few friends who, like me, submit Letters to Editors—an opinion outlet that is quite valuable, in my never humble opinion—but getting one of these in the New York Times is quite rare. And when it is a spot-on great letter and from a friend I really admire and respect (**Pam Woodley**), that is truly something to celebrate. Her letter from 18 October is printed here in full with her permission):

Re "Forms Suggest Kushner Paid Tax Bills of \$0" (front page, Oct. 14), To the Editor:

You report that 37-year-old **Jared Kushner**, with a net worth of \$324 million, has likely paid no federal income taxes during five of the past eight years.

For many years, I have volunteered with the I.R.S.'s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, doing taxes for low-income people at no cost to them. I was touched by one young man about Mr. Kushner's age who came into a VITA center in a crime-ridden Atlanta neighborhood. He was



filing his first tax return even though he was in his 30s. I wondered what he had done to support himself before his warehouse job. I had my suspicions.

His pre-tax income that year was \$20,000. He had had nothing withheld for taxes and owed \$2,000 in federal taxes and a substantial amount in state taxes. I

remember telling him that and seeing the despair and shock in his eyes. I remember fearing that his attempt to play by the rules had failed and that he would go back to doing whatever he was doing before.

There is something extremely rotten, not in Denmark, but here in the U.S.A., when the fantastically privileged pay nothing to support our country, and young men like that one are required to pay their fair share.

Pam Woodley Atlanta



After losing in two federal courts, the **Trump** administration is back at the drawing board on a new strategy to undermine women's access to basic healthcare.

It was announced at the end of October that administration officials are revising rules— blocked from taking effect last year by two federal judges — that allow employers to claim a "religious objection" to their obligation to provide employees insurance coverage for contraceptives as mandated by the Affordable Care Act. As recently as October 29, the Trump administration mischaracterized this as "nuns ordered to pay for contraceptives."

Under the ACA, employers are generally required to provide insurance coverage for preventive care, including contraceptives. The Trump administration's first attempts to expand exemptions from this mandate began in 2017, and were quickly blocked in two federal courts.

While the details of the forthcoming changes remain unclear, the Administration reportedly hopes they will "overcome the judge's objections without fundamentally altering the purpose or the effects of the rules."

FFRF fervently condemns the Trump administration's continued use of religious dogma to subjugate women and the Justice Department's callous, patriarchal claim that "a woman who loses coverage of her chosen contraceptive method through her employer may still have access to such coverage through a spouse's plan. Or she may otherwise be able to pay out of pocket for contraceptive services."

The contraceptive mandate has given more than 55 million women access to birth control without additional co-payments. Under these new regulations, hundreds of thousands could lose that coverage. The assumption that women can rely on a spouse's plan for basic healthcare is an affront to individual liberties, and rolling back protections disproportionately impacts already disenfranchised women.

"As it has for millennia, religion is being used to oppress women," notes FFRF Co-President **Annie Laurie Gaylor**. "Employers have no business sticking their noses into intimate health decisions by female workers. It's outrageous."

Whenever these changes are made public, we can expect them to be as unlawful as the original rules put in place by the administration a year ago. FFRF will continue to staunchly support a woman's right to comprehensive and quality health care free from the imposition of her employer's religious beliefs.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a national nonprofit organization with more than 32,000 members across the country and in every state. FFRF's purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between church and state, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

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Theocracy Will Come To Washington State If This Legislator Has His Way

By Rob Boston/Wall of Separation Blog

www.au.org

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"If they do not

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A state legislator in Washington is under scrutiny after issuing a document that outlines the "Biblical Basis for War."

The manifesto distributed by state **Rep. Matt Shea** (R-Spokane Valley) conjures up images of a "Holy army" that will overturn marriage equality and legal abortion as well as ban "idolatry and occultism." Openly proclaiming that "God is a Warrior," the document chillingly lays down rules for dealing with those who refuse to obey "biblical law": They should first be given a chance to surrender, but if they choose to resist, they should be invaded, conquered and, in some cases, killed.



Warrior for an invisible god and Washington state Representative Matt Shea

decided to go with the always-popular claim that it was taken out of context. The document, he says, was part of a lecture series on the Old Testament.

There's good reason to be skeptical. Shea has long championed far-right causes and hangs out with groups that advocate "Christian nation" ideas, promote conspiracy theories and even press for eastern Washington forming its own state. Many of these people would like to see a society built on "biblical law" – as they define it, of course.

All Religious Right groups are extreme, but at the furthest fringe there rests a collection of people who openly embrace theocracy. They go by different names – Christian Reconstructionists, theonomists, dominionists or Christian nationalists. Many of them argue for a society based on the legalistic books of the Bible, especially Leviticus. In their view, anyone who fails to follow all of the laws outlined in these books – even the complex dietary restrictions – should be imprisoned or killed.

In 1988, I wrote an article about this movement for Church & State and interviewed several of its leaders. It was highly disturbing to chat with people who would matter-of-factly explain to you that the Bible mandates the death penalty for homosexuality, blasphemy, "witchcraft," adultery, "unchastity" and propagation of false doctrines, among other things.

The Reconstructionists are no fans of democracy. One of them, **Gary North**, who declined my request for an interview back in '88, has written that because the Bible does not recognize democracy, there can be no such thing as "one man, one vote." North said the world has been "threatened" by such ideas.

He and other Reconstructionists also despise the very idea of freedom of conscience because, in their view, it can lead people down the wrong path. The founding father of Reconstructionism, a man named **Rousas John Rushdoony** who died in 2001, was clear on this, once writing, "In the name of toleration, the believer is asked to associate on a common level of total acceptance with the atheist, the pervert, the criminal, and the adherents of other religions as though no differences existed."

It's sometimes argued that people with thinking this far around the bend are just cranks who can be safely dismissed. That would be a mistake. While the Reconstructionists are not likely to seize control next week, their movement has had a profound influence on America's Religious Right groups.

Calls for "biblical values" in public life or demands that a narrow slice of right-wing fundamentalist Christianity merge with the state contain more than an echo of Reconstructionist thought. Efforts to strip members of the LGBTQ community of their rights or control women's reproductive lives are usually anchored in someone's narrow interpretation of the Bible. Demands that our public schools stop teaching evolution or parrot bogus "Christian nation" history are rooted in the false belief that America would be better off if church and state were thoroughly mixed.

Many people active in the Religious Right long to use their religion to tell the rest of us what to do, although they deny that when pressed. The Reconstructionists are at least honest enough to say it upfront. Shea's manifesto is more of the same. It's an insistence that the Bible (as interpreted by a small band of far-right fundamentalists) provides justification for whatever these folks want to do — and that usually involves them running everyone else's lives.

When you survey the incredible diversity of religious and non-religious thought in our free society, it's hard to grasp that there are some people who think the founders made a mistake when they rejected church-state union and theocracy, opting instead for a wall of separation between church and state. Yet recent events have proven to us, once again, that religious and political extremism is alive and well in our nation.

Advocates of theocracy are among us. They have a right to their strange beliefs – and we have a right to tell them how wrong they are.

American Humanists Will Defend Church State Separation at the Supreme Court

On November 2nd, the Supreme Court announced that it will hear arguments from the American Humanist Association's (AHA) legal team regarding the unconstitutionality of the 40-foot-tall Christian cross towering over a busy Bladensburg, Maryland intersection. This will be the AHA Appignani Humanist Legal Center's first case before the Supreme Court.

"We remain confident in our legal position and look forward to presenting arguments to the Supreme Court," said **Monica Miller**, senior counsel for the American Humanist Association and lead counsel on this case. "The Fourth Circuit's decision correctly recognized that the government's prominent Christian cross memorial unconstitutionally favors Christian veterans to the exclusion of all others," Miller added.

The AHA filed its complaint in February 2014, challenging the constitutionality of a massive Christian cross owned, maintained, and funded by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Following the December 2016 oral argument presented by Miller, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in the AHA's favor. The court held that the government's monolithic Christian cross unconstitutionally endorses Christianity and fosters excessive government entanglement with religion. The American Humanist Association successfully defeated the Commission's and American Legion's petitions for rehearing en banc in March 2018.

In June of 2018, both the American Legion and the government separately petitioned the United States Supreme Court to issue a writ

americanhumanist.org

of certiorari, hear the case, and overturn the Fourth Circuit's ruling. The AHA filed oppositions to both petitions, citing over thirty federal cases finding crosses unconstitutional, and highlighting concurring opinions from both **Justice Kennedy** and **Justice Alito**. Justice Alito's concurrence in *Salazar v. Buono* recognized that a Christian cross war memorial excludes Jewish and non-Christian veterans. Justice Kennedy's concurrence in *County of Allegheny v. ACLU* noted that the Establishment Clause obviously prohibits the government from erecting a cross in a conspicuous government location, stating "such an obtrusive year-round religious display would place the government's weight behind an obvious effort to proselytize on behalf of a particular religion."

The AHA's briefs also pointed out that the government's massive cross is in dangerous disrepair. The government has already spent \$117,000 in public funds on the cross and has earmarked an additional \$100,000 for necessary repairs, which may be futile. In an email, a Commission official expressed relief at the prospect that the Christian cross monument may very well crumble on its own, writing that "repairs to the structure have not proven sustainable or helpful in the long term" and suggesting the Commission start from scratch. Additionally, recent government records refer to the cross as a "public eyesore" and a "safety hazard."

"Rather than continue to waste taxpayer dollars repairing an exclusively Christian symbol, the government should use that money to construct a new memorial atop the historic platform that will honor all war veterans," says **Roy Speckhardt**, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "The current Christian monolith fails to represent the pluralistic nature of religion among veterans, and among Americans."

The AHA's Brief in Opposition to the American Legion's Petition for Certiorari can be found at americanhumanist.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/17-1717-AHA-et-al.-Brief-in-Opposition-Appendix-07.27.2018.pdf.

The AHA's Brief in Opposition to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Petition for Certiorari can be found at americanhumanist.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/18-18-Brief-in-Opposition-08.02.2018.pdf.

American Atheists' Statement About Proposed Anti-Transgender Policies

www.atheists.org

In response to the October 21 New York Times article "'Transgender' Could Be Defined Out of Existence Under Trump Administration," American Atheists president **Nick Fish** released the following statement:

"This latest attack on the trans community exposes the deep cruelty and bigotry of the religious extremists who have been installed by the Trump administration at every agency of the federal government. This proposal is nothing but transparent pandering to far-right religious groups who have spent the last decade attacking even basic civil rights protections for LGBTQ Americans."

"No one should have to worry about losing their job, losing their home, being denied service in a public place, or being harassed because of who they are. The trans community has fought too hard to achieve those basic protections and to advance the cause of inclusive civil rights laws to turn back now."

"No policy change by this administration can silence the voices of the millions of transgender Americans or stop the march of progress. American Atheists will continue to stand with our trans friends and loved ones as we fight back against these relentless attacks on their very existence."

"Science, medicine, morality, common decency, and the law are on all our side. We will do everything in our power to elevate the voices and experiences of all trans atheists, and indeed all trans people, in public discourse to ensure that this administration's galling attempts to define millions of Americans out of existence will not succeed."

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Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

The Atlanta Science Tavern has several meetings planned. Please check meetup page for more information. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern)

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

We Agnostics Atlanta meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Galano Club, 585 Dutch Valley Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30324. Clubhouse phone number: (404) 881-9188. This is similar to Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Marietta Skeptic/Humanist Meetup has various gettogethers and discussion groups. Several upcoming events. (www.meetup.com/Marietta-Atheists-Meetup)

The Peachtree City Humanists participate in social and educational activities such as dinners, lunches, coffees, outdoor recreation, discussion groups, and book clubs with topics that include science, psychology, philosophy. (www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH)

The Southern Crescent Freethinkers sponsor Navigators, Owl & Ibis: A Confluence of Minds, and meet for dinner, etc. Several upcoming events each month. (www.meetup.com/Southern-Crescent-Freethinkers)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets monthly at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA. Join the Meetup group for more information. There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and resources, please visit

 $\label{lem:www.recovering} www.recoveringfrom religion.org. \ (www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter)$

There will be a **meetup for Decatur Atheists** Sun, Nov II, 6 pm, Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths)

will meet at 7-9 pm, Mon. Nov. 12 at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. The topic is "Who is this Jesus person anyway?"* One of the biggest questions of theology is: Who is the man behind the creation of Christianity? What is the historical evidence of Jesus' existence, let alone his teachings? What was really happening in ancient Judea that led to a major religion—whether you're atheist, agnostic, or Christian, come join the discussion and separate fact from fiction.

*Title adapted from **Oolon Colluphid**'s great work Who is this God person anyway? (www.meetup.com/brights-295)

Atlanta Astronomy Club will meet on the third Friday at 7:30 pm each month at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Dr, Atlanta, GA 30307 unless otherwise noted. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia and AFS will have a book discussion on Sat, Nov 17, at Atlanta Freethought Hall from 7-9 pm. See page I. (www.ffrfga.org

- email is ffrfofga@gmail.com)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta's upcoming assembly will be held on Sun. Nov 18, 5:30 pm at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. At press time the subject had not yet been announced.

This is also a potluck supper. All are welcome. SAA is an extremely active community with a large number of upcoming events including rock chorus, secular support, mindfulness meditation, wonder club, urban wonder, book club, makers night out, volunteering, queer beyond belief group, public speaking series, trivia nights, etc. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly)

Black Nonbelievers will have a Holiday Potluck Dinner/ Mixer on Thurs, Nov 22 at 4pm at The Bakery ATL, 825 Warner St. Atlanta. In lieu of the General Meeting this month, BN is bringing back their annual holiday potluck dinner. Whether you acknowledge the day or just want some like minded fel-

lowship, be sure to join BN for some good food and a good time, minus any rituals and unnecessary pressure from religious family and friends. BN will supply the turkey and stuffing/dressing, soft drinks and decorations. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun, Nov 25, 4 pm, 5 Seasons
Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Prado Shopping
Center, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/
Atlanta-Atheists)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta: Next meeting is Sun, Nov 25 12:30-2 pm at Manuel's Tavern, 603 N. Highland Ave, Atlanta. "Our

shared task is to live decently, compassionately, and caringly in the world we inhabit." Come join the conversation. Ethical living is the philosophy of making decisions for daily life which take into account ethics and moral values, particularly with regard to consumerism, sustainability, environmentalism, wildlife and animal welfare.

Any recently made decision have you questioning its ethical or moral value? Maybe you're teetering or avoiding making a choice due to uncertainty. There's no guarantee questions will be answered, nor an action plan fully evolved, but trust good conversation to occur. Come and let's learn from one another; building forward one step at a time. (www.meetup.com/ Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Skeptically" on the first Friday of each month. 5 Seasons Brewing, Prado Shopping Center, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics)

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

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. (www.fellowshipofreason.com)



Become a Member!

(Or renew your membership with this form or online at www.AtlantaFreethought.org!)

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

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

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

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.) Paper newsletter: We encourage members to receive the newsletter by email. This avoids the printing

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

Annual dues are:

Membership Dues# of mems Total	ns Tota	al	
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AFS Art Display Program

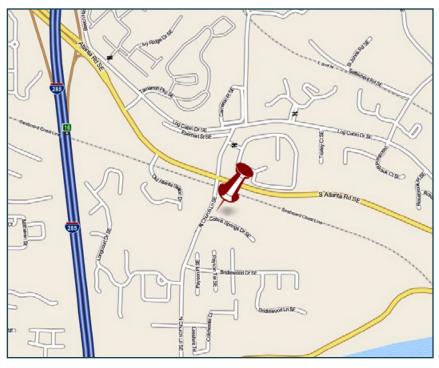
Person or entity displaying art: www.atlantafreethought.org 4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339 afs@atlantafreethought.org

Address:
Phone(s):
Email:
Description of artwork (subject, color, dimensions, weight, frame, price, materials, other info — list on separate page if necessary):
Display dates: from to to
Address:
Phone(s):
Is artwork for sale? Yes / No \$Upon sale owner agrees to pay AFS a 33.3% fee.
Terms: All artwork displays will be submitted to Atlanta Freethought Society art committee for approval (afs@atlantafreethought.org). Installation & removal will be done by artist/
will be repaired by artist/owner. The owner assumes all risk for artwork at all times. AFS will not be responsible for any damage or loss while artwork is in our posession.
Owner agrees to terms: Signature/date



November 11th meeting 1:00 at AF Hall 4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

Jonathan Burman



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