

## Edward Tabash: “The True Meaning of Separation of Church and State” (via Zoom)

For our first meeting of the new year, Atlanta Freethought is delighted to welcome **Edward Tabash**, who is a Constitutional Lawyer in Los Angeles and Chair of the Board of Directors of the **Center for Inquiry**.



**Edward Tabash**

He has filed amicus briefs arguing for the preservation of the separation of church and state with the United States Supreme Court and the California Supreme Court.

Mr. Tabash graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.A. from UCLA in 1973

and earned his Juris Doctorate from Loyola Law School of Los Angeles in 1976.

Mr. Tabash has represented the atheistic position in formal debates against many prominent religious philosophers, including **Richard Swinburne**, **William Lane Craig**, and **Peter Van Inwagen**. The son of an Auschwitz survivor and an Orthodox Rabbi, Tabash has concluded after decades of study and a personal spiritual odyssey that the universe is natural with no supernatural agencies or beings. Edward Tabash believes that the general public must be exposed to arguments against the existence of any supernatural being, any God or gods. Mr. Tabash maintains that an intellectually mature society must be able to handle arguments against even the most treasured and revered belief systems.

Mr. Tabash frequently speaks and debates on the topics of separation of church and state as well as why God does not exist. He uses constitutional arguments to demonstrate that separation of church and state is integral to the government and should be guaranteed, and also discusses how it is being violated at the local, state, and national levels. He also presents arguments against the existence of God or gods and refutes the well-known

religious arguments for the existence of a supreme being. Among the many theistic arguments he challenges are the first cause argument, the fine tuning argument, and the claim that objective moral values cannot exist without a supernatural perfect being.

Steve Yothment again has set up a free Zoom session for Sunday, January 10 from 1:00-2:30 p.m. Log in at 12:30 to socialize and everyone is welcome to hang out and chat afterwards. Below is the meeting invitation as generated by Zoom (note that it is a new link). Log in with a computer, tablet, or smart phone.

### AFS January Meeting

January 10, 2021 1:00-2:30 PM (EST)

To join Zoom meeting go to link below:

[us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911)

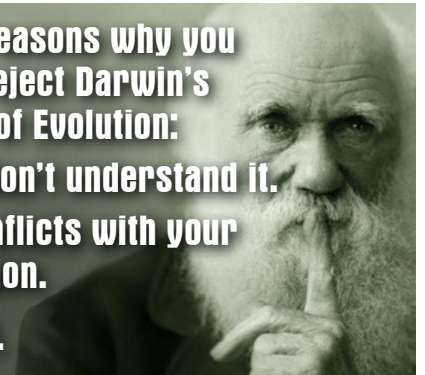
## Calendar

Feb 14	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm
Mar 14	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm

All events are via Zoom unless noted and are subject to change.

Three reasons why you might reject Darwin's Theory of Evolution:

- A. You don't understand it.
- B. It conflicts with your religion.
- C. A & B.



**For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!**  
[meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society](https://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 presented online due to global pandemic (see link on page 1). Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:30 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.

**January 10: Edward Tabash**

**February 14: Sam Whitehead**

**March 14: Bill Cooke**

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:AFSForum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). The AFS Facebook page is at [facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought](https://facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought). For calendar information on AFS activities, please join the **Meetup group**. The AFS website is [www.atlantafreethought.org](http://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](https://meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society).

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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. 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.

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## Atlanta Freethought News An AFS Publication

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### Atlanta Freethought News

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# What Lies at the Dark Heart of Atheism?

By Dwight Lyman

(Previously published on [atheology.com](http://atheology.com))

Once God is extinct, claimed one of Dostoyevsky's characters in *The Brothers Karamazov*, everything is permitted. And this is a common theist mantra. Theists ask themselves,

*What unfathomable perversion lies at the dark heart of atheism?*

*My answer:* nothing more salacious than loyalty to life. At the heart of atheism is a single-minded loyalty to this short breath of existence we call life here on planet Earth.

Atheists recognize that we are body beings. That we are inherently physical, that this bit of chemical, experiential life is not just all we have, it is what we are.

Atheist loyalty to life is necessarily paired with something else: antipathy towards death. Our lives are all that matter, and dying is the loss of all that matters. The finality of death imparts a finality to life. This makes life valuable to us as nothing else can.

In contrast, the afterlife religions worship death (which they euphemistically call heaven) and eagerly try to convince us to sacrifice our lives for an incoherent, imaginary state that can only be obtained by dying.

Aliveness requires movement and breath and temporality; it cannot exist in an eternal, timeless state. Life and eternity are inimical opposites. We will not sacrifice life for the eternity of non-existence, even if you sweeten it with names like Heaven or Nirvana.

Atheists embrace and indeed worship reality, because we realize it is all there is. We are human bodies with human feelings, desires, needs, hopes—and we live within a fragile biosphere that is as temporary as we are.

There is no God. There will be no after-life, no elsewhere.

With this stark embrace of reality, atheism proclaims its loyalty to life.

It follows that we are all in this together. Nothing can be experienced after life ends, and the brutal fact is that life will end. Every one of us will die and cease to exist. This fact forces us to the realization that our fulfillment relies entirely on each other.

No heaven, no hell. There is only Eden, our one earth, and we share it with everyone else.

That's it. This simple, honest confession about ourselves, about life itself, is what lies at the heart of atheism.



Photo by Jayson Hinrichsen on Unsplash

# New COVID Relief Bill to Enrich Wealthy Megachurches with Second Round of Government Funding

atheists.org

On December 21st, the watchdog organization American Atheists denounced Congress for intentionally excluding church/state separation protections from the new \$900 billion coronavirus relief bill, **H.R. 133**, while authorizing special exemptions for religious organizations. As a result, pro-Trump prosperity gospel pastors and other wealthy megachurches will be able to receive a second round of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding from a refreshed pool of \$284 billion.

According to the bill, "It is the sense of Congress that [the Small Business Administration] properly clarified the eligibility of churches and [religious] organizations for [PPP funding]" (p. 160). The bill retroactively permits **the unconstitutional \$7.3 billion church bailout under the CARES Act** and opens up a second round of funding for religious worship under the current bill.

"Prosperity gospel pastors and wealthy churches will **once again** get their hands on taxpayer dollars. Sadly, Congress chose to ignore the corruption and abuse resulting from the previous church bailout," said **Alison Gill**, Vice President for Legal and Policy at American Atheists. "It is unconstitutional and immoral to force the American taxpayer to prop up rich churches when so many people are in dire need."

American Atheists, other watchdog organizations, and the media have reported on multiple PPP-related church scandals:

- Daystar, one of the richest televangelist networks in the world, applied for and received \$3.9 million in PPP funding. **Two weeks later, the church went out and purchased a multi-million dollar private jet.**



**Covid Relief continued on page 5**

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

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# Even Pat Robertson Admits That Biden Won the Election

By Rob Boston / Wall of Separation Blog

au.org

TV preacher **Pat Robertson** says a lot of strange things. I know because I've chronicled them over the years. But, like the proverbial broken clock that is right twice a day, Robertson occasionally utters something that makes sense. He did it recently during a discussion about **President Donald Trump's** post-election behavior.

Commenting on Trump's attempts to overturn the election results on his "700 Club" show on Monday, **Robertson said**, "I had prayed and hoped that there might be some better solution, but I don't think — I think it's all over. I think the Electoral College has spoken. I think the **Biden** corruption has not totally been brought to fruition, but it doesn't seem to be affecting the Electoral College, and I don't think the Supreme Court is going to move in to do anything."

He added, "I think we're going to see a President Biden, and I also think we'll be seeing a President **Kamala Harris** not too long after the inauguration of President Biden. So just keep your eyes on the future."

Now, there's still some wacky stuff here. The claims about "Biden corruption" call out for proof,

and Robertson's implication that Biden won't be in office long is disturbing. (For what it's worth, Robertson's track record as a prophet is pretty bad. In 1980, he predicted that the Soviet Union would invade several Middle Eastern nations, seize their oil and plunge the world into a prolonged depression that would pave the way for the rise of the Antichrist. More recently, he predicted that Trump would win the election but that an asteroid would hit the Earth shortly thereafter.)



Robertson has generally been supportive of Trump, but yesterday he told his television audience that the president "lives in an alternate reality" and that his behavior is "erratic."

Observed Robertson, "It would be well to say, 'You've had your day. It's time to move on.'"

Robertson, who founded the Christian Coalition, isn't quite the powerhouse in the world of Christian nationalism that he used to be, but he still commands a sizeable TV audience. Unlike other Religious Right leaders who have **backed Trump's daft**

**conspiracy theories** about stolen votes and hacked voting systems, the Virginia Beach evangelist seems to realize that it's time to move into the reality-based community and prepare for the Biden-Harris administration.

For just a brief moment perhaps, Robertson is actually filling the role of the Christian nationalists' voice of reason. I don't normally recommend listening to Robertson, but this time, it might be all right to make a brief exception.

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## Covid Relief continued from page 4

- A nonexistent church, "ASLAN International Ministry," **took in \$8 million**.
- Prosperity gospel pastor **Joel Osteen's** Lakewood Church **pocketed \$4.4 million** in PPP funding.
- Televangelist **Jim Bakker** was sued by Missouri Attorney General **Eric Schmitt** (R) for falsely claiming products sold through his ministry cured COVID-19. His Missouri-based Morningside Church **received between \$350,000 and \$1 million** in government funding.
- Televangelist **Jimmy Swaggart** was defrocked by the Pentecostal Assemblies of God for his involvement in a prostitution scandal. His Louisiana-based Family Worship Center **claimed between \$2 million and \$5 million**.
- The U.S. Catholic Church capitalized off of an unprecedented exemption to **amass between \$1.4 and \$3.5 billion dollars**. The new bill specifically authorizes this exemption.

In addition, the \$900 billion coronavirus bill provides \$2.75 billion to

private schools, many of which are religious and discriminate against students and their families (p. 1853).

"Congress is once again ensuring that wealthy churches can buy private jets while telling struggling American families that our nation's budget could only afford \$600 per person in direct relief," said **Nick Fish**, president of American Atheists. "It's a moral outrage and a complete failure on the part of Congress."

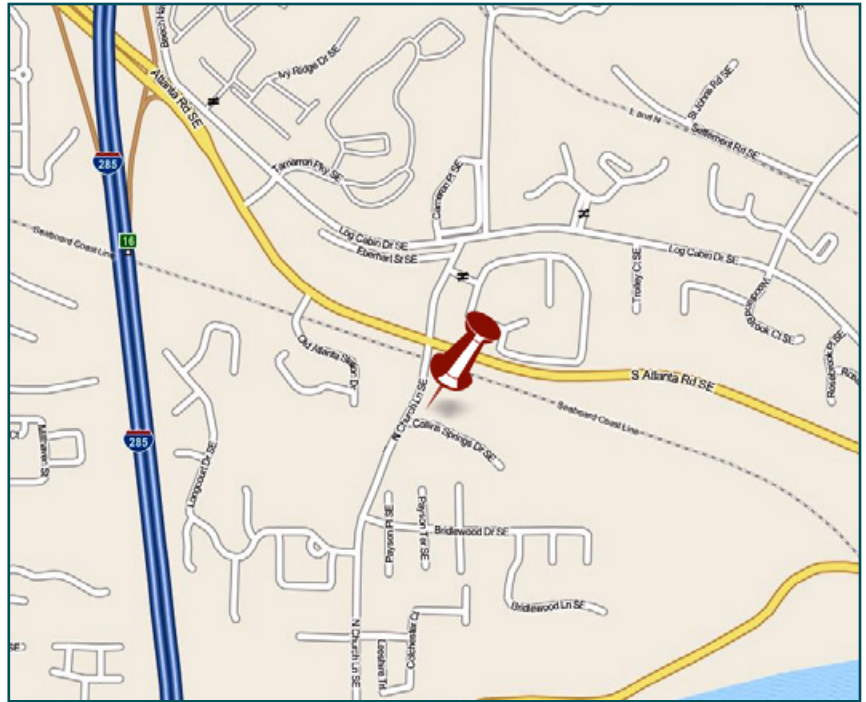
"People are in danger of eviction. People are wondering where their next meal will come from. And yet it's unaccountable churches and big businesses that are getting bailed out. I'm disgusted," added Fish.

*Dare To Think  
For Yourself!*



**AF Hall  
4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Atlanta, GA 30339**

**Edward Tabash  
1/10/21 1:00 pm EST  
(via Zoom)**



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