

Chris McDougal - Psycho-babble or Wisdom for the Ages? Why We Should Be Especially Skeptical of Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology

On Sunday, January 9, at 1:00 pm via Zoom, AFS will welcome another renowned speaker (and proud member of Atlanta Freethought Society) for our Zoom meeting, **Chris McDougal**. McDougal will discuss the 'sister disciplines' of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, tracing their history and examining the roles they've played in the so-called "science wars." After identifying their key limits and the critiques that have been leveled at them, he will assess their relationship to the enterprise of science itself, asking how precisely we should think of science and its trustworthiness.



Chris McDougal

Chris McDougal joined the faculty of Suffolk County Community College on Long Island in 2008, where he teaches sociology in his capacity as Assistant Professor, commuting from his home in Queens. Originally from Decatur and a proud past

member of AFS, he graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. from Georgia State University in 1993, majoring in sociology and minoring in philosophy, prior to earning his master's in sociology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1998 and teaching several years in the Birmingham area.

Along the way, Professor McDougal stayed active in a number of recreational and progressive communities and achieved a progress award for disc jockeying at the only student-run, 100,000-watt college station in the nation (Album 88, WRAS-FM); while in graduate school he was awarded a 1st Place national student award for his activism on behalf of church/state separation from the Freedom From Religion Foundation; he founded and led a local atheist organization on Long Island; he served as Vice President of the Mid-Suffolk

Calendar

Jan 9	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm
Feb 13	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm
Mar 13	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm

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

(L.I.) Chapter of the National Organization for Women; he was interviewed on the international English-language program "Inside Out," with **Susan Modares**, about the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act; and he was recognized with the Junior Faculty Award for Excellence on SCCC's Eastern Campus.

In his spare time, Professor McDougal attends improvisational theater, jogs, listens to indie music, and helps care for pet felines.

We're proud to provide our members and visitors with great programs, and this will be another great and appropriate program. We often have speakers with a true national reputation, as this time will be. We're delighted.

The McDougal program, free and open to the public, will be preceded by a few minutes of social distanced socializing starting about 12:30 P.M., for any interested. The program will start at about 1 P.M. (ET in US) on Sunday, 9 January, via Zoom. We welcome those who are not freethinkers but who just want to know more about the state of the law, history, and the separation of religion and government from the perspective of an accomplished scholar. All freethinkers are of course welcome—and we hope that they will decide to join as members in due course.

AFS January Meeting Jan 9, 2022 1:00-2:30 PM (EST)

To join Zoom meeting go to this link:
us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911

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 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 9: Chris McDougal

February 13: David Fitzgerald

March 13: Timothy Binga

April 10: TBA

AFS Email List

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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 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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Editor: Laura Ross
Assistant Editor: Steve Yothment

How to Contact the Editor

Send correspondence to AFS at:
4775 N. Church Lane SE,
Atlanta, GA 30339,
phone Laura at 404-634-1005, or send
e-mail to Laura@LauraRossDesign.com
or luara.mom@gmail.com

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Atlanta Freethought News

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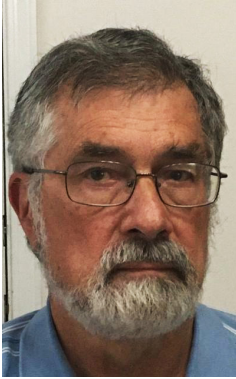
Guest commentary: The US was not formed as Christian nation

By Ed Buckner

Galveston County Texas - *The Daily News* 12/22/21

At the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, Benjamin Franklin saved the day by proposing that sessions start with prayer. Didn't he?

In the 1960s, I represented Clear Creek High School of League City, or possibly the junior high in Webster — there was then only one high school and one junior high in the district — at a speech and drama contest.



Ed Buckner

I think I won second place or at least got an honorable mention for a dramatic reading about Ben Franklin introducing prayer at the Constitutional Convention, thereby breaking a strife-torn deadlock and allowing our sacred Constitution to be born.

About four decades later, Speaker of the House **Newt Gingrich** wrote in his 2005 book, *Winning the Future*, that during “the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Benjamin Franklin (often considered one of the least religious of the Founding Fathers) proposed that the convention begin each day with a prayer.”

What I didn't know in the 1960s and Gingrich chose not to add was what might've been called, on the old **Paul Harvey** radio show, “the rest of the story.”

Franklin, for whatever reason, religiosity in his old age or a notion that it might give the delegates pause, did make such a motion. And since he was the grand old man of the convention, widely respected and considered wise, many may have expected the motion to pass.

But his motion died for lack of a second, more or less. It was tabled and never taken up, much less acted on. Sessions did not in fact begin with prayer and, after a fair bit of wrangling and compromise, agreements were reached and the Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787, and ratified by the states the following year.

The Articles of Confederation were superseded. The Constitution took effect March 4, 1789, when **George Washington** was sworn in as president. Two-and-a-half years later, in late 1791, the first 10 Amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, were ratified.

Some of the delegates to the 1787 convention were deeply religious; most apparently were not, though none called himself an atheist or a secular humanist. They seem to have been uniformly convinced they were establishing a charter for a democratic republic, not any sort of religious document.

As **John Adams** wrote, in defending the Constitution in a booklet published in London, “It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service (writing the Constitution) had any interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the inspiration of heaven.”

Franklin wrote on his own notes on all this that “The Convention, except three or four persons, thought Prayers unnecessary.”

And therefore the United States is a free country — for Christians and all others — and not a Christian nation.

Ed Buckner is a native of League City now living in Atlanta, Georgia.

SCOTUS Could Make the Protestant Flag a Common Sight at Government Buildings Across the Country

atheists.org

American Atheists has joined Americans United for Separation of Church and State in filing an **amicus brief** in the Supreme Court case *Shurtleff v. Boston*. The organizations urge the Justices to refrain from forcing the Boston government to fly the Christian Flag, also known as the Protestant Flag.

In 2017, the Christian organization Camp Constitution applied to raise the Protestant Flag outside Boston City Hall. The city government denied the request, explaining that it has authority over which flags to fly and that it has never flown a religious flag. According to the Establishment Clause of the Constitution, the government cannot endorse a particular religion. Nonetheless, Camp Constitution filed a lawsuit.

“Christian nationalists are trying to force the Boston government to declare allegiance to Christianity. This is an attack on religious freedom,” said **Geoffrey T. Blackwell**, Litigation Counsel at American Atheists. “Once again, Christians are viewing equal treatment as persecution. It isn't. Boston isn't flying the flag of any other religious group. Christianity is not entitled to special treatment.”

American Atheists warns of far-reaching consequences if the Supreme Court rules in favor of Camp Constitution. The Justices would set the precedent that groups and individuals can force governments to fly the Protestant Flag.

“Let's be honest about what will happen: Small towns, especially in the South, will fly the Protestant Flag again and again. This Christian symbol will become a common sight at government buildings across the country,” added Blackwell.

American Atheists' Reality Check: Being Nonreligious in America report found that nonreligious Americans face more discrimination and stigma in rural areas than in urban and suburban communities. American Atheists believes that nonreligious people in rural areas would suffer more harm if the Supreme Court allows the Protestant Flag on government buildings.

“Blatantly endorsing evangelical Christianity with the Protestant Flag would further stigmatize atheists and religious minorities who already face discrimination,” said **Alison Gill**, Vice President for Legal and Policy at American Atheists. “The Supreme Court should decide *Shurtleff v. Boston* in a way that guarantees religious equality for everyone—not swing the balance even further toward Christian nationalists.”

Humanists Defend Boston's Refusal to Fly Christian Flag at City Hall

americanhumanist.org

On December 22nd, the American Humanist Association (AHA) signed an **amicus brief** filed in the United States Supreme Court in support of the City of Boston's refusal to fly the Christian flag at city hall in *Shurtleff v. Boston*.

"Our Bill of Rights leads with the separation of church and state for a reason: our freedom and democracy depend on it. The City of Boston's refusal to fly the Christian flag over city hall in a manner that would connote a strong alliance between church and state was therefore mandated, not only by the First Amendment, but democracy itself," noted AHA Legal Director and Senior Counsel **Monica Miller**. "Tragically, we can all

but guarantee the Supreme Court will rule in favor of the Christian plaintiffs – the question is, at what cost?"

The brief submitted by Americans United for Separation of Church and State and joined by the AHA, along with numerous other secular and religious groups, argues that the flags in front of Boston's city hall represent government speech rather than private speech. Government speech is subject to the restrictions of the Establishment Clause.

"In these circumstances, Boston is not constitutionally obligated to vary its practice so as to display divisive religious images that will graphically associate the city government with the beliefs of particular faiths, in a manner that will alienate many residents and inevitably generate feelings of exclusion and

resentment," the brief recounts.

In 2020, the AHA joined a **friend of the court brief** when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit heard the *Shurtleff* case.

"The misconception that the United States is a Christian nation is dangerous and should not be furthered by allowing a Christian flag to fly at a city hall," comments AHA Executive Director **Nadya Dutchin**. "We urge the Supreme Court to protect the rights of Bostonians who would feel ostracized by the flying of a religious flag that does not represent them."

Arguments in *Shurtleff v. Boston* will be heard January 18, 2022.

A copy of the amicus brief can be found [here](#).

The American Humanist Association (AHA) works to protect the rights of humanists, atheists, and other nontheistic Americans. The AHA advances the ethical and life-affirming worldview of humanism, which—without beliefs in gods or other supernatural forces—encourages individuals to live informed and meaningful lives that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

Special thanks to the Louis J. Appignani Foundation for their support of the Appignani Humanist Legal Center.

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AU's Top Ten Of 2021: Protecting Church-State Separation In The Courts

au.org

By Rob Boston - Wall of Separation Blog

Editor's Note: The year 2021 was full of ups and downs – for the country, and for church-state separation. As the year draws to a close, we're looking back at the top 10 church-state stories, how Americans United rose to the challenge to defend religious freedom and what's on the horizon for 2022.

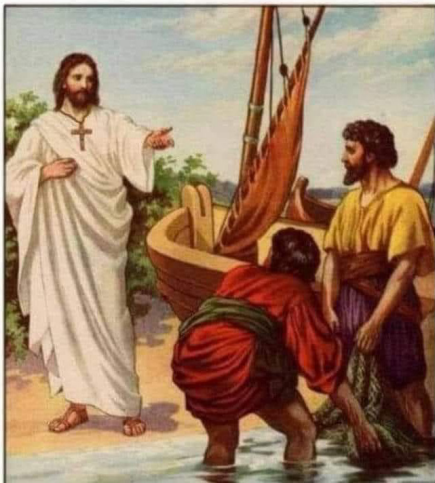
There's no denying that advocates of church-state separation face rough sailing before the U.S. Supreme Court these days. But through our cases, friend-of-the-court briefs, educational campaigns and coalition efforts, Americans United is making sure our perspective is heard.

Three cases with church-state overtones are pending before the high court. All present threats to the church-state wall:



Maximum atheist
@Maximumatheist

Hate to be captain obvious here but why is Jesus wearing a cross?



an online panel discussion about the case with experts from the Center for Reproductive Rights and SHERo Mississippi. AU and other groups filed a friend-of-the-court **brief** in the case, arguing that overturning Roe would stoke interfaith discord. (AU has a long history of supporting reproductive rights. [Read about it here.](#))

Carson v. Makin: In rural areas without public high schools, Maine pays for students to attend private schools instead. This program now requires those schools to provide the equivalent of public education, not religious education. The court will decide if Maine's taxpayers must subsidize religious instruction as well. Oral arguments took place Dec. 8. AU filed a **friend-of-the-court brief** arguing that Maine's policy of not providing government funding for private religious instruction is in line with long-standing Supreme Court precedent that states can protect their taxpayers' religious freedom by refraining from funding distinctly religious activities – including religious instruction. AU's **Laser moderated an online panel discussion** with experts from the National Federal of Teachers and BJC to analyze the case.

Shurtleff v. Boston: Officials in Boston have flown secular flags at city hall to mark certain special events when requested by private groups. A Christian nationalist group demanded that city officials fly the Christian flag; they sued when the city refused. AU's Legal Department **filed a brief in this case yesterday**, arguing that the city has no obligation to hoist the Christian

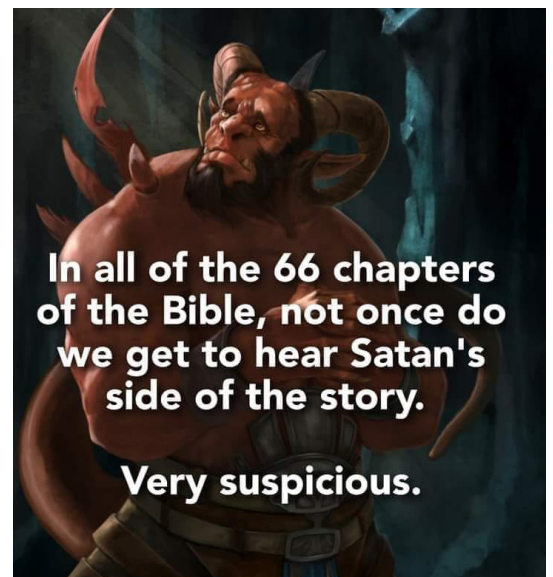
flag. Oral arguments will occur Jan. 18.

The Supreme Court may add more church-state cases to its docket. In Washington state, a high school football coach is insisting that he has a right to pray with players and other students on the field after games. Americans United is representing the school district in this case, **Kennedy v. Bremerton School District**. And in **Gordon College v. Deweese-Boyd**, AU represents a professor of social work at a Christian liberal arts college in Massachusetts who was denied a promotion after disagreeing with the school's policies on LGBTQ rights.

Americans United was active in lower courts in 2021 as well. We and our allies **won an important decision in** a case dealing with a Colorado man on parole whose First Amendment religious freedom rights were violated when he was sent back to jail after he refused to take part in worship services, Bible studies, and religious counseling mandated by his parole officer. We also **reached a settlement** in a long-running case in Kentucky challenging unwanted religious proselytization and discrimination in state-funded foster care programs.

Finally, **as we noted recently**, AU worked hard in 2021 to ensure that the nation's response to the COVID pandemic was based on sound public health policy, and we opposed efforts by some religious groups to use a dangerous definition of religious freedom that exposes others to harm.

Every court, from local jurisdictions all the way up to the Supreme Court, needs to hear that only separation of church and state can protect religious freedom for all. **With your help**, Americans United will continue to share that message.

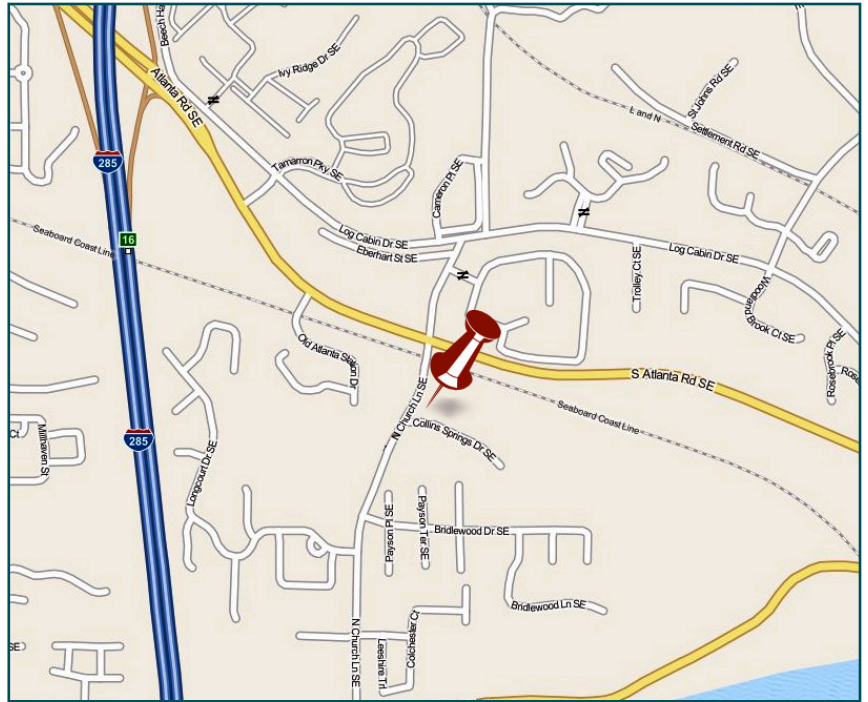


*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
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**Chris McDougal
1/9/22 1:00 pm EST
(via Zoom)**



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