

## Benjamin Radford “Investigating Miracles”

We are thrilled that Benjamin Radford, a longtime personal friend of Atlanta Freethought Society and a folklorist and researcher, has once again agreed to give a talk on June 9th! His talk will be on “Investigating Miracles.” He will discuss various claims of miracles, including some of his first-hand investigations.

Ben Radford is the world’s most prominent expert on the Chupacabra phenomenon. He is also the Deputy Editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* science magazine and a research fellow with the non-profit educational organization **Committee for Skeptical Inquiry**. He’s written over a thousand articles on a wide variety of topics. He is also an award-winning author, co-author or editor of over twenty books and thousands of articles on a wide variety of topics including urban legends, the paranormal, critical thinking, and media literacy. He currently hosts **Squaring the Strange** podcast (2017 to present) with Pascual Romero and Celestia Ward. He is also a board game creator, a puzzle designer, and a film director.



Ben Radford

Radford characterizes himself as one of the world’s few science-based paranormal investigators, and has done first-hand research into psychics, ghosts, exorcisms, miracles, Bigfoot, stigmata, lake monsters, UFO sightings, reincarnation, crop circles, and other topics.

Ben also owns a collection of Chupacabra shirts large enough to be cataloged.

You can watch from home or from the hall. Details on the Zoom meeting number are shown below.

### AFS June Meeting June 9, 2024 1:00-2:30 PM (eastern)

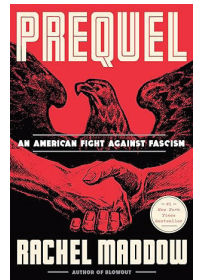
To join Zoom meeting go to this link:  
[us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911)  
Also at Atlanta Freethought Hall

## Atlanta Freethought Society GAME NIGHT

Please come hang out with us for Game Night on Saturday, June 8, starting at 6 pm! We’ve been having loads of fun playing games and catching up with friends old and new! We’d love to have you! Please bring snacks, beverages (beer and wine okay), and any games you’d enjoy sharing.

## Announcing the Atlanta Freethought Society Book Club

We are excited to announce the launch of the Atlanta Freethought Society Book Club! This club is designed to foster thoughtful discussion, intellectual engagement, and a deeper understanding of the issues that matter most to us, through the lens of books both old and new.



Our first gathering will be held on Sunday, June 9th, at 3:00 PM, after Ben Radford’s presentation at the regular meeting.

Our first meeting will be an informal discussion of how we’d like to proceed, followed by an introduction to Rachel Maddow’s book, *Prequel*.

### Book Club - Prequel continued page 4

## AFS Calendar

Jun 8	GAME NIGHT!!	6 pm
Jun 9	Board of Directors	11 am
Jun 9	General Meeting (Live/Online)	1 pm
Jun 9	Book Club	3 pm
Jul 13	GAME NIGHT!!	6 pm
Jul 14	Potluck Lunch	11 am
Jul 14	General Meeting (Live/Online)	1 pm

All events are combo Live/Zoom unless noted and are subject to change.



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 and also presented online (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. Announced events are subject to change.



- 9 Jun Ben Radford “Investigating Miracles”  
14 Jul TBA  
11 Aug April Lakeman “Fortifying the Separation of Church and State in Georgia”

### 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).

*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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# How can someone prove the existence of any god or creator? Can anyone prove the non-existence of these?

by Ed Buckner • Letters to a Free Country

A Christian believer, **Nurhan Kuyumcu** (of Istanbul), asked recently on Facebook:

How can someone prove the existence of any god or creator?

I'm asking this question to both atheists and Christian believers.

An appendix question for the atheists:

What type of proof is sufficient for you, or satisfies you?

Variations of this recur frequently, and I've written about aspects of it before. But here's some more discussion (some of it perhaps repetitive):

Proof of any god's existence or non-existence isn't possible, just as proof that the earth isn't flat or that there will be an apparent sunrise tomorrow isn't. That's true assuming you mean "demonstrate with absolute certainty." But if you instead mean "demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt," then we (humanity—not physics-impaired me and thee) can show beyond a reasonable doubt that the earth is closer to a sphere than to a flat disk. And that old Sol will pop up on schedule tomorrow. (Another pic that I like, see above)—

But what about God (or gods)? And is proof of existence parallel to proof of non-existence?

Standards of proof vary hugely when it comes to many questions—the more so regarding the existence of God. Some believers declare, apparently seriously, that you just cannot look at a beautiful natural scene (see right?) and not fall down on your knees in awe, gobsmacked by the obvious Truth of Godliness. My response to that is—if I already believed in God, maybe that sort of natural beauty would seem to confirm it—but I cannot see a logical way to connect the two things. There are, of course, all sorts of geological, astronomical, biological, psychological, and cultural explanations of why scenes appear before us and why we respond to them as we do. But actual evidence of causal connections has not been provided.

And, as **William Kingdon Clifford** famously wrote in 1877—

"It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."

"Insufficient" evidence is of course open to interpretation. So far I've seen no evidence (or logical argument) that is persuasive to me. (If for some reason you care enough to want to know what would change my mind, see my my earlier Letter from nearly a year and a half ago —[Here is the link.](#)) Thousands of books have been written on the subject (and I've read quite a few, on both [or all] sides and not everyone agrees).

Clifford's classic and persuasive essay—well worth reading—

[https://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/Clifford\\_ethics.pdf](https://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/Clifford_ethics.pdf)



Photo by Frank Borman (Apollo 8 Mission)



Photo by Ed Buckner (Sunrise? Sunset? Downstream from Looking Glass Falls near Hendersonville, NC)

Analysis of Clifford's essay—

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-belief/#:~:text='The%20Ethics%20of%20Belief'%20was,every%20one%20of%20our%20beliefs.>

But what about proving (to whatever standard) the non-existence of any gods? Allegedly, according to many theists, if atheists cannot prove non-existence, it's a logical wash—if neither side can prove their side right, we might as well have faith?

But it's not a meaningful both-sides setup. This is not based on whether the question is important or how unlikely one position or the other is.

Imagine for a moment that someone is trying to persuade you that something is true. An example was what **Bertrand Russell** included in an analogy about trying to persuade anyone that a teapot is in orbit. [From Wikipedia](#)—

"Russell's teapot is an analogy, formulated by the philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), to illustrate that the philosophical burden of proof lies upon a person making empirically unfalsifiable claims, as opposed to shifting the burden of disproof to others."

Russell specifically applied his analogy in the context of religion. He wrote that if he were to assert, without offering proof, that a teapot, too small to be seen by telescopes, orbits the Sun somewhere in space between the Earth and Mars, he could not expect anyone to believe him solely because his assertion could not be proven wrong.

The default, for all of us on all claims that are new to us, is that an assertion shouldn't be accepted without some good basis. If I tell you that **Joe Biden** [or **Donald Trump**, though a convicted felon] will be sworn in as the next President of the US in January of next year, my assertion can be supported with some evidence: polls, TV stories, and the like. But if I tell you that my next-door neighbor **Bob** will surely be sworn in one of these days, chances are pretty good that you not only won't be persuaded (since I have offered no meaningful evidence). And if I say, "Well you can't prove that Bob won't be elected and sworn in!"—that won't—and shouldn't—move the needle a whit towards your accepting President Bob.

Can I prove God doesn't exist? No.

Doesn't that mean faith is more reasonable? Sorry—no.

## Book Club - Prequel from page 1

### Meeting Agenda

- A brief introduction to “Prequel”
- Overview of the book’s historical context and contemporary implications
- Introducing a list of potential books for upcoming meetings
- Open floor for book suggestions and recommendations

### First Book: “Prequel” by Rachel Maddow

For our inaugural meeting, we will introduce “*Prequel: An American Fight Against Fascism*” by Rachel Maddow. This is only an introduction to the book; we’ll discuss it in full at the next AFS book club on July 14. Prequel is a look at the roots of fascism leading up to the Second World War and its impact on American politics at the turn of the last century—but it makes for a chilling read in view of our political landscape.

Maddow recounts the story of the 1930s and 1940s, a time when American politics teetered on the brink of chaos due to a violent, ultra-right authoritarian movement. This movement, fascinated with foreign dictatorships, developed elaborate plans to control or even overthrow the U.S. government. In today’s political climate, where authoritarianism and extremist ideologies are again on the rise, Maddow’s exploration offers crucial insights into how such forces can endanger democratic institutions.

Maddow’s book also underscores the precariousness of American democracy during the lead-up to World War II. She describes it as “a fast ride through churning and dangerous political rapids,” a period when the survival of democratic ideals was uncertain. This historical reflection is particularly pertinent now, as modern democracies worldwide face similar turbulence, marked by political polarization, economic inequality, and the resurgence of nationalist sentiments. Maddow’s account of the economic landscape of the time, where less than 2 percent of Americans controlled more than 60

percent of the nation’s wealth, further resonates with today’s widening wealth gap — and even has political parallels to today, such as the call by Senator Huey Long for steeply progressive taxes on accumulated wealth. “Prequel” not only provides a historical perspective; it also serves as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the importance of vigilance in safeguarding democratic values.

### Notable Quotes:

“Nazi Germany poured money and manpower into dividing the American polity, hoping to keep the United States and its arsenal of democracy out of the war in Europe. ‘America for Americans,’ as Hitler said in an interview widely published in the United States in 1940, ‘and Europe for the Europeans.’ His government blanketed America with isolationist and antisemitic literature.”

“A good chunk of the German money devoted to this effort passed through the hands of George Sylvester Viereck, who used it to try to exploit a key weakness he had discerned in the American political system. ‘The more I study the record of foreign propaganda in the United States, the more I am surprised by the long patience of the American Government,’ he wrote. ‘While the law requires that the ownership of a newspaper must be fully disclosed, there was nothing to prevent the German government or an individual German

**Book Club - Prequel Continued pg. 5**

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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.)

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

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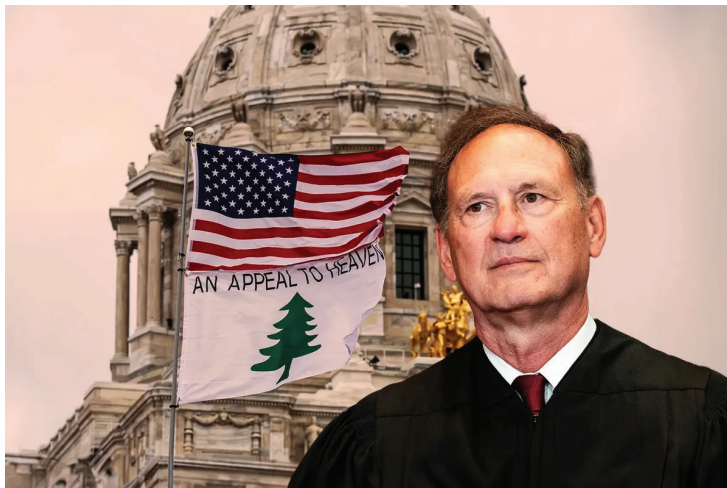
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# Americans United urges Congress to investigate Justice Alito's display of the Christian Nationalist 'Appeal to Heaven' flag

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Americans United for Separation of Church and State President and CEO Rachel Laser issued the following statement following reports that the Christian Nationalist "Appeal to Heaven" flag flew at the New Jersey vacation home of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito:

"The Appeal to Heaven flag that flew at Justice Alito's vacation home is the flag of the Christian Nationalist movement in America, the endpoint of which is nothing less than the toppling of our democracy. Christian Nationalists believe that the United States should be a Christian theocracy. Insurrectionists carried the flag when they attacked the Capitol on January 6th, 2021. Partisan politicians – like U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson,



U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, and Pennsylvania state Senator and failed gubernatorial candidate Doug Mastriano—fly this flag to announce their sympathies to fellow Christian Nationalists.

"That this partisan Christian Nationalist flag flew at the beach house of a Supreme Court justice raises serious questions about impartiality and the fair administration of justice at the nation's highest court. Congress must hold hearings to assure the American people that Justice Alito will honor his oath of office and put the Constitution first, before the tenets of the Christian Nationalist movement."

*Americans United is a religious freedom advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1947, AU educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom.*

## Book Club - Prequel from page 4

from making a present of several million dollars to an American sympathizer; nor was there anything to prevent the sympathizer from making his money talk—for Germany! There is no safeguard which the law can create which human ingenuity cannot circumvent."

"The fight here at home in the 1930s and 1940s is a story of American politics at the edge: a violent, ultra-right authoritarian movement, weirdly infatuated with foreign dictatorships, with detailed plans to overthrow the U.S. government, and even with former American military officers who stood ready to lead."

"In the lead-up to World War II, the U.S. Congress was rife with treachery, deceit, and almost unfathomable actions on the part of people who had sworn to defend the Constitution but who instead got themselves implicated in a plot to end it."

"But in the moment, the lead-up to World War II in America was a much more close-run affair than we want to remember. It was a fast ride through churning and dangerous political rapids, and it wasn't clear at the time exactly who and what were going to survive the journey."

"The New Deal was a dangerous and dastardly revolution in American governance to some, and not nearly enough to others."

"None shall be too rich, and none shall be too poor,' [Huey] Long would tell his listening audience, occasionally a national audience on the NBC radio network. 'America will become a land sharing the fruits of the land, not for the favored few, not to satisfy greed, but that all may live in a land in which the Lord has provided an abundance sufficient for the luxury and convenience of the people in general.'"

'Less than 2 percent of the American citizenry was hoarding more than 60 percent of the total wealth in the country back then, he said, and their share had only grown in the years since, through the economic boom of the 1920s

and the frightening upheaval of the ongoing Depression. When he became a senator, Long called for a federal tax on all that accumulated wealth, and not just a progressive tax but an exponential tax. The first million was in the clear; the second million would be taxed at 1 percent; the third million 2 percent; the fourth at 4 percent; the fifth at 8 percent; the sixth million at 16 percent; the seventh at 32 percent; the eighth at 64 percent; the ninth million and above at 99 percent."

"Nazi lawyers regarded America, not without reason, as the innovative world leader in the creation of racist law."

"For [Heinrich] Krieger, the genius of the American legal system was in how it allowed for the circumvention of this obvious contradiction by use of juridical Umwege (pronounced UM-vee-guh), secret and twisting passageways of reasoning that led to whatever outcome was politically desirable."

"The Nazis were in love with this idea. It meant you didn't have to spell out your eliminationist plans in black and white; you just needed to act on those plans, with compliant and complacent lawyers writing artfully around the worst of your intentions and with courts providing assurance that they would get what you were going for intuitively and the law wouldn't get in your way."

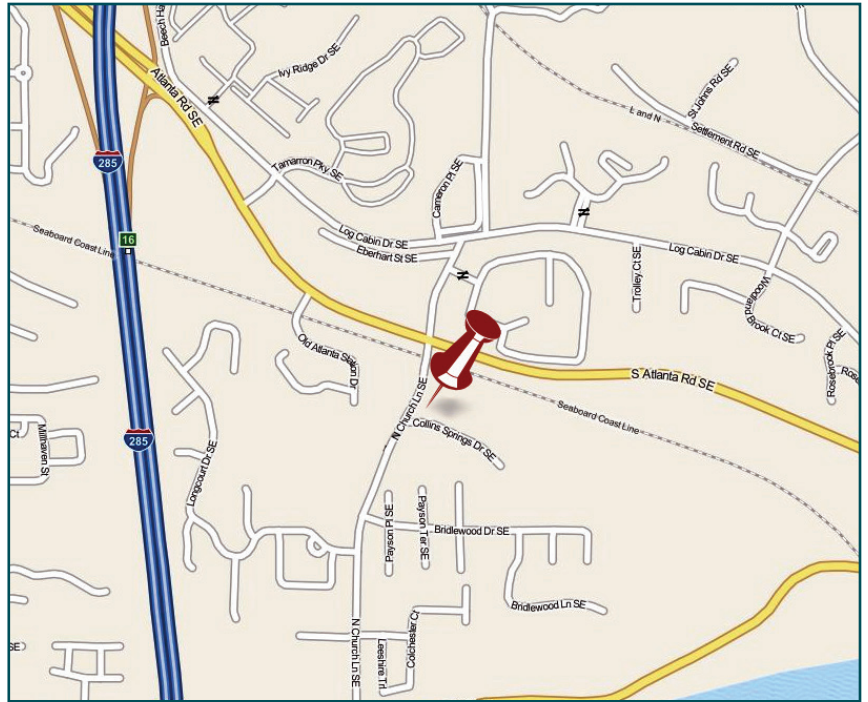
- Miriam Beattie

*Dare To Think  
For Yourself!*



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

**Benjamin Radford  
June 9 1:00 pm EST  
(At Hall and on Zoom)**



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