

Paul Broman: “Whatever Happened to Deism?”



Paul Broman

We again are happy that **Paul Broman**, a long-time member has agreed to give a talk again after his excellent presentation last May!

Paul says, “The talk will be titled “Whatever happened to Deism? Topics will include:

- What is Deism? How has that meaning of that term changed over the ages
- The divergence between British deism and French Deism
- Famous American and French revolutionaries who were Deists
- Deism in the French Revolution (Cult of the Supreme Being)
- The decline of Deism in the 19th century - why?
- Modern Deist movements, pan-Deism, etc.”

The Broman program, free and open to the public, will be preceded by socializing with a potluck lunch starting about 11. The program will start at about 1 pm Eastern on Sunday, November 10 via Zoom and in AFS Hall.

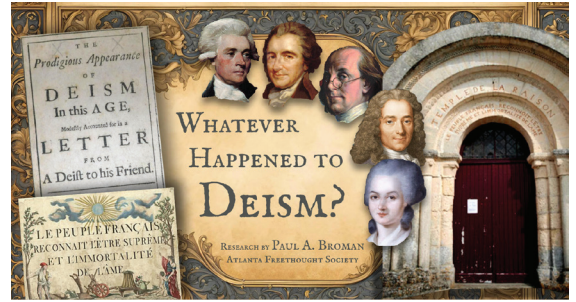
We welcome those who are not freethinkers but who just want to know more about 17th and 18th century beliefs in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe, specifically one who doesn't interact with humankind.

Details on the Zoom meeting is shown below:

AFS November Meeting **Nov 10, 2024 1:00-2:30 PM (eastern)**

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

Also at Atlanta Freethought Hall



AFS Calendar

Nov 10	Potluck Lunch	11 am
Nov 10	General Meeting (Live/Online)	1 pm
Dec 8	Board of Directors Meeting	11 am
Dec 8	General Meeting/Elections (Live/Online)	1 pm
Jan 12	Potluck Lunch	11 am
Jan 12	General Meeting (Live/Online)	1 pm

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

The November Potluck

Before the November 10th meeting we will have a Potluck Lunch, starting at 11:00. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name:

A-G: Bring a dessert

H-P: Bring a side dish

Q-Z: Bring a main dish

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

Atlanta Freethought Society presents 2025 candidates for three open board spots that are due Dec 8. Ballots to come soon—mail or bring back! Members who have paid their dues for 2025 can vote. Choose three:

Mark Banks (Incumbent)

Paul Broman (Former Board Member)

Michael Buckner (Incumbent)

Daniel Pyron (Former Board Member)

Judy Thompson (Incumbent)



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 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.



10 Nov	Paul Broman: "Whatever Happened to Deism?"
8 Dec	TBA
12 Jan	TBA
9 Feb	TBA

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 calendar 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 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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2024 Board of Directors

Mark Banks
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Laura Ross, President
Judy Thompson
Steve Yothment, Treasurer

Atlanta Freethought News

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Membership in AFS is \$50/year per person,
\$20 for low income.

Membership includes voting privileges and
AFNews by email/USPS (indicate preferences).

Sustaining Membership is \$100.

Life Membership is \$1000.

Subscriptions only are \$30 for 12 issues.

Please make checks or money orders payable to
Atlanta Freethought Society
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Wasn't Jefferson's Famous Wall of Separation Letter Just About Keeping Government from Interfering with Churches?

Ed Buckner • Letters to a Free Country

<https://edbuckner.substack.com/p/wasnt-jeffersons-famous-wall-of-separation>

Jefferson Just Wanted Government Out of the Churches' Hair, Right? After All, No Need to Restrict Churches in a Christian Nation!

This really is a “perennial” fake question—often and thoroughly debunked, but brought back out in ways that seem clearly dishonest. For an example from September, see—<https://www.lifenews.com/2024/09/11/pastor-says-theres-no-perfect-candidate-so-vote-for-the-better-choice/>

The recent “Religious Liberty” newsletter that linked to this article includes this dishonest “history”—

...in a personal letter penned by **Thomas Jefferson** in 1802 to the Danbury Baptist Association...Jefferson wrote not that the church should stay out of government affairs, but that government affairs have no place interfering with the church.

But that is historically and provably false. Jefferson was indeed championing religious liberty, but he wrote his famous letter as President and he asked various cabinet members, including his Attorney General, **Levi Lincoln, Sr.**, to review it before he sent it.

Jefferson was not in any usual or orthodox way a Christian much less a Baptist (see my *Letter* of April 17, 2023, for more details), and he certainly did intend to declare against government interference with the church. But he had a long record of stating unambiguous opposition as well to church interference with government. Discussion of the most prominent Jefferson quotation shown on the Jefferson Memorial is sometimes distorted. The quote:

I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man

comes from a letter to his friend, Dr. **Benjamin Rush**, almost exactly 224 years ago, on 23 September 1800. Efforts to claim this as evidence of Jefferson's piety (because he swears “upon the altar of God”) miss completely the context of the quote. As **Frederic Clarkson** noted (in *Eternal Hostility*, 1997, p. 6) Jefferson was complaining to Rush about “politically motivated attacks...from theocrats seeking to establish or re-establish their version of Christianity in the new nation.” As Clarkson wrote,

[the quotation] evokes the nature of the struggle that brought about a secular and republican form of government to the former colonies, and the fierce democratic sensibility that underlies the ethos of pluralism in the United States.

What Jefferson was swearing eternal hostility against was both government

interference in individual religious choices AND church interference in government. Real religious liberty, liberty from any tyranny against the mind of man, requires both.

And that is what Jefferson was writing about in his history making letter in 1802:

To messrs. **Nehemiah Dodge, Ephraim Robbins, & Stephen S. Nelson**, a committee of the Danbury Baptist association in the state of Connecticut.

Gentlemen

The affectionate sentiments of esteem and approbation which you are so good as to

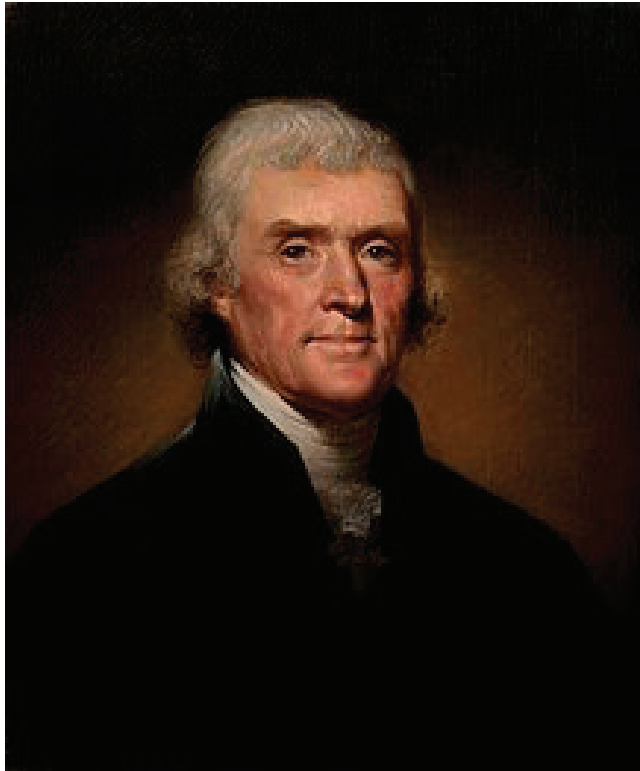
express towards me, on behalf of the Danbury Baptist association, give me the highest satisfaction. my duties dictate a faithful and zealous pursuit of the interests of my constituents, & in proportion as they are persuaded of my fidelity to those duties, the discharge of them becomes more and more pleasing.

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should “make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the

nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.

I reciprocate your kind prayers for the protection & blessing of the common father and creator of man, and tender you for yourselves & your religious association, assurances of my high respect & esteem.

Th Jefferson
Jan. 1. 1802.



Support Atlanta Freethought Society: New Heat Pump and Insulation

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-atl-freethought-society-new-heat-pump-insulation>

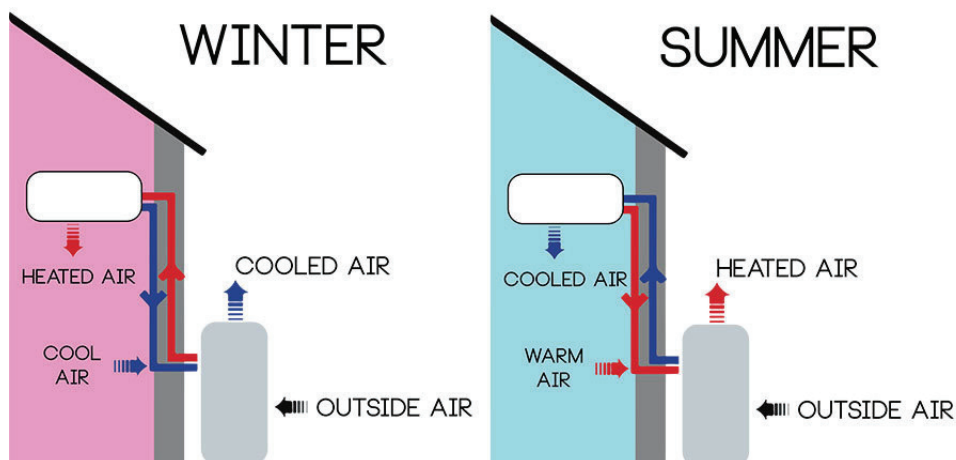
Friends, the Atlanta Freethought Society needs some help. We are coming to you, hat in hands, to let you know our aging air conditioner finally breathed its last and the 158-year-old building needs insulation and a heat pump to deal with our intense Georgia summers. The board members have compiled a list of improvements to the building that will help with the cooling, including:

- a new heat pump
- insulation in the attic
- new (sealed!) windows
- and dampness control in the crawl space

The AFS is a place for the non-theistic and skeptical people of the Atlanta area and beyond to gather and be amongst like-minded folk; groups other than AFS are welcome to use the building as well!

If you could consider helping us out with a GoFundMe donation

or just through PayPal or check/cash, it would be such a help keep the building cool and our energy bills low. Your contribution would be greatly appreciated! There is a \$26,500 goal but any bit will help. There is just not enough money in the AFS bank account to cover this.



Become a Member!

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

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 \$1000 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!

Membership Dues # of mems Total

Individual	\$50	_____	\$_____
Low Income	\$20	_____	\$_____
Sustaining Member	\$100	_____	\$_____
Life Member	\$1000	_____	\$_____
Subscription only	\$30	_____	\$_____
Extra donation (Thank you!)			\$_____
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An audacious move by anti-abortion extremists in Texas has collapsed. The next one may not.

Rob Boston • Wall of Separation

<https://www.au.org/the-latest/articles/an-audacious-move-by-anti-abortion-extremists-in-texas-has-collapsed-the-next-one-may-not/>

Christian Nationalists in several states are looking for ways to harass and intimidate anyone who helps a family member or friend get an abortion. In Texas, where abortion is illegal after six weeks, the so-called “Texas Heartbeat Act” incorporates a strange twist: The 2021 law is enforced primarily through individuals filing civil lawsuits.

The law states that anyone (except for government employees) can sue any person who “performs or induces an abortion” or who “aids or abets the performance or inducement of an

Aracely Garcia after they helped his ex-wife, **Brittini Silva**, obtain abortion-inducing medication. Marcus Silva sued Noyola, Carpenter and Garcia for “murderous actions” that caused unlawful death of “baby boy Silva.” He sought \$1 million from each woman.

The lawsuit was brought by **Jonathan Mitchell**, an attorney and former Texas solicitor general whom *The Texas Tribune* described as “an anti-abortion legal crusader responsible for Texas’ novel ban on abortions through private lawsuits.” (<https://www.texastribune.org/2024/10/11/texas-abortion-assistance-lawsuit-dropped/>)

The New York Times reported that Mitchell sought to use the case to win a legal ruling that fetuses have the same rights as adults. So-called “fetal personhood,” the newspaper noted, has been a longstanding goal of the anti-abortion movement. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/12/us/texas-lawsuit-friends-abortion-pills.html>)

‘I’m representing fathers of aborted fetuses’

Mitchell defended his actions, telling *The Times*, “We see lawyers representing Al Qaeda terrorists at Guantánamo Bay, serial murderers on death row, child molesters like **Jeffrey Epstein**. I’m representing fathers of aborted fetuses who have every right to pursue the legal remedies that the law provides.”

In this case, Noyola and Carpenter fought back with a counter-lawsuit. They asserted that Marcus Silva knew his ex-wife was preg-



nant” after the six-week limit. (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9320804/>) The law does not allow the person who is seeking the abortion to be punished, but its terms are so broad that it would cover medical professionals, friends who offered help and even a cab driver who drove someone across the state border to get an abortion in another state. Under the terms of the law, the person suing does not have to know the pregnant individual. If they are successful in court, their legal fees will be covered, and they will receive \$10,000.

A man in Galveston tried to use the law to sue three friends of his ex-wife who helped her terminate a pregnancy. The man, **Marcus Silva**, recently dropped the legal action after the women fought back with their own lawsuit. That’s a good result, but the fact that this legal action happened at all is alarming – and it could be a portend of things to come.

Sued for helping a friend

Silva sued Jackie Noyola, Amy Carpenter and

nant but did nothing about it.

Noyola and Carpenter had the means and support to oppose Marcus Silva and Mitchell’s aggressive actions. Not everyone has those resources. As a result, some people may back away from offering assistance if they fear being sued, fined or imprisoned.

That’s the clear intent of the Texas law – to intimidate and harass anyone who tries to help a friend. As Carpenter told *The Tribune*, “These laws are just a disgusting gift to abusers. That’s who they’re written for, because no decent human is going to try to criminalize people for helping their friend.”

A model law for Christian Nationalists

And bear in mind that Christian Nationalists look at draconian laws like the one in Texas as a model for the nation. Their appalling Project 2025 calls for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to institute “abortion surveillance” aimed at “liberal states [that] have now become sanctuaries for abortion tourism.” (<https://www.au.org/project2025/>)

We can be pleased that this recent case in Texas had a happy result, but let’s remember that the next one – and be assured, there will be a next one – may not.

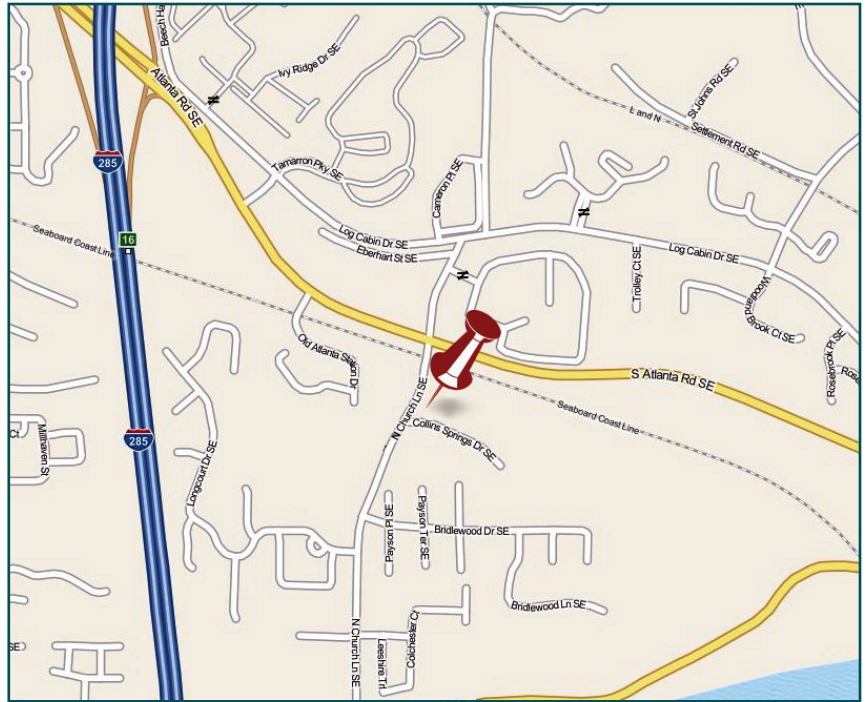
That’s all the more reason to oppose Christian Nationalists and their theocratic schemes.

*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



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

Paul Broman
Nov. 10 1:00 pm Eastern
(At Hall and on Zoom)



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***Elections for Board Members will be held
before the December meeting.***

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