

*Discover the Importance of Teaching
Evolutionary Theory in the Classroom*



Co-Sponsored by the
Department of Biology
University of North Florida

and the
First Coast Freethought Society



**SCIENCE
UNDER SIEGE
The Attack on Evolution**

Panel Discussion • Questions & Answers

Anthony M. Rossi, Ph.D., Biologist, UNF

Matthew R. Gilg, Ph.D., Biologist, UNF

Jay S. Huebner, Ph.D., Physicist and Astronomer, UNF

Gordon F. M. Rakita, Ph.D., Anthropologist, UNF

Ken Hurley, President, ACLU Jacksonville, Moderator

Monday, November 13, 2006, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

UNIVERSITY CENTER • UNF

(Bldg. 43 – The building closest to the Kernan Blvd. entrance to UNF)

FREE PARKING • FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

For further information call the FCFS – 904-288-6291

or visit firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

If you have a disability and require an accommodation for this occasion, please contact the Dept. of Biology, 904-620-2830, five days before the event to enable us to provide you a reasonable accommodation for the event.

First Coast

FreeThinker



The newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

October 2006

Volume 4, Issue 10

Looking Over The Horizon: What Do We Want To Be Doing In Five Years?

Inside this issue:

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Curtis Wolf

Setting goals is an essential part of growing an organization like the First Coast Freethought Society. If we want to be an influential part of this community, we have to plan towards this end. Here are the suggested goals for the First Coast Freethought Society over the next five years that I believe will take us to the next level as a freethought organization.

They will be discussed at the November 2006 board meeting. So if you feel that this goal framework left out something, let one of the

board members know how you feel. It is like an election. You do not get heard if you do not speak out.

• Membership Goals

Membership in the First Coast Freethought Society should increase by 10 percent every year.

Members of the First Coast Freethought Society should feel part of a community that cares about their personal needs.

Members of the First Coast Freethought Society should have strong lines of communications between themselves and the organization's leadership.

Membership involvement in committees of the First Coast

Freethought Society should increase by 5% every year as a percentage of the membership.

At least 95% of the members of the First Coast Freethought Society should renew their membership yearly.

Fifty percent of the members of the First Coast Freethought Society should volunteer in activities that help people in the community.

(Continued on page 8)



"What is tolerance? It is the consequence of humanity. We are all formed of frailty and error; let us pardon reciprocally each other's folly -- that is the first law of nature."

--Voltaire

October 2006 Meeting

Ken Hurley, President, Greater Jacksonville Chapter, ACLU

"Ra, Blue Blankies, Ghosts, Holy Ghosts, and Flying Spaghetti Monsters: Should we tolerate the intolerable?"

Monday, October 16, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

(Upstairs in the Sanctuary - Doors open at 6:00)

Unitarian Universalist Church • 7405 Arlington Expressway • Jacksonville, FL

HUMANIST BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

- When:** 2:00 p.m., the third Sunday of each month.
- Where:** Borders Books, 8801 Southside Blvd., 519-6500, books are usually in stock.
- What:** Books/magazines planned for discussion:
- October 15, 2006 - *Free Inquiry*, Oct/Nov edition.
 - November 19, 2006 - *Humanism as the Next Step*, by Lloyd and Mary Morain.



November's selection, *Humanism as the Next Step*, was described by one Amazon.com reviewer as "...a brilliant down-to-earth guide to the humanist philosophy. It is totally positive and deeply inspiring, written in a style that is easy to read and to understand." Written by the former president of the American Humanist Association, Lloyd Morain, and social reformer, Mary Morain, it "beautifully and intelligently answers all the relevant questions about humanism that anyone would want answered." (Albert Ellis, president of The Albert Ellis Institute for Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy).

Borders can order single used copies which are non-returnable and cost about \$12, or you can download it free at www.americanhumanist.org/publications where it is listed under "Bookstore" on the right side of the page.

For the November discussion, see also www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/humanism.



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The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for members of the First Coast Freethought Society, other freethinkers, and potential freethinkers. We exchange newsletters with other freethought groups and obtain information from many diverse sources.

Readers are invited and encouraged to reprint our original materials provided they give credit to this publication.

The officials of the FCFS are not responsible for opinions or other statements expressed in this newsletter. It is intended to convey ideas to stimulate discussion on a variety of subjects.

We welcome submissions. Deadlines are the end of the **THIRD** week of the month for the following month. Submit contributions by e-mail to Hugo (see above), or mail to Hugo Borresen, 8831 Taurus Circle South, Jacksonville, FL 32222. Submit web site contributions by e-mail to Carrie Renwick at the address above.

Just 51 Days To Go Until SCIENCE UNDER SIEGE....

Wilhelmina Walton

As of this writing, it has been 28 days, 7 hours and 28 minutes since the science panel discussion committee left the meeting with Dr. Rossi, et al., having agreed that the Department of Biology, UNF, and the FCFS would co-sponsor a science symposium on November 13, at 7:00 p.m., in the University Center at UNF. Since then, my every waking hour has been consumed with what I can do to make our program a success. I am sure the other committee members have felt similarly driven.

Having gathered mailing addresses for the target audience, I now know the name and address of every high school and middle school in Duval County, who the principal is, as well as the names of all the PTA presidents; also department heads of the colleges in town, and numer-

ous individual science teachers.

That could be a bit of an exaggeration, but not much. Anyway, that gives you an idea of what has been accomplished, but we still have a long way to go. We have had our first mailing of letters and fliers to several hundred people in the Jacksonville area. We have two more mailings scheduled. Publicity will include press releases, paid advertising, and calendar events, and we hope for a feature story.

and pass them out to anyone you see who may have the slightest interest in attending.

Then, draw a big red circle around November 13 on your calendar and about 6:15 p.m. on that date, come on over to University Center and bring all the neighbors. We are counting on each and every one of you to help us fill the 400-seat auditorium.

If you have questions you would like answered, write them down and bring them with you for the Q&A following the four lectures.

This will be THE BIG NIGHT for the First Coast Freethought Society, but more than that, we hope the presentation will help provide resolutions to the problems plaguing the teaching of science.



Don't Miss
“SCIENCE UNDER SIEGE”
Monday, November 13, 2006
University Center, UNF

I would ask every member of the FCFS to tell everyone you know about the program and ask them to tell everyone they know. Make copies of the fliers from your computer, if you don't get some copies from the committee,

Humanists “Pray” to Themselves

Hugo Borresen

The annual gathering of the Theosophical Society of America, held in Wheaton, Illinois on July 21, 2006, started with prayer. Prayers were offered from eight or nine religions. Atheism was also included. Theodore M. Utchen offered the

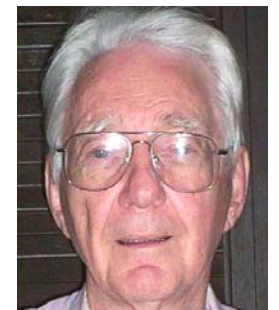
following prayer which garnered many compliments.

We thank Nita Pitts, FCFS member and Caring Tree Chair, for bringing attention to this prayer found in the September issue of *Freethought Today*, a publication of the Freedom from Religion Foundation.

Let us remember our brotherhood with others as we hear this

prayer which is addressed to us rather than to our gods.

Let us rise each morning, and strive each day, to do only that which



(Continued on page 10)

The Emperor and The Creed

Fred W. Hill

In 306 CE, when Gaius Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus, better known as Constantine the Great, was proclaimed the new senior emperor of the western half of the Roman Empire by the soldiers of his deceased father, the empire was divided among four co-emperors. Christians were a harshly persecuted minority who were themselves divided on several issues, including what exactly was the nature of the god (or was it gods?) whom they worshipped.

Within the next two decades, through superior political and military acumen, Constantine had reunited the empire under his sole rule, eliminating all rivals. Further, recognizing the futility of centuries of attempts to eradicate Christianity, he tried the unique tactic of embracing the religion, not simply granting Christianity toleration but also endeavoring to absorb the well-structured church into that of the state, to become a staunch prop to his rule rather than a corrosive element within the empire.

However, Constantine was disturbed by the tumultuous bickering of the Christians amongst themselves, sometimes resulting in riots, and determined he would force them to settle their doctrinal disputes. Thus, in 325, Constantine called for a council of all the prominent Christian regional leaders

throughout the empire to gather at his palace in Nicaea, a few dozen miles from New Rome or Constantinople, the new capital of his empire. A new creed would be hammered out to transform Jesus Christ, the once human “prince of peace” who had been executed by Roman soldiers for subversion against the empire, into a full god worthy of an empire built by war.

The gist of the primary controversy was whether Jesus Christ was in essence subordinate or equal to God the Father.

Had reason rather than imperial fiat prevailed, the attendees would have recognized that neither God, nor Jesus, nor the Holy Ghost, had any substance at all, and there is no God, period.

Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, pressed the view, later known as Arianism and based on a close examination of the gospels and especially the statements attributed to Jesus, that Jesus was “in some way distinct from and subordinate to God his Father, and perhaps essentially different in nature” (Charles Freeman, *The Closing of the Western Mind*, p. 165).

The opposing view, postulated by Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, was that Jesus Christ was the full equal of and

of the same nature as God the Father and always had been, even from the time he was conceived within the womb of



Mary to the time he was dying on the cross, plaintively asking why “his father” had forsaken him. Although, as described by Freeman, many modern religious historians of Christianity paint Arius as a wild heretic with views entirely contrary to those of mainstream Christian opinion of the time, more objective scholarly research indicates most Christians then leaned more closely to Arius’ position than to Alexander’s. As Karen Armstrong writes, “when the conflict broke out there was no officially orthodox position and it was by no means certain why or even whether Arius was wrong”

(Armstrong, *A History of God*, p. 108); and, according to Richard Hansen, “[Subordinationism] could, in about the year 300, have been described as a fixed part of catholic [...in the sense of universal] theology” (Freeman, p. 165).

Both Arius and Alexander attended the Nicene Council, along with approximately 250 bishops, mostly from the more heavily Christian eastern half of the empire. Out of 1800 Bishops invited to attend, only between 250 and 300 attended, and with less than a dozen representa-

tives from the west, including two priests representing an ailing Silvester I, Bishop of Rome, whose authority as the self-styled Pope over all bishops was not acknowledged by the Christian communities of the east. Constantine, however, was the dominating figure of the time, and presided over the proceedings upon a golden chair, dressed in a dazzlingly bejeweled robe meant to impress the attendees with his grandeur, and stressing upon them the need for harmony (Freeman, p. 167).

Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea and author of a biography of Constantine, proposed a creed that sidestepped the controversy by advocating belief in God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, describing Christ as “first born of all creation and begotten from the Father before all ages.” However, as Eusebius later told his congregation, Constantine was dissatisfied and commanded that Christ be described as being of the same substance (*homoousios*) as God the Father, a view that had been determined a heresy by a council of bishops held in Antioch in 268. There was no scriptural authority to support Constantine’s definition, but being a forceful emperor was authority enough. Only Arius himself and two other council members resisted the emperor’s browbeating to sign the final creed, for which they were rewarded with excommunication and exile. Arianism and any other views holding that there was ever a time when Christ did not exist and was not the com-

plete equal of God were declared heresies.

Alistair Kee, author of *Constantine Versus Christ*, asserts that Constantine did not have much use for Jesus as portrayed in the gospels, whose example could conceivably inspire rebellion against the state. Christ fully absorbed within the godhead, with no distinctive personality or substance apart from God the Father, was far more palatable to Constantine.



Constantine the Great

Regardless of his desires, however, the creed did not take hold just yet. The Bishops went back to their dioceses and “went on teaching as they had before” (Armstrong, p. 111), mainly advocating the very Arianism they had just condemned; and Constantine himself later reconciled with Arius. It was left to Theodosius, who reigned from 379 to 395, to impose a revised Nicene Creed, professing the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as three yet one, never mind how, punishing

anyone who dared question the doctrine. Theodosius was also the first emperor to ban all pagan worship, thereby encouraging Christians to destroy the ancient pagan shrines and bring an end, after nearly 12 centuries, to the Olympic Games, held for the last time in antiquity in 395. Within less than a century, Christians, once a persecuted minority, had taken over the empire and become persecutors themselves.

Ultimately, of course, the empire fell apart. While Christianity thrived and spread across the globe, universal consensus on doctrine was never truly achieved, despite centuries of violent efforts by multiple sides to enforce one creed or another. The continued controversy over the nature of Jesus Christ and his relationship to God would eventually inspire Mohammed to devise his own answer, and his adherents conquered half of what had been Constantine’s empire within the next hundred years. The consequences of the controversy resonate to this very day, nearly 17 centuries after Constantine commenced that first Nicene Council. Had reason rather than imperial fiat prevailed, the attendees would have recognized that neither God, nor Jesus, nor the Holy Ghost, had any substance at all, and there is no God, period.

Of course, reason was in short supply in 325 and remains far too scarce even in the present day when, given our greater capacity for destruction, it is needed more than ever.



Fabulous Freethought Fall Frolic

What: Freethought Fall Frolic - Covered Dish - Picnic

When: Sunday, October 22, 2006, from 11:00 a.m. - until ?

Where: Losco Regional Park, 10851 Hood Rd., South, in Jax, 32257. (The park has a beautiful live oak tree grove, pavilions, grills, picnic tables, restrooms.)

Bring: A dish to share! (Tea, ice, and charcoal will be provided.) Bring **LAWN CHAIRS**, and conversation! Or bring any outdoor play stuff like Frisbees, wiffle ball & bat, horseshoes, etc.



To discuss food or directions, contact John Ruskuski at Ruskuski@bellsouth.net or call 260-0072 and leave a message.. Also, June Applen will have a sign-up sheet and maps available at our October 16 monthly meeting. You can also “Google” the address to find a map and directions.

Mark your calendar and plan to frolic in the park!



Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners For Atheists (and Freethinkers, Humanists, Agnostics, etc.)

Sign up to attend or host a dinner yourself. Sign-up sheets will be at the back table at the monthly meetings. For further details on how this works, see page 9 of the February 2006 *Freethinker*, or ask the hospitality ladies at the back table.

Atheist Sunday Morning (or Sunday Morning in the Park)

For those of us seeking more freethought fellowship, conversation and camaraderie, here is an opportunity to get together on Sunday mornings. Contact June Applen at JApplen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-762-0627.

No Atheist Left Behind (or Are You Going My Way?)

If you are seeking a ride to an FCFS event, contact **Hugo Borresen** at HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-779-6883.

Caring Tree

If a telephone call to any member or anyone interested in our group might serve a purpose--such as a ride to our meeting or some other personal need, please contact **Nita Pitts** at 904-996-0879 or e-mail her at pitrymnd@comcast.net. Otherwise, leave a notation on the sign-in sheet at the front table during one of our meetings.

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 550591
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(904) 288-6291
<http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the First Coast Freethought Society is to serve the needs of the nonreligious of Northeast Florida, to promote freethought and secular humanism, and to provide an opportunity for agnostics, atheists, skeptics and other free-thinkers to exchange ideas.

Meetings

The FCFS meets the third Monday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, Florida. 32211. (904) 725-8133. Doors open 6:00. Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

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October Social - All Welcome!

WHERE: STEAK & ALE at Baymeadows and I-95 South

WHEN: Tues., October 24, 2006. Gather in Lounge at 6:00 p.m., Dinner at 7:00 p.m.

RSVP: CarrieRen@att.net (or 268-8826) by **October 23**, if you plan to attend!

**Looking over the horizon:
What do we want to be doing
in five years?**

(Continued from page 1)

• **Education Goals**

Members of the First Coast Freethought Society and other humanist groups on the First Coast should have a thorough understanding of the principles of humanism, skepticism, and science.

Members of the local press should become familiar with the basics of humanism, skepticism, and science, and understand how they apply to the news stories concerning religion, pseudoscience, and other issues central to humanism.

People of the First Coast who are outside of this group should become familiar with the basics of humanism, skepticism, and science. Even if they still disagree with humanism, they should at least have a correct understanding of the humanist alternative. Myths concerning the humanist alternative should be dispelled within the population of the First Coast.

People on the First Coast should increasingly recognize the importance and necessity of keeping church and state separate.

People on the First Coast should recognize that pseudoscientific beliefs lack scientific validity and should be rejected. Alternative medicine should lose its popularity on the First Coast.

Belief in supernatural explanations should decline on the First Coast.

• **Activism Goals**

Violations of the separation of church and state and attempts to promote special privileges for religious organizations should decline.

Twenty-five percent of the Members of the First Coast Freethought Society should become effective activists on behalf of humanism and skepticism.

There should a declining number of pseudoscientific claims and services on the First Coast.

• **Supporting Goals**

The budget for the First Coast Freethought Society

should increase 3% in addition to the increase in revenue generated by increased membership.

The number of people who are familiar with the First Coast Freethought Society and its purpose should increase every year.

The press should see the First Coast Freethought Society as the voice of humanism in the First Coast.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ It's not too early to begin ★

★ thinking about our ★

★ favorite **Pagan Holiday** ★

★ Yes - Christmas! ★

★ Visit Terry Loucks' ★

★ website, The ★

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Philosophy Slams Are Positively Slamming!

Join fellow slammers when they meet to discuss philosophy and how it applies to current events. There is never a dull moment at the philosophy slams. A joint venture of UNF, JU, and FCCJ, slams are described in *JU Magazine* as "packed & charged

with emotion and passion" and waiting for "the match that ignites this powder keg of ideas." See their website www.geocities.com/philosophy_slam. Slam topics in the past have included Dr. Michael Ruse from FSU, whose topic was "Evolution vs. Creationism: Which Side Is Making

the Most Mistakes?" January of 2006 brought UNF's Dr. David Schwam-Baird who explained "Why Democracy Is a Failed System." The two remaining slams of this semester will be held on Oct. 17 and Nov. 7, 7:30 p.m., at the Fuel Coffeehouse, 1037 Park St, in Five Points.



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 • (904) 288-6291

2006 Membership Application



Name		Date	
Home address	City	State	Zip Code
E-mail address	Home phone	Business phone	
Occupation	Areas of interest and/or expertise		

How did you hear about us? _____

Membership level (please select one):

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular (\$30/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Carl Sagan (\$50/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Darwin (\$200/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bertrand Russell (\$75/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Robert Ingersoll (\$500/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior - 65+ (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Paine (\$100/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (\$1,000) |

I'm interested in getting involved in the FCFS as a(n):

- General member Committee member Officer Financial supporter

Do you object to your name appearing on our membership list, which is only distributed to other members? YES

Comments: _____

***You can make a lasting impact on the future of
freethought and secular humanism in this community
...if you provide for the First Coast Freethought Society in your Will.***

Your bequest will ensure that the FCFS continues to be a beacon for freethinkers on the First Coast and to remain a vital Voice of Reason in the Northeast Florida area. Several options are available for establishing a bequest (specific, percentage, residual, or contingent). We will be happy to provide the appropriate wording to you and your attorney, depending upon your wishes.

For further information, contact
Carrie Renwick, P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 or
904-288-6291 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Humanists "Pray" to Themselves

(Continued from page 3)

brings happiness and joy to others, and avoid doing things which cause others hurt and pain. Let us use our minds and our reason to foster behavior based on the mutuality and reciprocity inherent in human rela-

tionships, and let us always respect the dignity and worth of each other.

And let us, above all, love one another, not to obtain rewards for ourselves now or hereafter or to avoid punishment, but rather always to bring to each other contentment and peace.

So be it.



NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee has been appointed (chaired by Bobbie Nord) and is hard at work lining up 2007 leadership.

Voting will be held by mail again this year. Look for the ballot in the November *FreeThinker*. It will need to be returned no later than December 1.



First Coast Freethought Society 2006 Events

October	16 - Monthly meeting	15 - Book discussion group	24- Social at Steak and Ale
November	20 - Monthly meeting	19 - Book discussion group	28- Social at Steak and Ale
December	18 - Monthly meeting	17 - Book discussion group	26- Social at Steak and Ale

Visit our website at <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>.

Return service requested

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Jacksonville, Florida 32222**