

FIRST COAST FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY, INC.

An organization of freethinkers and secular humanists supporting free inquiry, education, and community in the Northeast Florida area

Our Motto: “To Question is the Answer.”

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The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

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May 2009

Volume 7, Issue 5

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Earl Coggins

Critical mass is a term used to describe momentum—the type of momentum necessary to enable something to become self-sustaining and then grow. It's also referred to as a tipping point. Richard Dawkins has mentioned critical mass as a primary focus of the freethought movement, with the tipping point being a juncture where nonreligious people are coming out, speaking

out, and being counted in numbers sufficient to initiate a consciousness shift in how the public perceives and treats nonreligious persons (i.e., freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, secular humanists, etc.). Similarly, issues per-

and church and equal rights for nonreligious persons, are beginning to gain respect, as well.



Dawkins' website, <http://richarddawkins.net>, has an entire section devoted to achieving critical mass. It's called the Out Campaign. You can find it separately from his website by going straight to <http://outcampaign.org>.

“Our radio spot is a beacon of reason being transmitted across North Florida and Southeast Georgia. In order to keep that beacon burning brightly, the First Coast Freethought Society needs to fund it.”

coming out, speaking

taining to the freethought movement, such as separation of state

The campaign is

(Continued on page 3)

May 2009 Meeting

Joe Wolf, President, Florida Citizens for Science

“The History of Creationism in Florida”

Monday, May 18, 2009, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

(In the Sanctuary, upper parking lot level • Doors open at 6:00)

Unitarian Universalist Church • 7405 Arlington Expressway • Jacksonville, FL

HUMANIST BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

- When:** 2:00 p.m., the first Sunday of each month.
- Where:** Borders Books, 8801 Southside Blvd., 519-6500, books are usually in stock.
- What:** Books/magazines planned for discussion:



- May 3, 2009 - *1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance*, by Gavin Menzies
- June 7, 2009 - *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time*, by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

This is an “as-told-to” biography of American Greg Mortenson, who has devoted his life to building schools in the remotest mountains of Pakistan. After a failed attempt to scale the earth's second highest peak, K2, he stumbles into an isolated mountain village, where he resolves to repay the generosity of the village leader and his people by building them a school. Mortenson's struggle to fulfill that promise and then committing himself to fundraising and building many more schools, for both boys and girls in this Muslim country, is the central subject of this long, well-detailed book.

For more information, contact moderator Jewell Kross at JKross@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-996-1553. (NOTE: If you purchase books from Amazon, please go to our website first, <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/index.html> and then click the link to Amazon.com. Thank you!)

First Coast FreeThinker

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for FCFS members, other freethinkers, and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive three issues free of charge, after which they must join the FCFS to continue to receive hard copy.

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. The *FreeThinker* is intended to convey ideas that stimulate thought and promote discussion on a variety of subjects.

We welcome submissions. The deadline is the **FOURTH SATURDAY** of each month.

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following month's issue. Submit contributions to the newsletter by e-mail to Hugo (see above), or by U. S. mail to Hugo Borresen, 8831 Taurus Circle South, Jacksonville, FL 32222.

May 2009 President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

simple. Dawkins is advocating that all atheists and agnostics who are keeping their nonreligious status a secret or a non-issue put aside the secrecy and let everyone know. Here is an excerpt from his website:

COME OUT! *Atheists are far more numerous than most people realize.*

REACH OUT! *The OUT Campaign allows individuals to let others know they are not alone. Let the world know that we are not about to go away and that we are not going to allow those that would condemn us to push us into the shadows.*

SPEAK OUT! *We can help others understand that atheists come in all shapes, sizes, colours and personalities. We are human (we are primates) and we are good friends and good citizens.*

KEEP OUT! *It is time to let our voices be heard regarding the intrusion of religion in our schools and politics.*

Herb Silverman, founder of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry and now President of the Secular Coalition for America, was recently quoted in the *New York Times*, stating: "It's not about carrying banners or protesting, the most important thing is coming out of the closet."

Some of you may be now be saying, "Well, wait a minute...I can't come out of the closet because I'm not an atheist." When I read Dawkins' website, I was

thinking the same thing. Then a light bulb went off. I was able to see the big picture. This is beyond atheism. Dawkins' campaign is a piece of a movement to bring this country back to the way in which the Founders intended it to be. In his book *The God Delusion*, Dawkins states: "Whether [Thomas] Jefferson and his colleagues were theists, deists, agnostics, or atheists, they were also passionate secu-



Come on out of the atheist closet

larists..." Secularism is what this movement is really all about. The movement to attain critical mass is a movement for secularism.

Contributing to critical mass can be achieved individually or as a group. The First Coast Freethought Society is already doing it as a group through our announcement on National Public

Radio (NPR) member station, WJCT 89.9 FM. Our 15-second radio spot is a collective "coming out" for our membership without the (perhaps) unwanted spotlight of coming out individually. Our announcement on NPR affiliate WJCT is a crucial component of the critical mass campaign going on around the world. By itself, it might not carry much weight, but fortunately, we are not alone. Most polls show at least 45 million Americans have stated one way or another (polls, surveys, questionnaires, etc.) that they have no religious affiliation. How many more are in the closet and need only know they are not alone?

Our radio spot a beacon of reason being transmitted across North Florida and Southeast Georgia. In order to keep that beacon burning brightly, the First Coast Freethought Society needs to fund it. Our membership dues only fund half of the yearly ads. The remaining funds come from individual donations. Achieving critical mass equates to having a group of people large enough to bring the freethought movement and secularism out of obscurity. Your continued support of our NPR announcement will insure that freethinking is never far from the ears (and minds) of the citizens of the Greater Jacksonville and Northeast Florida area.. Please give generously in the next 30 days so that we can help further the cause and bring true plurality to our region and to this country.

—Earl Coggins is Founder and President of the FCFS.



Praying—One of America's Favorite Hobbies

Sigrun Buckley

A prayer is the request to God (or some unseen, unproven, fairy, mythic entity) to grant us our wishes. People pray for everything: health, money, even for a scarce parking space in a busy city center, invoking their “parking angel.”

In spite of the absence of proof of what Jesus really said, and in the presence of separation of church and state, most Americans feel comfortable with a National Prayer Day. Only those of diminished faith, like the cynic in me, want to know what it is: “Ask and you shall be given” or “Only hypocrites pray in public?”

The faithful pray to hit the jackpot, for gadgets, toys, or for the Patriots to win the Superbowl. At least my friend in Dublin didn't bother Jesus or Him with her mundane request. What if everybody else vying for said spaces uttered the same? What makes God decide you are worthier than your fellow worker to get that job or the Patriots fans to be victorious?

Is it legit to pray for health but not for commercial products? Do you have to be a Christian (of which flavor?) to have your prayers answered? Of which faith exactly has one got to be in order to win a war? Is the Mus-

lim God equal to the Christian God to let one or the other prevail? Or do some denominations pray more than others? One could argue that God is more willing to answer the prayers of wealthy people in the West than the starving masses in Africa or Asia, who might just be asking for a bowl of rice or to feed their families for another day. Is he hearing them at all? But then again, they are not as advanced, also in a manner of religious speaking. The *Christian* God and above all, the Catholic Church, is the only true path to God, or so they claim.



Guess what? There is no scientific evidence that praying for someone can improve their health. Religious believers may be surprised—nonbelievers and skeptics won't see anything strange about this, but believers are constantly told that prayer has a real impact and even that science supports this. Thus, the new study may come as a real

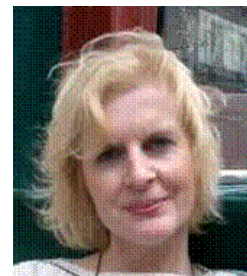
shock to many who have been deceived. (The work, which followed about 1,800 patients at six medical centers, was financed by the Templeton Foundation, which supports research into science and religion. It will appear in the *American Heart Journal* according to CNN.)

How can prayer be reconciled with the claim to a divine plan God has for you? If your fate is predestined, can God really be swayed by persistent praying? More questions than answers.

And if you don't have the time or faith, trust the American service-driven industry to come up with the beguiling and, no doubt, profitable idea of websites that pray for you.

In my time, I prayed for peace, strength, absence of pain. I prayed for answers. I never got them, or results. In spite of five years in Divinity School, I remained excluded from the privileged who—like some infamous Presidents—converse with God or his son. The more the answers failed to come along, the more frustrating praying became: a futile and nonsensical endeavor.

However, praying can have a surprisingly calming quality, even on someone who normally



only believes in the here and now. I found myself falling into step with the rhythm of Our Lord's Prayer, emerging from vaults of deeply buried grey cells, I had thought long lost, when faced with a decidedly unpleasant and painful medical procedure lately, where stillness was of the essence. I leave the exploration of the placebo effect and the benefits of meditation for later.

Bound to reason and a scientific explanation of the universe,

silently replying, "And I'll do the thinking."

How can prayer be reconciled with the claim to a divine plan God has for you? If your fate is predestined, can God really be swayed by persistent praying? More questions than answers.

Just to be on the safe side, I allow some dear friends to keep sending me good vibes, lighting candles, and throwing fairy dust. Every little bit helps—as they say in England.

Inspired by a YouTube blast of a sketch by Betty Bowers investigating

America's favorite hobby (other than shopping).

I bite my tongue every time somebody offers to pray for me,



(Un)Intelligent Design vs. Science Again

The following is a an email Earl Coggins sent to WJCT Channel 7 in response to the First Coast Forum broadcast on local PBS and NPR stations on April 23, 2009. The topic was whether Intelligent Design should be taught along with evolution in science classes in public schools. For more information on the Forum itself or to listen to the program online see: <http://www.wjct.org/tv/productions> .

The jury was in a long time ago on the worthiness of Intelligent Design. Scientists agree it is not science. The key word here is "scientists."

What is startling is the efforts of some to use politics as a way to legislate Intelligent Design into text books and classrooms. Did Newton use the courts to introduce Gravitational Theory? Was Copernicus' idea of a sun-centered solar system a House Bill or a theory? Did Einstein use the courts to introduce the Theory of Relativity? Did Quantum Mechanics come through the Supreme Court? Were Black Holes debated in the halls of

academia or at a local school board meeting? Did a politician decide Pluto is no longer a planet?



Education is the key to advancing everything we do as a species. Using the courts to force unaccepted hypotheses into our educational system is dangerous and a threat to our future. This

practice must stop.

There is an elephant on the proverbial table. That elephant is a faction of Christianity refusing to accept that science has forever changed the way in which we explain how the universe operates. Until we face that aspect of this issue and deal with it properly, this problem is not going away. It's been going on since 1859, the publication date for Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. It's time to stop the madness.

—Earl Coggins, President, First Coast Freethought Society, Jacksonville, FL



The Stars Our Destiny?

Fred W. Hill

The stars beckon. They will be our saviors from whatever calamity may one day render life on Earth untenable.

Or, to be more precise, we will be saved by the rocket scientists who will build the spacecraft that will enable humans to reach the nearest stars outside our solar system, with planets that can sustain life such as ours.

At least that is the scenario I've heard from a few acquaintances while speculating on the eventual extinction of our species, brought about either by our own environmentally destructive behavior or by natural forces beyond our control, such as the eventual expansion of our own sun into a red giant, due to consume Mercury and Venus and leave whatever remains of its third planet a scorched, lifeless husk in about five billion years. Planetary destruction is a scene long popularized in science fiction and fantasy tales, including the very first Superman story, published in 1938, wherein the infant Kryptonian escaped his home world moments before it exploded into cosmic rubble, headed for the nearest friendly planet.

Famed theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking himself asserted that, "The long-term survival of the human race is at risk as long as it is confined to a single planet," (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/we-must-travel-to-the-stars-to-save-the-human-race>

[says-hawking-426557.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/we-must-travel-to-the-stars-to-save-the-human-race-says-hawking-426557.html)). This is an undeniable fact considering that however far more extensive than that of any known organism, the lifetime of a star is still finite. What's questionable, however, is not only whether humans will ever have the capacity to travel to and colonize other solar systems, but whether we should.

At present, only one other planet has been found to share enough ascertainable characteristics with Earth to be seriously considered capable of supporting life, as announced by a team of European scientists led by Michel Mayor in April 2007 (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9796321>). Lo-

Perhaps, in centuries to come, our descendents will colonize planets we can't even see now, but will they be able to curb humanity's voracious, destructive appetites?

cated in the constellation Libra and named Gliese 581 c, the planet is over 20 light years, or roughly 120 trillion miles, away. As related by SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute astronomer Seth Shostak, "[T]he fastest rocket ever launched, NASA's New Horizons probe to Pluto, roared off its pad in 2006 at 10 miles per second" but would still take over 800 centuries to reach Proxima Centauri, at 4.37 light years away, the nearest star outside our solar system ("Boldly Going Nowhere" in the *New York Times*, April 14,

2009). If launched on his way at birth, even the mythically long-lived Bible-hero Methuselah would not have out-lived the far longer journey to Gliese 581 c. And of course, the cost of the energy expended would be astronomical, in the trillions, even for the briefest star treks. Scientists may yet develop the means for people to travel to another solar system and back, without giving up most of their lifetime and bankrupting the nation; or extra-terrestrials may stop terrorizing isolated yokels long enough to share their ad-



vanced technology with us. But such events are destined to remain cosmic fantasies for the foreseeable future.

Undoubtedly, if relatively cheap and easy space travel as depicted in the entertainment media

ever became possible, there would be plenty of volunteers for the adventure, but moral quandaries would remain. After all, we might put off our extinction only to ravage much of the life of whatever other hospitable planets we might spread our kind to.

Imagine, for example, if Mars was like Earth as it was about one million years ago, complete with bipeds that closely resembled our ancestors from that era. Several of Earth's richest nations would already have established colonies on Mars. There would be ugly debates about whether the

humanoid Martians deserved rights. Various Christian and Muslim sects would vie to convert them. A few Earthlings might hunt them as pests to be exterminated, much as European settlers and their descendents dealt with the original natives of the Americas and Australasia, at least until they were reduced to subservience and forced off any territory the invaders hungered for. And, Mr. Spock notwithstanding, humans would not be able to reproduce with them, as even if our kind encountered Martians or other unearthly species that looked just like modern Homo sapiens, genetically we would still have less in common with them than we do with starfish or oak trees.

Or suppose we travelled to Gliese 581 c and found life equivalent to that of Earth's 100 million years ago, including a massive array of species but not one capable of even a semblance of intellectual discourse. Would humans be justified in viewing that planet as a potential paradise going to waste and changing its landscape, to the detriment of its native life, to bet-

ter suit ourselves, as we have done to much of our own world? Would we even exist if space invaders had invaded Earth during the age of the dinosaurs and colonized it for their own benefit?

Perhaps intelligent beings from the outer limits have visited our lonely planet but reached the moral conclusion that it is better to observe than to interfere, not counting the practical jokers who

all have been stymied in efforts to locate or communicate with one another. The difficulty of travel between solar systems may be a saving grace.

The biggest current danger to the long-term survival of our species is our own staggering success at changing our world for the benefit of our short term-desires. Perhaps, in centuries to come, our descendents will colonize planets



“Greetings! We’re from Earth and we need to take over your planet. Ours is just a mess.”

get their kicks from beaming up isolated hicks to perform anal probes on before releasing them to sell their stories to the News of the World. Or perhaps there are many civilizations like ours scattered throughout the universe but

we can't even see now, but will they be able to curb humankind's voracious, destructive appetites? Despite our best technological efforts to boldly go forth seeking strange new life on distant worlds, we may well have already breached our true final frontier right here on Earth. Certainly, such efforts should be continued, but I would not put faith in them as our ultimately destiny. If we are to have any long-term destiny at all, we must put our intellect into halting the destructive impact our activities are having on the other life on our planet lest we render it uninhabitable eons before our sun begins its death throes.



If God is what people say there can be no one in the universe so unhappy as He; for He sees unceasingly myriads of His creatures suffering unspeakable miseries—and besides this foresees how they are going to suffer during the remainder of their lives. One might as well say, “As unhappy as God.”

—Mark Twain, Notebook #24, April - Aug. 1885



Freethinkers Have Opened Doors in Washington

Hugo Borresen

The Secular Coalition for America (SCA) is having a small growing pain. It represents nonbelievers to Washington, mostly directly to Congress. Director Lori Lipman Brown resigned after three busy years of building it. She enjoyed working on policy issues but, "There are people who want to focus more on explaining their conclusion about whether there is a deity than making the country feel comfortable and safe for people like themselves." Its President, Herb Silverman, said the organization "has gone beyond what we even thought it could be," but "the managing wasn't going as efficiently as we wanted."

The SCA was formed in 2002 with its present members: American Humanist Association, ("being good without God since 1941"); Atheist Alliance International ("a positive voice for atheism"); Internet Infidels ("a drop of reason in a pool of confusion"); the Secular Student Alliance ("Mobilizing Students for a New Enlightenment"). Later joiners are the Freedom from Religion Foundation and the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers. Woody Kaplan chairs the SCA Advisory Board.

Members have met with half the U.S. Senate, including Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and Arlen Specter (R-PA). The only acknowledged nonbeliever now is Pete Stark (D-CA), but probably twenty others are skeptics who have not identi-

fied themselves as such. SCA is intensely concerned with civil rights and joined the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, which includes the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Jewish B'nai B'rith International, and National Council of Catholic Women.

When Kay Hagan ran against Elizabeth Dole for senator from North Carolina, Dole said her opponent "took Godless money." Hagan replied she is a Christian, but nonbelievers would rather she replied with something like, "Godless money is as good as any

Exit polls show the religiously unaffiliated are 12% in 2008, and those with no religious preferences are now 16%.

money." Barack Obama has indicated he was not raised in a religious household and still learned high ethical standards, and his Muslim-born father became an atheist. So maybe his reaching out to religious organizations is not intense. He named non-believing Jonathan D. Moreno head of the Council on Bioethics. Moneyed Louis Appignani has created a think tank Humanist Center for Bioethics at the United Nations.

Exit polls show the religiously unaffiliated were 12% in 2008, and those with no religious preferences are now 16%. These are about equal to the Protestants in the population, who probably comprise many of the deserters. The age group 18 to 29, representing a quarter of all adults, has no reli-

gious affiliation at all. Brown University in Providence, RI, has no free-thought society because so many there are already freethinkers.



Financial support for donors in freethinking groups is high in the population in California and also conservative Arizona and Virginia. But problems remain. A 2003 survey got these responses: "I would disapprove if my child wanted to marry a member of this group: 48% said atheist, 34% Muslim, 27% African-American, 19% Asian-American, 19% Hispanic, and 12% Jewish.

Twenty-one percent of the military have no religious preference. The services have been forced to stop heavy handed proselytizing. A recent magazine article related the problem of a cadet at the Air Force Academy being harassed because he was Jewish: snide remarks, anonymous hostile notes, discrimination. Complaints produced no changes, so his father contacted a high ranking officer in the Pentagon and explained that the *New York Times* would soon have an article on the front page describing the abuses. The hostility was stopped.

SCA will get increasing support and recognition throughout the nation. We freethinkers just have to keep pushing.

(Source: Article, "Rise of the Godless" by Paul Starobin, in the *National Journal*, 3/7/09.)



American Atheists 35th National Convention

Earl Coggins

The 2009 American Atheists National Convention was held April 9th through 12th at the Emory Conference Center Hotel in Atlanta, GA. It was well attended, with standing room only on Saturday, which just happened to be the day Richard Dawkins was speaking.

There were lots of activities for everyone, with vendors lining the inside hall around the conference room, hawking merchandise ranging from bumper stickers and T-shirts to books and DVDs. There were freethought and humanist organizations from around the country ready to sign up new members, and if that wasn't enough, a huge book and product room was set up by American Atheists.

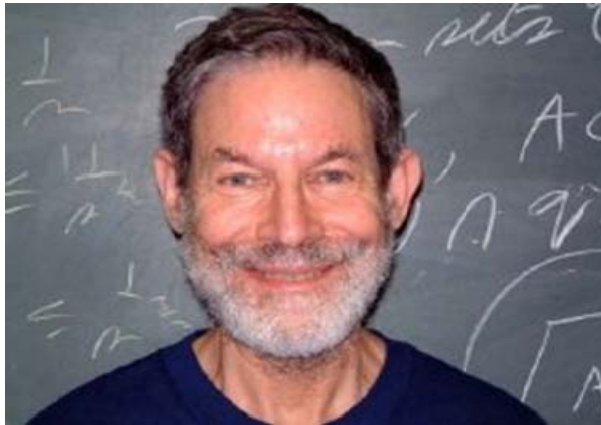
The conference had a good lineup of speakers. They included (in order of appearance) Michele Goldberg, *The Means of Reproduction: Sex, Power and the Future of the World*; Mike Malloy, *Atheist Behind the Mike*; John Lombard, *Lessons From China*; Herb Silverman, *Us vs. Them: But Who is Us and Who is Them*; Dr. J. Anderson Thompson, Jr., *Why Do We Believe in God(s): The Evolved Psychology of Supernatural Beliefs*; Dr. Richard Dawkins, *The Most Famous Atheist in the World*; Nate Phelps, *The Uncomfortable*

Grayness of Life; James Morrow, *Contrarian Visions: My Career as God's Least Favorite Novelist*.

The speakers that I saw (I missed Michele Goldberg) were an eclectic group. Mike Malloy, a radio personality, likes using the airwaves to either mock or degrade religion. John Lombard, having spent a lot of time in China, basically said that citizens in an atheistic country cannot be deprived of religion and

but did spend a few minutes on the need for atheists to come out of the closet and get organized in their efforts to promote secularism. He was great, and I am glad I got to see him.

The real highlight for me was Herb Silverman. He stole the show. Founder of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry in Charleston, South Carolina, and now President of the Secular Coalition for America,



Herb Silverman

he came on stage and asked everyone if they were proud to be atheists. The crowd thunderously roared "Yes!" He then sheepishly moaned "Well I'm not." His talk, *Us vs. Them: But Who is Us and Who is Them*, raised a lot of legitimate issues—things like working with progressive religious organizations who support secular governments and equal rights for nonreligious people. He also discussed the need for freethought and humanist groups to bury the hatchet and stop the infighting and competition among themselves that has been keeping the freethought movement a stagnant, non-cohesive group unable to effect real change in America, despite their large numbers—45 million and still counting. His presentation had no bells or fancy PowerPoint whistles, but it was invigorating and drew a standing ovation. I hope everyone was paying attention. He gave the best message of the entire event.

will find a way to be religious. Dr. J. Anderson Thompson, concurred, giving a great PowerPoint presentation on why and how humans are biologically predisposed in high numbers to do just that—be religious.

Nate Phelps spoke about his life growing up with a fundamentalist Christian minister. No surprise to his story—his life was miserable. James Morrow discussed his career as an author who writes blasphemous novels. Richard Dawkins, the keynote speaker and highlight of the event, spoke mainly about being misquoted in the media,

he came on stage and asked everyone if they were proud to be atheists. The crowd thunderously roared "Yes!" He then sheepishly moaned "Well I'm not." His talk, *Us vs. Them: But Who is Us and Who is Them*, raised a lot of legitimate issues—things like working with progressive religious organizations who support secular governments and equal rights for nonreligious people. He also discussed the need for freethought and humanist groups to bury the hatchet and stop the infighting and competition among themselves that has been keeping the freethought movement a stagnant, non-cohesive group unable to effect real change in America, despite their large numbers—45 million and still counting. His presentation had no bells or fancy PowerPoint whistles, but it was invigorating and drew a standing ovation. I hope everyone was paying attention. He gave the best message of the entire event.



Top Ten Signs that You Might Be a Religious Fanatic



The following is taken from *This Is True* (<http://www.thisistrue.com>), a webpage featuring bizarre-but-true news items from the world's press.

10. You vigorously deny the existence of thousands of gods claimed by other religions, but feel outraged when someone denies the existence of yours.
9. You feel insulted and “dehumanized” when scientists say that people evolved from other life forms, but you have no problem with the Biblical claim that humans were created from dirt.
8. You laugh at polytheists, but you have no problem believing in a Triune God.
7. Your face turns purple when you hear of the “atrocities” attributed to Allah, but you don't even flinch when hearing about how God/Jehovah slaughtered all the male first-born babies of Egypt in “Exodus” and ordered the elimination of entire ethnic groups in “Joshua”—including women, children, and trees.
6. You laugh at Hindu beliefs that deify humans and Greek claims about gods consorting with women, but you have no problem believing that the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary, who then gave birth to a man-god who got killed, came back to life and then ascended into the sky.
5. You are willing to spend your life looking for little loopholes in the scientifically established age of the Earth (4.55 billion years), but you find nothing wrong with believing dates recorded by Bronze Age tribesmen sitting in their tents and guessing that Earth is about a couple of generations old.
4. You believe that the entire population of this planet with the exception of those who share your beliefs—though excluding those in all rival sects—will spend Eternity in an infinite Hell of Suffering, and yet you consider your religion the most “tolerant” and “loving.”
3. While modern science, history, geology, biology, and physics have failed to convince you otherwise, some idiot rolling around on the floor “speaking in tongues” may be all the evidence you need to “prove” your choice of religions to be the correct one.
2. You define 0.01% as a “high success rate” when it comes to answered prayers, and consider that to be evidence that prayer works. And you think that the remaining 99.99% failure was simply the will of God.
1. You actually know a lot less than many atheists and agnostics do about the Bible, Christianity, and church history—but you still call yourself a Christian.



It's Only a Story

Paul Heck

The Bible was written to inspire a new religion. It is kindergarten cosmology embraced in the western culture over two thousand years. In his metaphysical deficiencies, western man allows his own ego to affect his perceptions of everything, including a "creator." Defending the idea of his anthropomorphic "creation," he proves that he is incapable of abstract thought!

The writers of the Bible did not even know that the earth was round. Think about that! These early Christians claimed

the pagan fables and those of Middle Eastern Jews as their own, as the basis of their new religion.



The Babylonian account of Adam and Eve, the story of Moses (which was fashioned after Syrian Mises), and hundreds of other Bible stories were de-

rived from Egyptian, Indian, and other scriptures.

Today, still millions of people believe these accounts, written by ignorant, uneducated preachers, to be true. Rather than read and research these accounts, the masses accept and defend them against scrutiny.

It amuses and amazes me when Americans observe the burka worn by Afghan women to be an anachronistic symbol of enslavement while they embrace the mental bondage of their religious beliefs—and they don't see the parallel.



Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners for Doubters

Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. Sign-up sheets will be at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details on how this works, see **page 7 of the August 2008 *FreeThinker*** (available on website) or ask a greeter at the back table.

Secular Sunday Morning in the Park (or Atheist Sunday Morning)

Freethinkers... let's get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation **every 4th Sunday of the month** (unless inclement weather prevails) at 10 a.m. until ? at the pavilion at Losco Park, 10851 Hood Rd., S., Jacksonville 32257, between Shad and Losco Roads. Need directions? Call Beth Perry at 733-5489 or Google the address to get a map and directions. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack, coffee perhaps, and **a chair**. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

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 a member is in order, or if a sympathy card, flowers, or some form of support is needed, please contact Membership Committee chair **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188, or e-mail her at judithhankins06@comcast.net. If you prefer, leave a notation on the sign-in sheet at the back table at one of our monthly meetings.

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 550591
Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
(904) 288-6291
<http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

Statement of Purpose

The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc. is an educational, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization dedicated to supporting nonreligious persons in the Northeast Florida area and promoting a nontheistic approach to everyday life.

Meetings

The FCFS meets the THIRD Monday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, upstairs in the sanctuary, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, Florida 32211, (904) 725-8133. Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

Committees and Chairs

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Welcome Judy Hankins 724-8188
JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

Long-Range Planning Curtis Wolf 573-3847
CWolf@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

May Social

Where: OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, near the Avenues Mall.

When: **Tuesday May 26, 2009** at 6:00 p.m. Proceed directly to our room.
Drinks at 6:00. Dinner at 7:00. (Order from the menu.)

RSVP: CarrieRen@att.net (or 268-8826) by **Tues. a.m.**, if you plan to go!

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2009 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? Comments? _____			

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) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$45/yr.) | | |

Do you object to your name appearing on our membership list, distributed to other members? Yes No

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

- General member Committee member Officer Financial supporter

- Annual dues cover the period of **January 1 through December 31**.
- The initial dues for new members joining in **July through September** are half the regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the current calendar year.
- The initial dues for new members joining in **October through December** are the full, regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the following calendar year.

***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.

May 2009 Calendar Events

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Book Group	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 Board Meeting	11	12	13	14	15 Movie Religulous	16
17	18 Monthly Meeting	19	20	21	22	23 Article Deadline
24 Secular Sunday	25	26 Olive Garden	27	28	29	30
31						

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

In the Adobe version, the links are **LIVE!** One click takes you there. If the two-line links do not work, copy and paste into your browser window.

See **RELIGULOUS** - Friday, May 15

Presented jointly by the Jacksonville Atheist Meetup Group
and the First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

- WHAT:** A one-time showing of Bill Maher's comedy/documentary **RELIGULOUS**.
- WHEN:** Friday, May 15, 2009, at 7:00 p.m..
- WHERE:** Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, FL 32211, downstairs in the **Social Hall** (use lower level parking lot).
Link to map & directions: <http://www.uujax.org/where/Directions.html>
- BRING:** **A snack or munchies to share and your own beverage (wine is allowed).** We'll provide ice and soft drinks.
- PRICE:** No admission will be charged, but donations to help defray royalty fee and room rental expense will be gratefully accepted.
- RSVP:** **Please let us know if you plan to attend!** Space is limited, but based on your response to our opinion poll, there will be enough room. Please contact Carrie at carrieren@att.net or call 904-268-8826 **AS SOON AS YOU CAN** if you plan to attend.