

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 Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

October 2009

Volume 7, Issue 10

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"Creationists make it sound like a 'theory' is something you dreamt up after being drunk all night."

—Isaac Asimov

Earl Coggins

Last month I spoke about a few controversial labels. Who would think that the definitions of two words so closely aligned with freethought—atheism and agnosticism—would be so misunderstood? I thought I was clearing up what I perceived as turbid waters. Well, the letters and comments I received indicated that my analysis of the definitions didn't

seem to help everyone. There were still some confused readers asking questions. The Freethought waters, it appears, are still as murky as the Suwannee River.

"Freethinkers come to conclusions independent of authority. How beautiful is that? Don't tread on me comes to mind. Freethought is all about open inquiry and the subjugation of taboos."

After hearing from a few readers of last month's newsletter, I decided it was time for a

vocabulary lesson. I came up with quite a laundry list of terms: Religion, skeptic, freethinker, agnostic, deist, atheist, nontheist, secularist, naturalist; materialist, rationalist, and last but certainly not least, humanist.

I thought it appropriate to define religion first, since one of the

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October 2009 Meeting

Gary A. Stilwell, Ph.D., Secular Humanist

Author of *Christianity: 5000 Years of History and Development* and *Where Was God: Evil, Theodicy, and Modern Science*

"What Was Jesus' Good News?"

Monday, October 19, 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

What: Books/magazines planned for discussion.

- October 4, 2009 - *Christianity: 5,000 Years of History and Development*, by Gary A. Stilwell
- November 1, 2009 - *When Atheism Becomes Religion*, by Chris Hodges

Books may be found in the library, may be purchased from local book stores, or purchased online. The First Coast Freethought Society will receive a small remuneration from your purchase (at no additional cost to you) if you first go to <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/> and then click the link to Amazon.com for your purchase.

Hedges is clear from the outset: There is nothing inherently moral about being either a believer or a nonbeliever. He goes a step further by accusing atheists of being as intolerant, chauvinistic, bigoted, anti-intellectual, and self-righteous as their archrivals, religious fundamentalists; in other words, as being secular versions of the religious Right. Like best-selling atheists Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and Daniel Dennett, Hedges is disgusted with the Christian Right, going so far as to call it the most frightening mass movement in American history. Even more disturbing for Hedges, however, is the notion which many atheists and liberal churchgoers share that, as a species, humanity can progress morally. There is nothing in human nature or human history to support the idea, Hedges maintains, nor that the flaws of human nature will ever be overcome. He discusses the dark sides of the Enlightenment, Darwinism, consumer culture, the justifications for America's wars (including in Vietnam and now Iraq), and obsession with celebrity, among other equally hot topics. His purpose in this small, thought-provoking book is, he says, to help Americans, in particular, accept the limitations of being human and, ultimately, face reality. —June Sawyers, Booklist

For more info, contact Jewell Kross at JKross@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-996-1553.

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 for the

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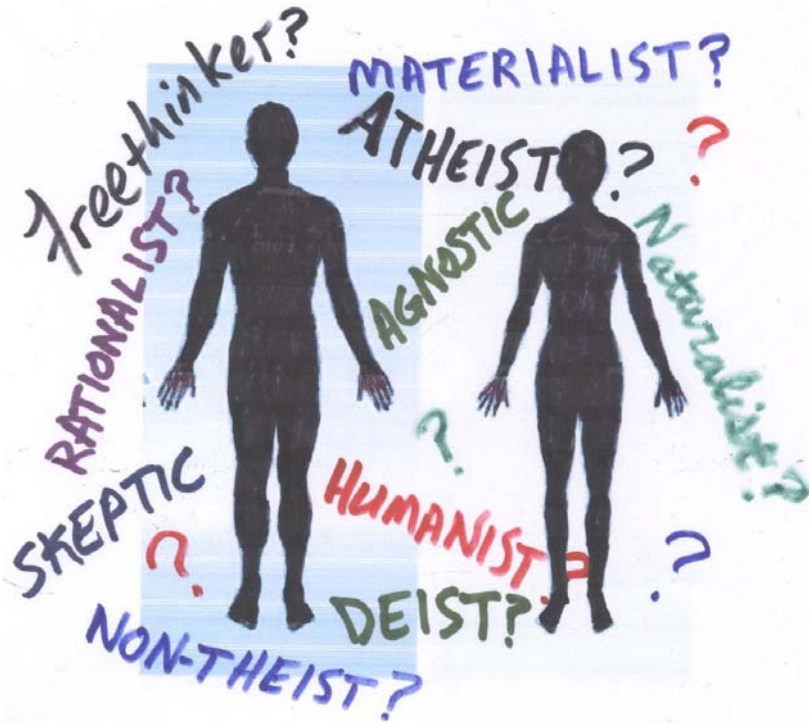
following month's issue. Submit contributions to the newsletter by e-mail to Hugo (see above), or by U.S. mail to Hugo Borresen, 8831 Taurus Circle South, Jacksonville, FL 32222.

(October 2009 President's Message
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original reasons for forming the First Coast Freethought Society was to create a place where people having problems with religion could gather and discuss them. Turns out, defining religion isn't exactly rocket science. I've personally always thought religion to be a rendering process where spirituality is pulled apart, beaten up, and melted down until it becomes a commodity—which essentially turns religion into a business selling god and theology as merchandise. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines religion as, "belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe." Is everything clear now?

There are those who doubt what religion or anyone else (for that matter) claims as holy, sacred, or above all else, the truth. They call themselves skeptics. Skepticism is a core value of the First Coast Freethought Society's motto, *To Question Is the Answer*. Skeptics are modern-day dissidents. They challenge the status quo, doubt anything, and question the most miniscule point of view. An essential component of any skeptic's consciousness is an insistence that

any truth claims, theistic or atheistic, natural or supernatural, must be tested by reason, logic, and scientific investigation. Skepticism is credited by many scholars as the prime mover of human progress.



Closely related to, if not synonymous with, skepticism is the freethinker—the moniker I chose for the First Coast Freethought Society because of its inclusiveness with all other labels. Freethinkers come to conclusions independent of authority. How beautiful is that? *Don't tread on me* comes to mind. Freethought is all about open inquiry and the subjugation of taboos. It embraces science and the scientific method, social justice, nature and a human's place in it, reason and logic, a humanistic emphasis on life, and the need for secular governments.

Agnosticism is a great term for freethinkers if we could get consensus on its meaning. I've tried. Agnostics are those individuals who, when faced with a subject replete with inadequate data, simply throw up their hands, walk away, and say "...we cannot know. We are without knowledge."

Deism could almost be a subset of agnosticism because even though most deists regard god as transcendent and the guiding force behind life's apparent complexity, many also agree that god is unknowable.

Atheism is to me a simple term. The negative prefix *a* meaning without combined

with the Greek *theos* meaning god. I interpret the word to mean without god, or without theism. Modern usage equates the word with a belief that god does not exist, a definition that for me lacks a comprehensive representation.

Nontheism is atheism disguised as another word. It is for people who have a problem with the word atheism—a concept that will most likely be forever stigmatized and never understood for what it truly is: a benign utterance.

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My Observations Concerning Poverty and Capitalism

Curtis Wolf

Michael Fitzgerald's September 2009 *FreeThinker* article, "Poverty is a Capital Crime in the U.S.," reflects many of the fallacies of the Left that center around the supposed evils of capitalism. The Left contends that many of the societal evils could be eliminated by government intervention into the free market to correct the distribution of income and wealth that is so obviously unfair to the liberal who is determined to second-guess the many decentralized decisions made by consumers and producers in the marketplace. As I have lamented multiple times in the past in this newsletter, this liberal bias has permeated present day humanism and limits the options that humanists are willing to consider to improve the human condition.

Let's begin with the statistic that 18,000 Americans per year die for lack of health care. This statistic is based on a 1993 study by Peter Franks et al. who concluded that after controlling for noninsurance factors, the uninsured are 25 percent more likely to die than the privately insured. The first problem with quoting this study today is that it is based upon 20-year-old data that may not reflect the reality of today's

uninsured. Also, a study by the Employment Policy Institute (EPI) (www.epionline.org/studies/oneill_06-2009.pdf) argues that the Franks study has a large amount of uncertainty based on the large age range of the sample and the resulting wide range of mortality rates, the inclusion of individuals in the age range of 65-75 who were not on Medicare, but not those in this age range who were on Medicare, and other biases. The EPI study using a more homogeneous sample found that the percentage difference in mortality between the privately insured and the involuntarily uninsured is much less dramatic at 3 percent. So continues the saga of dueling studies!

"While a gene that loses out in the natural selection battle with a mutated challenger is powerless to change its fate, the individual can do much to improve his economic status through education and hard work."

With that said, let me make a couple of observations about poverty in America. First, poverty in America has been dramatically reduced in this country not due to social programs but due to economic growth. We are so used to this country's material affluence that it is easy to believe this is the way it has always been. But that is not true. The fact is that the human race has languished in third world

poverty for the vast majority of its existence until very recently. The Industrial Revolution that began in the 18th century has brought enormous improvements in our daily existence especially in the post World War II era. This includes the doubling of life expectancy in the United States over the past 200 years, and as much as liberals do not like to hear this, none of this would have happened without free enterprise.

Second, there is too much emphasis by liberals on income equality in this country. Income inequality is a consequence of the fact that different people make different contributions to the availability of goods and services in our economy and therefore are rewarded differently for their contributions. Employee A rises up the corporate ranks faster than employee B due to his higher productivity and acquirement of skill sets that are more vital to the success of the corporation. The same could be said for the difference in income between a medical doctor and a WalMart store clerk which is determined by the fact that a doctor's skill set is much harder to acquire than the skill set of the store clerk, i.e. pretty much anyone



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can become a store clerk but not everyone can become a doctor!

This points the way to the best means of getting out of poverty. Improve your skill set! Fitzgerald mentions Social Darwinism in his article. But the main fallacy of Social Darwinism is its problematic attempt to apply the mechanisms of biological evolution to our understanding of social and economic stratification. While a gene that loses out in the natural selection battle with a mutated challenger is powerless to change its fate, the individual can do much to improve his economic status through education and hard work. Your genetic inheritance is less important than your cultural values in determining your financial future, and your values

are a lot easier to change than your genes.

The reason that we have a poor underclass in this country is largely because this class has not bought into the cultural values that lead to success in our knowledge-based economy that rewards people who are better educated and better able to analyze information. The path to middle class life is no longer centered around manufacturing jobs that you could start right out of high school. This is not to say that America's manufacturing base is declining, which it is not, but like mechanized agriculture, its productivity has increased so dramatically over the years that it needs fewer workers to manufacture its products (<http://www.cbo.gov/doc.cfm?index=5078&type=0>). This frees

up workers to meet the ever increasing demand for services, but contrary to popular belief, "since the early 1990s, two-thirds of the net new jobs added to our economy have been in service sectors—such as education, health care, and business, financial and professional services—where average wages are higher than manufacturing" (http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=10512). That means that these jobs require more education and the ability to think creatively, and if the poor do not want to be left further behind in this economy, they need to put more emphasis on cultural values that will help them succeed in this new reality.



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Secularism is concerned with nonreligious environments and therefore closely aligned with the separation of state and church. A secularist would probably be less inclined to belong to a religious institution or order, although there are many religious people who advocate secularism in government. Religious skepticism seems to be at the heart of secularism.

Naturalism is closely aligned with science and the scientific method. Naturalists are very humanistic and therefore define humanity as a product of nature. Most naturalists either reject or are uncomfortable with the idea

of a body having a soul, and therefore have no belief in an afterlife.

Materialism is closely related to naturalism because its core principle is the belief that physical matter is the only reality. Materialists believe that processes in the universe, from human feelings and thoughts to celestial movement, can all be explained by physical laws.

Rationalists contend that reason and logic are our only tools to access knowledge. Rationalism contends that our beliefs, ethics, morality, and thinking should all be firmly grounded in common sense. It's a safe bet Thomas Paine consid-

ered himself a rationalist.

Humanism is centered, of course, on humanity and therefore concerned with the well-being of all humans, not just one particular creed, club, race, or religion. Humanism focuses on using human intellect and ability to solve the many challenges humanity faces, as opposed to seeking supernatural intervention.

It doesn't surprise me that our labels can sometimes be confusing. After all, they were invented as rebuttals to theological language, where most concepts are confusing, indefinable or nonsensical.



Witch Mania

Fred W. Hill

What is a witch? Oh, yes, that sexy blonde housewife who could do all her housework in a flash just by wiggling her nose. No, no, witches are practitioners of ancient pagan (or maybe new age) religions, who love nature and use magic only for healing. Ahem, actually witches were consort of demons who cast evil spells to wreak havoc on the lives of good Christians!

In these and many other guises, witches have been part of human culture since the belief that certain people could bend nature to their will through supernatural means took hold in popular imagination many millennia ago. In Homer's *Odyssey*, circa 800 BCE, the witch Circe turns Odysseus' crew into pigs. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, 1607, was considered cursed even to recent years because the Bard reputedly put real spells in the mouths of his stage witches thus earning the ire of genuine necromancers. Witches were among the most common characters in the various fairy tales the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm compiled in the early 1800s. In our modern, technological age, witches have leading roles in popular movies and TV shows. To most of us, witches are mere figures of fantasy but for most of human history, they were believed to be very real and until relatively recently, a great many

people who were accused of being witches suffered horrendously for that superstition.

Written laws regarding witchcraft date back nearly 4,000 years, to the Code of Hammurabi which prescribed the method for settling disputes where one man has cast a spell on another, requiring the latter be plunged into the "holy river." If he drowned, the former could take his property. If he survived, however, the person who cast the spell would be put to death and lose his property to his purported victim.

"Superstition was obviously not all that was running rampant — so were greed, sexism and above all opportunism to take advantage of others' ignorance and fear for one's own benefit while claiming utmost piety, all with the blessing and support of church and state."

Variations of this trial by water to determine guilt in the use of witchcraft would stay afloat for thousands of years, until as recently as 1706 in North America where Grace Sherwood of Pungo, Virginia, accused of bewitching a neighbor's crops, was ordered to be ducked into a river. Drowning would have verified her innocence, but as the water "rejected" her, she was found guilty and sentenced to seven years in prison. A lenient punishment compared to what was meted out only a few years previously in Salem and other communities in Massachusetts where over 150 colonists accused of witchcraft were imprisoned. Based on "spectral evidence" con-

sisting of dreams and visions, 14 women and 5 men were found guilty and hanged, while another man who refused to enter a plea was crushed to death by stones in an attempt to get him to confess.



These events occurred during the final decades of a witch mania that haunted Europe and its far-flung colonies for over three centuries. Fear escalated as re-

curring plagues and religious and imperial wars ravaged the continent. Blaming heretics and Jews was no longer enough; new scapegoats were needed. For most of the Mid-

dle Ages, the official doctrine of the Catholic Church, as exemplified by the *Canon Episcopi* of 906, was that belief in witchcraft was a heretical holdover from ancient pagan beliefs. "Both popular and learned traditions of sorcery were more or less accepted alongside Christian practice,"¹ however, and stories about the evil powers and practices of witches, such as nocturnal flights on broomsticks, grew more widespread during the late 13th century, and the church took to describing them as "engaged in anti-human practices, including infanticide, incest, cannibalism, bestiality, and orgiastic sex"²

By 1320, Pope John XXII authorized the Inquisition to prose-

cute sorcery, and in 1484, Pope Innocent VIII issued a bull authorizing Inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger to write and publish the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer Against Witches) to specifically refute arguments that witchcraft does not exist and instruct local authorities on how to find and convict witches. Of course, now that it was heresy to deny the existence of witches, it became relatively easy to find them almost anywhere—many were elderly, socially isolated women who were blamed for nearly anything that went wrong in a community, whether it was crops failing, rivers flooding, farm animals dying, diseases spreading, or even beer going bad. Younger, more attractive women were accused of witchcraft simply for arousing sexual desire in Inquisitors who often repeatedly raped their victims before having them burned alive. “Wise women” who were adept in the use of healing herbs were often singled out for their “arcane” knowledge, particularly those who acted as mid-wives and attempted to ease the pain of childbirth, contravening religious doctrine that such pain was ordained by God as the price all women had to pay for the “original sin” committed by Eve. Even prominent, wealthy members of communities were accused of sorcery, often in ploys by corrupt church officials to obtain their property which was divided by the church and state while the family was charged for all expense from the per diem for the

witch hunters to the wood and pitch used to burn the victim.³ During the height of the mania, few of those formally accused of witchcraft escaped conviction. Church officials themselves rarely executed “witches,” leaving secular authorities to bloody their hands at the behest of the church, and threatening excommunication of any that declined to carry out the slaughters.



Witch burning, Library of Congress Print Collection, artist unknown

Witch hunting was hardly limited to Catholic Inquisitors, however, as the mania was most intense in those regions of northern Europe where Protestantism had taken or attempted to take hold. Catholics, after all, could still use church-approved rituals or holy materials, “good” magic, even if they didn’t think of it that way, to protect themselves from evil. Protestant leaders de-

nounced those particular superstitions, however, leaving their flocks feeling defenseless in a world where they were taught the devil and his evil forces were all around them, threatening to devour them or cajole them into eternal damnation.

Even where both religious and secular authorities declined to prosecute particular alleged witches, mobs would take matters into their own hands, exterminating the supposedly evil wretches, themselves. While on one level Europe was undergoing the Renaissance, reacquiring and expanding on the wisdom of their classical forebears, on another level Europe was going stark raving mad.

The number of victims of the witch mania may never be known with any accuracy, as detailed records were not always kept and many were destroyed. Estimates vary from a few thousand to at least a million alleged witches executed between 1450 and 1750, the vast majority of them women, perhaps up to 90 percent. Even when accused, men were more likely to be found innocent than were women, and during a time when even kings had to resort to founding a new branch of Christianity in order to get a divorce, many husbands found accusing their wives of being witches the easiest legal means to end an unhappy marriage. Superstition was obviously not all that was running rampant—so were

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“My Body Is Not My Own”

Hugo Borresen

Quiverfull is a conservative Christian movement to get couples to have lots of children. Lots and lots of children. Adult members avoid birth control, family planning, and sterilization, believing every conception, every birth is a blessing from God. Centered in the United States, it is sometimes called natalism and has several thousand followers. Among the Quiverfullists, the Duggar family has 18 children, Michael Farris has ten, Douglas Phillips eight, Charles Porvan ten, R. C. Sproul, Jr. seven, and Trehwella has 11. All evangelical Christians, naturally.

The movement is yet another conservative religious backlash against what they consider the horrors of modernity, such as birth control, abortion, and feminism, which they hold have eroded the moral authority of Christianity. For example, in 1930, the Lambeth Conference, a decennial assembly of Anglican bishops, approved of birth control “when there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence.” Of course, that declaration had no legal authority in the U.S., or even in the British Empire, but it at least opened the way for the erosion of laws such as the Comstock Act of 1873 that prohibited all forms of “obscenity,” including the distribution of information about birth control. Margaret Sanger

(1879-1966), whose Roman Catholic mother had 18 children, and who worked as a nurse among the poor in New York City during the 1910s, saw for herself how numerous unwanted pregnancies kept many women impoverished and in ill health, became a staunch advocate of birth control. However, it was not until the 1965 Supreme Court decision, *Griswold v. Connecticut*, that birth control was made legal for married couples in the U.S. Unmarried couples had to wait for the *Eisenstadt v. Baird* decision of 1972 to legally discuss or practice birth control anywhere in the country. Eventually, even most conservative Christians, Protestants, and Catholics, adopted the use of modern contraceptives themselves, whether their priests approved or not.

“The [Quiverfull] movement is yet another conservative religious backlash against what they consider the horrors of modernity, such as birth control, abortion, and feminism, which they hold have eroded the moral authority of Christianity.”

This didn’t sit well with evangelist and homeschooling advocate Mary Pride, who wrote *The Way Home: Beyond Feminism, Back to Reality* in 1985, pioneering the Quiverfull program. The Bible, she insisted, requires women to be subordinate to men and bear children. “The church’s sin which has caused us to become unsavory and incapable of uplifting the society around us,” Pride asserts, “is selfishness, lack of love, refusing to consider chil-

dren an unmitigated blessing. In a word, family planning.” She claims that feminism is a religion incompatible with Christianity, and deals with faith, pure and simple. Many other books followed as did their journal, *The Quiverfull Digest*.



Why this movement? First, it obeys God’s commands, such as be fruitful and multiply and whichever other commands Quiverfullists agree with. It prohibits contraception, abortion, sterilization, family planning, women’s careers, homosexuality, divorce, lesbianism, feminism, and child abuse, while spreading conservatism via politics, teaching creationism and better

Christian sensibilities, as they perceive them. Quiverfull is a missionary effort that reaches out to the world to combat declining birth rates in developed nations and spread a new (but very antiquated)

world view.

The Bible says, “Behold, children are a gift from God” who “opens and closes the womb.” They are an unqualified blessing. Believers think the more children, the more blessings, and couples must not reject God’s blessings. God commanded that sex be at least potentially fruitful, and all forms of sex that shy away from marital fruitfulness are perverted. God knows how

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many children every couple should have. The Devil deceives Christian couples into using birth control to subvert God.

Infertility is accepted as an "empty quiver." Praying may miraculously cause intervention. Adoption is approved. Some believers accept medical intervention to cause conception or improve health of believers. Quivers have many differences with these opinions so are not uniform.

God opens and closes the womb, case by case. So the couples must be open to fertility all the time regardless of the woman's ovulation, a primary belief. A couple may have a child every two years for maybe ten children, but aging, changing health, or other factors often intervene. Breast feeding reduces fertility in half of all cases but is not dependable as contraception. Reversing sterilization is supported by group funds, physician referrals, and other sources. Quiverfull families often homeschool and live in rural areas.

Critics abound. Children are only one form of blessings; tradeoffs can be made. People cannot go the fullest extent all the time. Marriage may not be a wise thing. Regulating family size may be very important. The Bible may need interpretation. Circumstances vary regarding condoms and birth control pills. The Catholic Church opposes birth control and abortion but discusses responsible parenthood, such as welfare of the children and their material and spiritual needs.

Also, the family group, society, and the Church must be considered. The parents must make the decisions and not impose on each other. It therefore permits natural family planning. But consideration must be given to health, economics, employment, poverty, and other elements which are much more important than in they are in Quiverfull.

Andrea Yates and her husband did not use birth control and accepted all children. She had a history of post-partum depression and was advised by her

drowned all five of her blessings from God in a bathtub. Eventually found not guilty by reason of insanity, she is now confined in a Texas mental health facility. Although the Yates were not members of the Quiverfull movement, they adhered to its ideas and were conservative Christians. Based on her testimony, Andrea Yates felt she wasn't good enough as either a mother or Christian and felt it was better to kill her children rather than risk them growing up to become failed Christians themselves and thus doomed to eternal damnation.



"Oooh! My lord and master, I feel another blessing about to arrive..."

"Good! That means God wants me to bless you again tonight. Meantime, you better get my supper ready before Bill O'Reilly comes on!"

psychiatrist not to have any more children. But her husband persuaded her to stop taking medication and conceive a fifth and last child. She home schooled her children, ages six months to seven years. And one fine day she

Freethinkers can add more comments. They ask if "spare the rod and spoil the child" from the Bible is a good guide. No benefit for each individual child is mentioned, just group benefit. Certainly there is no benefit for parents struggling to make ends meet to have far more children than they can adequately feed or care for. Perhaps the extra bodies will benefit warmongers eager to force their will on everyone. Hitler and Stalin, among many other totalitarian rulers, both religious and nonreligious but all absolute dogmatists, prohibited abortion because they needed human cannonfodder for their military adventures. In Quiverfull mythology, even Adolph and Josef were once unmitigated blessings from God which, if true, is more evidence that God has a sick sense of humor.

(Fred W. Hill contributed to this article)



(*Witch Mania*
Continued from page 7)

greed, sexism, and above all, opportunism to take advantage of others' ignorance and fear for one's own benefit while claiming utmost piety, all with the blessing and support of church and state. Eventually, however, more people found the witch hunters far more evil and frightening than the supposed witches. During the Salem witch trials, while the prominent minister Cotton Mather supported the use of spectral evidence, his own father, Reverend Increase Mather opposed it, stating, "It were better that Ten Suspected Witches should escape, than that one Innocent Person should be Condemned."⁴

Although too late for the victims of the American witch mania, Increase Mather's outlook came to prevail during the 18th century, although witchcraft remained a crime under English law until 1951, and mobs have harassed or murdered "witches" in Germany, France, and Mexico between 1976 and 1981.⁴

Belief in witchcraft faded away with increased knowledge about how the natural world actually works, including the true causes of bad weather and diseases, none of which involve casting spells. Too much superstition, cruelty, and hypocrisy remain—but notions of people engaging in orgies with devils are now the subjects of horror flicks rather than confessions brutally tortured out of suspects by

priests. That would have made for a truly ghastly reality show. Happy Halloween.

¹*Inquisition* (1984), by Edward Burman, p. 119

²*The Dark Side of Christian History* (1995), by Helen Ellerbe, p. 119 (quoting from Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon*, p. 49)

³*The Demon-Haunted World* (1995), by Carl Sagan, p. 120

⁴"*Crime vs. Cybercrime: Is the Law Adequate?*", (May 6, 2009), by Susan Brenner http://www.circleid.com/posts/20050506_crime_vs_cybercrime_is_law_adequate/



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 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 **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188, or e-mail her at JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org, or leave a notation on a meeting sign-in sheet.

Proposed Bylaws Amendments to Increase Board Size

MEMBERSHIP VOTE REQUIRED

In order to garner new and increased leadership positions for the First Coast Freethought Society, the Board recommends increasing the number of At-Large Board Members from *one appointed position* to a total of *three elected positions*. With the number of Board Members totaling a minimum of seven (7), (eight with the past president), the Board recommends concomitantly increasing the quorum to four (4). To effect these changes, the following edits in these two bylaws articles need membership approval. Please vote by November first!

ARTICLE V: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Current

The Board of Directors shall be composed of the President, the Vice President, the Treasurer, the Secretary, one Board Member-at-Large recommended by the President and approved by the Board, and the Immediate Past-President. The Board shall manage the affairs of this organization. Three (3) voting Members of the Board shall constitute a quorum.

Proposed

The Board of Directors shall be composed of seven (7) elected positions: the President, the Vice President, the Treasurer, the Secretary, three (3) Members-at-Large, and the Immediate Past-President. The Board shall manage the affairs of this organization. Four (4) voting Members of the Board shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE IX: ELECTIONS

Current

The means of electing the officers will be to publish the slate and the ballot in the November newsletter. Voting will be by mail-in ballot post marked no later than December 1st. Write-in candidates are allowed on the ballot. The officers shall be elected by a majority of ballots received from members in good standing, and the results of the voting will be announced at the December public meeting.

Proposed

The means of electing the Board of Directors will be to publish the slate and the ballot in the November newsletter. Voting will be by mail-in ballot post marked no later than December 1st. Write-in candidates are allowed on the ballot. The Members of the Board shall be elected by a majority of ballots received from members in good standing, and the results of the voting will be announced at the December public meeting.

In accordance with the current Bylaws, this proposed amendment is being placed in the newsletter and *requires a membership vote*. **FCFS members with e-mail** are requested to *vote by e-mail*, replying to Carrie Renwick, e-mail secretary, carriren@att.net. Just say in your e-mail:

YES. I support the proposed amendments to increase the At-Large Board Members to three (3) and to increase a quorum to four (4).

NO. I do not support the proposed amendments to remove officer term limits.

FCFS members using U.S. Mail will find a **ballot** enclosed in the newsletter and are requested to *return the ballot in the enclosed envelope*.

Deadline: Please VOTE BY NOVEMBER 1, 2009!

Thank you, the First Coast Freethought Society Board



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

Program Carrie Renwick 268-8826
CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

Audit Roger Wenner 288-6291
RWenner@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

Editorial Hugo Borresen 779-6883
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Membership Judy Hankins 724-8188
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FCFS Officers

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Vice President Carrie Renwick 268-8826
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Treasurer Mark Renwick 268-8826
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At-Large Steve Peek 742-5390
S.Peek@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

Other FCFS Appointments

Parliamentarian Fred W. Hill 358-3610
F.Hill@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

E-mail Secretary Carrie Renwick 268-8826
CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

Finance Mark Renwick 268-8826
MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

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Website Mark Renwick 268-8826
MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

Welcome Judy Hankins 724-8188
JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

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

October Social

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

When: Tuesday October 27, 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!

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

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

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 interesting 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.

FCFS October 2009 Activities

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

FUTURE FCFS MEETINGS

- Mon., Nov 16, 2009 - **JEFF BRUMLEY**, T-U Staff Writer - "The History of Separation of Church and State on Florida's First Coast"
 - Mon., Dec. 21, 2009 - The Sixth Annual **HUMAN LIGHT CELEBRATION** - in the Social Hall
 - Sun., Jan. 10, 2010 - **ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING**
 - Mon., Jan. 18, 2010 - The 2010 **FCFS PRESIDENT** will help us ring in the New Year
 - Mon., Feb. 15, 2010 - **GORDON RAKITA, PH.D.**, expert in evolutionary theory and bioarcheology, will help us celebrate Darwin's Birthday!
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CALL FOR NOMINATIONS!!

Make a difference! Do something really worthwhile for this community. Work with wonderful people. If you are interested in running for a position on the 2010 First Coast Freethought Society Board, contact Nominating Committee Chair, Bobbie Nord, at bobbienord@gmail.com or call 904-396-9553.

