



April 2011

Volume 10, Issue 4

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*“Any idiot can believe in Jesus H. Christ. To truly understand all that confusion in the gospels takes a real contortionist scholar.”*

—Franz Bibfeldt  
German theologian

## President’s Message - April 2011

Earl Coggins

**W**hy do some people have a disdain for labels? I’ve been pondering the question since the first time I heard the view expressed. If you don’t like labels, what’s your alternative? If we eliminate them, we will eradicate all nouns and adjectives from the English language.

If we stop using labels, how do we communicate with each other?

How do I ask you to pass the butter if I am not allowed to label the rectangular-shaped, yellow, fatty, high-in-cholesterol, dairy product at the end of the table

labels?

The classic examples used to substantiate the



anti-label rhetoric go like this: “Oh, I don’t like using label X as my moniker because I am so much more than X” or, “I’m giving up on labels because I am frequently depicted as X and I am so much more than X.”

*“I am many things. All of us are a conglomeration of many things. I call myself a lifelong student because I feel I (we humans) should always be in pursuit of knowledge.”*

as butter? Aren’t the words rectangular, yellow, fatty, and dairy all

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### April 2011 Meeting

**Jay S. Huebner, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus and Visiting Research Professor, Physics Department, University of North Florida**

**“The Origin and Structure of the Universe”**

**Monday, April 18, 2011, 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:** Books a Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville

**What:** Books planned for discussion:

- May 1, 2011 - *The Cheating Culture*, by David Callahan
- June 5, 2011 - *Deadly Spin*, by Wendell Potter

Books may be found in the library, 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.freethoughtsociety.org/> and then click the link to Amazon.com for your purchase.

**F**ree cable television. Imaginary tax deductions. Do you take your chance to cheat? David Callahan thinks many of us would. Witness corporate scandals, doping athletes, plagiarizing journalists. Why all the cheating? Why now?

Callahan blames the dog-eat-dog economic climate of the past twenty years: An unfettered market and unprecedented economic inequality have corroded our values and threaten to corrupt the equal opportunity we cherish. Callahan's "Winning Class" has created a separate moral reality where it cheats without consequences, while the "Anxious Class" believes choosing not to cheat could cancel its only shot at success in a winner-take-all world.

Updated with a new afterword analyzing the latest on cheating from the Martha Stewart trial to the Tyco and Enron sentencings, *The Cheating Culture* takes us on a gripping tour of cheating in America and makes a powerful case for why it matters.

For more info, contact Herb Gerson at 904-363-6446, or [herbge@bellsouth.net](mailto:herbge@bellsouth.net)

### Ongoing FCFS Activities

**Dinners for Doubters:** Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. If a dinner is scheduled, sign-up sheets will be found at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details on how this works, see page 7 of the July 2008 *FreeThinker*, available on the website, or ask a greeter at the back table.

**Secular Sunday Morning in the Park:** 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 904-733-5489 or Google the address to get a map and directions. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack and a chair or two. Note, if it's too hot under the pavilion, we take our chairs to some trees with a nice breeze. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

**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 [info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org), or leave a notation on a meeting sign-in sheet.

*(President's Message -  
Continued from page 1)*

I empathize with anyone expressing these concerns. I feel their pain. I am often labeled incorrectly, and I find myself frequently frustrated at how finite any one label can be. I am much more than any one label can express.

I am many things. All of us are a conglomeration of many things. I call myself a lifelong student because I feel I (we humans) should always be in pursuit of knowledge. I am a lover of wisdom, which is the original definition of the word philosopher. I am a human being, born from a woman, but also a man, a son, a brother, an uncle, a cousin, a friend. I like calling myself a tree-hugging, dirt-worshipping, liberal, progressive life form of the hippie persuasion. I am also an artist and a musician. I am a reader. I love the written word as much as I love the spoken word. I am a speaker, a listener, a thinker. I am fond of calling myself a free-thinker. I am a humanist. I am a seeker of truth. I am open-minded. I am a skeptic. I am a rationalist. I am an agnostic. I am an advocate of Socratic dialogue. I am a free speech advocate. I am a first amendment junkie. I am an advocate of the scientific method as a tool for ascertaining truth in declarative statements. I am an example of someone attempting to live an examined life. I am also an atheist.

I am not the variety of atheist who expresses his or her atheism as a belief, expressed in the statement: "I believe there is

no god." I feel strongly such a statement is intellectually disingenuous. In order to adopt such a belief, I would have to have the necessary evidence to substantiate it. There is no such evidence. A lack of evidence might propel many atheists to believe there is no god, but one must bear in mind that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.



***Don't let a few labels  
scare you.***

Thomas Henry Huxley was trying to overcome more than just the binary distinction of theist or atheist—us or them. He was extremely displeased that the word atheism had evolved away from its original meaning, signifying a person who is without theism to its current usage which restricts the meaning to a narrower version: belief that there is no god, which is anything but a comprehensive definition of a nonreligious worldview. The meaning of the word

has also migrated into the realm of personality. If you inform someone of your atheism, you are often deemed an angry person and a religion basher.

We need labels. While in a coffee shop, I can ask for a hot drink with 2 shots of espresso mixed with steamed milk and extra foam, or I can ask for a cappuccino.

Take the label atheism. Is it as simple as most dictionaries state, that atheism is a belief—a belief that god does not exist? Atheism is many things, one of which is taboo. Steven Pinker, in his book *The Stuff of Thought*, tells us that taboo words activate brain areas associated with negative emotion. Even worse, taboo words are processed involuntarily, so people who have gotten a negative impression of a word are not likely to change their minds.

When someone calls me an atheist I wonder if their meaning is identical to my meaning. What is an atheist? How many people take the time to find out vs. going with the public's perception of atheism? Let's look at the word. Atheism is the negative prefix "a" meaning "without" combined with the word "theism" meaning "a belief in a god or gods," which yields a word that means "without theism," or more specifically, a word that means "without a belief in a god or gods." It's not a belief, it's not a hypothesis, it's actually the negation of a hypothesis. It doesn't say anything about me other than WHAT I AM NOT.

I need elbow room in the world of labels.



## Online Daters Trust In God

Sigrun Buckley

Online dating agencies have been around for over a decade now. It takes some ingenuity to convince potential customers that your company stands out against the competition and is the only choice for their quest. American entrepreneurs know no limits when it comes to money-making ideas. The same can be said for religious leaders, founders of churches in particular. Known for the megabucks they make from the mega crowds they attract, it's an obvious step in a lucrative direction: Exploit the idea of a helping god when you dabble in matchmaking. A winning ticket, a guarantee for success like a mint.

An online dating service follows similar principles as old fashioned matchmakers—like I used to be in Ireland. You choose potential candidates from any given pool of clients, i.e. paying customers, based on compatibility (or so one hopes, at least), age, height, characteristics, hobbies, location, love for pets or lack thereof, adversity to smoking or not. These are just the most minimal criteria for consideration. I'm not ashamed to admit that I made several matches totally ignor-

ing these basic guidelines of a matchmakers' handbook.

Forget all this and put your dreams of romance into God's hands. That'll do! according to a new TV commercial. To sign up with a service that exclusively deals with Christians of whatever flavor a love seeker may favor is a logical step on the super highway of cyberromance. Then comes the silver bullet: let God choose your match!



Having a postgraduate degree in divinity under my belt, this statement made me flinch and run to my PC. Praying was always supposed to help. If that's not enough, people went to a matchmaker to nudge fate along. The matchmaker (dating service) or their computer does the matching. Now God is directly involved.

See <http://www.Christianmingle.com>, "Find God's match for you." You can browse for free. Their questionnaire looks remarkably like mine used to: Height, eye color, build, smoker, drinker? Then they zoom in on your religion. How often do you go to church? What is the name of your church? Zip code? These are identical criteria for computer matching people. I stopped my research when they wanted my name. I guess a handle is allowed. Like with any other online dating service. I hope that will not confuse God when he looks through his database for the match he has in mind for you.

A devious ruse but I guess a slogan like this wouldn't work as well. "Let God find a match for you, but give us your money to put you in touch with God." Sadly, most of the people who fall for the typical religion scams will find this newest scam as manna from heaven. If your faith is pure, then why would you believe a computer and dating service were necessary? God would provide... simply through prayer. Skip the computer and service and go straight to the source. You've now got me on my soap-box.



## Camp Quest of the Smokey Mountains

Jonas Holdeman

**W**e would like to call the attention of our outdoors loving freethought families to Camp Quest of the Smoky Mountains (CQSM), one of 10 affiliated Camp Quests to be held this summer across North America. The Camp Quests were created for the children of atheists, agnostics, and all freethinkers and nontheists, as a place where children 8 to 17 can feel free to express their beliefs with others like themselves, while engaging in many traditional camp activities.

That said, no child is rejected based on their developing beliefs or the beliefs of their parents, so long as the parents recognize the Humanist principles on which

the camp is conducted. Campers are encouraged to think critically and be skeptical of unsupported claims, to think in natural rather than supernatural terms.

CQSM, held at Tremont in the Great Smoky Mountains



National Park (near Townsend, south of Knoxville), was started nine years ago as a project of the Rationalists of East Tennessee. Last summer we had 25 campers coming from 10 states, about equal numbers of girls and

boys, and below and above age 13, and counselors from 5 states. You can learn more by visiting our web site at <http://rationalists.org/cq/> or visit the CQ national web site at <http://campquest.org/> where links can be found to all of the camps.

The 2011 camp begins on Sunday, July 31 and ends on Saturday, August 6. We expect to have another exciting year with adventure, friendship, leadership, and community service. I

can be contacted by email at [CQSM@rationalists.org](mailto:CQSM@rationalists.org), or by telephone at (865) 896-9270.

—Jonas Holdeman  
CQSM Director



### April Social

**Where:** OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, near the Avenues Mall.  
**When:** Tuesday April 26, 2011 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](mailto:CarrieRen@att.net) (or 268-8826) by **Tues. a.m.**, if you plan to go!

## American Struggles Towards Religious Freedom, Part 1

Fred W. Hill

**D**uring the Presidential campaign of 2008, a Republican candidate, Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister and former governor of Arkansas, declared, "...what we need to do—is to amend the Constitution so it's in God's standards rather than try to change God's standards so it lines up with some contemporary view of how we treat each other and how we treat the family." (See Steve Benen, <http://www.thecarpetbaggerreport.com/archives/14244.html>, 1/15/09). More recently, a contender for next year's campaign, Tim Pawlenty, former governor of Minnesota, asserted, "The Constitution was designed to protect people of faith from government, not to protect government from people of faith." (see "Campaigning as All Things to All Republicans," Jeff Zeleny, *New York Times*, 3/13/11) Ever since Ronald Reagan won the support of religious conservatives which helped him beat Jimmy Carter (himself a self-proclaimed "born again Christian") in the 1980 election, such invectives by presidential aspirants against the separation of church and state have been routine. They are hardly new, however, having been a source of debate and conflict during the colonial period, influencing the men who would draft our federal Constitution which represented not the blessed work of imaginary saints

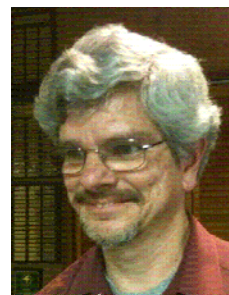
but the best compromise the conflicted delegates of the time could come up with.

Contrary to the bumper sticker axiom, "Know Jesus, know peace, no Jesus, no peace," Europeans had known about Jesus for quite some time and suffered nearly perpetual war in efforts to impose varying interpretations of Jesus' alleged will throughout the continent. Peace persisted in not co-existing with knowledge of Jesus, as the Europeans conquered the Americas, waging war on the natives as well as on each other, in the name of God, King, and treasure.

***"...Roger Williams was exiled from Massachusetts due to expressing such unorthodox beliefs as church and state should be separate..."***

During the late 1500s, Spanish Catholics slaughtered French Protestants in a region of north-west Florida that centuries later became part of our own Jacksonville. In the next century, various Christian sects from England founded a string of colonies along the North American eastern seaboard, many seeking to establish their own ideal Christian communities, and fining, banning or even executing anyone who persisted in expressing contrary religious thoughts. The Quakers, a pacifist sect that advocated equality of the sexes and opposed slavery and war, were outlawed by Anglicans in Virginia, as well as by Puritans in

Massachusetts, where in 1659 two Quakers, William Robinson and Marmaduke Steven-son, were hanged for the crime of practicing their religion in peace.



Overall, however, there was less sectarian violence in the North American colonies than in Europe. Historian Susan Juster notes this is primarily due to "the absence of traditional targets of such violence—cathedrals, religious art, shrines,

and, above all, significant urban concentrations of 'outsiders' like Catholics and Jews." ("What's 'Sacred' about Violence in Early America?" at [www.common-place.org](http://www.common-place.org), vol. 6, no. 1, October 2005). There was, to be sure, plenty of violence

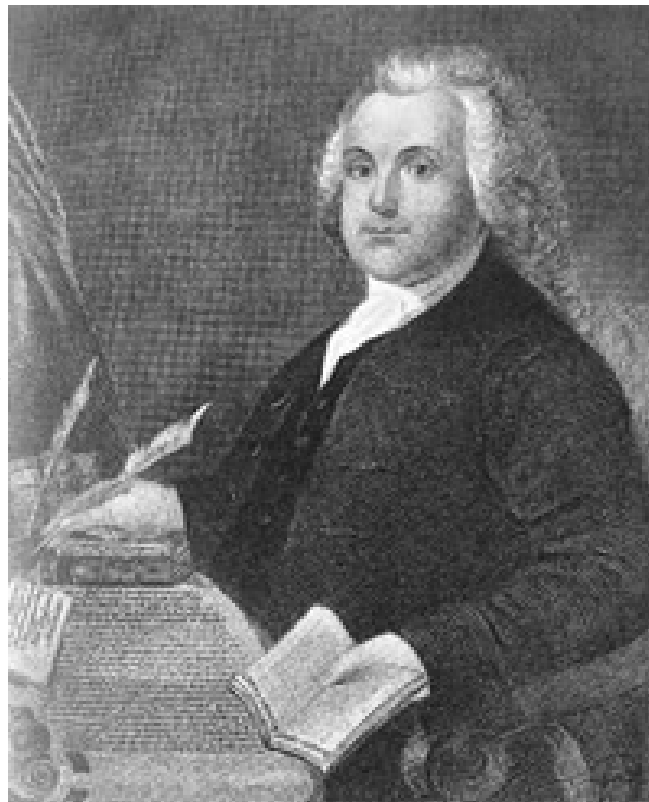
directed at the Native Americans, even those who had converted to Christianity, such as the "Praying Indians" who adopted the religion of their Anglo-American neighbors in Boston and remained neutral during the conflict between other New England tribes and colonists known as King Philip's War. But the Praying Indians were still forcibly interned on tiny, desolate Deer Island where hundreds died due to starvation and exposure. Racial fear and greed for land trumped shared religious belief, after all.

Several colonies were founded on principles of religious toleration. Maryland, for exam-

ple, was founded in 1634 as a haven for Catholics, an oft-persecuted sect among British Protestants. In 1649, the Maryland assembly issued a law mandating toleration for all Christians who professed belief in the Trinity of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost—a tenuous step towards true religious freedom, leaving Jews, Unitarians, atheists and anyone else who denied the divinity of Jesus, facing forfeiture of life and property for criminal thought. Moreover, the law was twice rescinded, and by 1718, Catholics themselves were barred from voting in their former haven. Meanwhile, in 1636, Roger Williams was exiled from Massachusetts due to expressing such unorthodox beliefs as church and state should be separate, people should be allowed to practice any religion they choose, and all people, even American Indians, should be treated fairly. Subsequently he founded Rhode Island as a place of religious freedom, putting his ideals into practice. Decades later, in 1681, William Penn founded Pennsylvania as a haven for his fellow Quakers and, in 1701, issued a “Charter of Privileges,” granting, *“That no Person or Persons, inhabiting in this Province or Territories, who shall confess and acknowledge One almighty God, the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the World; and profess him or themselves obliged to live quietly under the Civil Government, shall be in any Case mo-*

*lest or prejudiced, in his or their Person or Estate, because of his or their conscientious Persuasion or Practice, nor be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious Worship, Place or Ministry, contrary to his or their Mind, or to do or suffer any other Act or Thing, contrary to their religious Persuasion.”*

([http://constitution.org/bcp/penn\\_charpriv.htm](http://constitution.org/bcp/penn_charpriv.htm)) Not quite the



**Roger Williams (1603-1683), founder of Rhode Island and early advocate of the separation of church and state**

level of freedom of, and from, religion that freethinkers would want, but still a significant step forward.

Yet religious bigotry remained a prevalent feature of the British America before, during, and after the American War of Independence. In fact, a major complaint of the colonists

against Parliament shortly before the war was passage of the Quebec Act of 1774 which, among other provision, guaranteed that the predominantly Catholic inhabitants of the former French province forcibly acquired in 1763, could continue to practice their faith. As recounted by Steven Waldman in *Founding Faith* (Random House, 2008), the British Crown’s old

British American subjects were “appalled and terrified” by this act of benevolence bestowed upon the newer Franco-American subjects. Newspapers throughout the colonies railed against it. Alexander Hamilton fumed, “Does not your blood run cold to think that an English Parliament should pass an Act for the establishment of arbitrary power and Popery in such an extensive country?” Future first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court John Jay collaborated with Richard Henry Lee and William Livingston on the formal response of the Continental Congress, expressing “shock that Parliament would promote a religion that ‘disbursed impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder, and rebel-

lions through every part of the world” (Waldman, pp. 50-51). At least a few British commentators then and later opined that the subsequent rebellion was sparked not so much by anguish about “taxation without representation” as by, in the 1912 assessment of English historian

*(Continued on page 10)*

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 550591  
Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591  
904-419-8826  
<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.

For other activities besides monthly meetings, please see the website, brochure, or newsletter!

**FCFS 2011 Board Members**

<b>President</b>	Earl Coggins	521-5039
<b>Vice President</b>	Carrie Renwick	268-8826
<b>Secretary</b>	Patrice Bennett	352-7005
<b>Treasurer</b>	Stephen Peek	742-5390
<b>At-Large</b>	Fred Hill	358-3610
<b>At-Large</b>	Richard Keene	386-1121
<b>At Large</b>	Alex Mabee	864-6198

**Other Appointments**

<b>Parliamentarian</b>	Mark Renwick	616-2896
<b>E-mail Secretary</b>	Carrie Renwick	268-8826

**Committees and Chairs**

<b>Audit</b>	Roger Wenner	419-8826
<b>Editorial</b>	Fred Hill	358-3610
<b>Membership</b>	Judy Hankins	724-8188
<b>Finance</b>	Mark Renwick	616-2896
<b>Publicity</b>	Carrie Renwick	268-8826
<b>Website</b>	Mark Renwick	616-2896

All FCFS personnel may be reached via e-mail at [info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**First Coast  
FreeThinker**

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Non-members may receive the e-mail version indefinitely. Non-members may receive three hard-copy issues free, 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.

**Information for Contributors**

We welcome submissions. Articles for consideration should be submitted via e-mail to the e-mail address shown below. Contributors who cannot submit manuscripts electronically may send them to Fred

Hill, 1817 Egner St., Jacksonville, FL 32206. The deadline for time-sensitive material is the FOURTH SATURDAY of each month for the following month's issue.

We prefer articles no longer than 1,000 words. Longer articles will be evaluated in terms of whether their importance and degree of interest to our readers warrant publication.

All accepted manuscripts are subject to editorial modification. Our style guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Manuscript submissions cannot be returned. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for supplying complete references where applicable.

**E-mail for Submissions**  
[Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**ADVERTISING RATES: Eighth-page (business card size) \$25.00, quarter-page \$50.00, half-page \$75.00, and whole page \$100.**  
**To advertise, contact Patrice Bennett, 904-352-7005, or [info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)**



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 • (904) 419-8826

2011 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  
904-419-8826 • [CarrieRen@att.net](mailto:CarrieRen@att.net) • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>  
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

## Upcoming Freethought Events of Interest on the First Coast

Monday	April 18	FCFS Monthly Meeting - 6:30 p.m.
Saturday	April 23	FCFS Deadline to submit articles for May 2011 <i>FreeThinker</i>
Sunday	April 24	FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville - 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday	April 26	FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville - 6:00 p.m.
Sunday	May 1	FCFS Humanist Book Discussion Group, Jacksonville - 2:00 p.m.
Monday	May 9	JAM Meetup at European Street Café in San Marco - 6:30 p.m.
Monday	May 16	FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jax - 6:30 p.m.

First Coast Freethought Society (FCFS) • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>  
Jacksonville Atheist, Agnostic, Secular Meetup Group (JAM) • <http://www.jaxatheists.com/>  
Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason (NeFCoR) • <http://NorthEastFloridaCoR.org/>

**The FCFS is a proud member of the Humanists of Florida Association  
and the Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason**

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*(American Struggles, continued from page 7)*

and cardinal Francis Gasquet, “the bigoted rage of the American Puritan and Presbyterian ministers at the concession of full religious liberty and equality to Catholics of French Canada.” (Waldman, p. 51).

Granting Gasquet’s likely bias as an English Catholic, and that there were many reasons for the colonial revolt, nevertheless, religious mania, greed, and bigotry were as much involved as lofty aspirations for representative government and freedom from the perceived tyranny of a distant royal government. After all, another hated provision of the Quebec Act was its expansion of the province into what are now the north Midwestern states from Ohio to Minnesota,

then still largely inhabited by Native Americans and a few French frontiersmen, but claimed by several of the old British colonies. Thus, the angry British-American colonists were not only legally blocked from taking land they deeply coveted, but in the minds of the most fervent Protestants, their loss was a Catholic gain that further delayed the return of the Messiah and the commencement of the Millennium. Moreover, many British-Americans were certain that the Quebec Act was merely a test run to imposing French-style royal despotism on them. King George III, a staunch if not zealous Protestant himself, was now cast in the role of a Catholic-favoring devil working against the “one

true” religion—even if his Protestant American subjects sharply disagreed over which of their many sects was most agreeable to Jesus. These were some of the darker, uglier forces that combined with the Enlightenment-inspired motives expressed in *The Declaration of Independence* and Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* that resulted in the founding of our nation. Both sides have shaped this country ever since, with echoes in our modern culture wars and political debate.

How the religious and political debates that followed the American Revolution led to the First Amendment to the United States Constitution will be discussed in part 2 of this article next month.

