

# 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.”**

Post Office Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591

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February 2012

Volume 11, Issue 2

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## President's Message - February 2012

**Earl Coggins**

I mentioned this before, and although I don't necessarily want to sound repetitive, it bears repeating: the definition of insanity is to repeat the same process over and over, all-the-while expecting different results with each subsequent repetition.

recently received an e-mail from the Center for Inquiry announcing a two-day conference taking place at the Center for Inquiry in Los Angeles, California. The conference has the title, *Confronting Religion With Reason: Promoting Science, Reason, and Secular Values*

*Among a Religious Majority.* The keynote lecture is actually a debate with the title, *Does God Exist?*



Also scheduled is a pre-debate lecture titled: *Debating Religion in Public.*

Ten or even fifteen years ago I would have been ecstatic that such

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***“The leaders of the Free-thought Movement should offer as much energy as possible to bringing awareness to plurality, human rights, and thinking skills.”***

*“It is useless to attempt to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into.”*

—Jonathan Swift  
(1667-1745)

Now to my point. I

*ion With Reason: Promoting Science, Reason, and Secular Values*

years ago I would have been ecstatic that such

## February 2012 Meeting

# “What Does Evolution Mean for Ethics?”

**Scott Kimbrough, Ph.D., Chair, Division of Humanities  
Jacksonville University**

**Monday, February 20, 2012, 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, FL 32225

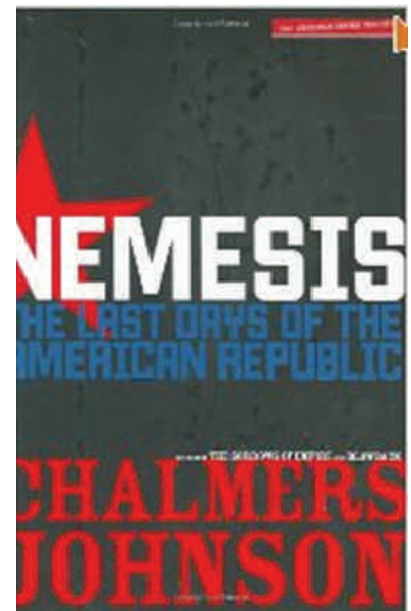
**What:** Books planned for discussion:

- March 4, 2012 - *Nemesis*, by Chalmers Johnson
- April 1, 2012 - *Thomas Paine's Rights of Man*, by Christopher Hitchens (or any other book about or by Thomas Paine)

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://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> and then click the link to Amazon.com for your purchase.

In his prophetic book *Blowback*, Chalmers Johnson linked the CIA's clandestine activities abroad to disaster at home. In *The Sorrows of Empire*, he explored the ways in which the growth of American militarism and the garrisoning of the planet have jeopardized our stability. Now, in *Nemesis*, he shows how imperial overstretch is undermining the republic itself, both economically and politically.

Delving into new areas—from plans to militarize outer space, to Constitution-breaking presidential activities at home, and the devastating corruption of a toothless Congress—*Nemesis* offers a striking description of the trap into which the dreams of America's leaders have taken us. Drawing comparisons to empires past, Johnson explores in vivid detail just what the unintended consequences of our dependence on a permanent war economy are likely to be. What does it mean when a nation's main intelligence organization becomes the president's secret army? Or when the globe's sole "hyperpower," no longer capable of paying for the vaulting ambitions of its leaders, becomes the greatest hyper-debtor of all times?



In his stunning conclusion, Johnson suggests that financial bankruptcy could herald the breakdown of constitutional government in America—a crisis that may ultimately prove to be the only path to a renewed nation.

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

### February Social

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

**When:** **Tuesday February 28, 2012** 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!

*(President's Message, continued from page 1)*

a conference was taking place, especially the debate *Does God Exist?* Now, I am not so sure debating the existence of God is an important issue facing the freethought movement.

Bearing in mind that the definition of insanity is to repeat the

same process over and over, all-the-while expecting different results with each subsequent repetition, I have to ask: Have we (humanists and free-thinkers) confronted religion with reason in the past? Where has it gotten us? Have we debated religion in the public square in the past? With the exception of Robert G. Ingersoll, where has it gotten us? Do we really expect the results to be different?

Don't get me wrong. I strongly and whole-heartedly believe there is no evidence to support a belief in a god or gods. Having said that, I also believe with equal zeal that there is no evidence that God does not exist. Those beliefs do

not change my status as someone who is without theism and, therefore, atheistic. They merely affirm my allegiance to an empirical approach to what one would declare as conclusive evidence. My empiricism does not negate my infatuation with metaphysics (my apologies to David Hume and Rene

thought—something we as members of the First Coast Freethought Society should be extremely intrigued by, given the fact that we claim to be thinkers.

I am no longer interested in why someone thinks God exists. I am now more interested in the thought process that

leads people (who think God exists) to such a conclusion. In other words, I'm more concerned with the validity of an argument rather than the truth of the proposition.

Debating the existence of God can be

a fun endeavor if you do your homework. You can easily demonstrate that a proposition supporting the existence of God has no merit and is an argument with no empirical evidence available to substantiate it. I can do the same thing with an argument that attempts to support a proposition supporting the nonexistence of God. Both are equally meaningless and arguments without merit.

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Descartes), nor does it degrade my friendship with theists.

I am now more inclined to get excited over lectures or discussions regarding how humans know what they know, or how humans know a belief is worth believing in. I like these types of lectures because they are paradigm breakers—transcending the methodology of the past with deeper reflections into the realm of

## Christopher Hitchens: On Religion, War, Fascism, & Mother Teresa

Fred W. Hill

Christopher Hitchens is in Hell. Along with Stephen Jay Gould, Carl Sagan, Bertrand Russell, Mark Twain, Charles Darwin, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, among so many other dead geniuses and skeptics—at least, according to the poisonous and arrogant beliefs of billions of Christians and Muslims, they are all sweating it out eternally in fire and brimstone while getting their behinds poked by trident-wielding red devils, or some variation of that scenario. Nothing personal against them—God loving us all, as they say—just a consequence of not believing in him, or his alleged words, or simply having doubts. And I, as well as every other irreligious free-thinker, will join them when we die. Unless, to paraphrase Hitchens' most famous assertion, God is not only not great, but not there (or anywhere else).

A journalist, author, polemicist and pundit, Hitchens dared much, venturing into several war zones for stories, and speaking his mind as he saw fit, sacred cows be damned, a true freethinker. As such, he was praised and scorned by all sides of the political spectrum for his observations which included tomes denouncing Henry Kissinger, President Clinton, and Mother Teresa; others praising Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and George Orwell, and,

most notoriously, his best-selling critique of religion, *God Is Not Great* (2007). Beginning his career in 1970 as a correspondent for the *International Socialist* magazine, by 2001 he no longer felt he could describe himself as a socialist (<http://reason.com/archives/2001/11/01/free-radical>) but in an interview with the *New York Times* last year, he stated, "I consider myself a very conservative Marxist." (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/06/magazine/06fob-q4-t.html>)

***"The totalitarian, to me, is the enemy—the one that's absolute, the one that wants control over the inside of your head, not just your actions and your taxes."***

**—Christopher Hitchens (1949—2011)**

Due to his support for the Iraq War in 2003, however, he was labeled a neo-conservative by many former colleagues on the political left, including the British Pakistani historian and author Tariq Ali who asserted that Hitchens was among the casualties of the 9/11 attacks and had been replaced by a "vile replica." Hitchens, who had initially regarded Hussein's Ba'ath Party as secular and potentially progressive, and had opposed the 1990 Gulf War, later denounced Hussein as a mass-murdering thug who enriched himself at the expense of the Iraqi people while portraying himself, however hypocritically,

as a champion of Islam. Having developed an intense loathing of all forms of religious mania, particularly the variant forms of what he termed "fascism with an Islamic face," and regarding Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein as equally bad, Hitchens thus was pleased that the latter was overthrown, regardless of the pretext. He expressed misgivings about the handling of the invasion of Iraq—the attempt to wage war as cheaply as possible and without adequate plans to restore stability—and the immense human



cost. That was brought home to him most intensely when he became aware of a U.S. soldier, Mark Daily, who enlisted to fight in Iraq specifically because he had been convinced of the moral necessity to do so by Hitchens' arguments for the war and was subsequently killed by a roadside bomb on January 15, 2007 (as related in pages 320 – 329 of his memoir, *Hitch 22*, 2011). Saddam Hussein indeed committed monstrous crimes against humanity, sometimes with weapons provided by the United States; the manner of removing him, however, exchanged one horror for another,

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and Hitchens has been severely castigated for his stance on the war, as covered in a collection of essays, *Christopher Hitchens and His Critics: Terror, Iraq and the Left* (Coffee, Cushman and Hitchens, 2008). Michael Petrou, historian and foreign correspondent for *Maclean's* magazine, however, defends Hitchens as having stood for "freedom from tyranny and from religious dogma; freedom of thought and expression; and, on a personal level, the freedom of the individual to pursue and live his life as he sees fit. He didn't pick his causes from an ideological menu dictating which causes to support or shun." (<http://www2.macleans.ca/2011/12/16/hitchens-deserves-to-be-remembered-with-orwell/>).

In his memoir, Hitchens describes his growing disenchantment with some of his leftist colleagues in 1989, when the Ayatollah Khomeini, spiritual leader of Iran, issued a fatwah against a close friend and acclaimed author Salman Rushdie due to alleged blasphemous passages in his novel, *The Satanic Verses*, demanding his execution. Many booksellers and translators were threatened or injured by mili-

tant Islamists eager to carry out the order, and Hitoshi Igarashi, a Japanese professor of literature was murdered for having translated the novel. Hitchens attempted to rally support for Rushdie only to find many of his colleagues accusing Rushdie of purposely inflaming the Islamic world, although it was more the case of a relatively few Muslims attempting to curtail free speech and impose their religious dogma around the world.



**Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, taken during an interview for *The New Statesman* last October**

Of course, Hitchens was as critical of Christianity as he was of Islam. Brought up in the Anglican Church (and not knowing of his mother's Jewish background until much later), required by law to say daily prayers in school, he nevertheless grew skeptical of Christianity by his adolescence, recognizing its contradictions and absurdities. A prodigious reader, he was also aware of the many atrocities committed in the name of God throughout history, as well as the often anti-demo-

cratic nature of religion even in the modern era, telling Richard Dawkins in one of his last interviews, "...if you're writing about the history of the 1930s and the rise of totalitarianism, you can take out the word 'fascist', if you want, for Italy, Portugal, Spain, Czechoslovakia and Austria, and replace it with 'extreme-right Catholic party'." ("Christopher Hitchens' Final Interview: Catholic Church, Christian Charities, and Totalitarianism," by Josh Feldman, *New Statesman*, December 18, 2011)

In his blistering exposé, *Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice* (1995), Hitchens took on the reputation of the not-quite-universally beloved Nobel Peace Prize winner and pious fraud, describing how the millions of dollars contributed di-

rectly to her Missionaries of Charity organization, including hospitals and homes for the dying, and intended by donors for the purchase of medical supplies, food and other amenities to directly help patients, was instead used to open hundreds of convents and to finance missionary work. As Hitchens detailed, she literally allowed starving children and ailing adults under the care of her undertrained helpers in her dilapidated facili-

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ties in Calcutta, and elsewhere, to die because she believed their suffering was a good thing and would bring them “closer to Jesus,” and that it was more important to use the money to spread the alleged word of

God than to actually help people! Verifying that she valued the pre-born over the already born, while infants were needlessly dying of starvation in her hospices, in her 1979 Nobel Peace Prize lecture she stated, “the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion...” ([http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1979/teresa-lecture.html)). Recognizing Hitchens’ criticisms, the Vatican invited him to be an unofficial Devil’s Advocate during the beautification step towards making Agnes Bojaxhiu (Mother Teresa’s real name) a saint. As Hitchens explains in *God Is Not Great*, Pope



John Paul II abolished the office of Devil’s Advocate in order to speed up the process of making saints, but “the church was still obliged to seek testimony from critics...” (p. 145). Still, unsurprisingly, a “miracle” was attributed to Agnes in 2003 and she was beautified, leaving only the manufacture of another miracle to be accepted by the Catholic Church to transform her into a saint. At least Hitchens tried to get the good old boys of the ancient church to listen to reason.

Love him or loathe him, Hitchens boldly stated many uncomfortable truths, as well as several views that won’t hold up

to close scrutiny. Many freethinkers, I’m sure, admire him for much of what he said but strongly disagree with many of his other assertions. Nevertheless, his renowned advocacy of free speech and reason over irrational dogma will be missed. As he related to Dawkins a few weeks before his death, “I have one consistency, which is [being] against the totalitarian—on the left and on the right. The totalitarian, to me, is the enemy—the one that’s absolute, the one that wants control over the inside of your head, not just your actions and your taxes. And the origins of that are theocratic, obviously. The beginning of that is the idea that there is a supreme leader, or infallible pope, or a chief rabbi, or whatever, who can ventriloquise the divine and tell us what to do.” (*ibid.*, Feldman)



## Two Upcoming Freethought Events of Note

Two events are coming up in March that our members may want to make plans to attend.

First up is the Center for Inquiry (CFI) annual conference, “Moving Secularism Forward,” to be held from March 1 – 4, 2012, at the Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport in Orlando. Just a few of the speakers are Daniel C. Dennett, Sir Harold Kroto, Stephen Law, and Rita Swan. For more details see [http://www.centerforinquiry.net/events/moving\\_secularism\\_forward/](http://www.centerforinquiry.net/events/moving_secularism_forward/)

Next up, The Reason Rally will be held on Saturday, March 24, at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Speakers include Richard Dawkins, James Randi, Adam Savage of Mythbusters, and musical performers Bad Religion. For more details, go to <http://reasonrally.org/>.



(Continued from page 3)

On the other hand, I can argue that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. It gets nauseating very quickly.

The Center for Inquiry conference is advertised with the following statement and two questions: *The modern American social landscape presents a distinct challenge to the nonreligious: How best to make the skeptical case to a religiously-dominated society? How best to fight for the secular cause within a religiously-battered democracy?* Unfortunately, it appears that their answer is simply more of the same, i.e., let's argue about the proposition instead of the argument. I believe the conference questions should be: How can the freethought movement garner acceptance for the skeptical worldview among other worldviews? How do freethinkers define the secular cause as a needed component of democracy—in a fresh new way?

When the keynote lecture of a humanist conference focuses on the existence of God, I have to question the priorities of the leaders of the freethought/humanist movement. It sounds like an entry level position—something you do when you

have that very first ah-hah moment and realize that what mommy and daddy told you about the world might not be true. Once you realize that neither side can prove the existence or nonexistence of a god with truly empirical evidence, you don't just move on—you move forward. I don't see us moving forward by debating the existence of God.

I realize that much of the work of CFI and similar organizations is a crucial component of the freethought movement. We (freethinkers) have to push back at irrationality. However, many discussions with theists concerning the efficacy or substantiation of their beliefs are not dialogues; and there is very little, if any, return on investment for the time spent doing it. I feel strongly that there is a negative effect—that these kinds of discussions have little weight in furthering our cause. Debates can quickly turn into two monologues where neither side is listening to the other but merely waiting for a turn to talk. What purpose does this serve, whether it's the President of the First Coast Freethought Society or the President of the Council for Secular

Humanism doing it?

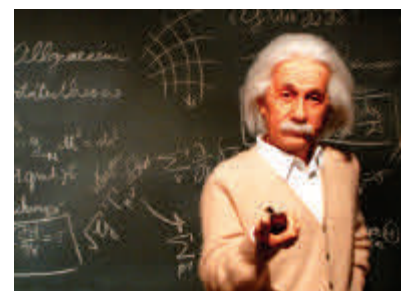
The leaders of the freethought movement should offer as much energy as possible to bringing awareness to plurality, human rights, and thinking skills. Debating the tenets of a worldview could easily be interpreted as the beginning steps of a movement with a mission to eliminate the worldview being debated.

I firmly believe that old story about feeding a person forever. You can give a person a fish and feed that person for a day, but if you teach that person how to catch fish, you can feed her for a life time. The same holds true for thinking. Give people one idea, and they'll have one perception, one way, one path, one dogmatic viewpoint, as if they were looking at the reflections of images on the walls of a cave thinking they are the only reality. On the other hand, teach people how to create ideas by independent and critical thinking, and they will have a much more meaningful life with a rich understanding of what it means to reflect and understand the many attempts to define reality. What a life!



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***“I cannot accept any concept of God based on the fear of life or the fear of death or blind faith. I cannot prove to you that there is no personal God, but if I were to speak of him I would be a liar.” —Albert Einstein***





## Letter from an Agnostic

Susan Ert-Ker

Usually I have more questions than answers. Maybe that is part of the reason that I lean toward being an agnostic.

I have had debates with atheists about the definition of agnostic, so I know that people define that word in different ways. Many atheists (if not all) think the evidence strongly leads to the belief that there is no God. But what about the agnostic who wants to claim to be a reasonable thinker?

Part of me would like to say that I (who labels herself an agnostic) think the idea (that there is some sort of human creature that lives in the sky listening to prayers and granting wishes) seems ludicrous. But part of my agnosticism entails being flexible with the definition of god. Since you have read this far, I offer my thanks. You can certainly write letters of disagreement to the editor, but what about trying to understand my point of view first?

Often, people are intentionally vague about god. They don't have and can't offer a definition. Why interrogate them when it might lead to animosity? Why not let it be vague? **Why not interpret the word "god" within the context of his/her sentence?** Sometimes the person may mean inspiration, placebo effect of hope, the web that

holds society together, the strength of the camaraderie of the group, or some vague delusion that helps them make it through some dark period of their life.

Part of me might answer my own question in a couple of different ways:

- They might know something that I don't.
- I should not let people hang on to stupid beliefs.
- I love the good debate.

***"Often, people are intentionally vague about god. They don't have and can't offer a definition. Why interrogate them when it might lead to animosity? Why not let it be vague?"***

However, interrogating someone about their definition of god might lead to animosity. As I grow older, I want to learn to communicate in such a way that animosity isn't created during the dialogue. So I am working on the idea of interpreting god in the context of the sentence that makes the most sense to me.

One of the uses of God that completely baffles me is when someone tells me that they base their morals on God. That seems a dangerous statement. Whenever anyone uses the term "god" to try to control or condemn other people, then the wording

has gone beyond the benign. It has become dangerous. But I still believe that a skilled communicator can discuss morals without debating the definition of god.

If the person means that god speaks directly to them, then I would assume they mean the voice in their head. We all have that, and we have to discern which ideas are good and which are not so good.

If the person means that god speaks to them through a holy book or another person, then I guess I would have two follow up questions:

Do you follow the advice even if it makes no sense?

Could the other person be wrong?

I am reading a book called *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* by J. Mackie. It has me thinking that the discussion about morals, values, and/or ethics is a serious one with serious consequences to our society. I hope that free thinkers will join in that discussion without getting lost in god. It isn't about god. As I said in the beginning, I believe that most people use the term in a very vague way. If you get stuck in debating god's existence, then you may never move forward to the really important stuff.



## Community Outreach Program Activity

Richard Keene

**O**n Saturday, January 14, members of the First Coast Freethought Society joined members of the Jacksonville Atheists Meetup (JAM), as well as volunteers from other unaffiliated (religious, secular, civic, etc.) organizations at the Jacksonville Second Harvest warehouse on Jessie Street, to participate in the sorting and bagging of produce and food-stuffs, and the boxing of staples for distribution to the less fortunate in our area.

FCFS members Curtis Wolff, Fred Hill, Richard Keene, and others volunteered industry and labor from 9:00 am to 12:00, in a repetition of similar volunteer activity held on December 12, 2011. Our Community Outreach chair, Patrice Bennett, led the group in December. FCFS members have also worn their logo golf shirts and “freethinker statement” tee shirts, to demonstrate to the other volunteers that heartfelt charitable works do not need religious motive or belief for performance. FCFS intends to make the Jax Second Harvest a dedicated outreach

event, recognizing the benefits it yields to the whole Jacksonville metro area without regard to religious motivation or affiliation.



JAM and FCFS members typically volunteer as a group on the 2nd Saturday of each month. For more info, or to join us at the next volunteer meetup, go to <http://www.jaxatheists.com/> or contact Patrice or Fred via [info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org).

*“There is not sufficient love and goodness in the world to permit us to give some of it away to imaginary beings.”*

— Friedrich Nietzsche



### 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 ? under 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.

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 550591  
Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591  
904-419-8826  
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### 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 2012 Board Members

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## First Coast FreeThinker

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive the e-mail version indefinitely. Nonmembers 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.

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2012 Membership Application



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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 February 20 FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m.  
Saturday February 25 FCFS Deadline to submit articles for January 2012 *FreeThinker*  
Sunday February 26 FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville - 10:00 a.m.  
Tuesday February 28 FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville - 6:00 p.m.  
Sunday March 4 FCFS Humanist Book Discussion Group, Jacksonville - 2:00 p.m.  
Monday March 12 JAM Meetup at European Street Café in San Marco - 6:30 p.m.\*  
Monday March 19 FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m.

\* Please check at [www.jaxatheists.com](http://www.jaxatheists.com) as the date and place may change

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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## Meet Our February Speaker - Scott Kimbrough, Ph.D.

It has long been the custom of the First Coast Freethought Society to recognize February as Charles Darwin's birth month and to celebrate his birth by having a talk regarding some aspect of evolution. To that end, our February 2012 speaker's presentation is titled, "What Does Evolution Mean for Ethics?"

Dr. Scott Kimbrough is Professor of Philosophy and Chair, Division of Humanities, Jacksonville University. Dr. Kimbrough received his B.A. *Summa Cum Laude* in Philosophy from Southwestern University in May 1989. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania in August 1996.



Dr. Kimbrough asks, does evolutionary theory provide a new foundation for ethics? Or does it show our ethical commitments to be groundless products of natural selection? He goes on to explain, early attempts to base ethical conclusions on Darwin's theory of evolution did not go well, ending in the discredited social Darwinist and eugenics movements of the early 20th century. Since the 1970s, new efforts have been made to base a universal, objective ethics in evolutionary biology. Others have appealed to evolution to argue for moral skepticism. This presentation will consider the case for each conclusion, asking whether evolution provides a new basis for ethical theory or instead proves ethics to be baseless.