

# 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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The First Coast

# FreeThinker



Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

August 2012

Volume 11, Issue 8

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*Religion is like chemotherapy. It may solve one problem, but it may cause a million more.*

—John Bledsoe

### Earl Coggins

**T**he agnostic/atheist argument, discussion—whatever you want to call it—has me intrigued as never before.

My message last month prompted many comments and responses regarding the word “agnosticism.” The big problem is how to define and interpret ag-

nosticism—everyone seems to have their own personal definition. Agnosticism’s place within the freethought and humanist movements is another

***“Atheists have been pigeon-holed as militant for decades, a label that has impeded the progress towards equal rights for atheists.”***

problem I have not mentioned in any of my other messages.

One of the responses to the July

President’s Message was from one of our board members, Richard Keene, who wants to conduct a survey of our FCFS members and friends based on Richard Dawkins’ *Spectrum of Probabilities* from his book *The God Delusion*. Richard (our Richard) has reproduced the

*(Continued on page 3)*



## August 2012 Meeting

### “The Devil Made Me Do It: What Light Can Neuroscience Shed on the Problem of Free Will?”

Elaine Hull, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience, Florida State University, Tallahassee

Monday, August 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 - **but 2nd SUN in SEPT!!**

**Where:** Books-A-Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32225

**What:** Books planned for discussion:

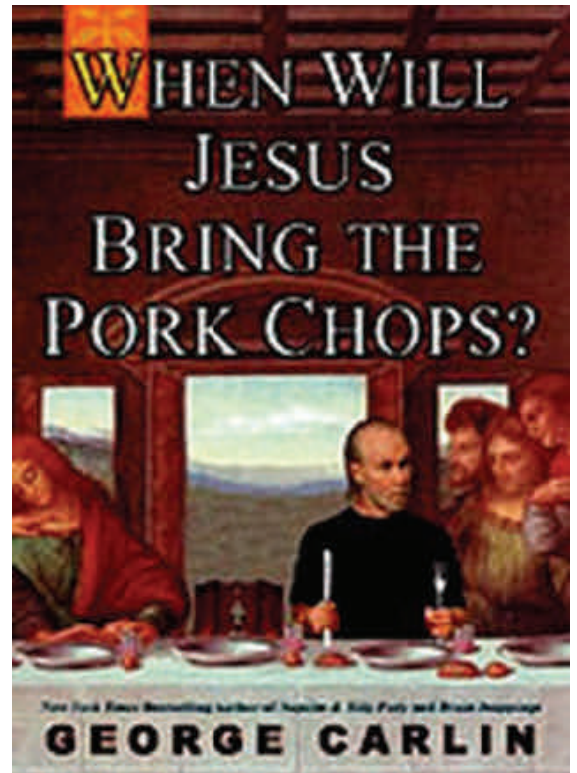
- September 9, 2012 - *When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops?* by George Carlin
- October 7, 2012 - *People of the Lake*, Richard Leakey

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.

**G**eorge Carlin spends a lot of time pondering the universe. For example, he worries about the gloves that deli sandwich makers now use. Where have they been and who wants latex on his sandwich? He wonders, too, about the PC police who refer to ugly people as “people with severe appearance deficits.” And why do they lock the public bathrooms at gas stations? Are they afraid that someone will clean them? In *When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops?* Carlin probes life’s deeper mysteries and emerges with many answers and very dirty hands. (Review from Barnes & Noble)

Please note that as the first Sunday in September occurs during the Labor Day weekend, and at least a few people who would love to take part in a discussion of Carlin, Jesus, and pork chops may also be inclined to travel outside the First Coast region during that very same weekend, the movers and shakers of the Book Discussion Group have graciously decided to alleviate the dilemma by moving the meeting to the *second* Sunday, September 9. We expect Jesus will fail to attend, with or without pork chops.

For more information, contact Herb Gerson at 904-363-6446, or [12herbert30ger-son@bellsouth.net](mailto:12herbert30ger-son@bellsouth.net).



### Monthly Social

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

**When:** Tuesday August 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 (or 268-8826) by **Tues. a.m.**, if you plan to go!

*(President's Message, continued from page 1)*  
survey for everyone to fill out. You will find the survey on Page 6 of this issue, and it will also be available at the August meeting. The results will be tabulated and published in the next *FreeThinker*.

Last month I said: "The confusion regarding the word agnosticism wasn't that funny after all, perhaps even a bit of a destructive element to the free-thought movement." I want to clarify that statement. It seems to me that there is a running argument regarding the strength of the position concerning the labels, "agnostic" and "atheist." I have heard many agnostics state, and perhaps rightly so, that atheists cannot definitively and empirically prove god does not exist; therefore, their position is weak. I have also heard it said that an atheist cannot question the belief in any of the gods of the religions of the world because there is no evidence to support the atheist's position that gods do not exist.

My rejuvenated intrigue

for "all that is agnosticism" led to an exploration on the internet, i.e. the information highway, and dusting off a few old books. I found a two-year-old article at Slate.com that expresses what I typically hear from a lot of agnos-



***Thomas Huxley (1825 - 1895)***

tics jockeying for position at various levels of the free-thought movement. The street version I have heard isn't as caustic as this article, but this article is worth dissecting. You can read the entire article at: [http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the\\_spectator/2010/06/an\\_agnostic\\_manifesto.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_spectator/2010/06/an_agnostic_manifesto.html).

In his June 2010 article on Slate.com, *An Agnostic Manifesto*, Ron Rosenbaum calls for agnostics to "take on" atheists. His message isn't something new. It started in 1869 with Thomas Henry Huxley and has been the

source of confusion ever since. Having said that, I have to repeat what I said last month. We're perhaps all agnostics on the subject of whether a god (or gods) does or does not exist. It is from that foundation that some of us decide to declare an affinity for theism or atheism.

It is troubling to hear Rosenbaum or any other person advocating that agnostics "take on" atheists. Atheists

have been pigeon-holed as militant for decades, a label that has impeded the progress towards equal rights for atheists. Are Rosenbaum and people with similar views trying to establish the "militant-agnostic" faction of the free-thought and humanist move-

*(Continued on page 7)*

*Editor's Note: Responses to the President's Message in the July 2012 FreeThinker have resulted in this issue's focus on the agnosticism vs. atheism debate, with further reflections by Earl Coggins in this month's message, the following submissions by Susan Ert-Ker and Shane Christian, and the survey page prepared by Richard C. Keene. —Fred W. Hill*

## Definition of an Agnostic

Susan Ert-Ker

This is a response to the President's Message appearing in the July 2012 *FreeThinker*, in which Earl Coggins offers various definitions of agnostic. He quotes Richard Dawkins.

I think Dawkins should have included this variation:

**God's existence or nonexistence isn't worth debating unless you clearly define what you mean by God.**

In my view, that variation includes "agnostic." Agnostic means it is silly for you to ask me to take a position until you clearly (and to my satisfaction) define your terms.

For example, many Christians would categorize themselves as a 7 on Dawkins' list regarding Zeus. I would guess that few Christians would categorize themselves as a 1 on the list regarding a bearded entity sitting in the sky doling out

punishments for those that break the Ten Commandments.

The part (in the list of options) about living as if God exists vs. living as if God doesn't exist also bugged me. What would be the difference? I posit that the belief or non-belief makes no difference in one's ethical behavior. I understand

*"It seems to me that a person's propensity to fall prey to leaders of exclusionary ideologies is what might lead them astray rather than a mere belief in a god."*

that certain dogma encourages people to act in certain ways. I understand that some people may argue that a "belief in God" may make one more vulnerable to manipulation by religious leaders. It seems to me that a person's propensity to fall prey to leaders of exclusionary ideologies is what might lead them astray rather than a mere belief in a god.

There have been people (some fall in the belief category and some fall in the non-belief category) in our recorded history that have acted ethically and unethically. That is why I posit that a belief or non-belief in a God makes no difference in your ethical behavior. What makes people act ethically? I don't have the answer to that...but I continue to read various books to see if I can get closer to the answer.

I consider myself to be an agnostic. None of the 7 on Dawkins' list resonated with me.

The author may be contacted at <http://susanin florida.wordpress.com/>



## Agnostic Humor:

"Mario, what do you get when you cross an insomniac, an unwilling agnostic and a dyslexic?"

"I give."

"You get someone who stays up all night torturing himself mentally over the question of whether or not there's a dog."

—David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*



## Atheism, Agnosticism, and Richard Dawkins

Shane Christian

**R**ichard Dawkins is an atheist and an agnostic. In *The God Delusion*, Dawkins points out, "There is nothing wrong with being agnostic in cases where we lack evidence one way or the other. It is the reasonable position." (pp 46-47) He then provides examples of agnostic positions, one by Carl Sagan on life elsewhere in the universe and "many scientific questions, such as what caused the end-Permian extinction, the greatest mass extinction in fossil history."

Carl Sagan explained his position regarding atheism and agnosticism in his book, *Broca's Brain*:

*"Those who raise questions about the God hypothesis and the soul hypothesis are by no means all atheists. An atheist is someone who is certain that God does not exist, someone who has compelling evidence against the existence of God. I know of no such compelling evidence. Because God can be relegated to remote times and places and to ultimate causes, we would have to know a great deal more about the universe than we do now to be sure that no such God exists. To be certain of the existence of God and to be certain of the nonexistence of God seem to me to be the confident extremes in a subject so riddled with doubt and uncertainty as to inspire very little confidence indeed. A wide range of intermediate positions seems admissible, and considering the enormous*

*emotional energies with which the subject is invested, a questing, courageous and open mind seems to be the essential tool for narrowing the range of our collective ignorance on the subject of the existence of God."*

If Dawkins thought the only reasonable position was agnosticism, he would not have started his preface to *The God Delusion* noting that it "...is intended to raise consciousness ... to the fact

***"I cannot know for certain but I think God is very improbable, and I live my life on the assumption that he is not there."***  
—Richard Dawkins

*that to be an atheist is a realistic aspiration, and a brave and splendid one. You can be an atheist who is happy, balanced, moral, and intellectually fulfilled. ... If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down."* He concludes, "What presumptuous optimism!"

Dawkins knows that the faithful believers are not very likely to be converted easily. In Dawkins spectrum of probability from 1, signifying a strong theist, as in the words of Carl G. Jung, "I don't believe, I know," to 7, a strong atheist who knows "there is no God, with the same conviction as Jung 'knows' there is one," Dawkins places himself at, "probability level 6. Very low

probability, but short of zero, a *de facto* atheist. "I cannot know for certain but I think God is very improbable, and I live my life on the assumption that he is not there."



Over the years, I have debated the atheist/agnostic question with many and have found the majority of intellectual atheists/agnostics do place themselves on the spectrum of probability number 6. None of these intellectuals are agnostic about the Jewish, Christian, or Muslim man-made Gods; and I don't think Richard Dawkins is either. The agnostic problem is with knowing with 100 per cent certainty that there is no God. These atheists/agnostics point out that the universe is estimated to be 14 billion years old. We don't know how or why the universe began. We don't know everything about the vast universe. A "God" could be out on the edge of the universe. You must know all, or be omniscient, before you can know there is no God.

My reply is that one need not be God to know there is no God. Yes, we are all agnostic about many things, such as the origins of the universe, or the origins of life, but we know far too much about the origins of the God myth, to be agnostic about God.



## Dawkins' *God Delusion* Survey, per Richard Keens and Earl Coggins

Taking Richard Dawkins' idea of a *Spectrum of Theistic Probabilities* seriously, we are surveying FCFS readers' judgments about the existence (or not) of (a) god along Dawkins' stated extremes of opposite certainty.

Merely place a check mark along one of the seven "milestones" along the Spectrum way, representing your own opinion, and drop it in the Survey Box on the back table at the August meeting.. NOTE: Surveys will also be available at the back table at the August meeting. Watch for results in next month's Newsletter!

- 1. Strong Theist. 100% probability of God's existence. (I know it.)
- 2. De Facto Theist. Very High Probability but short of 100%, Strong belief plus life on that assumption.
- 3. Higher Than 50% but not very High. Technically Agnostic but leaning toward Atheism.
- 4. Exactly 50%. Completely Impartial Agnostic. Equality of probability of existence or nonexistence.
- 5. Lower Than 50% but not very low. Technically Agnostic but leaning towards Atheism.
- 6. Very Low Probability, but Short of Zero. De Facto Atheist. Do not know for certain but very improbable; live life accordingly.
- 7. Strong Atheist. I know there is no god.

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## Second Harvest Volunteer Opportunities

**C**ommunity outreach opportunity for the nonreligious available! On the second Saturday of every month, 10:00 a.m. to noon, join FCFS members and JAM (Jacksonville Atheist Meetup) group members, as well as other unaffiliated religious, secular, and civic groups, to volunteer at the Second Harvest food bank warehouse, 1502 Jessie Street, Jacksonville.

You can arrive as early as 9:00 a.m. Be sure to sign in at the warehouse as an FCFS member. You will participate in the sorting and bagging of produce and foodstuffs and the boxing of staples for distribution to the less fortunate in the North Florida area. Wear CLOSED toe shoes and clothes you don't mind getting dirty.

For more information about volunteering with the FCFS, contact board members Richard Keene at 904-386-1121, or Fred Hill at [frednotFaith2@aol.com](mailto:frednotFaith2@aol.com). You may post questions on the JAM website at <http://www.jaxatheists.com/events>. To learn more about Second Harvest North Florida, visit <http://www.wenourishhope.org>.



(President's Message, Continued from page 3)

ments? Are atheists being thrown under the bus, again—this time from within the ranks of non-theists? *Et tu, Brute?*

Here are a few more quotes from the article. I have heard similar versions of these quotes in the past from people who abhor being labeled as an atheist:

“Agnostics see atheism as a theism—as much a faith-based creed as the most orthodox of the religious variety.”

“Atheists display a credulous and childlike faith, worship a certainty as yet unsupported by evidence—the certainty that they can or will be able to explain how and why the universe came into existence.”

In his article, Rosenbaum declares: “...I challenge any atheist, new or old, to send me their answer to the question... why is there something rather than nothing?”

Rosenbaum already has a t-shirt manifesto for his rebellious agnostics: “Our T-shirt will read: I just don’t know.”

I like that idea. I can’t count the number of times a theist has asked me what I think will happen to me after I die—in other words, will I survive death. I always start my answer with “I don’t know, but...”

I haven’t met many theists claiming to be both theistic and agnostic. On the other hand, most of the people I have met over the course of the First Coast Freethought Society’s 14 years of existence, who claim to be an agnostic

have no use for theism and agree with most, if not all, of the Statement of Principles posted on our website.

After considerable thought and having reread portions of Thomas Henry Huxley’s celebrated 1889 essay *Agnosticism*, I believe the dispute between agnostics and atheists regarding the existence of empirical evidence proving or disproving the existence of a god or gods, is a colossal waste of time. Agnostics and atheists should agree to disagree and work together to promote the freethought and humanist movements. We’ve come too far to let a schism within our own ranks, caused by personal interpretation of a *word*, impede our progress in building a world where non-theists can live in peace among theists.



## 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, **see the website**, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, or **ask a greeter** at the back table, at a meeting.

**Second Harvest Second Saturday:** On the **2nd Saturday of every month**, 10:00 a.m. to noon, join FCFS members and JAM (Jacksonville Atheist Meetup) group members, to volunteer at the Second Harvest North Florida food bank warehouse, 1502 Jessie Street, to help distribute food to the less fortunate in North FL. See <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> or call Fed Hill, 904-358-3610.

**Secular Sunday Morning in the Park:** Freethinkers, let’s get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation the **4th Sunday of every 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. For directions, call Beth Perry at 904-733-5489 or Google the address. 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, flowers, or a sympathy card to a member is in order, please contact **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188, or e-mail her at [info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org).



## Reacting to Madness

Fred W. Hill

In Aurora, Colorado, the horror erupted yet again. Yet another madman with guns and ammo and scores of human targets whom he had no rational reason to terrorize, to shoot, to wound, and to murder. This time the atrocity, a dozen slain and many more wounded or traumatized, occurred in a movie theater, a midnight premier of the new Batman flick, *The Dark Knight Rises*. Afterwards, while in police custody, the killer allegedly remarked, "I am the Joker," identifying himself with Batman's prime nemesis, often depicted in film and comics committing murder and other crimes for the sheer joy of creating chaos. After the arguments of competing experts are taken into consideration, the legal system will eventually determine whether this real life joker was truly insane to the extent that he could not distinguish fantasy from reality, or if he was merely filled with an intense rage against society that he released by executing his intricate plan to terrorize and slaughter people who meant nothing to him. Whatever the cause, it remains an act of madness, an attempt to tear down civil society.

Madness in many forms has run rampant throughout human history. Sometimes in relatively benign or even beneficial ways, resulting in great works of art that expand on or even eschew previous standards to provide

new perspectives. Such creative madness, likely combined with an outrage at the insanity of the world they lived in, prompted such works as Josef Kafka's novel, *The Trial*, in which the protagonist, Josef K., is arrested and eventually put on trial for a crime that is never specified to him or the reader by an authority that never reveals itself; or Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*, his Cubist depiction of the carnage wrought by the bombing by Nazi and Fascist forces of the Bosque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. Too of-

***"Despite near-incessant and all-too-often justified griping about the inadequacies and excesses of our government, most of us trust it enough so we don't feel we have to meet madness with madness."***

ten, however, the madness is destructive, as in the actions of governments that would arrest people or wage wars that destroy lives for no rational reason. Or in acts of violence committed by private individuals and groups.

Batman has been portrayed as a reaction to such violence. In his origin, first told in a 1939 comic book, pre-adolescent Bruce Wayne witnesses the murder of his parents by an unknown thug and thereafter swears he will have his vengeance by bringing all such crimi-

nals to justice. It wouldn't do for him to simply grow up to become a police officer or some such legitimate agent of government authority, however. Such authority could not be trusted to adequately do the job. After all, there are so many violent criminals, including murderers, who are never caught or who get off with minimal punishment. No, he would become a vigilante and confront



the criminals in his own unique way, using his wits, strength, and all the gadgets that the fortune he inherited can buy. The character was just the latest variation of the ancient idealization of a hero, a demigod in Greek mythology, who would fight wrongs and put things right. Even in the old myths, however, the

hero was hardly a perpetual paragon of virtue and wisdom. Tales of Herakles and Thor were as likely to impugn them as arrogant buffoons as regale them as champions of the oppressed. Perhaps because the storytellers and their audiences were all too aware that they could not really count on either imaginary or real heroes. Real heroes could fail, or die, or, worse, morph into murderous monsters. Also, stories about perfect heroes can get rather boring after awhile.

*(Continued on page 9)*

(Continued from page 8)

Even the ultimate hero of billions of people around the world, also known as God, is hardly without flaws based on an objective analysis of his published adventures in various holy books. Certainly it's no stretch to assert that God was mad (peevish at least) when he drowned most of the world. God may have been rather tipsy when he took up Satan's wager to test the piety of a dutiful worshiper named Job with a variety of terrible tribulations, including the painful deaths of all his loved ones and loss of his extensive property. After Job finally broke and asked why God was treating him so poorly, the maddened deity, sounding as drunk as a lord could be, skipped over Job's question to demand he explain who the Hell was he, a lowly mortal, to question his utterly magnificent creator about anything! Yes, God was rather full of himself and set the standard for many genuine mad tyrants who have infested history, leaving millions dead in their wake.

After several millennia, however, their age is slowly winding down. In ever larger parts of the world, we can question the acts of our leaders without fear of having our heads lobbed off by their lackeys. As Steven Pinker spends nearly 700 pages addressing in *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (2011), our chances of being murdered by another

human being have diminished considerably over the last ten thousand years, and even within the last five centuries. The number and reach of tyrants who can have anyone within their realms executed even for a trifling and unintended affront has significantly dwindled, as has the capacity of rulers to draft men into the military and send them off to conquer new lands or die in the trying. In this modern era, there is much greater recognition of a broader range of rights than ever before.



*The Joker, as portrayed by Heath Ledger*

A greater percentage of people exercise more self-control, not reacting violently to every perceived slight, trusting that civil authorities will make honest and diligent efforts to apprehend and bring to justice those who commit crimes against us or our loved ones so that we don't feel compelled to become vigilantes, with or without capes and side-kicks. Despite near-incessant and all-too-often justified griping about the inadequacies and excesses of our government, most of us trust it enough so we don't feel we have to meet mad-

ness with madness.

Of course, there are still wars, there are still people compelled to hurt and kill others, there is still too much madness. Humanity is unlikely to ever be entirely sane. Perhaps because too many of our ancestors over billions of years had to depend on killing for sustenance in order to survive. As creatures capable of rational thought and of engaging in self-control, we are not entirely slaves to our past or our genes. However, we also cannot predict with absolute cer-

tainty who will give in to their worst impulses and hurt and kill others. I do believe our representative government can and must do more to try to prevent or at least reduce the carnage without transforming society into a police state. At the least, more credence should be

given to that part of the Second Amendment that refers to "a well-regulated militia" instead of entirely ignoring it at the behest of gun-manufacturing lobbyists.

As I write this, yet another mass murder is in the news—this time six murdered at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. However diminished, the madness is out there. We can recognize it, be saddened by it, try to alleviate and avoid it. We must not let ourselves be consumed by it.



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P.O. Box 550591  
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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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All FCFS personnel may be reached via e-mail at [info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

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## First Coast FreeThinker

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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 submissions is the THIRD 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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[Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

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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://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>  
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

## Upcoming Freethought Events of Interest on the First Coast

Saturday	August 18	FCFS Deadline to submit articles for Sept. 2012 <i>FreeThinker</i>
Monday	August 20	FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m.
Sunday	August 26	FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville - 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday	August 28	FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville - 6:00 p.m.
Saturday	Sept. 8	FCFS/JAM Volunteer at Second Harvest - 10:00 p.m.
Sunday	Sept. 9	FCFS Humanist Book Discussion Group, Jacksonville - 2:00 p.m.
Monday	Sept. 10	JAM Meetup at European Street Café in San Marco - 6:30 p.m.
Monday	Sept. 17	FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 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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## Meet Our August Speaker: Elaine Hull, Ph.D.

Carrie Renwick

**W**e warmly welcome Dr. Elaine Hull back to our podium this month! You may remember her talk last summer titled, “The Neurophysiology of Religious Experience,” which was so well received. This month, her talk is titled, “The Devil Made Me Do It: What Light Can Neuroscience Shed on the Problem of Free Will?”

Dr. Hull received her B.A. in Psychology from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and her Ph.D. in Psychology from Indiana University in Bloomington. She is currently serves on the Neuroscience Faculty of Florida State University, as Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience. Dr. Hull is deeply involved with how brain chemistry affects behavior.

The concept of free will is one that keeps cropping up in all sorts of places: courts, classrooms, popular press. Recently, neuroscientists have been seeing if there are ways of testing whether free will is genuine or an illusion, i.e., whether we genuinely start causal sequences with our decisions, or whether those decisions themselves are driven by prior neural events of which we are typically unaware. Dr. Hull will discuss this fascinating set of puzzles and the research that aims to answer the question of free will. In the course of her talk she will illustrate the findings with case studies of individuals whose wills seem to them to be free, but don't seem that way to outside observers at all.

