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October 2014

Volume 13, Issue 10

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October Meeting

- **What:** FCFS Monthly Meeting
- **Who:** Matthew Groe, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Philosophy, Jacksonville University
- **Title:** "Rethinking the Search for Truth"
- **When:** Monday, October 20, 2014, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (doors open at 6:00)

- **Where:** Buckman Bridge Unitarian Church, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244 (Driveway located on Collins Rd., 400 feet east of Roosevelt Blvd.)

Meetings Free and Open to the Public • Plenty of Free Parking

Meeting Description

Are contemporary intellectuals flirting with the irrational when they reject traditional truth talk? By turning to William James, who helped found the pragmatist movement in philosophy, and Friedrich Nietzsche, the philosophical “bad boy” who has been so influential upon postmodernism, Dr. Groe will endeavor to clarify the method in this madness. He will briefly sketch out, in clear and accessible terms, why so many thinkers have become suspicious of the idea that we could ever reach the absolute truth about how reality really is.

About the Speaker

Our October speaker, Dr. Matthew Groe, currently serves as Associate Professor of Philosophy, Division of Humanities, at Jacksonville University. He has been with JU since 2007.

Dr. Groe completed his undergraduate work at the University of Northern Iowa and earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in philosophy at Villanova University. He has two areas of specialization. The first is the pragmatist thought of John Dewey, which disregards any strict separation of theory and practice. The second is the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which scuttles mind-body dualism to emphasize the role of embodiment in perception and thought.

Join us as we rethink the search for truth in what promises to be a thought-provoking meeting. A lively Question & Answer session is sure to ensue.



October President's Message - The Troubled Constitution

Guest Author: David R. Simon, Ph.D.

FCFS President Earl Coggins is taking a few months off from his President's Message responsibilities in order that he may devote the time to a play he is writing and directing, which is scheduled for our November monthly meeting. Thank you to FCFS member and friend David Simon for authoring this feature.

In the summer of 1787, the Philadelphia convention that produced America's Constitution met behind locked doors. From colonial times to the 1820s, voting rights were restricted to white, adult males who met



a property qualification. Frequently, established seacoast areas had maintained their political power in the state legislatures at the expense of the growing western frontier. Some historians believe that secrecy at the convention existed so that the founding fathers could speak their minds openly, make compromises freely, prohibit partisan press coverage, and avoid all chances of a public clamor over difficult issues that might break up the convention.

Yet an examination of the attitudes of convention attendees reveals some disturbing realities:

The vast majority of common people were viewed as “parochial spendthrifts who never paid their debts and who advocated inflated paper money.” Small farmers of the day were plagued by heavy and chronic indebtedness and serious tax burdens. Many people were jailed for nonpayment of debts and/or taxes. In the winter of 1787, a rebellion against repressive debts and taxes was led by Daniel Shays and left eleven dead and many more wounded. This weighed heavily on the minds of the wealthy elites who met at the Constitutional Convention and feared dangerous factions of the masses of people. Some of the remedies for these situations included “the full faith and credit clause,” which allowed creditors from one state to pursue debtors fleeing to other states. Second, the Constitution created a standing military to put down future Shays-like rebellions and protect other interests as well.

The members of the Philadelphia convention who drafted the Constitution were, with a few exceptions, immediately, directly, and personally interested in, and derived economic advantages from, the establishment of the new federal system.

The leaders who supported the Constitution in the states ratifying conventions represented the same economic groups as the members of the Philadelphia convention and in several instances, they were also directly and personally interested in the outcome of their efforts.



Charles A. Beard (1874-1948)
American historian whose emphasis on the dynamics of socioeconomic conflict, change, and analysis of motivational factors in the founding of our institutions, made him one of the most influential American historians of his time.

As Charles A. Beard has noted:

Thirty-seven of the fifty-five delegates were holders of Revolutionary War Bonds, and the taxing powers under the Constitution obligated the new government to pay off all debt incurred from the Revolutionary

War. On the other hand, Treasury Department records of the 1790s listed the names of several prominent Federalist leaders and also those of many other delegates to the Constitutional Convention. Several of these leaders held varying amounts of old Continental notes. These had rapidly depreciated from the outset because the Continental Congress had not secured them with gold or silver.

During the 1780s, there existed a large national debt and few, if any, steps were taken to pay it off or to redeem the Continental notes. They consequently decreased in value to only about twenty cents on the dollar. This produced a rash of speculation, wherein many people bought up the paper money for a fraction of its original worth, hoping that the federal government might someday pay off the bills at a higher rate. The notes were eventually honored at 100 percent, and the financing of this debt consumed almost 80 percent of the federal treasury's receipts in the 1790s. One of the people who learned the debt was to be honored at 100% was the Undersecretary of the Treasury. He had his relatives buy up all the notes possible at 20 cents on the dollar or less. The result was that one of the founding acts of the republic was an insider trading scandal.

Eleven of the fifty-five delegates were engaged in either shipping or trade and benefited from the Interstate Commerce Clause which eliminated state control over commerce, creating a free trade area among the states.

Twenty-four of the attendees of the Convention were bankers and investors and benefited from congressional powers to coin money and regulate its value, establish post offices and postal roads, grant copyright and patent powers, and punish pirates and felons on the high seas and those guilty of counterfeiting.

Fourteen of the fifty-five delegates had speculated in land west of the Appalachian Mountains. Some of these lands contained hostile Native American tribes and a few British forts. The Constitution also gave the federal government the power to raise a military, declare war, and levy taxes. This allowed the new federal government to put down mass riots like Shays' Rebellion and to rouse Indian and British troops from the newly emerging frontier west of the Appalachian Mountains. The land speculators that held claims in these new lands were anxious to make a return on their investment. The new federal troops were utilized to rid these lands of Native Americans and a few remaining British troops.

Fifteen of the fifty-five delegates were slave owners who greatly feared slave revolts and benefited from the establishment of a federal army and navy. The import of slaves was not to be outlawed until 1808, and the Constitution (until passage of the Thirteenth Amendment) required the forced return of slaves who escaped to free states. The slave trade was never abolished by the Constitution; and for census purposes, slaves were counted as three-fifths of a human being. This gave slave-owning states increased representation in the House of Representatives.

The Constitution of the United States



The Constitution was essentially a document based upon the concept that the fundamental private rights of property are outside governmental jurisdiction and beyond the influence of popular majorities. The entire process, from the calling of the Philadelphia convention to the ratifying of the Constitution, was unrepresentative and undemocratic; there was no popular vote on calling the convention; the masses of small property holders were not represented at Philadelphia; and only a small minority in each state voted for delegates to the ratifying conventions.

A small band of highly organized men with particular economic and political interests shaped and directed the drive toward holding a Constitutional Convention.

When the convention was held at Philadelphia in 1787, it was under strict instructions from the Continental Congress only to prepare a list of amendments to the Articles of Confederation; the convention was not authorized to draw up a whole new Constitution, but only to advise the Continental Congress about what it should do to meet the needs of the Union. Therefore, the delegates had exceeded their instructions and were acting illegally.

The delegates at Philadelphia wrote a document that was in their direct economic and political interests; the new government would be in their hands, and its fiscal policy helped directly to enrich the personal fortunes of the original Philadelphia delegates.

The delegates at Philadelphia met in secrecy and not in an open forum that was subject to public scrutiny. Moreover, they never wanted publication of their debates or even the minutes of the convention. All the records were given to George Washington to take home with him at the end of the meeting in the belief that the great patriot of the Revolution would never be challenged for them. Conspiracy historians point out that by getting Washington into their camp, the pro-Constitution forces went a long way in fending off critical opposition.



George Washington
First President
of the United States
(1732-1799)

The kind of government established was in fact not a democracy, although a fledgling democracy had been developing under the Articles of Confederation. The founding fathers wished to curb and restrain majority will and found the notion of popular sovereignty acceptable only when so indirect as to make a mockery of the concept.

The ratification procedure was patently illegal. According to the Articles of Confederation, which was the fundamental law of the land at the time of the Constitutional Convention, any change in the powers of the central government had to have the unanimous approval of all thirteen states as represented in the

Continental Congress. The founding fathers changed this because they knew they could not get ratification under this procedure, so they said that the new Constitution would take effect for all the states when nine of them had registered their approval. The Continental Congress was completely sidestepped, it being asked to send the proposed Constitution along to the states immediately and without any debate or discussion.

The ratification procedure was also clearly undemocratic. The most democratic procedure would have been to have each state hold a popular referendum on the Constitution, with the people merely asked to indicate acceptance or rejection. Instead, the people were not directly consulted in any of the states. State constitutional conventions were held that decided the question of whether to approve the Constitution or not. In most instances, the people were asked to elect the delegates to these conventions, but this was not universal. Under these schemes, it has been estimated that only about 15 to 25 percent of the people even voted in the elections held to send delegates to the state conventions.

Finally, with regard to ratification, it has been pointed out by several historians that in key states, like New York and Virginia, those opposing the Constitution were in a clear majority at the beginning of the state conventions, but in the end were outvoted. What happened? Some say bribery and other illegal or at least immoral tactics were used to push the Constitution through.

On the very eve of the Philadelphia convention in 1787, a short-lived revolt occurred in Massachusetts, where western farmers were up in arms about the high level of taxes that they were required to pay. This was quelled when an army was raised against them by the Bay State and the old tax policy was reinstated. But, even so, the merchants of Boston and state and national political leaders had been given quite a scare. They knew that if the farmers had been more determined, they might well have been able to seize the state capitol. The weak national government had no army or authority to put down a rebellion successfully. Thus when the founding fathers gathered in Philadelphia, they were mostly concerned about the state of the union and the general economic conditions of the day.

Political corruption has been an integral part of U.S. politics from its beginnings. Political corruption is defined as "any illegal or unethical use of governmental authority for personal or political gain." Corruption occurs, then, to accomplish one of two broad goal: material gain or power. Material gain can involve personal enrichment or illicit contributions to election campaigns. Abuses of power involve illegal acts of electioneering, violations of civil and human rights, and, more recently, sexual harassment by the powerful (usually men) of the less powerful (usually women). Despite all the talk about our values of altruism, freedom, religion, and equality, the US remains a corrupt nation, a deeply economic unequal kleptocracy facing its own decline.

References

For additional reading and reference sources, see David R. Simon, *Elite Deviance* 10th Edition (Boston: Pearson, 2012): Chapter 2.

October Olive Garden Social

- Where: **OLIVE GARDEN** on Philips Highway, across from the Avenues Mall. The hostesses will know where we are seated. Proceed directly to our room.
- When: Tuesday, **OCTOBER 28**, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. Social hour at 6:00. Dinner at 7:00. We order from the menu.
- RSVP: E-mail CarrieRen@att.net (or call 904-268-8826) by Tuesday morning, if you plan to attend!

Angelic & Bedeviled Choices

Fred W. Hill

Choices – so many choices to make throughout each day. To hit the snooze button or get up. What shirt to wear. Which way to go when facing the proverbial fork in the road. Oh, wait, there's an angel gesturing that way and a devil pointing towards the other with his pitchfork.

Well, I haven't scarfed down enough magic mushrooms to see that particular vision, but there are plenty of people who believe angels and devils take active roles in our choices, trying to protect us from ourselves or to lead us down to hell.

Pope Francis, for one, unsurprisingly very much believes in guardian angels, stating that they are not imaginary and only our pride prevents us from hearing their voices, upon which we should rely for sound moral advice (The Independent, October 3, 2014, "Pope Francis: 'I believe in guardian angels ... and everyone should listen to their advice,'" Lizzie Dearden). Another prominent Catholic, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, in an interview for New York Magazine, expressed his belief that the Devil, also known as Satan, no longer possesses people much anymore, as he did in days of yore, because he finds it far more lucrative to convince people that neither he nor God exists. (<http://nymag.com/news/features/antonin-scalia-2013-10/index3.html>). Well, how can I possibly disagree with the most prominent religious leader in the world, a member of the highest court in the United States of America, and even my own mother, who likewise was Catholic, believed in guardian angels and is now watching me from Heaven, if another common Christian myth is true? Apparently even when we think we're entirely alone, we are constantly being watched by God, all our dead relatives, and by whispering angels and devils, not to mention the National Security Agency.



Homer Simpson and friends trying to help him figure out whether to do good or bad.

Given the abominable behavior of God as related in the Old Testament, among other sources, including mass murder and ordering others to commit genocide, rape, and theft, I wouldn't be inclined to think any of his angels capable of sound moral advice, especially considering that Satan himself used to be one of God's angels. As the myth goes, Satan, previously known as Lucifer, the lightbringer, got knocked down to Hell because he rebelled against God's authority, as detailed in Milton's Paradise Lost. For some odd reason, God gave Lucifer and all of his other angelic and humanoid creations free will, that he didn't really want any of us to use, and thus gets steaming mad when any of us do. Perhaps God is just morbidly bored and really just wants the entertainment of engaging in a parlor game with Satan to see who can get the most souls, which is a bit tricky because being all-knowing and omnipotent God knows he can win any time he feels like it. Or, of course, all of it is nothing more than a myth made up by humans millennia ago and elaborated on ever since.

Throughout history masses of people have been culturally indoctrinated to believe in the ancient myths, although more than a few take up new myths which either borrow largely from older ones, as Christianity did itself roughly two thousand years ago, or are products of novel fantasies, as with Scientology. Christianity itself is but one of an estimated 4,200 religions, while, as of 2012, Catholicism is one of roughly 43,000 Christian denominations as determined by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity. True, Catholicism is by far the largest denomination, but it was never the only one despite many wars and more benign attempts to make it so. I'd wager a clam shell that Pope Francis believes that if everyone would just heed the advice of those guardian angels we would all be Catholic, although he's hardly as aggressive as his 13th century predecessor Pope Innocent III, who ordered kings to lead crusades to exterminate heretics and infidels. Catholic kings had a choice of obeying the pope or taking the risk of being excommunicated along with their subjects who might rebel against a secular ruler they suspected of leading them to Hell. Protestantism became a popular option for many European kings in later centuries as a way to curb this particular threat popes tried to hold over them, as well as to reduce the amount of wealth within their kingdoms being transferred to the papacy. Henry VIII of England presumably happily listened to the papal angel and opposed Protestantism early in his reign, earning the title Keeper of the Faith, until the devil convinced him that because Pope Clement VII would not grant him a divorce, he should name himself head of the Church in England, reclaim all the English real estate owned by the Roman Catholic Church, switch tithes from the Pope's coffers to his own, divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. Of course, Henry would likely have insisted it was the damned Pope who was taking advice from devils. An angel must have advised Sir Thomas More to openly disagree with his king, and he lost his head in the dispute. Pope Francis would have been proud of Sir Tom.

Pope Francis getting another message from his guardian angel?



Pope Francis can almost be excused for believing in angels and devils – it's pretty much in the job description for priests to at least pretend to absolutely believe in religious non-sense. Justice Scalia's beliefs, however, are much more troubling. Part of his job, after all, is to make decisions in legal cases based on his interpretation of the United States Constitution. Can he really be objective in cases involving atheists and other secularists, whom he seems to believe are under the sway of Satan? During a speech at the Colorado Christian University on October 1, 2014, as reported by Valerie Richardson for the Washington Times, Scalia stated, "I think the main fight is to dissuade Americans from what the secularists are trying to persuade them to be true: that the separation of church and state means that the

government cannot favor religion over nonreligion.” As a Justice, Scalia champions originalism, interpreting written constitutions consistently with what was meant by those who drafted and ratified them, as the best means for judging laws. However, Scalia often appears to ignore the original intent of the drafters and ratifiers of the U.S. Constitution and its amendments when they come into conflict with his religious and political ideology. James Madison, primary author of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, explained before Congress the meaning of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, “Congress should not establish a religion and enforce the legal observation of it by law, nor compel men to worship God in any manner contrary to their conscience, or that one sect might obtain a pre-eminence, or two combined together, and establish a religion to which they would compel others to conform (Annals of Congress, Sat Aug 15th, 1789 pages 730 - 731). Based on James Madison’s own description of the amendment he wrote, he likely would have disagreed with Scalia’s interpretation which led to his joining in the majority decision of May 5, 2014, on the Town of Greece v. Galloway case, determining the First Amendment did not bar volunteer chaplains from opening legislative sessions with a prayer. In a concurring opinion, Scalia and Justice Clarence Thomas held that the case should have been dismissed, because the Establishment Clause did not apply to the states or their subdivisions, leaning towards a strict interpretation even if it means each state could establish a religious dictatorship, but in the infamous Citizens United and Hobby Lobby cases each defining “person” broad enough to give more rights to corporations than to average individuals. Having so far shown no capacity for posthumous communications, Madison can’t debate Scalia on the meaning of his own words, leaving the Justice to listen to the advice of his personal devil and make his choice whether to uphold the U.S. Constitution that upholds the rights of “we the people” or to bring the nation ever closer to a form of corporate theocracy where the sacred rights of zygotes, plutocrats and priests trump everything else.



Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia and an associate.

For myself, even realizing that I can’t be 100 percent certain, I feel at least reasonably sure my choice not to believe in any gods, devils, or other supernatural beings is based on my own rational evaluation of available information and evidence and not on Satan or any of his minions leading me astray. Rather, despite being so much more learned than I am, I’ll dare to presume that Pope Francis and Justice Scalia have been intellectually led astray by ancient fantasies embedded in our global culture. Beliefs that one is obeying the will of god and fighting Satanic forces has resulted in massive bloodletting and crimes against humanity that continue to this day. Admittedly, I’ve made a few bad choices in my life, but none that had truly dire consequences for myself or anyone else, and I have no regrets in choosing to listen to voices of reason of actual people or even my own thoughts, rather than to those trying to convince me invisible and intangible angels and devils continuously swirl about my head trying to lead me to heaven or hell.



Local AU Update - Petition and Facebook Campaign

In this regular feature, you will be kept apprised of the actions of the local AU chapters which include the Northeast Florida Chapter (Jacksonville) and the Clay County Chapter, should you wish to participate. If separation of church and state issues are important to you, we encourage you to join Americans United, on the local and/or national level.

Thanks to everyone who has already signed the petition in response to the e-mail forwarded by Carrie Renwick. If you have not yet signed it, here is more information and another chance.

United Not Divided

The Northeast Florida Chapter (Jacksonville) of Americans United for Separation of Church and State has formulated a petition drive and a Facebook page as part of a larger awareness campaign called **UNITED NOT DIVIDED**. The petition addresses the problem of Council President Clay Yarborough deciding to ignore the compromise reached by the ACLU and then Council President Webb concerning invocations before city council meetings.

The purpose of **United Not Divided** is to convince the Jacksonville City Council members that the explicitly Christian invocations currently being given at City Council meetings are divisive and inappropriate. The Christian invocations should either be stopped; or, a policy of inclusion should be adopted, in which all religious and non-religious worldviews are represented in future invocations. You can show your support of **United Not Divided** in two different ways.

Facebook Campaign

One component of the **United Not Divided** campaign is Facebook. You can send a friend request to the Northeast Florida Chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State's Facebook page dedicated to the City Council Invocation issue. Please share this Facebook page link with your friends, family, and anyone you think would want to support this cause. Or, simply go to the Facebook page and add yourself to it.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/uniteustocareaboutourcity/>

Sign the Petition

The other crucial component of the **United Not Divided** campaign is a petition you can sign. We are urging everyone who cares about this issue to sign the petition and share the link to the petition with your friends and family. (You do NOT need to be a Facebook participant in order to sign this petition. You can sign the petition now at this link:

<http://www.change.org/p/sign-our-petition-in-the-name-of-unity>

According to the Greece v. Galloway decision, if there is to be an invocation before a government meeting, then ALL groups in the community must be given a turn on a rotating basis, including those of us who have no religious world view. We are asking for everyone who cares about this

issue to support the **United Not Divided** campaign and join or support your local chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

The Petition

The City Council of Jacksonville, Florida begins its public meetings with prayers explicitly aligned with one faith tradition. That is a divisive practice, especially in a city where there are many faith traditions, not just one faith tradition.

Raise your voice with ours, as we call upon the City Council of Jacksonville, Florida to discontinue a practice that divides us, favors some of us over others, and tears apart the fabric of our community!

We are asking the City Council to consider three potential solutions to the problem:

1. End the practice of religious invocations at City Council meetings.
2. Allow all groups in town the opportunity to send a representative to offer a message of their choice, whether a solemnizing message, a prayer, or a moment-of-silence.
3. Designate a Council Member or staff person to deliver a prescribed invocation that does not proselytize one religion or denigrate any other religion. We suggest the sample invocation that can be found at www.au.org, under their "Operation Inclusion" tab.

Raise your voice on behalf of unity in Jacksonville. Join with us to let every citizen know that all are equal in the eyes of our governmental institutions! Let us all be proud that we live in a country where a government of the People, by the People, and for the People seeks to unite us as Americans and to reinforce our communal commitment to creating one nation in which we all are made to feel welcome.

Polarity

Joe Varon

The North and South poles are, by definition, "Polar Opposites", as far apart on Earth as they can possibly be. But, although they represent contrary extremes (polarization), they're not really that different. They're both cold and inhospitable, stark and desolate. And nobody lives there!

Why, then, do we (humans) insist on polarizing ourselves? We're not really that different and we don't exist at "polar extremes" from each other. White people aren't really white. Black people aren't really black. So, why do we choose to use these polar opposite "racial" terms to categorize ourselves? And, to make it worse, our Western culture tends to attach extreme (good and evil) characteristics to these colors – white and black hats in cowboy movies, white and black swans in the ballet. Heaven is bright and welcoming and Hell is dark and foreboding. It's not fair. It's not productive. It's not true!



Because we have become so comfortable with the process of polarity, we have a tendency to extend it into other areas of our life as well. The abuse of polarization is evident in our politics. Our leaders and our media exploit its power by insisting on grouping differing viewpoints into categories that are as far apart as possible, into strict philosophical boxes – liberals and conservatives. And, in these boxes, it becomes easier to start painting the good guys (in our box) with pure white robes and the others wielding evil, black pitch forks.

Let's consider skin color. People, more correctly, exhibit a continuum of color. Very few, if any, are at either end of the color spectrum. Almost everybody is somewhere in-between. Even though these "in-betweeners" constitute the vast majority, they become marginalized when they are shoved to the ends of the spectrum so that they can be lumped into the convenient categories. This is especially troubling when people are asked to categorize themselves when filling out standard forms. The limited array of options forces those with mixed heritage to choose one, dismissing their individuality.



**Not black or white or
yellow or brown or red
-- only one human
race.**

Why do we do it? Why is it so important to put human beings into such discrete groupings? It is lazy to ignore the complexity that we represent. It takes less effort to quantify us into easily manipulated (and, often, erroneously understood) data bases. It is lazy to disregard the myriad of subtle physical differences that we exhibit and ignore the diverse range of our viewpoints and opinions.

I realize that it would be difficult – make that impossible – to establish a fair and meaningful set of categories for all our physical and philosophical differences. So, here's an idea – don't.

If categorization leads to polarization, which leads to disrespect and animosity, why not stop? We've grown past diminishing people whose hair color or height or left/right handedness is different from the majority. We don't demonize people anymore who have different tastes in literature or art or music. Let's stop placing such a disproportionate emphasis on color and point of view.

I don't personally believe in Heaven or Hell, but I can't conceive that either place would sort out the incoming souls based on such trivial human differences like race or politics.

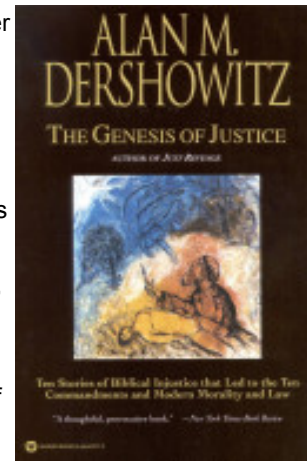


Humanist Book Discussion Group - Jacksonville

- **When:** 2:00 - 3:30 p.m., the first Sunday of each month.
- **Where:** Books-A-Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32225.
- **What:** Books planned for discussion:
 - November 2, 2014 - *The Genesis of Justice*, by Alan M. Dershowitz
 - December 7, 2014 - *The Ancestor's Tale*, by Richard Dawkins

A Harvard Law School faculty member since 1964, Dershowitz is noted for representing controversial and unpopular clients. In addition to tomes on the law and two novels, he wrote a 1987 book prescribing a remedy to save American Jews (*The Vanishing American Jew*). In this further demonstration of his versatility, he turns to 10 stories from Genesis to demonstrate how the Bible provides a basis for contemporary ideas about justice and injustice. The narratives deal with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Dina, Tamar and Joseph. Dershowitz includes a translation of each story, recounts some theological commentaries and offers his own interpretations. He acknowledges the failings of the biblical characters, pointing out that they were guilty of deception, lust, crime, incest, revenge and murder. Their problematic actions highlighted the need for the laws that appear later in the Torah, starting with Exodus and the Ten Commandments. The book concludes with four chapters on "The Genesis of Justice in the Injustice of Genesis." Dershowitz argues that the "bad actions" depicted in Genesis gave rise to the "common law of justice." He addresses the question of theodicy, claiming that the belief in the hereafter solves the problem of why evil exists on earth. Finally, he asserts that the stories he has examined explain the need for judicial codes. The book makes an important contribution by clearly validating this claim, although Dershowitz disregards the stories' significance as a basis for moral and ethical development.

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Link to Book Review: <http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-446-52479-7>

For More Info: Contact Herb Gerson at 12herbert30gerson@bellsouth.net, or call 904-363-6446.

Humanist Book Discussion Group - St. Augustine

- **When:** 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., the second Thursday of each month.
- **Where:** Clubhouse at a private condominium in St. Augustine (Anastasia Island).
- **What:** Book planned for discussion:
 - November 13, 2014 - *Religion for Atheists*, by Alain de Botton
 - December 11, 2014 - *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*, by Sam Harris

What if religions are neither all true or all nonsense? The boring debate between fundamentalist believers and non-believers is finally moved on by Alain's book *Religion for Atheists*, which argues that the supernatural claims of religion are of course entirely false – and yet that religions still have some very important things to teach the secular world.

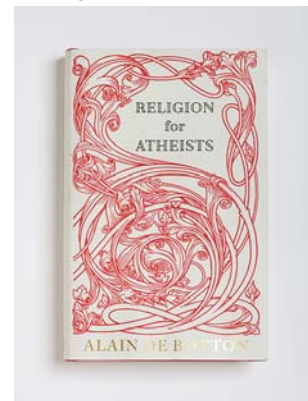
Religion for Atheists suggests that rather than mocking religions, agnostics and atheists should instead steal from them – because they're packed with good ideas on how we might live and arrange our societies. Blending deep respect with total impiety, Alain (a non-believer himself) proposes that we should look to religions for insights into, among other concerns, how to:

- build a sense of community
- make our relationships last
- overcome feelings of envy and inadequacy
- escape the twenty-four hour media
- go travelling
- get more out of art, architecture and music
- and create new businesses designed to address our emotional needs.

For too long non-believers have faced a stark choice between either swallowing lots of peculiar doctrines or doing away with a range of consoling and beautiful rituals and ideas. At last, in *Religion for Atheists*, Alain has fashioned a far more interesting and truly helpful alternative.

Link to Book Review: <http://alaindebotton.com/religion>

More Info: Contact Bill Stroop at bill@strooplaw.com for address, directions, and gate code.



NOTE TO ALL! Books may be found in the library, purchased from local book stores or 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.

NPR Corporate Sponsorship Fund Drive Will Continue Quietly

Carrie Renwick, Fundraising Chair

The First Coast Freethought Society fundraising campaign to keep our National Public Radio (NPR) announcements about the FCFS and our monthly meetings on radio station WJCT, 89.9 FM, will continue, but quietly. For your convenience, this article listing the different ways to donate will appear in each newsletter.

We Made It Three-Quarters of the Way...

A heartfelt thank you on behalf of the First Coast Freethought Society to everyone who has already contributed this year and to those of you who have not, but plan to. We have ended up raising \$4,800 of our \$6,600 goal.

Our plan is to continue with the same number of NPR announcements we are contracted for now, in hopes that membership renewals will be helping soon, and in hopes that folks will continue to contribute throughout the year.

NPR-o-Meter



To Donate on a Monthly Basis

You can now set up automatic monthly donations which you may find very convenient and easy on the budget. You can do this in two different ways.

1. Go to the FCFS website home page, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, where you will find a PayPal button to make an automatic monthly donation to our NPR fund. Automatic monthly donations via PayPal require you to have a PayPal account.
2. Set it up through your online banking system.

To Donate on a One-Time Basis

Should you prefer to donate on a one-time basis, here are the ways.

1. Visit the website, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, where you will find the opportunity to contribute on our homepage. You can pay via PayPal or with any major credit card (via PayPal);
2. Mail a check payable to the FCFS to P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255;
3. Bring your contribution to a meeting or another FCFS event and give it to a board member.

Whichever method you select, you will receive a letter from the treasurer, suitable for your IRS records, acknowledging your tax-deductible contribution.

We will not pester you with fundraising requests until next summer, but please keep in mind that our NPR announcements on the air may well be the most significant project the FCFS undertakes for the community and for the cause of the freethought movement. Please support the cause when you can!

Thank you for your support!

About our newsletter, the *First Coast FreeThinker*

Information for Readers

The First Coast FreeThinker is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers and members 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. Members are entitled to receive hard-copy should they prefer. The e-mail version is encouraged, as the newsletter is optimized for on-screen reading.

Readers are invited and encouraged to share 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 should be submitted to Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org. Contributors who cannot submit manuscripts electronically may send them to Fred Hill, Editor, 1817 Egner St., Jacksonville, FL 32206.

The deadline for time-sensitive material is the THIRD SATURDAY of each month for the following month's issue, but submissions are welcome anytime.

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.

Subject matter must tie in with [freethought](#) or with the [Affirmations of Humanism: A Statement of Principles](#) (found on our website). All accepted submissions are subject to editorial modification. Our style guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Printed manuscript submissions cannot be returned. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for supplying complete references where applicable.

Call for Nominations for 2015 Board

Liz DuClose, Nominating Committee Chair

Would you like to help shape the future of the First Coast Freethought Society, share your ideas, and keep us going strong? If you are interested in taking part in the leadership of the FCFS, contact the Nominating Committee Chair, Liz DuClose, to discuss running for a board position.

It is the responsibility of the Nominating Committee to prepare a slate of candidates they recommend. However, any FCFS member in good standing is eligible to run and is encouraged to do so. Members may nominate themselves or another member in good standing. If you nominate another member, written consent of the individual is mandatory before the nominee's name can be placed on the ballot. Please e-mail nominations and provide any consent necessary to me.

Nominations must be received by October 31, 2014

Feel free to contact me for further information.

E-mail: lizduclose@gmail.com

Phone: 352-260-2880



About the First Coast Freethought Society

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 Buckman Bridge Unitarian Universalist Church, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244. (Driveway located on Collins Rd., 400 ft. east of Roosevelt Blvd.)

Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public.

Other Activities

In addition to regular monthly meetings, we offer:

- two monthly humanist book discussion groups, one in Jacksonville and one in St. Augustine, (current books are listed in each newsletter, or for further details visit: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/bdg>);
- a monthly social and dinner at the Olive Garden (see details in each newsletter);
- coffee and conversation in the fresh air on a monthly basis at Secular Sunday in the Park. We meet the fourth Sunday of each month, 10:00 a.m. to noon, at Losco Regional Park, 10851 Hood Road South, Jax 32257. (see Activities section of the FCFS home page: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/>);
- Dinners for Doubters (when scheduled);
- volunteer opportunity on a monthly basis, currently at Dignity U Wear (visit: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/component/content/article/50/150>); and
- a freethought Yahoo! Group (to subscribe, send a blank message to: jaxfreethought-subscribe@yah oogroups.com).

For information on all these activities, please visit <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, or see the calendar of events at the end of each newsletter and on the website. You need not be a member to attend these activities!

FCFS 2014 Board Members

President - Earl Coggins: 904-521-5039

Vice President - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Interim Secretary - Celia Abbruzzese: 904-419-8826

Treasurer - Stephen Peek: 904-742-5390

At-Large - Herb Gerson: 904-363-6446

At-Large - Fred Hill: 904-358-3610

At Large - Richard Keene: 904-386-1121

Other Appointments

Parliamentarian - Mark Renwick: 904-616-2896

E-mail Secretary - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Committees and Chairs

Editorial - Fred Hill: 904-358-3610

Community Outreach - Celia Abbruzzese: 904-982-8431

Finance - Stephen Peek: 904-742-5390

Fundraising - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Membership - Judy Hankins: 904-724-8188

Publicity - Carrie Renwick: 904-268-8826

Website - Mark Renwick: 904-616-2896

All FCFS personnel may be reached via e-mail at

info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

November Meeting

Carrie Renwick, Program Chair

On November 17, we will be presenting, at the beautiful Buckman Bridge Unitarian Church in Jacksonville, a play in one act titled, "**Waiting for a Donut**" written by Earl Coggins and enacted by David Schwam-Baird and Earl Coggins. You will not want to miss this thought-provoking and entertaining event!

Bequests

*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 can provide the appropriate wording to you and your attorney, depending upon your wishes. Or, just talk to your attorney. Our EIN is 20-1462737.

For further information, contact

Carrie Renwick, P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 or
904-419-8826 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason

- First Coast Freethought Society: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>
- Jacksonville Atheist, Agnostic, Secular Meetup Group (JAM): <http://jaxatheists.com>

- Secular Saint Augustine (SSA): <http://meetup.com/Secular-Saint-Augustine>

The FCFS is a proud member of the [Florida Humanist Association](#) (formerly the Humanists of Florida Association).

Freethought Events on the First Coast

- Monday, October 13 - JAM Session, 6:30 p.m. (See <http://www.meetup.com/jaxatheists/> for details.)
- Friday, October 17 - [Secular St. Augustine Meetup](#) - St. Augustine, 7:00 p.m. (Meetups are generally the third Friday, but you need to visit website to RSVP and for meeting details.)
- Saturday, October 18 - Volunteer at Dignity U Wear - CANCELLED!!
- Monday, October 20- FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville (Rethinking the Search for Truth), 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, October 25 - FCFS October Newsletter Deadline
- Sunday, October 26 - FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville, 10:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, October 28 - FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville, 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 2 - Humanist Book Discussion Group - Jacksonville, 2:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 10 - JAM Session, 6:30 p.m. (See <http://www.meetup.com/jaxatheists/> for details.)
- Thursday, November 13 - Humanist Book Discussion Group - St. Augustine, Anastasia Island, 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, November 15 - Volunteer at Dignity U Wear, Jacksonville - 9:00 a.m.
- Monday, November 17 - FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville ("Waiting for a Donut" - 6:30 p.m.

Directions to Monthly Meeting

Our monthly meetings are held at the **Buckman Bridge Unitarian Universalist Church (BBUUC)**, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244. The address is Manresa, but the main entrance to the church is located on Collins Rd..

- From I-295, take the Roosevelt exit. Go north on Roosevelt Blvd. to the first traffic light which is Collins Rd. Turn right onto Collins. Go 400 feet. The main entrance to the church is located on Collins Rd., on the right.
- Going south on Roosevelt, look for Atlantic Self-Storage on the left. This is the Collins Rd. intersection. Turn left onto Collins. Go 400 feet. The main entrance to the church is on Collins Rd., on the right. (If you come to I-295, you've gone too far, turn around, and you will turn right onto Collins Rd.)

MAP ON FCFS WEBSITE

See accurate map at this link: http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/cms/lib/fcfs_bbuuc_map.gif (Please note, Google Maps, as well as other maps, may not be consistent with the actual street signs.)

FCFS Month-at-a Glance

- Saturday, Oct. 18 - Dignity U Wear - CANCELLED!
- Monday, Oct. 20 - Monthly Meeting – 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, Oct. 26 - Secular Sunday – 10:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, Oct. 28 - Olive Garden - 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, Nov. 2 - Book Group - Jax - 2:00 p.m.
- Thursday, Nov. 13 - Book Group - St. Aug - 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, Nov. 15 - Dignity U Wear - 9:00 a.m.
- Monday, Nov. 17 - Monthly Meeting – 6:30 p.m.

Details in newsletter, e-mail reminders, and on website.

Membership Application



Use this PDF form

or join on our [website](#).

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