

The Minnesota Atheist

Speaking for Reason

The Day of Reason

From noon to 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, May third, Minnesota Atheists hosted the annual Day of Reason rally inside the Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda. This is the seventh year that we have held this celebration of the separation of state and church to protest the Day of Prayer event held at the same time outside on the Capitol steps.

There are many ways in which the separation of state and church is violated, and this year we focused on the denial of equal rights to gays and lesbians, especially when it comes to civil marriage.

Speakers included:

- Phyllis Kahn, Minnesota State Representative,
- Eric Jayne, Minnesota Atheists Associate President,
- Doug Benson, Lead plaintiff of Marry Me Minnesota,
- Scott Lohman, President of Humanists of Minnesota,
- Charles Samuelson, Executive Director of ACLU Minnesota,
- Robin Raianiemi, Minnesota Atheists Associate Chair,
- James Zimmerman, Editor for *The Minnesota Atheist*,
- David Pacheco, Representative from Minnesota United for Separation of Church and State,
- Grant Steves, Former Minnesota Atheists board member.



Steve Petersen hosted the event, and George Kane served as Master of Ceremony. More Day of Reason photos, courtesy of Steve Petersen and Richard Trombley, are on page six.



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**Minnesota Atheists
 practices positive,
 inclusive, active, friendly
 neighborhood atheism in
 order to:**

- Provide a community for
 atheists;
- Educate the public about
 atheism; and
- Promote separation of state
 and church.

MNA Meetup members: 1,148

Life memberships: 30

Honorary Members

- Hector Avalos, PhD
 Dan Barker
 Gerald Erickson, PhD
 Annie Laurie Gaylor
 Dick Hewetson
 Robert M. Price, PhD

Minnesota Atheists Mission Statement

Minnesota Atheists is dedicated to building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs.

ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

If you are thumbing through this month's newsletter looking for the President's Column, you're not going to find it. Since August was busy with other adventures, including a debate with theists in Canada, I agreed to fill in with an "Associate President's Column." I'm going to use this platform to make a public confession followed by a plea for help.

First, the confession: I've been regularly attending church lately and I've been joining others in prayer. That's right; the associate president of the Minnesota Atheists has been going to church...a lot! It's a little bit of a personal existential crisis but before you demand a recall election, please allow me to explain.

As a full time licensed community social worker, I work with many agencies—both public and private. I feel fortunate to be employed at a secular nonprofit but I don't enjoy the fact that I have to collaborate with churches and faith organizations due to their vast influence in the social service industry. Two significant reasons for their influence are because faith organizations get oodles of money from government grants and because there are often many thousands of church congregants in one single neighborhood church that volunteer their time and donate their money to social service causes in the name of their church or faith.

Since church congregants include lawyers, social workers, doctors, IT professionals, and accountants, churches can relatively easily build a large network of money and resources. In fact, an argument could be made that it's shocking that there aren't more churches directly giving back to their community. Unfortunately, because churches and faith organizations hold so much power I often have to meet on their turf with their



Help!

by Eric Jayne

members. In a room where pastors and parishioners outnumber secular-based social workers 10 to 1, I have to hear about how we're "doing God's work" and that we're "modeling the work of Jesus."

Listening to comments that compare my hard work to the fictitious actions of a capricious, infanticidal, maniac is bad enough, but then to begin and end meetings with a prayer to said maniac leaves me wanting to run for the nearest door. Instead, I silently protest by keeping my head up and leaving my eyes open. I know it's not much of a protest, but for now I'll be keeping my atheist identity in the closet while working with people that I don't want to rock the proverbial boat with for the sake of my job.

All right, now that I've disclosed and explained my confession it's time for my plea: If you would like to organize a volunteer event, please let me know so I can help you promote it. I can be reached via email at apres@mnatheists.org. Examples of recent volunteer events include gift collections and donations to Children's Hospital, highway clean-ups, and food donations to a local food bank. Please remember that we will want to volunteer and donate to secular, non-faith organizations.

It truly is a good feeling to help community organizations and neighborhoods. Since we're a partner of Volunteers Beyond Belief, our good deeds are featured on their blog, website, and Facebook page! Help me show our communities that the Minnesota Atheists do humanity's (not God's) work and that we model the work of human kindness (not Jesus).

News and Notes

The Secular Coalition for America ignited a major controversy when it announced that it had hired Edwina Rogers as its new Executive Director. Without question, Rogers brings to the job an impressive inside-the-beltway résumé; the problem is that her work has been entirely for the Republican Party. That party is firmly established in the minds of most organized atheists as the wholly-owned property of the religious right and the champion of undoing the separation of church and state. Rogers was an economic advisor for both Presidents Bush, and General Counsel to the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

So, is Rogers switching sides? Not at all, she told Hermant Mehta:

I think it's a misconception that the majority of Republicans are lined up against the secular movement. As someone who has been an insider within the Republican Party, I'm certain it's not the consensus of the majority of Republicans to have an [overt] influence of religion on our laws. Having said that, no one agrees with everyone they work with on every single issue. In these roles I never worked on anything having to do with issues of religion — I worked primarily on economic issues.

This response aroused the incredulous contempt of blogger P.Z. Myers. If she is right that most Republicans oppose the influence of religion on our laws, why do we need the Secular Coalition for America?

The selection of Rogers is all the more puzzling, since the only members of Congress who can be counted upon to support legislation that shores up Jefferson's Wall are Democrats. Presumably Rogers has many Republican contacts, and the selection committee hopes that she will be able to reach across party lines to form interparty alliances. In the polarized culture of today's Congress, however, what is the likelihood of that? Republicans never vote in support for separation of church and state because there is no constituency for it in their party. Democrats are rarely willing to stand with us, but are

instead eager to show their support for religion to appeal to the “religious middle-ground.” That is why bills like last year's H. Con. Res. 13, reaffirming “In God We Trust” as the national motto, passed the House by 396 – 9 with two congressmen voting ‘present.’ The only time we can expect Democrats to support us is when we are arguing in support of a key Democratic constituency – for equal rights for gays, or women, for example. We can piggy-back a ride on the support of Democrats for their issues. They are willing to provide no more support for separation of church and state than lip service. Legislators of both parties are driven by the political realities of their next election.

One could look at these same facts and conclude that the job of a lobbyist for separation of church and state is hopeless no matter who has the job. Our lobbyists can be successful only when atheists have grown and matured as a political movement, to the point that we are recognized as a voting bloc that can decide — or at least influence — elections. Creating that growth is a job for organizations that can build the atheist community. Organizations such as Minnesota Atheists.

Mitt Romney made a revealing remark at a campaign stop in early May. When a questioner accused President Obama of undermining the constitution, Romney responded “I happen to believe that the constitution is not only brilliant but inspired. I believe the same thing about the Declaration of Independence.” By ‘inspired,’ he could only mean ‘divinely inspired.’ That is a distinctive Mormon doctrine, so it comes as a surprise: Romney has hitherto been careful to avoid stating any religious convictions that are not held in common with Christians. In the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 101:77 Section 101, God said to Joseph Smith:

According to the laws and a constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles [.]



George Kane

MEETING REVIEW: REP. MINDY GREILLING

by Eric Jayne It's not often that the Minnesota Atheists have an elected policy maker featured as the speaker for our monthly public meetings. Many elected officials would consider a Minnesota Atheists-sponsored speaking engagement to be political suicide. For that reason, and since the Minnesota Atheists promote church and state separation, Rep. Mindy Greiling's appearance on May 20th at the Roseville Library was a significant draw for many members.

Rep. Greiling began her presentation by acknowledging a recent email exchange between her and one of her constituents who was in the audience. The email discussion, Rep. Greiling explained, was about the daily practice of prayer and Pledge of Allegiance recitation at the beginning of every floor session in both legislative chambers at the capitol. She said that she would end her presentation by addressing the question with a more thoughtful response than the one she originally gave which, she indicated, amounted to condoning it due to tradition.

Rep. Greiling then took the audience back to Tim Pawlenty's first term as Governor and criticized his appointment of Cheri Pierson-Yecke to the post of State Education Commissioner. She reminded us of Yecke's campaign to inject creationism into the public school science standards and Yecke's push for tax-payer funded vouchers that would have funnelled taxpayer money into private, religious schools. Fortunately, Yecke lost her job after the DFL-controlled senate rejected her confirmation in 2004.

After discussing the Pawlenty-endorsed K-12 education school vouchers, Greiling warned the audience about the bipartisan approved campaign for early childhood scholarships (i.e. vouchers) which the Obama administration supports. These scholarships are financed with government money and distributed to families who can pay for parochial, faith-based childcare. Rep. Greiling said that the scholarships were included in Minnesota's Race to the Top application that gives pre-K education money to select states.

One of the more sobering statistics Greiling mentioned was that there is not a single pro-choice Republican in the Minnesota House. For



comparison, she said that there are 10 pro-life DFLers.

Regarding the marriage amendment, Greiling encouraged concerned citizens to reach out to their city council members and mayors to take an official position against the discriminatory ballot initiative.

Rep. Greiling concluded by addressing the justified complaint from the constituent in attendance. She said that she initially explained that because prayer and pledge recitation was traditional, it was okay. Then she admitted that that was not a good response. She readdressed the complaint by saying that if a bill were to be introduced to end legislative prayer and pledge recitation it wouldn't go anywhere—especially when both chambers are currently controlled by socially conservative lawmakers.

To promote the end of the prayer and pledge recitation, Rep. Greiling suggested making it a broad based initiative during an election year when issues are more fervently covered and discussed. She also suggested that we as individuals, or in organized groups, ask legislators about their positions on prayer and pledge recitations. Finally, she suggested getting students interested in the issue because students of all ages are good agents for mobilization. Politicians typically take more of an interest in what students say and they need to be especially kind to the younger ones.

Even though Rep. Greiling mentioned that she, herself, is not an atheist, said that her two children (in their 20s) identify as agnostic, and she gladly accepted a complimentary marriage equality Minnesota Atheists shirt.

The DFL representative is retiring at the end of her legislative term after serving the residents of Roseville, Lauderdale, and St. Anthony for 20 years.

Photo courtesy Richard Trombley

More Photos from The Day of Reason



FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM

BY GEORGE KANE

Sr s mspbcm cu yckd plsm ptc plewrsmo usbplr, td tewzo hwbffjza
 ubmo sma sppdyqp pc rwxrbobvd pldy szz ck xkbme szz usbplr
 bmpc pld qwxzbf rflcczr cm reyd paqd cu kepspbme xsrbr tewzo xd
 wmtckjsxzd.

*-Xskka Zamm, Qbdpa & Qczbpbfr: Pld Kbelp-Tbme Srrswzp cm
 Kdzbebcwr Ukddocy*

(Answer on page 14.)

Book Review: Inventing Jesus

by Bill Lehto

In *Inventing Jesus*, Paul Gabel, a history teacher, argues that Jesus was an entirely fictional character, with no historical basis, having been completely invented by the writer of the Gospel of Mark. The book is 700 pages long, and covers a lot of ground. Gabel is a good writer, and some of his sections provide succinct and balanced summaries of critical thinking on particular topics: his sections on feminism in biblical studies and on the debate over whether Jesus was apocalyptic are good examples. But these sections are just asides to his main argument about the historicity of Jesus.

Gabel's argument focuses on the fact that there is so little non-canonical evidence for Jesus, since an historical person "would have left more of himself to be discovered *outside* of what the New Testament contains." This is a frustratingly feeble argument for at least three reasons.

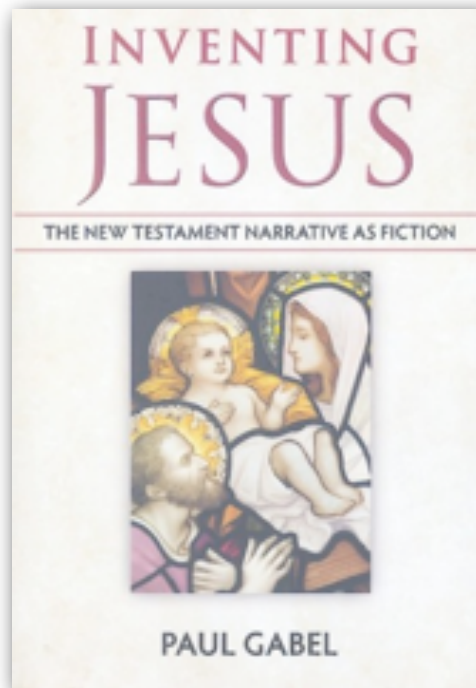
First, a collection of the available writings on Jesus is what the New Testament primarily *is*. For him to then argue that there should be more non-biblical written evidence is circular reasoning. He's stuck in a traditional view of the New Testament as a singular literary creation, as if it has one author, and this is perhaps the biggest flaw with Gabel's book. The New Testament is not, as evangelicals would have us believe, a single unified story. It is a collection of otherwise largely unrelated writings. Paul was not writing his letters with the gospels in mind, as they had not yet been written. When Matthew and Luke wrote their versions of Mark's gospel, they were not envisioning later being put alongside Mark in a book.

Second, this was an oral culture, with only a very small percentage of the population able to write. Writing was a difficult, expensive, and time consuming task, and required training that very few people received. That so much, let alone anything, was written on a single first century Galilean Jew is phenomenal. And that we have multiple, independent sources writing about him, Paul only about twenty years after his death, indicates a very strong oral tradition flowing from an historical source.

Third, the non-canonical sources are actually quite rich, although he barely addresses them and sometimes even claims that there is no non-canonical evidence for Jesus. This is simply false. The Gospel of Thomas (a collection of sayings) is an early, independent source for the Jesus tradition according to critical scholars. Another example is the fascinating and critically important lost Q gospel, which was an independent source for both Matthew and Luke (but unknown to Mark). And this is just to name a few examples.

I have to admit a personal bias against these efforts at trying to prove that Jesus was not an historical person, and at the way atheists like to jump on this bandwagon. This is a marginal position that very few actual historians or scholars would argue for. I can see the temptation of atheists to side with this thinking: what better way to disqualify the Christian myth than to take away the very foundation of it? But if atheists were to actually take

research on the historical Jesus seriously, to actually look at what can be known and what can be conjectured with probability, they might be surprised to find an interesting figure—an iconoclast who challenged the status quo and paid the ultimate price for it. For an interesting take on the historical Jesus from a critical biblical scholar, I recommend John Dominic Crossan's *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*.



**Inventing Jesus: The New
Testament Narrative as Fiction,
by Paul Gabel
702 pages
©2012, Paul Gabel**

May Day Parade

The May Day Parade and Festival in South Minneapolis is one of the most fun things Minnesota Atheists get to do during the year. On Sunday, May 13th, we gathered at Cedar Field at noon, then marched down Bloomington Avenue to Powderhorn Park. We never fail to get a welcoming and enthusiastic response from the crowd!

After the parade, we met at our booth. Many of the attendees felt just as strongly as we do about the importance of the separation of church and state.

32 people took part in our contingent in the Minneapolis May Day festival, either by marching in the parade or staffing our booth:

August Berkshire, Kevan Bohan, Dave Bradley, Jack Caravela, Morgan Christian, Cody Connel, Phil Cunliffe, Annette Gaudreau, Dan Hansen, Greg Hart, Heather Hegi, Josh Hendlin, Joseph Homrich, Laura Hutt, George Kane, Susan Kennedy, Jacqueline Larsen-Burda, Kristin Meyer, Dana Nelson, Kristin Oman, JuliAnne Owens, David Perry, Tom Riddering, Jack Rivall, Neyshaliz Rivera

and two friends, Ramnik Singh, Will Tanberg, Mike Toft, Richard Trombley, Rachel Wilson – and three dogma-free dogs: Blu, Cheyenne, and Lily.

Photos by Richard Trombley



Book Review: Candidate Without a Prayer

by George
Erickson

“If a man is going to publish his life story, he had best take the precaution of leading an interesting life first. Or at least to being a very funny writer or of lacing his pages with wittily unconventional wisdom. Or even being just an exceptionally nice person. Fortunately, Herb Silverman ticks all these boxes, and more.”

With these words, Dr. Richard Dawkins, yes, *the* Richard Dawkins, began the foreword to *Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt*, and Herb deserves every word.

I first met Herb in the nineties, when we served on the board of the American Humanist Association, where his humor, clear thinking, and thoughtful nature helped move our meetings along. However his attire and appearance, which trended toward the hippie end of sartorial splendor, explains why I was shocked to find (in the book) a photo of Herb dressed in an oversized tux for a presentation he gave at Oxford. For a moment, I thought Lincoln had arisen from the grave.

Before reading *Candidate*, I already knew of Herb's efforts in behalf of Humanist and Atheist causes, and that he'd taught Mathematics at the College of Charleston, South Carolina. Still, the opening chapters were a revelation because we grew up in very different worlds – I in an average Northern Minnesota family where religion or ethnicity was never an issue, and Herb in a Philadelphia family where Jewishness was everything. Their Jewishness included a loving, “control freak” mother; her attentiveness to her son included ironing Herb's shoelaces. Thus, when Herb arrived at college, his roommate had to tell him

how to boil water and change a light bulb - skills I was practically born with.

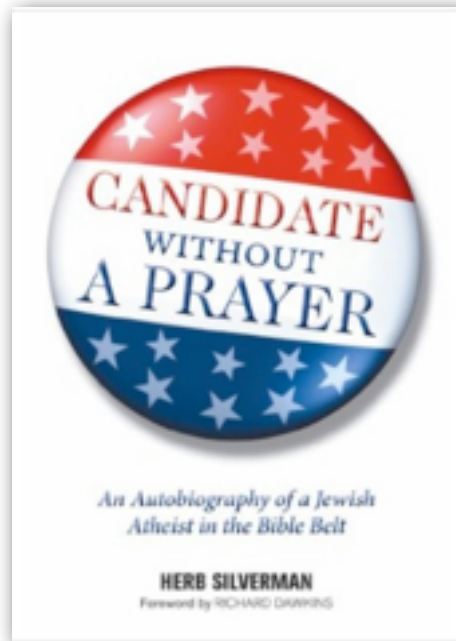
I had expected Herb's pre-college chapters to be a bit of a slog (because mine would have been), but instead, they provided a look into a culture I'd never had a chance to understand. Although the entire book is first rate, those opening chapters were, for me, among the best. This is good, because, as it turned out, *Candidate* is the most expensive book I've ever read. (More on that later.)

I was surprised to learn that Herb had joined a fraternity, then pleased that he'd been elected its president, but I was not surprised that he had been arrested for protesting the Vietnam War, that he had been an advocate for Women's Rights, or that, on learning in 1990 that the South Carolina constitution prohibits atheists from holding public office, he decided to run for governor - which is how he met his future wife, whom he calls his first and only groupie. He lost, but, as Herb puts it, “with politics in my blood... I decided to try to fulfill my lifelong dream of becoming a notary public.” Herb won. Bigotry lost.

In the ensuing years, Herb founded the Secular Humanists of the Low Country, followed by the Coalition for the Community of Reason, which evolved into the Secular Coalition for America. His tireless work for reason and against bigotry makes inspiring reading in the chapters he titles “Discussions on Religion,” “Debates on Religion,” and “Essays on

Religion,” before turning to his first love and his occupation in a chapter titled “Mathematics and God.”

Silverman's *Candidate Without a Prayer* is, a candid, well-written, captivating read, but be warned: If you find *Candidate* as inspirational as I did, it might cost you – like it cost me – because, inspired by Herb's remarkable story, I was moved to donate to the Secular Coalition for America.



**Candidate Without a Prayer: An
Autobiography of a Jewish
Atheist in the Bible Belt,
by Herb Silverman
702 pages
©2012, Paul Gabel**

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

On April 29th, fourteen Minnesota Atheist members participated in the adopt-a-highway program near Rice.

Pictured, from left to right, are:

Clint Buhs, Rachel Wilson, Susan Kennedy, Heather Hegi, Phil Cunliffe, Caroline Brunner, Sarah Bachmann-Lane, Deb Douchette, Sarah's partner, and Rob Taylor.

Not pictured: Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Tom Stavros, and August Berkshire, who took the picture of the participants gathered around his infamous license plate.



May Membership Report

compiled by Steve Petersen

Individual Members: 149, Email newsletter 49 Paper 100
 Household Memberships: 62, Email newsletter 20 paper 26
 Lifetime Memberships: 35 (three members have died), Email Newsletter 14 Paper 18
 Student: 4 Email Newsletter 4
 Sustaining Memberships: 23, Email Newsletter 8 Paper 15

We have 255 memberships, but because multiple people are covered by household memberships that represents 276 active dues paying members. When you add in the donors, the total rises to 357. This reflects an increase since last Novembers of 26 active

financial supporters. We have a Giftworks mailing list of 2,529, with 399 on the current list and 2,130 on the inactive list. The active list includes comps, trials, and paying supporters. Meet Up members 1,143. We now have two Facebook pages. Our Like page has 355 active viewers and in the past month we had 907 views of the page. Our Groups page has 656 members. Our email system, Mailchimp, has 1,646 members. Our last email newsletter had 445 members open the message and 222 opens on our Twitter account for a total of 667 people reached.



Atheists Talk: April and May Radio Report

Atheists Talk is produced by Minnesota Atheists and directed by Carl Hancock. Original music is composed, played, and recorded by Brent Michael Davids. The program is broadcast live from KTNF studios in Eden Prairie every Sunday morning from 9:00 to 10:00 at AM950. Listen to live streaming of all past programs through our web page, www.mnatheists.org. The six month cost of the program to MN Atheists is \$5,320. Your kind donation will be greatly appreciated. Donate online at <http://minnesootatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund>, or by check to Minnesota Atheists, P.O. Box 120304, New Brighton, MN 55112. If you can contribute your time, please write to radio@mnatheists.org.

by Steve Petersen



Recent shows include:

Human Evolution: #164, Sunday, April 22nd.

John Hawks is one of the nation's leading palaeoanthropologists and has lately been working with ancient DNA, human evolution, and an interesting project that is a sort of casting call for extinct humans and their relatives.

Most people know John from his famous internet site, John Hawks Weblog, Paleoanthropology, Genetics and Evolution.

John discussed some of the hottest topics in human origins: Were the Clovis people Solutreans? How many hominids were there in recent prehistory? And, what do both ancient and modern DNA studies tell us about the Neanderthal side of the human family?

Interviewers: Greg Laden and Carl Hancock.
Host: Stephanie Zvan

Horseshoe Crabs and Velvet Worms, #165, Sunday, April 29.

"Living fossil" is a term that might well have been calculated to drive evolutionary biologists insane. Evolution has stopped for no organism on Earth – except those that have gone extinct. However, some plants and animals have proved resilient enough that they live on our planet in roughly the same forms they were millions of years ago.

Richard Fortey is a distinguished writer and palaeontologist who is fascinated by the idea of seeing ancient history in our modern world. On our show, he talked about his latest book, *Horseshoe Crabs and Velvet Worms: The Story of the Animals and Plants That Time Has Left Behind*, which details his fascination.

Interviewer: Carl Hancock. Host: Scott Lohman.

Sex, Genes & Rock 'n' Roll, # 166, Sunday, May 6th.

Much of what we see in our world can seem hopelessly tangled or intertwined. It can be difficult to see from where problems originate and even tougher to think about how to resolve them. This can lead us humans to conjure up some strange worldviews, superstitions, and spurious advice for each other. But our guest for this show

thinks he may have a way to help us sort out some of today's issues: Evolution.

In his book *Sex, Genes & Rock 'n' Roll*, Rob Brooks shows how evolution may help us understand such seemingly disparate issues as political disagreements, obesity, and why men dominate the rock and roll scene.

Interviewer: Carl Hancock. Host: Brianne Bilyue.

Ron Lindsay on Atheists Talk #167 Sunday, May 13th.

Ronald A. Lindsay is the president and CEO of the Center for Inquiry. Ron Lindsay is a philosopher, lawyer and the author of *Future Bioethics: Overcoming Taboos, Myths, and Dogmas*. He blogs on important current issues that affect the atheist and skeptical movements at No Faith Value as part of the Center For Inquiry's blog network "Free Thinking".

During this show, Dr. Lindsay explained his organization's recent popular billboard and bus ad campaign and their petitions to the FDA requesting homeopathic medications be tested for efficacy.

Interviewer: Scott Lohman. Host: Brianne Bilyue.

Meaningful Shoes, #168 Sunday, May 20th.

Once upon a time, a shoemaker had the fun idea of creating a line of shoes that would allow a person to declare themselves an atheist. So the shoemaker, David Bonney, put his idea up on Kickstarter. Lots of people loved the idea, supported the Kickstarter, and got the fun shoes. Everyone lived happily ever after.

Interviewer: Carl Hancock. Host: Scott Lohman.

God and the Folly of Faith, #169 Sunday, May 27th.

Many religious people claim that religion and science are compatible. This raises the question, what do we mean by compatible? A person may hold both

Radio Report continued on page 12.

Religious Liberty Restoration Amendment

by Jason Schoenack

The North Dakota Family Alliance (NDFA) is a Christian-based nonprofit that represents over 2000 individuals, families, and churches. The NDFA is pushing hard to get the so-called Religious Liberty Restoration Amendment passed. The amendment is Measure 3 on the June 12, 2012, North Dakota ballot. The NDFA says Measure Three will restore the legal protections provided by the First Amendment that most North Dakotans grew up with. North Dakotans will not be fooled by outrageous claims by those who desire to restrict our religious liberties. The NDFA claims our religious liberty is a treasured freedom on which America was founded, and now, being threatened by attack, it is time to act. Measure 3 would add the following to the North Dakota Constitution:

“Government may not burden a person's or religious organization's religious liberty. The right to act or refuse to act in a manner motivated by a sincerely held religious belief may not be burdened unless the government proves it has a compelling governmental interest in infringing the specific act or refusal to act and has used the least restrictive means to further that interest. A burden includes indirect burdens such as withholding benefits, assessing penalties, or an exclusion from programs or access to facilities.”

This measure is so ripe for abuse by religious organizations in ND it's scary. Freedom to differentiate on the basis of religion is fine, but freedom to discriminate on the basis of religion is not fine. If this amendment is passed, it would raise the burden test that the ND government must meet before it can pass into law any measure that strains any citizen's or

group's religious beliefs, and would elevate religious privilege to stratospheric heights. The amendment would give pharmacists in North Dakota legal grounds to refuse to sell birth control. Doctors could refuse certain treatments or withhold information about morning-after pills and abortions because of their faith. A Muslim cab driver could refuse to give someone a ride because they are carrying alcohol with them. A Christian apartment owner could refuse to rent to non-Christians, or who are the wrong kind of Christian, or to someone who might be gay. Some religious North Dakotans could use the new amendment to argue that they should be allowed to use illegal drugs, because their drug use is considered part of their sincerely-held religious belief. Resources for "faith-based initiatives" could be prioritized over other, say, "science-based initiatives." A public school counselor could refuse to counsel a gay student, if it conflicted with the counselor's religious beliefs.

Since many North Dakotans don't know about the proposed Religious Liberty Restoration Amendment yet or its potential ramifications, it could easily pass. They might think that anything supporting religious freedom is automatically good, and they may see the amendment as supporting the traditional values that they support.

What will come out of the amendment passing is an additional load on our already-overtaxed court system, and the over-privileging of the conservative Christian groups in our state that are represented by the North Dakota Family Alliance.

Radio Report (continued)

science and religion in high regard, but this tells us nothing about their values as ideas. People can and do hold plenty of contradictory beliefs.

In a sweeping historical survey from ancient Greek science, through the Renaissance and Enlightenment to contemporary advances in physics and cosmology, Stenger makes a convincing case that Christianity held back the progress of science for one thousand years. It is significant, he notes, that the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century occurred only after the revolts against established

ecclesiastic authorities in the Renaissance and Reformation opened up new avenues of thought.

The book goes on to detail how religion and science are fundamentally incompatible in several areas: the origin of the universe and its physical parameters, the origin of complexity, holism versus reductionism, the nature of mind and consciousness, and the source of morality."

During the show, Stenger delved into these and other arguments in his book.

Interviewer: Carl Hancock. Host: Scott Lohman.

Writing Opportunity



David G. McAfee, author of *Disproving Christianity and other Secular Writings* (see image at right), is accepting submissions for his new series: *Atheists Coming Out*.

Submissions should be 1,000-1,500 words and detail a first-person account of de-conversion or “coming out” as an atheist to family and friends. The stories should help provide insight or advice to freethinkers who are still “in the closet” about their belief, often as a result of less-than-understanding loved ones.

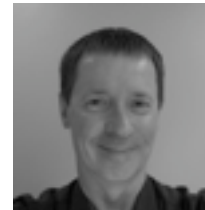
Each approved submission will be published on www.DavidGMcAfee.com and www.GodsWillChurch.com. Five winning submissions will also be included in an upcoming book entitled *Mom, Dad, I'm an Atheist*, which is set to be published by Dangerous Little Books in July. Winners will receive a small cash prize.

Submissions can be sent to McAfee at David@DavidGMcAfee.com with a subject line that reads: “Atheists Coming Out.”

Deadline for inclusion in *Mom, Dad, I'm an Atheist* is July first. Submissions received after this date will still be published online.

May Treasury Report

Compiled by
Chris Matthews



Building Fund			
Ronald Julien	\$108	Dale Howey	\$10
Edward Rang	\$25	Meghan Kosowski	\$10
Sue Halligan	\$15	Total General/Visibility Fund	\$300
Total BuildingFund	\$148		
Radio Fund		Total Income:	\$913
George Kane	\$200		
Steve Petersen, in memory of Nick Pease	\$50	Current Building Fund Total	\$130,489
James Wright	\$35		
James Barri	\$25	Radio Show Fundraising Goal	\$8,215
Prudence Johnson	\$25	(for 2012)	
Arthur Scearcy	\$25	Amount Raised (thru May 24, 2012)	\$2,379
Nancy Ruhland	\$20	Amount Remaining to Reach Goal:	\$5,836
anonymous donations	\$85		
Total Radio Fund	\$465		
General/Visibility Fund		Top Expenses for May	
Pierre Girard	\$100	Saint Paul Saints Game Sponsorship	\$2,000
Lawrence Ronning	\$50	Radio Show	\$820
Michelle Tjernagel	\$42	Newsletter Printing	\$483
Justine Hartz	\$27	Parades, Booths, etc	\$443
Caroline Brunner, in memory of Brian Hartman	\$25	Logo Merchandise	\$426
Sarah Gerold	\$21		
Russell Sussan	\$15		

May Atheists Talk Television Show Report

by Steve Petersen.

Our May cable program was an extension of the Day of Reason event earlier in day. In the episode titled "Marry Me Minnesota," August Berkshire interviewed Doug Benson and his partner Duane Gajewski.

The continuation of the cable program is dependent on finding a new director. Duties include, scheduling guest, preparing DVDs and other items for the taping and mailing out of copies, and taking a class in studio directing from MTN. If you think you might be able fill this role please contact Steve Petersen at 651-484-9277 or spetersen175@comcast.net. All can be viewed on the following cable stations or via iTunes, thanks to Grant Hermanson

If you would like to sponsor our program in your community, or have an idea for a program, or if you have a public access television station in your community, please contact write to dir3@mnatheists.org.

Cable Crew: George Kane, Brett Stenbridge, Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Wendy Steinberg, Grant Hermanson and Art Anderson.

Podcasts: MinnesotaAtheists.org. Available via iTunes. Made possible by Grant Hermanson.

Television Schedule:

Burnsville/Eagan Community Television: Channel 14. Check their web site www.bect.tv for day and times. Sponsor: Kevin Hardisty

Bloomington: Channel 16. Sunday 11:00 p.m. Sponsors: David and Joanne Beardsley.

Minneapolis: Channel 17. Saturday 8:30 p.m. Sponsor: Steve Petersen.

Rochester: Channel 10. Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 7:30 p.m. Sponsor: Jim Salutz.

Roseville, Shoreview, Arden Hills, North Oaks, Little Canada, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Moundsview/New Brighton: Channel 14. Wednesday 10:30 p.m. Sponsor: Shirley Moll.

St. Cloud: Channel 12. Thursday 8:30 to 9:00 p.m. Sponsor Tom Stavros.

Stillwater: Channel 16. Tuesday 7:00 p.m. and Wednesday 9:00 a.m. Sponsor: Lee Salisbury.

White Bear Lake, Hugo, Lake Elmo, Mahtomedi, Maplewood, North St. Paul, Oakdale, Vadnais Heights: Channel 15. Saturday 7:30 p.m. Sponsor: Michael Seliga.



CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

As a nation of more than two thousand faiths, we would quickly find any attempt to subsidize them all or bring all faiths into the public schools on some type of rotating basis would be unworkable.

-Barry Lynn, *Piety & Politics: The Right-Wing Assault on Religious Freedom*



www.mnatheists.org

P.O. Box 120304, New Brighton, MN 55112

CHECK THE WAYS YOU WANT TO HELP ATHEISM GROW

Minnesota Atheists has IRS 501(c)(3) status. All contributions are tax-deductible.

JOIN OR RENEW MEMBERSHIP

_____ \$35 - Individual Membership
 _____ \$90 - 3 years for Individual

_____ \$45 - Household Membership
 _____ \$115 - 3 years for Household

_____ \$75 - Sustaining Membership
 _____ \$200 - 3 year Sustaining

_____ \$10 - Student (newsletter by email; send copy of fee statement or school ID

_____ \$600 - Life Membership

\$ _____ General Expense/Outreach Fund

\$ _____ Building Fund

\$ _____ Radio Program

Other than students, please let us know if you wish to receive your newsletter by e-mail or regular mail. If you prefer e-mail, please add your e-mail address. _____

Check (enclosed) for \$ _____, payable to **Minnesota Atheists**.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Things to Do, Places to Go: A Calendar for Atheists

In addition to these regularly scheduled events, there are many more events every month. Please subscribe to Atheist Weekly e-mail on our web site, mnatheists.org, and join our Meetup group.

Sundays, 9:00am-10:00am *Atheists Talk* Radio. AM 950 KTNF in the Twin Cities or stream live at <http://www.am950ktnf.com>. Contact us during the show with questions or comments at (952) 946-6205 or radio@mnatheists.org.

Sundays, 6:00pm-7:00pm Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous. Men's Center, 3249 Hennepin Avenue South Suite # 55, Minneapolis Meet in the basement. Open to all genders.

2nd Sundays, 1:00pm Minnesota Atheists Little Canada Book Club, Caribou Coffee 3354 Rice St, Little Canada, MN 55126

3rd Sundays, September through May, 1:00pm-4:00pm. Minnesota Atheists Public Meeting. Various libraries. Business meeting, educational program and dinner afterwards at a nearby restaurant.

5th Sundays, 5:00pm (January, April, July, Sept, Dec). Flying Spaghetti Monster Dinner. Old Spaghetti Factory, 233 Park Ave., Minneapolis. Get together for drinks and pasta.

1st & 3rd Mondays 6:00pm Freethought Toastmasters. Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Ave. W, St. Paul 55113. George Kane, dir2@mnatheists.org.

2nd and 4th Mondays, 5:00pm-7:00pm Freethought Dinner Social. Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Avenue South, Bloomington, MN. For more information call Bob or Marilyn Neinkerk at 612-866-6200.

1st Tuesdays, 11:30am-1:00pm Freethought Lunch. Old Country Buffet, County Road B2 between Fairview and Snelling. Bob or Marilyn Nienkirk at 612-866-6200.

4th Tuesdays, 7:00pm Maple Grove Book Club. Byerly's Meeting Room - 12880 Elm Creek Blvd N Maple Grove, MN 55369

Every other Tuesday, 7:00pm Secular Bible Study. Various locations. See the Meetup page <http://www.meetup.com/Secular-Bible-Study/>.

1st Wednesdays, 7:00pm Minnesota Atheists Burnsville Book Club. Davanni's, 14639 County Road 11, Burnsville MN 55337. Meet in the Party Room.

3rd Wednesdays, 11:30am-2pm Lunch at Dragon House Restaurant. Dragon House Restaurant 3970 Central Avenue Columbia Heights. Private room reserved. Bill Volna 612-781-1420

3rd Wednesdays, 6:30pm Minnesota Atheists Monthly Board Meeting. Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Avenue, St. Paul, 55113. Open to all members. George Kane, dir2@mnatheists.org.

1st Thursdays, 6:00pm-9:00pm *Atheists Talk* television show. MTN Studio A, 125 SE Main Street, Minneapolis. Steve Petersen at 651-484-9277.

To sign up for the Atheists' Weekly Email (AWE), send a request to awe@mnatheists.org.

To sign up for Minnesota Atheists Meetups, visit atheists.meetup.com/493.



MN Atheists 2012–13 Goal Setting Meeting

On Saturday, July 8th, Minnesota Atheists will hold a Goal Setting Meeting. This will be similar to the "2011 Goal Setting Meeting" held last year. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Review past MN Atheists activity from January 2011 to May 2012, and whether we have met the goals,
- A round-table discussion of 2012 and 2013 goals,
- And a round-table discussion of what committees we need going forward and their goals.

This will be an excellent opportunity to touch base with everyone, see that everyone knows what our organization is doing as a whole, and to have a clear sense of where we are headed in the coming year.

The meeting will be held at the Larpenteur Estates party room, located at 1276 Larpenteur Avenue in St. Paul at 1:00. The meeting is open to all dues paying members.

“Simply being taught one religion and no others early in life is not a reasonable justification for believing that your religion is best and makes more sense than all the others”

-Guy P. Harrison, *50 Popular Beliefs that People Think are True*, page 252 (©2012)

**Check us out on the radio!
AM950 on Sundays at 9:00 a.m.**