

The Minnesota Atheist

Fun Myths About Evolution Explored



In honor of Charles Darwin's birth month, our February speaker will be Sehoia Cotner, who will discuss "Fun Myths About Evolution Explored."

Evolution is among the most contentious topics in our society, in part due to key misconceptions about the theory. Some of these are iconic (humans evolved from chimpanzees, survival of the fittest), some more esoteric (evolution is a belief system, Darwin discovered evolution, evolution is a random process). We'll discuss evolution itself, some key misconceptions, and potential negative consequences of falling victim to evolutionary myths.

Sehoia Cotner is an Associate Professor of Teaching in the Biology Program at the University of Minnesota. Sehoia teaches General Zoology, The Biology of Galápagos, Coral Reef Ecology, and The Evolution and Biology of Sex. Her research interests include strategies for teaching science to non-scientists, as well as barriers to teaching evolution.

She is the co-author of three books: *Arguing for Evolution: An Encyclopedia for Understanding Science*, *Chronology of the Evolution-Creationism Controversy*, and *Understanding Galapagos*.

You can read a Minnesota Public Radio interview of Cotner at minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2011/11/16/cotner.

If You Go...

When
Sunday, February 17, 2013

Where
Southdale Library
7001 York Avenue South
Edina

Schedule

1:00-1:15	Social Time
1:15-1:45	Business Meeting
1:45-2:00	Break
2:00-3:30	Clement Presentation
4:00-	Dinner at Q. Cumber's

IN THIS ISSUE...

- Board of Directors nominees' statements.....see page 4
- UU's and You.....see page 8
- A Letter to the Editor.....see page 9
- Cancel My Subscription to the Resurrection.....see page 13



IN THIS ISSUE...

February Meeting	1
President's Column	3
Nominees for the Board	4
January Meeting	6
News and Notes	7
Unitarian Universalists?	8
Freethought Cryptogram	8
Letter to the Editor	9
Letter from the Bridge	10
Dec/Jan Radio Report	11
Treasury Report	12
Cancel My Subscription	13
January TV Show Report	14
Things To Do....	15

**MINNESOTA ATHEISTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

board@mnatheists.org

President: August Berkshire
pres@mnatheists.org
612-338-4548

Associate President: Eric Jayne
apres@mnatheists.org

Chair: Heather Hegi
chair@mnatheists.org

Associate Chair: Robin Raianiemi
achair@mnatheists.org
612-872-0574

Treasurer: Chris Matthews
treas@mnatheists.org
763-476-3989

Secretary: Jill Carlson
sec@mnatheists.org

Director-at-Large: Caroline
Brunner, dir1@mnatheists.org

Director-at-Large: George Kane
dir2@mnatheists.org
651-488-8225

Director-at-Large: Steve
Petersen, dir3@mnatheists.org
651-484-9277

The Minnesota Atheist

Published by Minnesota Atheists,
P.O. Box 120304
New Brighton, MN 55112
612-588-7031, info@mnatheists.org
www.MinnesotaAtheists.org

Editorial Board, editor@mnatheists.org

James Zimmerman, editor
zgoatee@gmail.com

Chief Photographer: Richard Trombley

Membership/change of address: Steve
Petersen, address@mnatheists.org,
651-484-9277

Public Relations: Emily Matejcek,
pr@mnatheists.org

Atheists Weekly Email (AWE): George
Kane, awe@mnatheists.com

Cable: Steve Petersen,
cable@mnatheists.org, 651-484-9277

Webmaster: Grant Hermanson
web@mnatheists.org

Podcasts: Grant Hermanson,
podcast@mnatheists.org

Copyright 2013 Minnesota Atheists.

A production of
Minnesota Atheists Press.

Minnesota Atheists is an affiliate of
Atheist Alliance of America, Atheist
Alliance International, American Atheists,
American Humanist Association, Council
for Secular Humanism, and International
Humanist and Ethical Union.

Submit material for the newsletter to
editor@mnatheists.org. Submissions
may be edited. Publication is not
guaranteed.

**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: 1,335

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.

President's Column

Atheists and Humanists Together?

August Berkshire

A personal long-term goal has been to persuade enough members of each group that Minnesota Atheists should merge with the Humanists of Minnesota.

The roots of our groups started independently, and with no knowledge of each other, in the mid-1980s. Back then it made more sense to have two groups. Atheists (inspired by Madalyn Murray O'Hair) were viewed as quite militant. There was also the false equivalency of atheism with communism and being unAmerican. Consequently, many humanists were afraid of publicly using the word "atheist." Moreover, humanists wanted a group that represented more than what they were against (belief in the supernatural).

For their part, atheists viewed humanists as not having the courage of their convictions to come out of the closet as atheists – something that was much more difficult for many people then than it is now.

Today, as both movements have grown and matured, we find the differences between atheist and humanist groups to be dwindling. Atheists realize that discrediting arguments for the supernatural is just the first step. We are engaging in charities, family activities, and social causes beyond state/church separation.

Humanists are finding that the root cause or enabler of many social problems is religion, and that it is not enough to merely criticize the extremists – we must strike at the very root. *Any* supernatural belief lays the groundwork for *all* supernatural beliefs. Moreover, "atheist" has become a much more accepted word in society, especially among young people. The American Humanist Association has, within the past five years, embraced the word "atheist," calling it the elephant in the room that cannot be ignored.

If you compare the attendees of typical meetings of Minnesota Atheists and the Humanists of Minnesota, you will find that the former tend to have a younger average age.

Yet both groups prosper and many people, such as my partner Rachel and I, are members of both groups. I even served

on the Humanists of Minnesota board of directors for a couple years and received a prestigious award from them. I never met a single member who wasn't a compassionate atheist.

The advantage of a merger is obvious: economies of scale for like-minded groups. We would only need one board of directors, one newsletter, one website, one TV show, one Meetup group, and, ultimately, one building.

Our "Atheists Talk" radio show demonstrates that atheist and humanist ideas can happily coexist without any conflict at all. At our shared summer picnics and winter solstice parties, members of both our organizations get along as if we were already one big group.

The new group could be called Minnesota Atheists and Secular Humanists (MASH). Or, if the Minnesota Skeptics would like to join us: Minnesota Atheists, Skeptics, and Humanists (MASH), which would parallel the group at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities: Campus Atheists, Skeptics, and Humanists (CASH).

In order to make sure that this idea had sufficient support, I would suggest that it pass by a supermajority of each group's membership – say 75%.

In my almost 30 years of atheist activism, it seems to me that virtually every schism, split, or separation in the freethought movement was based on personalities, ego, desire for power, or quibbles about a name – not on atheist/humanist philosophy. Can we rise above our differences for the greater good of coming together under the banner of a unified atheist and secular humanist organization? Should we? Or are there rational obstacles that are just too great to overcome?

Nominees for the Board of Directors

Board of Directors elections will be held immediately prior to our monthly meeting on Sunday, February 17th.



Eric Jayne
Nomination for
President

I am honored to be nominated for president of Minnesota Atheists, especially since the nomination came from our current president, August Berkshire. He has been a terrific mentor during my previous two years on the board and I've learned a lot from our other senior board members.

One significant goal I have is to continue to broaden our organization's community outreach efforts. We are currently working with the St. Paul Saints to offer another "Night of Unbelievable Fun" and we are organizing another big conference. This kind of outreach does well to promote ourselves and reach out to local freethinkers.

I am also excited about the enthusiasm we've generated in our efforts to reach out to those in need of general basic support, such as the meals we prepare every month at a local homeless shelter. I'm looking forward to increased participation in volunteer events by supporting others with their outreach ideas.



Stephanie Zvan
Nomination for
Associate
President

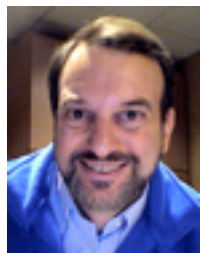
I have been involved with the Atheists Talk radio show for several years as host and interviewer. I blog at Almost Diamonds on the Freethought Blogs network, using that platform to promote Minnesota Atheists, and I occasionally speak at events across the country. I am already working with board members to make sure our conference this summer is as good or better than last summer's. Additionally, as associate president, it would be my priority to increase our collaboration with the national secular groups where our interests coincide and to make sure that people find value in being a member of Minnesota Atheists on top of attending our events.



Heather Hegi
Nomination for
Chair

I have enjoyed serving as chair of Minnesota Atheists this last year, and am honored to have been nominated again. I am a passionate atheist who sees religious thinking as harmful to society, suppressing science, reason, and freethought. Since religions are widespread, I think this organization is an important voice of reason and it lets people know that it's okay to be an atheist.

I have an agnostic partner who isn't as involved as I am, but I'm glad to have his support. Recently, I joined Freethought Toastmasters to help improve my speaking skills; I have enjoyed participating in their meetings and hearing speeches given by other atheists. I hope to become even better at performing my tasks as chair this coming year.



Andy Flamm
Nomination for
Associate Chair

I have previously served as treasurer and as a director, and I am running for associate chair because I like the direction Minnesota Atheists is moving and want to contribute to its further growth and improvement.

Having been a small-business owner for almost 30 years, I have learned a great deal about goal-setting and organizing people. As associate chair, I will assist the chair in managing the activities of our group, planning for our future and furthering our mission of education, outreach and community. I will work to maintain our positive image and to be inclusive of atheists of all backgrounds and political opinions.

Thank you in advance for allowing me the privilege of serving our organization in the coming year.

**Jill Carlson
Nomination for
Secretary**



Hello! I am excited to serve on the MN Atheist Board as Secretary. MNA topics that interest me include secular parenting, feminist philosophy, community service and interfaith dialogue. I have been casually involved in local atheism since the late 1990s and started participating in MN Atheists events in 2010. In addition to serving on the MNA board, I am also an active member of a Unitarian Universalist Church in Bloomington. Professionally, I work as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and I live in Burnsville with my husband, Kevin, and our son, Wesley.

My active involvement with Minnesota Atheists began in late 2010 as assistant treasurer, and I have served as treasurer since 2011. I enjoy working with numbers and computers, so this role suits me well. I also enjoy working behind the scenes to support an organization that works toward a future that is better for everyone in Minnesota. I appreciate the opportunity to continue serving as treasurer for the upcoming year.

**Christopher Matthews
Nomination for
Treasurer**

Nominations for Directors-at-Large



August Berkshire

As I finish my three-year term limit as president, I am grateful for the many people who have also been leaders and contributors, both on and off the board. I am excited to see new leaders stepping forward. I also think there is value to having some longtime activist board members with “institutional memory.” This is not to ensure that things are always done the same way as they have been in the past, but to add context to any new directions we may take. Our organization belongs to our members and I ask for your vote of confidence for the future.



Phil Cunliffe

I grew up in Edina, MN and graduated from Edina High school in 1982. I moved back to Minnesota in 2008 after spending 10 years living in the Chicago area. I have been an atheist for more than 30 years. In MN Atheists I have found a group that shares the values that I consider important. During the past year I have participated in many events as a member that have helped show a positive view of atheism. I am honored to be asked to serve on the board. I will continue to attend events that promote atheism and positive values to the community.



George Kane

During my 17 years of membership I have served Minnesota Atheists in a variety of roles. I have served on the board of directors for 15 years, eight of those as secretary, but also including a term as president and two years as chair. My other service for the organization includes a variety of outreach beyond our modest community. I am technical director on Atheists Talk cable TV as well as a frequent interviewer. I write the News and Notes column on church/state separation issues, the cryptogram, and other articles as needed for the Minnesota Atheist newsletter. In 2000, I started a Freethought Toastmasters Club in Saint Paul, the second Toastmasters Club in the nation formed especially for the development of Freethinkers. I have been the organizer for many social events such as the spaghetti dinners. Every Friday I send out Atheist Weekly E-mail, which I began over a decade ago.

January Meeting Review

by Shirley Moll and Steve Petersen.

At our January meeting we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of Roe v Wade. Our speaker, Reverend Kelli Clement, covered the history of reproductive rights challenges and changes in the political climate in Minnesota, other states and nationally. The first challenge she discussed is the need to be prepared if Roe is overturned by the Supreme Court. Clement related how many different states have enacted laws with the goal of the courts overturning the landmark ruling. This would move abortion laws back to the states. In states where abortion is outlawed, reproductive rights activists would again need to decide whether to set up underground operations to give women safe access to abortion needs. History tells us abortion does not go away; if it is illegal it just goes underground.

She expressed support for all the secular reproductive organizations, such as NOW, NARAL, Planned Parenthood, and others for providing full reproductive services. Clement also pointed out the only opposition to abortion services comes from religious groups and organizations. Clement sees her role representing the Minnesota Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice to re-educate religious people on reproductive justice and particularly countering the religion-based crisis counseling centers that are designed to misinform women on abortion.

One of the most important points was how the response of citizens to terminology and abortion services is changing. Clement stated that about 20% are strongly opposed to all abortions while an equal 20% support full reproductive choices. There are



about 60% in the middle with a variety of opinions. The center is younger and has not lived through a time when abortion was illegal. They do not respond to outdated labels, such as “pro-choice” and “antichoice.” Many in the 60% react positively to the reproductive justice argument.

Clement ended by stating reproductive justice means providing women a full range of options, including non-coercive counseling, contraception, and abortion services. The objective should be for women - not government nor the churches - to control whether they will become a parent. This leads directly to the goal for each child to be born into a home where they are loved, wanted, supported, and given every chance to succeed. A lively question-and-answer session followed.



photos courtesy of Richard Trombley

The Day of Reason

This year the Day of Reason will be on Thursday, May 2nd from noon to 1:00 pm in the State Capitol Rotunda. If you are a veteran or are currently on active duty and would like to be honored by Minnesota Atheists, please contact Steve Petersen at spetersen175@comcast.net or call 651-484-9277.

News and Notes

by George Kane I was pleased to learn before this election that my polling place had moved from Como Park Lutheran Church to the North Dale Recreation Center, even though it is a couple of miles from my home. When I lived in California, I always voted at a public school. I don't know if California ever uses churches as polling places, but I found the practice here in Minnesota to be an unsettling mix of the sacred with the civic act of voting. This election provided considerable evidence that it is time for Minnesota to end the practice. Many churches are activists in political issues these days, and cannot be trusted to provide a politically neutral environment.

At St. John Vianney Catholic Church in South Saint Paul, a banner proclaiming "Strengthen Marriage, Don't Redefine It" hung over the voters' entrance. It was a campaign sign, pure and simple, to display the church's endorsement of the constitutional amendment on the ballot to ban same-sex marriage. Another Catholic Church in nearby West St. Paul displayed a prayer, written by Twin Cities Archbishop John Nienstedt, imploring Catholics to defend God's plan, for marriage to be exclusively between one man and one woman.

Both of these incidents violated the Minnesota statute requiring that campaign materials must be at least 100 feet away from a polling place. The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis claimed that the incidents were innocent oversights that were corrected when they were pointed out by election officials, but they were displayed for hours. If churches cannot be trusted to follow the rules, they should not be used as polling places.

No one should be surprised that the spokesmen of the religious right wasted no time in blaming the December 15 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut on atheists.

- Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich: "When you have an anti-religious, secular bureaucracy... seeking to drive God out of public life, something fills the vacuum."

- Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee: "We ask why there is violence in our schools, but we have systematically removed God from our schools. Should we be so surprised that schools would become a place of carnage?"
- James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family: "I think we have turned our back on the Scripture and on God Almighty and I think he has allowed judgment to fall upon us."
- Bryan Fischer, spokesperson for the American Family Association: "We've kicked God out of our public school system. And I think God would say to us, 'Hey I'll be glad to protect your children, but you've gotta invite me back into your world first. I'm not gonna go where I'm not wanted. I am a gentleman.'"
- William J. Murray, head of the Religious Freedom Coalition: "In the vast majority of America's public schools, the authority of God has been replaced with the authority of the iron fist of government. Morals? Without the authority of God, there are no morals, and none are taught in the public schools today. The ethics that are taught are situational, perhaps the same situational ethics that led to the logic that caused the tragic shootings in Newtown."

These accusations are purely ideological and are not substantiated by any facts from our nation's history of mass killings. Massacres occur in privately owned movie theaters as well as public schools. In the 61 mass murders in the US in the last 30 years, there has not been an atheist perpetrator. The claim of Christian moral superiority over atheists is without basis. People who advance beyond the folly of god belief base their moral decisions on the consequences in peoples' lives.

Is it even possible that these people believe what they have said? Probably not. They are just reflexively attacking atheism to sharpen national division. They have no qualms about their brazen opportunism at what should be a time for coming together and national healing. Unfortunately, they are sure to succeed in stirring their followers to greater anger.

Unitarian Universalists?

In the early days of the atheist/humanist movement, we looked to the Unitarian Universalist (UU) churches for some of our new members. This made sense because, until our groups formed, the UU churches were the most nontheistic organizations around. They offered humanistic programs and tended to use words like “god” and “spirit” metaphorically. Some of their members embraced a more openly atheistic group like ours and joined us.

Today, as the UU membership ages and dwindles, we find them looking to our atheist and humanist groups for members. But the problem is is that atheists and secular humanists are neither Unitarians (believing in one supernatural god) nor Universalists (believing in supernatural salvation for all). So, while politically most of us would vote the same

by August Berkshire

way most UU members would, UU churches really aren't a good fit for most atheists.



A longtime friend and colleague, and a member of a local UU church/society that has had atheist ministers in the past, told me that their organization was filled with atheists and could well become “Atheist Central.” This got me to thinking:

In the past I had assumed that Minnesota Atheists might well purchase a building from a small extreme religious congregation that ran out of steam. (Jehovah's Witnesses buildings are ideal for our purposes.) But if atheists are

UU continued on page 9.

FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM

BY GEORGE KANE

Bivi, nmygt mvryif qtl nykm myq ahbkmth'q nyot
(sbi'k vqj), tzvxpgvkts bi kmt xvhetk. Kmt Gbhs,
atyif v qbwtmvmk vivg styku, jitn kmvk trti v sva bo
xgpa qbsv nbpgsi'k ftk kmvk piqyfmkgu qkvvi bpk,
vis yiqkvikgu jygts Bivi obh myq qgbeeu vyw.
(Ftitqyq 38:9-10)

-Whq. Atkku Abnthq, Vwthyxv'q Atqk Xmhyqkyvi

Cryptogram answer appears on page 14.

Letter to the Editor

In his President's Column in the January issue, August Berkshire wrote that support for the pro-choice position on abortion is the only exception to Minnesota Atheists' rule that its public policy positions are based upon "atheism and separation of state and church." But the opening paragraph of that policy makes it clear that the board of directors does not consider it to be an exception:

The right of women and couples to plan their reproductive lives is the target of a broad range of continuous legal attacks by conservative Christians. Their tactics to end abortion rights include local, state, and federal legislation and excessive regulation; campaigns to stack the judiciary with opponents of abortion; and constitutional amendment. They also support legislation and FDA regulations to ban or restrict access to varieties of contraceptives. Minnesota Atheists opposes these efforts because of our principle that public policy should never be based on religious values and superstitious thinking.

The justification that August gives for his declaration is that "*the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) and the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) recognize that abortion is not strictly a state/church issue and have not taken a stance on it.*" If this is indeed the policy of these groups it is not stated explicitly, and is more honored in the breach than the observance. The FFRF, in an open letter to Catholics, asked "Why are you aiding and abetting a church that has repeatedly engaged in a crusade to ban contraception, abortion and sterilization, to deny the right of all women everywhere, Catholic or not, to decide whether and when to become mothers?" Secular.org states on its *Issues* page that "A patient's health is compromised and his right to control his body is taken away when a doctor or pharmacist can deny treatment based on personal beliefs, not professional opinions," and that government should not base "women's health care" on religious belief. In the political discourse of the last 40 years, "women's health care" has become a synonym for abortion rights. But if the support for abortion rights by these two organizations is not expressly stated, the Atheist Alliance of America, which represents 33 atheist organizations across the country, has adopted a public policy position specifically upholding a woman's right to choose abortion.

Indeed, secular anti-abortion organizations have been politically insignificant. The best argument for the existence of secular opposition to abortion rights is that many Americans have a moral intuition that fetal rights arise at some indefinable point. To many Americans, the assertion that a fully developed offspring moments before natural birth has no right to legal protection seems absurd. Even pro-abortion rights groups join in the argument over the stage in fetal development at which a valid state interest in protecting the fetus begins. The claim that an ovum has that same right from the moment of fertilization, however, can only be argued from religious dogma.

-George Kane

Unitarian Universalists? (continued)

the majority of a UU church/society, maybe we should see about officially taking it over and renaming it an Atheist-Humanist Center. This should, of course, be a friendly takeover, supported by the overwhelming number of their existing members.

But before we contemplate doing that, we should ask ourselves why there are any atheists in UU societies at all. Part of it may be habit: some atheists started going there before

they found out about our group. Part of it may be proximity: a UU church/society is closer to where they live than most of our activities. But I think a big part of it is that UU societies are more family-friendly or inviting than we have been up to this point. It's not that we have been anti-family; it's just that we haven't made a special effort to accommodate those members who have children (for example, by offering child care at meetings). I hope this will change in the future; I know we have members who will help with this.



December 19, 2012

Minnesota Atheists
PO Box 6261
Minneapolis, MN 55406-0261

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you so much for choosing The Bridge for Youth as the beneficiary of this year's Freethought Winter Solstice Celebration and organizing a winter solstice donation drive to donate the toiletries, paper items, a laundry basket, towels, sheets, blankets, shoes, socks and more that we received on Sunday, December 16, 2012. The runaway and homeless youth at The Bridge for Youth face many challenges, but your generosity will make a substantial difference in their lives this year.

Whether young people stay with us for a few hours or a few days, The Bridge for Youth is there at a critical moment in their lives. We provide the support services, food, and shelter that they need to stay off the streets and eventually reunite with their families or learn to live on their own. Providing these resources all day, every day at no cost is an incredible achievement – and we could never do it without strong community support.

You play a crucial role in showing youth that this community believes in them and thinks they are a worthy investment. Thank you for supporting youth and families when they need it most. Thank you for believing in youth and families, and in the work of The Bridge for Youth.

Sincerely,

Julia Holtemeyer
Development Coordinator

*The Bridge for Youth is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization,
to which contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law;
no goods or services were provided in exchange for this donation.*

PS–Would you like to receive e-mail updates from The Bridge? Email info@bridgeforyouth.org!

THE BRIDGE FOR YOUTH
WWW.BRIDGEFORYOUTH.ORG

1111 WEST 22ND STREET
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55405

TEL 612.377.8800
FAX 612.377.6426

Atheists Talk: December/January Radio Report

A*theists Talk* is produced by Minnesota Atheists and is directed by Carl Hancock. Hosts include Carl Hancock, Brianne Bilyue, Scott Lohman, Greg Laden, David Pacheco and Stephanie Zvan. Both Stephanie and Brianne upload the podcasts to the web site. The radio program is live every Sunday morning from 9:00 to 10:00 at AM 950 KTNF studios in Eden Prairie. Live streaming can be done through our web page at www.mnatheists.org. Original music is composed, played and recorded by Brent Michael Davids. The six month cost is \$5,320.00. Each donation to support the program is greatly appreciated. Please consider becoming a monthly Sustaining supporter. To donate just send in a donation to our POB or online at <http://minnesotatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund>. Thanks to Brianne Bilyue we have an *Atheists Talk* Facebook page and [Twitter.com/atheiststalk](https://twitter.com/atheiststalk).

by Steve Petersen



All past programs can be accessed via MNA web page <http://minnesotatheists.org/news-and-media/podcast>. If you are interested in helping on the radio program please send a note to radio@mnatheists.org

Charles Darwin's Notebooks, Atheists Talk #199, December 30th, 2012

Dr. John van Wyhe has a passion for spreading the good word from the good books - the writings of Charles Darwin, that is. He is an historian of science who has spent his career studying the work of Darwin and Wallace. He has written numerous books, articles and reviews, and has presented over 50 unique lectures on the subjects of evolution, history of science and Charles Darwin.

For this day's show, Dr. van Wyhe discussed his project "Darwin Online," the largest and most widely consulted collection of the writings of Darwin ever published. He explained why he challenges whether Darwin kept his theory secret for twenty years, and talked about whether *The Origin of Species* raised as much of an uproar when it was first published as it does today.

Evolution's Witness: How Eyes Evolved, Atheists Talk #200, January 6th, 2013

Eyes are a marvel of evolution that first appeared in trilobites during the Cambrian explosion

approximately 543 million years ago. Because of their complexity, many creationists see eyes as a weak point in evolutionary theory. They make an argument of irreducible complexity: that if any single part of the eye was missing it wouldn't function.

But as Dr. Ivan R. Schwab explains in his new book, *Evolution's Witness: How Eyes Evolved*, this argument doesn't hold vitreous fluid. Much simpler eye designs not only existed in our evolutionary past, but in some animals alive today. We know how eyes evolved; no creator is needed. For this show, interviewer Carl Hancock and host Brianne Bilyue talked with ophthalmologist Ivan Schwab as he shared the story of the evolution of the eye.

The Young Atheists Handbook, Atheists Talk #201, January 13th

If you pick up Alom Shaha's *The Young Atheist's Handbook: Lessons for Living a Good Life Without God* thinking you're getting a how-to book, you may be disappointed. On the other hand, you may not. While that was Shaha's original intent in writing a book, his editor persuaded him to write something much more personal. For this show, interviewer David Pacheco and host Stephanie Zvan discuss Shaha's book and work promoting science. This program was produced by Carl Hancock.

Deconverted: A Journey from Religion to Reason, Atheists Talk #202, January 20th

Seth Andrews is the founder of The Thinking Atheist, one of the most popular atheist communities on the internet. The Thinking Atheist produces a podcast of the same name, YouTube videos, hosts a thriving forum, and offers resources for those who are questioning religion or seeking information to refute religious apologist arguments.

Seth Andrews joined *Atheists Talk* for this show to discuss his new book, *Deconverted: A Journey from Religion to Reason*. This autobiography describes Seth's upbringing in a predominantly Christian community and takes us through the questions and doubts that he found himself asking as an adult who eventually left his religion. Carl Hancock conducted the interview. Brianne Bilyue hosted.

November-December Treasury Report

Building Fund

Dean Borghorst	\$25
Georgia Tsoi	\$20
Chris Matthews	\$11
Steve Petersen	\$10
Total Building Fund	\$66

Radio Fund

August Berkshire	\$320
Alice Lesney	\$200
Erik Englebretson	\$100
George Kane	\$100
David Thomas	\$100
Jessica Park	\$75
Greg Laden	\$58
Shirley Moll	\$55
Darryl Halbrooks	\$50
Lawrence Ronning	\$50
Arthur Scearcy	\$40
James Barri	\$35
Brian Kaul	\$35
Steve Petersen	\$35
Michael Seliga	\$35
Mark Paquette	\$30
Denise Beusen	\$25
Andy Flamm	\$25
Georgia Tsoi	\$25
James Wright	\$25
James Bodsberg	\$20
Caroline Brunner	\$20
Richard Ellingsen	\$20
Breonna Mason	\$20
Nancy Ruhland	\$20
Robin Raianiemi	\$10
Donald Holden	\$5
anonymous + cash	\$187
Total Radio Fund	\$1,720

General/Visibility Fund

Rick Rohrer	\$425
Wayne Varner	\$250
Vallery Gingras	\$130
Mike Abbott	\$100
Erik Englebretson	\$100
Steve McCulloch	\$100
Vanita Mishra	\$100
Jim Mueller	\$75
Peter Dodge	\$50
Valerie Gingras	\$50
Michael Johnson	\$50
Robin Karras	\$50
Kent Kokko	\$50

Edward Lubinski	\$50
Keith Thorkelson	\$50
Tim Traynor	\$50
Paul Redleaf	\$45
Michelle Tjernagel	\$42
Justine Hartz	\$27
Dean Borghorst	\$25
Lillian Bubser	\$25
Suellen Carroll	\$25
Geraldine Donnelly	\$25
Sharon Fortunak	\$25
Vicky Hagens	\$25
Riana Heck	\$25
Heather Hegi	\$25
Eric Jayne	\$25
Prudence Johnson	\$25
Bill Lehto	\$25
Grace McGarvie	\$25
Charles Williamson	\$25
Joshua Winn	\$25
Adam Zielie	\$25
Sarah Gerold	\$21
Meghan Kosowski	\$20
Thomas Stavros	\$20
Georgia Tsoi	\$20
Dean Rossow	\$15
Karen McCauley	\$10
JuliAnne Owens	\$10
Dominic Temple	\$10
Rajiv Vaidyanathan	\$10
anonymous	\$125
Total General/Visibility Fund	\$2,430

Total Income: **\$4,216**

Current Building Fund Total **\$130,993**

Radio Show Fundraising Goal **\$8,215**

(for 2012)

Amount Raised **\$9,376**

Congratulations:

We raised **114%** of our goal in 2012!

Top Expenses for November - December

Radio Show	\$1,851
Solstice Event	\$1,510
Newsletter Printing	\$582
Storage	\$304

CANCEL MY SUBSCRIPTION TO THE RESURRECTION

One week after 2013 arrived, my dad called and said he began receiving hospice care for congestive heart failure. I went to Iowa to visit him two days later. When I got there he was lying in his bed, struggling to breathe because his heart was not pumping oxygenated blood very well. We talked a little about his health and how the weather was during my 4-hour drive, and then we reminisced about some distant shared memories. When dinner time came Dad took me up on my offer to get him a beer and an enchilada from one of our favorite local restaurants. After enjoying our feast the nurses and staff came in to administer pain meds and adjust his large, heavy body the way he requested. He thanked me for dinner then proceeded to fall sleep. I gave him a hug and began my journey back home. I received a call from my stepmother just after midnight the next night. She tearfully reported that Dad died a few minutes ago.

The funeral was held the following Thursday at Dad's church in Des Moines. Since his Christian faith was a significant part of his identity, I knew the funeral would have a religious tone, so I was prepared to hear about heaven, Jesus, and the resurrection. What I wasn't prepared for was the good feeling I got from feeling sad. This seemingly contradictory feeling came from my ability to understand and accept the reality of the situation while others found peace through delusion.

The funeral began with the church's pastor affectionately talking about Dad. I followed the pastor with my eulogy. It was one that I wrote and calmly rehearsed a couple times, but when I spoke from the podium I couldn't get past the first sentence without crying. I honestly didn't think I would struggle with it, but there I was, fighting for control over my emotions while sharing some of my most fond memories of Dad.

My eulogy was followed by a 10-minute sermon delivered by my cousin. He is a pastor currently living in Mexico. Unlike me, he was calm and cool. He didn't share any memories of my dad and no tears were shed. Instead, he confidently preached that my dad's death was nothing to be sad about because we will see him again if we "share his faith." We were assured that Dad had been "promoted" to heaven since he believed in Jesus and rejoiced in "His" resurrection.

To clear any possible confusion, my cousin preached that **only** by believing in Jesus, and accepting "Him" as your personal lord and savior can one ever hope to see

Dad again. He said it was wrong to think that acts of kindness, charity, and overall benevolence would bring the same reward. Other religions that taught this way of thinking were wrong, according to my cousin, and only Christianity provided the path to eternal life. He concluded his sermon with a prayer asking God to help those (such as my wife, kids, and me) who don't believe in "Him" to come to know "Him," worship "Him," and believe in "Him."

As I sat in one of the front church pews with my wife and kids, trying to regain my composure while listening to my cousin's sermon, I looked at Dad's body comfortably resting in a satin-filled mahogany coffin. It was only a few days ago that I saw the same body more animated—eating, drinking, talking, coughing—and able to consciously interact with me. I felt like the only sober person in a room of others who were inebriated by fantasies of wishful visions. Of course I wanted to be drunk with the certainty that I will see Dad again but I knew better. I understood that I will never see him again. I will never talk to him, share ideas with him, hug him, or have any further interaction with him again. For these reasons I knew there was a damn good reason to feel sad. Compared to sedating myself with blissful afterlife mirages it felt righteous and purifying to genuinely mourn the reality of death with tears and a healthy dose of anguish.

Undoubtedly, Dad would have approved of the sermon my cousin gave because he was a devout, passionate, tithing evangelical Christian. Even though he tried to raise me to be a Christian and practice Christian ceremonies, I want my godless funeral to be without my embalmed body slowly rotting in a pricey coffin. I will, however, take the 10-minute sermon, but I want it to be delivered by The Doors (via compact disc, of course) with their song "When the Music's Over." When Jim Morrison shouts, "Cancel my subscription to the resurrection," I want the volume cranked up loud and repeated several times. Then everyone is welcome to cry, laugh, or whatever seems appropriate over their loss of little ol' me.



Eric Jayne

January Atheists Talk Television Show Report

by Steve Petersen

In part one of our first show this year, David Pacheco, Board Member of the Minnesota chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, discussed his organization's history and purpose. He then explained the good points of the recent election, such as the large number of voters identifying as non-religious and what this will



mean for future elections. Pacheco also spoke about voters' rejection of hard-line anti-abortion candidates.

In part two, Pacheco continued his explanation of the ramifications of the 2012 election. In this half, he detailed several specific ballot measures that were defeated in various states, such as Florida's Amendment 8, and Minnesota's proposed amendment to forbid same-sex marriage. Pacheco next explained the illegality of church electioneering, and the IRS' response to their overt endorsements of specific candidates. Finally, he discussed the conflict of interest in using churches as polling stations. Pacheco offered resources for those who wish to learn more and get involved.

Cryptogram Answer

Onan, while having sex with his brother's wife (don't ask), ejaculated on the carpet. The Lord, being a somewhat anal deity, knew that even a dab of club soda wouldn't get that unsightly stain out, and instantly killed Onan for his sloppy aim. (Genesis 38:9-10)

-Mrs. Betty Bowers, America's Best Christian

James Zimmerman hosted both episodes.

Minneapolis viewers please note that our channel, day and time has changed. Check the schedule below.

If you have an interest in being on a program or would like to sponsor the program on your local cable access station please contact Steve Petersen at 651-484-9277 or spetersen175@comcast.net.

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

Podcasts: MinnesotaAtheists.org. Available via iTunes and YouTube. 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 pm. Sponsors: David and Joanne Beardsley.

Minneapolis: Channel 75. Monday 7:00 pm. Sponsor: Steve Petersen.

Rochester: Channel 10. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 7:30 pm. Sponsor: Jim Salutz.

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

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

St. Paul: Channel 15. Wednesday 5:00 pm. Sponsor: Jim Wright.

Stillwater: Channel 16. Tuesday 7:00 pm. 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 pm. Sponsor: Michael Seliga.



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 email 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 (April, June, September, December). 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.



“If they are considering lifting the ban on gays, that’s a good thing. That’s progress. If they lift that bigotry from their requirements, I would hope they remove the rest of the bigotry and admit atheists as well.”

-American Atheists President David Silverman, responding to the Boy Scouts’ news regarding their membership policy, on January 28, 2013

**Check us out on the radio!
AM 950 KTFN**