

The Minnesota Atheist



“Hug an Atheist” at Minnesota Atheist March Public Meeting

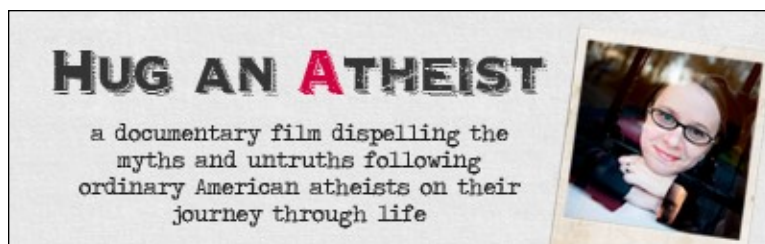
Minnesota Atheists is pleased to sponsor the first authorized public showing of “Hug An Atheist” in Minnesota on Sunday, March 16, 2014. This is a documentary film by Sylvia Broeckx about atheism in the USA, dispelling myths and untruths by following ordinary American atheists on their journey through life.

The money to produce this film was raised by a crowd-funding campaign. It made its premier at The 5th Atheist Film Festival in San Francisco on September 14, 2013.

On Sept. 13, 2013, the *Washington Post* featured a report on the film from Religion News Service. Here is an excerpt:

The 90-minute film is the project of Sylvia Broeckx, a 35-year-old Belgian who lives in England and has been an atheist and humanist since her teens. She became interested in America’s perception of nonbelievers when some American friends and fellow atheists shared their own stories of feeling marginalized.

“I always assumed America was founded on freedom of religion and was very much like Europe where if you are an atheist it is no big deal,” she said. “When I discovered that in America being an atheist could be a big problem, that was really a shock to me.”



Visit huganatheist.org to view a short teaser for the film. While there, read more about the film, including clicking on the *Washington Post* link to read the full article by Religion News Service.

Admission to our showing of the film is free. However, we will have a donation jar (suggested donation \$5) to help offset the cost of purchasing and showing the film. Any extra money raised will be donated to help get the film wider distribution.

And don’t forget to tune in to our radio show “Atheists Talk” 9-10 am that morning, on AM 950 or stream online, when we’ll interview the film’s director Sylvia Broeckx.

Roseville Public Library
2180 Hamline Ave. N.
(Hamline Ave. & County Road B)
Roseville, Minnesota 55113

1:00-1:15 p.m. – Social time
1:15-1:45 p.m. – Business Meeting
1:45-2:00 p.m. – Break
2:00-3:30 p.m. – “Hug An Atheist” film
4:00-whenever – Dinner at Panda Garden Buffet

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President's Column: Atheist Baseball Game (by Eric Jayne)

Walt Whitman once said that “Baseball is the hurrah game! well—it’s our game: that’s the chief fact in connection with it: America’s game: has the snap, go, fling, of the American atmosphere—belongs as much to our institutions, fits into them as significantly, as our constitutions, laws: is just as important in the sum total of our historic life.”

Whether you’re a fan of the sport or not it’s difficult to deny that baseball is woven into the fabric of American culture. Versions of the sport (such as “Bat and Ball” and “Town-Ball”) were referenced in historical records prior to the Revolutionary War. Baseball had been played mainly in the New York area for several decades before the first organized club was formed in 1845. The Civil War popularized the sport even more when Union soldiers from New York introduced the game to other soldiers in their war camps. It was an invaluable recreation that helped distract from low morale.

Baseball continued to advance in tandem with and sometimes in advance of – our nation’s growth. Jackie Robinson breaking the color line in 1947, seventeen years before the Civil Rights Act was signed into law, is a good example. The Minnesota Atheists understands that our nation is still growing and it will eventually come to fully welcome atheists while embracing our nation’s secularist foundation. In the meantime we are thrilled to tap into *The National Pastime* through our partnership with the St. Paul Saints professional baseball team as an engaging way to showcase our fun-loving side and advance positive atheism in action.

Our third annual installment of a “Night of Unbelievable Fun” will be held again at Midway Stadium in St. Paul.



It’s the last year the St. Paul Saints will play ball in the stadium since next season will be the inaugural year at their new downtown ballpark. Fans can expect to see the between inning atheist-themed shenanigans as well as the secularized team name on the player’s jerseys. The “S” in “Saints” will be dropped and the subsequent “A” will be capitalized and formatted in the recognizable red atheist “A” made famous by the Richard Dawkins Foundation. And of course “St. Paul” will be secularized to “Mr. Paul.” In case you’re interested, the Mr. Paul Aints player jerseys are auctioned off during the game, and the payment is collected at the conclusion of the game.

Our atheist baseball game will be played four days before the Major League Baseball All-Star game, which will be played across the river in Target Field. As an avid baseball fan, I can’t think of a better prelude to the All-Star game than watching our beloved (albeit winless) Mr. Paul Aints atheist baseball team take on the Kansas City T-Bones for their first ever win. They lost to the Amarillo Sox in 2012 and the Sioux City Explorers in 2013.

If you’re like me, you might be eager for the baseball season to begin. Maybe you’re anxious to don your favorite team’s gear at the ballpark while soaking up the sun with a cup of hoppy suds in one hand and a hot dog in the other. If this sounds good to you then have I got some great news! For every Tuesday St. Paul Saints home game this year, card-carrying Minnesota Atheists members receive a \$2.00 discount on tickets in the Outfield Reserved section. All you need to do is present your member card at the ticket office for your discount. Be sure to wear your Mr. Paul Aints shirt and/or hat. If you don’t have any Mr. Paul Aints stuff to wear you might want to consider visiting our online store and buying some. All profits from Mr. Paul and Ms. Paula Aints shirts and hats directly benefit the operating costs of the Minnesota Atheists.

Spring training will soon be over and the 2014 baseball season will quickly commence. I’m looking forward to seeing familiar faces in the crowd at this summer’s baseball themed atheist celebration, but I’m also excited to meet new freethinking people at the ol’ ballgame. If you haven’t had the chance to see our last two atheist baseball games you definitely owe it to yourself check out this year’s game on July 11. I’m sure you’ll find that the *snap, go, fling* of the game’s atmosphere embodies the best qualities of American culture: fun, tolerance, pastime, and camaraderie.

Tickets will be available soon. Stay tuned for further information, including when tickets will be made available and how to purchase them.

News and Notes (by George Kane)

The next session of the Minnesota legislature opens on February 25. It will not be as intense for secular activists as last year's session, when same-sex marriage dominated attention, but every year there are bills of concern. Conservative Christians are eternally committed to undermining Jefferson's wall of separation between church and state, and defining America as a Christian nation. This crusade is championed by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which provides model bills for conservative legislators to introduce in their states. Because there are Minnesota lawmakers who are members of ALEC, a religion-based bill introduced in other states could be introduced here, so if such a bill surfaced in another state, we would at least know what we could expect in ours.

The Student Religious Liberties Act, HB 1771 was introduced in the last session to encourage religious expression by public school students. Bills bearing the words "religious liberty" in their title are actually designed to create legal privileges for Christians and to permit them to discriminate on the basis of religion. This bill would prohibit schools from taking any action against a student expressing a religious viewpoint. If, for example, a student creates a hostile environment by preaching that gay students are condemned to hell, the schools could take no action to stop it. It would not allow the schools, in selecting student speakers at assemblies, to refuse to allow students to give speeches because of their intent to give religious testimony. The proposed law would guarantee students the liberty to create a religiously hostile school environment, and subject their fellow students to religious views to which their parents might not wish them exposed. It might even protect a student's grade in biology class if that student denies the evolution of species. The bill was assigned to the Education Committee last year, which took no action on it. We are likely this year to see attempts to move it to the floor.

We are likely to see legislation driven by religious dogma either introduced as new bills or as amendments to the anti-bullying bills HF 826 and SF 783. Look for attempts by right-wing legislators to gut the anti-bullying bills with religious exemptions. It is hard to believe that anyone actually supports bullying, but conservative Christians are convinced the principal intent of the bill is to shackle Christians who are exercising their religious imperative to torment gays and lesbians. In several states, bills have been introduced to protect students from school discipline who are acting from "sincerely held religious belief." I suppose there must be an expectation undergirding these bills that conservative Christian views will always be accepted as sincerely held, while non-Christian views will be dismissed as spurious.

Our legislative activism is more than just defending attacks from the religious right. Minnesota Atheists expects to support a couple of bills this year. One is to revise the marriage laws to permit tax exempt self-described atheist organizations to certify marriage celebrants. This was the topic of our January public meeting, and has previously been explained in the Minnesota Atheist. Minnesota Atheists is taking the lead position to draft and promote this legislation, with the support of the Humanists of Minnesota and the Secular Coalition of Minnesota. Another bill we support is HF 1946, which would rescind the prohibition on alcohol sales on Sundays, Thanksgiving and Christmas. The current restrictions are vestiges of religious blue laws, but they are sustained and supported by economic interests. Most liquor store owners want to keep the restrictions, on the expectation that the public is getting all of its liquor purchases done on Monday through Saturday. They believe the market will force them to be open on Sundays, raising their overhead costs, without increasing their sales. The restrictions are opposed by customers and by liquor store owners near state borders, who are losing business to out-of-state competitors. August Berkshire wrote a column about this bill in the February issue.

Another bill to follow is HF 1906, which would prohibit 'reparative therapy' to attempt to change the sexual orientation of children.

George Kane

Freethought Cryptogram

Zun xsf bvll oxpwovc illx oxnwkjln uf fzl lvu sb fzl Vlbsvgufosx, fzl qsvvwmfosx sb Qzvodfouxofc qswkn xsf zuyl illx mwvjln uhuc.

Fzsgud Albbldsx (Answer on page 10)

Accepting Nominations for Board Vacancy

At our January monthly meeting, we received nine nominations for the Minnesota Atheists' board of directors, one for each of the nine positions on our board. Nominations closed at the end of that meeting. However, before our February elections, the candidate for associate chair withdrew. Since no other candidates had been nominated for associate chair, that position will become open once the new board takes office on March 1, 2014.

According to our bylaws, vacancies are filled by our board of directors, subject to subsequent ratification by our members. Therefore, we would like to hear from anyone who is interested in being associate chair. To be eligible, you need to have been a dues-paying member of Minnesota Atheists for one year.



At this moment, there is one possible candidate who has indicated an interest in being the associate chair. If the board accepts this candidate, that would leave an opening for an at-large position. Eligibility requires a 6 month membership in Minnesota Atheists.

Please let a board member know if you would be interested in an at-large position. Thank you.

Progress for Sunday Assembly Minneapolis-St Paul (by Rebecca Chesin)

The SA MSP Crew has been moving forward with great energy and creativity. In fact, we are working towards hold our first Assembly, possibly as early as the end of April.

Here's an update on some recent developments: We've been generously offered a space to meet for our start-up phase. This is most welcome while we establish various financial, legal, and incorporation matters.

SA is 100% volunteer-run and donation-supported. Admission to our Assemblies will always be free, which is why member participation and support means so much and makes this community possible.

The parent organization, Sunday Assembly, has established a New Jersey nonprofit corporation –Sunday Assembly in America—which is described in the articles of association as a charitable and educational organization. They may be able to offer us a streamlined process if we decide a 501(c)(3) is our best option. Our local group has also applied for accreditation as this would give several benefits and has no cost to us.

SA MSP is a good complement to the other Freethinker-type groups we have in the metro area. As the “new kid on the block” we are very appreciative of the positive, accepting, and helpful reception we've received. We're grateful for the friendly and valuable mentoring extended to us, and look forward to many years of collaborating with the various allied communities already well-established in the Twin Cities. Together, these groups provide a wealth of activities and resources to one of the fastest growing social sectors of our population.

Last month, we surveyed our members via our main online home (for the time being) at www.meetup.com/SundayAssemblyMSP. Results will be used to map out our short-term and long-term direction.

Anyone who agrees with the philosophy* of Sunday Assembly is invited and welcomed to help us keep the gears turning that make SA MSP possible. Our volunteers are our foundation; we believe we can do big things as well as have fun when we work together.

We welcome diversity in all its forms. Although Sunday Assembly is often called an “atheist church”, it's more accurate to say we are a congregation that is apatheist. We don't focus on what you believe or disbelieve about god, religion, or spirituality. We focus on making the best of the one life we each have. We focus on celebrating the amazing beauty of the universe. We focus on being alive and aware and appreciating connection with our fellow human beings.

Join us for the rousing talks, for the singing, for the community support, for the service projects we undertake, or for the above-average coffee!

* For a detailed description, visit sundayassembly.com. The thumbnail sketch is embodied by our motto: “Live better, help often, wonder more.”

Brian Sandberg Memorial (by Steve Petersen)

This past month and Shirley Moll and I attended a memorial for Brian Sandberg. Brian was a supporter of Minnesota Atheists and active on our Facebook Group page posting items on separation of state and church. Brian enjoyed highlighting the absurdity of the narrow minded religions who believe they have the sole right to the public square. Two of his past postings were related to equal access for holiday displays that are religious but not Christian. One was at the Oklahoma Capitol building where the Satanic Temple requested to put up a seven foot tall monument and the other was in Wisconsin where the Flying Spaghetti Monster did join the other holiday displays.

The memorial honoring Brian's life was personal, informative, sad and funny at the same time. The family wanted to be respectful of Brian's non-belief and also wanted the religious not to feel alienated. Both were accomplished through Humanists' Celebrant Audrey Kingstrom, who officated. The memorial table in the front of the room had some of Brian's prize possessions, including his Mr. Paul Aints cap!

While we only knew Brian through his online postings, we left the memorial feeling we had known him a long time. This was due to the many friends who spoke about his impact on their lives and the eulogizes by his brother and son who brought everyone to tears with his remembrance.

Save the Date!

July 11-12 Will Bring Unbelievable Fun



Minneapolis is hosting the 2014 Major League Baseball All-Star Game but St. Paul will be hosting the more affordable—and probably more fun—2014 MN Atheists/FFRF Atheist Game across the river.

For the 3rd year in a row the Minnesota Atheists organization is taking over Midway Stadium and secularizing the St. Paul Saints to the Mr. Paul Aints. There will again be atheist-themed shenanigans between innings, including a “Doubting Thomas” who will likely be unconvinced of the umpire’s calls. The players will wear specialized jerseys with the Mr. Paul Aints logo, and these jerseys will be auctioned off during the game.

The Aints are hoping to get their first win this year, which will be a little bit more special since this is the last year that the team will play at Midway Stadium. The game against Kansas City will begin at 7pm on Friday, July 11 which is when the weekend-long All-Star Fest begins in Minneapolis (the All-Star game is on the following Tuesday).

Whether you’re a baseball fan or not, this game will be unbelievably fun—as will the pre-game tailgating which begins at 4:30 at Midway Stadium’s parking lot.

Stick around the beautiful, secularized city of St. Mr. Paul on Saturday because we’ll be holding an *All-Star Conference* in partnership with the Humanists of Minnesota. It will be held at the RiverCentre on the west end of downtown near the Xcel Energy Center, Science Museum, and Mississippi River.

Confirmed speakers on a growing list include Susan Jacoby, Rebecca Watson, and PZ Myers. Check back at MinnesotaAtheists.org/conference, our newsletter, or our [facebook page](#) for updated details including schedule, new speakers, and admission prices. We will continue our tradition of keeping prices affordable and provide price discounts for our members.

Minnesota Atheists Meeting Report

February

Sehoya Cotner amazed attendees to the February Monthly Meeting with her presentation titled “Are We Still Evolving?” For our February meeting we always like to bring in a speaker to speak on evolution in honor of Darwin Day which occurs in the same month. We were impressed with Sehoya’s knowledge and ability to engage the audience last year, so we were excited when she accepted our invitation to come back this year. The filled seats confirmed that people were excited to hear her talk!

Sehoya’s answer to the question of “Are we still evolving” can simply be summarized as “Yes,” but Sehoya knew that the crowd wanted to be more informed than that, so she explained. First she gave us an overview of evolution. Secondly she explained important factors for evolution to occur such as variation in a population, reproductive success, among other factors. She then put human evolution to the test by going through these factors for evolution to occur. She did a great job in making her case.

Minnesota Atheist News

Marriage Celebrant Law Update

When we last left the question of changing Minnesota’s marriage celebrant law so that atheist and secular humanist groups could also certify marriage celebrants, we’d met with state senator John Marty in December to talk about pursuing a change. We came away from that meeting with two pieces of homework. First, Marty requested the survey whose results we reported in our February newsletter.

Our second charge was to provide Senator Marty with sample language from other states that allowed notaries public to officiate marriages. Here too, we went a bit beyond. I surveyed the codes of all 50 states to determine which allowed marriage officiants who were neither clergy, judicial employees, nor officials elected for another purpose and compiled those statutes. You can see those results here: <http://freethoughtblogs.com/almostdiamonds/2014/02/12/reviewing-marriage-officiant-law/>

We met again with Senator Marty on February 13 and presented him with this information. He was impressed, and the meeting went well.

Marty has seen a history of piecemeal adjustments to Minnesota marriage law on this topic. As a result, he supports a multi-pronged approach to changing the law now so that it will suit everyone’s needs going forward.

Some dismiss that we are still evolving because survival of the fittest doesn’t apply anymore; we allow the weakest to survive through our advanced medical technology. However, what I have learned is that mutations are more important than survival of the fittest for evolution to occur. Variations in the human population are caused by slight mutations in our genes. We are, in fact, all mutants. While Sehoya didn’t make any predictions for the future, I think this factor alone says that we will never stop evolving.

Elections

Elections for the board of Minnesota Atheists were also held at the February Meeting. The 2014 board will take effect on March 1st and is as follows:

President: Eric Jayne
 Associate President: Stephanie Zvan
 Chair: Heather Hegi
 Associate Chair: vacant
 Secretary: Jill Carlson
 Treasurer: Chris Matthews
 Directors-at-Large: Phil Cunliffe, August Berkshire, and Georgia Hancock Tsoi

To that end, he supports adding both a provision similar to the one that just became law in New Jersey, allowing certain nonprofits to certify celebrants, and a provision to provide for temporary celebrants for single weddings. Representative Phyllis Kahn, who was already willing to sponsor our bill, is in agreement. This makes us very happy. If we pass this bill, it will be a significant step toward secularizing Minnesota law and providing for a growing population of nonbelievers. Any couple getting married will be able to choose a celebrant who is a meaningful addition to their ceremony. Members of our communities who want to provide this service will not have to go through significantly more work than clergy or declare themselves religious for the purpose. Everyone wins.

Our next step is to work with the Senate Counsel to draft a bill. This is a very short session in the Minnesota legislature, so we don’t expect the bill to receive a hearing, much less pass this year. However, introducing it will allow us both to build a coalition to support the bill and to take criticism and questions on the bill now so we’re prepared to make any changes and polish our arguments for next year.

That’s where we stand today!

In Praise of August Berkshire (by Bill Paulson)

(with tongue planted firmly in cheek)

Minnesota Atheists would scarcely be the phenomenal organization it is if not for the efforts of a certain August Berkshire. Let's recap some of his deeds: Co-founder of our predecessor organization; many years as a board member including seven terms as president; speaking (and thus educating) at schools; countless letters to editors published; working with lawmakers to protect human rights; and simply being involved since our inception in nearly every organizational capacity.

August's efforts haven't gone unnoticed by our friends in Washington. Thus, bills are now pending in Congress to make just a teensy-weensy change to the calendar. They feel it's high time to renumber the years so that year 1 is the year of August's birth instead of, uh, that other guy. "The United States is once again leading the way," said Sen. Rufus McDoofus. "I'm confident that our friends and allies in all those other backward, lame-duck, pesky, second-rate countries will follow our fine example." "I'm all for it," said Rep. Rochelle Walkmann. "The world needs more kind-hearted, tolerant people like August and fewer rabid fanatics like myself."

"I can't walk on water," said August, "but I can swim a little. And I can't feed 5,000 people with two fish and a few loaves of bread. But I did once serve dinner for four." All the people rejoiced upon hearing these modest, forthright statements.



Rep. Bradley GoneMadly lauds the idea, but was initially reluctant to support it. "I'm an old geezer, stuck in my ways," said Bradley, "and these radical, new-fangled changes just leave my head spinning. I'll never get used to having been born in the year 21 B.A." But Bradley's bummed, bothered, beleaguered brethren bombarded his backyard with battered, bludgeoned, bloodied bibles, then brandished blazing, beautiful banners bearing Berkshire, barking and bawling like bedeviled bozos. Bradley is now on board with his full support.

The bills are making progress. The Senate's version passed unanimously in the "Out with the old, in with the new" committee. Likewise in the House's "Hey hey, ho ho, Jesus Christ has got to go" committee, it passed unanimously with each Democrat voting "hey hey" and each Republican voting "ho ho."

The bills now move to the full floor of each chamber. Oh, this is so exciting! We'll keep you posted.

And happy April Fool's!

Secretary's Report

- The February board meeting for MN Atheists covered the welcoming of our new newsletter editor, Jenny Nolan, with a consensus of board approval.
- The monthly MNA meeting schedule was discussed with a confirmation that "Hug an Atheist" film will be the topic for March and it was approved to move the April meeting date to April 27th because venues are difficult to secure for the previously scheduled date of April 20th which is Easter Sunday.
- The board approved to sign the Minnesota Charitable Organization Annual Report Form for 2013.
- Board reviewed the upcoming redesign of the MNA website and approved changes made on the site so far.
- Board member Stephanie Zvan is assisting with the coordination of better MNA database management.
- Meetings with Senator John Marty are occurring with MNA board members to further MNA's proposal to authorize marriage celebrants from atheist and humanist organizations.
- MNA board approved fees for registration for the summer festivals including, May Day and Twin Cities Pride.
- The MNA board is focused on planning a summer conference and Aints baseball game to spread and encourage reason and knowledge of our organization.

The Easter Bunny Gets the Last Laugh (by Lee Salisbury)

Every April, Easter with all its accompanying regalia is celebrated. Belief in Jesus' resurrection guarantees the future resurrection of the believer's mortal body no matter how old or decomposed. All one has to do is believe. Oi, Oi, Oi, such a deal!

You might ask, where'd the bunnies and eggs come from? 13th Century German pagans worshipped their goddess of fertility Eostra. Because the rabbit was so adept at sex producing life where none previously existed, the bunny became Eostra's symbol. Eostra eventually became Easter. The bunny and its eggs came to symbolize Jesus' resurrection. The pagan faith and the Christian faith once again merge as they did with Christmas. Amazingly, 21st Century believers perpetuate these beliefs.

Today, children are seduced into this pagan myth by the Easter bunny and Easter egg hunts. Nevertheless, Jesus' resurrection is fervently preached from the pulpit as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, thus assuring the believer's resurrection. To paraphrase Paul, Christ's resurrection guarantees the believer's resurrection. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is vain (I Cor. 15:14)".

Curiously, Matthew in his gospel describes another resurrection besides Jesus' resurrection that directly impacts the credibility of Jesus' alleged resurrection.

"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many (Mt. 27:50-53)."

In contrast to the stories of Jesus raising Lazarus or Jairus' daughter or Jesus' own resurrection, this resurrection depicts saints dead, not for a mere day or two, but possibly years, if not decades or even centuries, coming back to life for all to witness the miraculous resurrection power of God's only begotten son, Jesus Christ.

If Matthews' story is true, wouldn't every inhabitant of Jerusalem have been awestruck? With "many bodies of the saints" appearing to many, how could there not be mass hysteria and mayhem throughout Jerusalem? Those resurrected might have included Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Elisha, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

Supposedly the resurrected saints' decomposed clothes distinguished them from other inhabitants of Jerusalem. Seeing these legendary saints of old, those who just the day before yelled, "crucify him" would likely have caused them to realize the enormity of their sin.



Considering this momentous resurrection event, one wonders how there could be any fear or lack of faith in Jesus' resurrection, especially among Jesus' followers.

Why were the women visiting Jesus' tomb afraid? How could the visitors to Jesus' empty tomb be fearful when these resurrected saints were appearing to many in Jerusalem? Why did the disciples not believe the first reports of Jesus' resurrection? Why were the disciples hiding in a room for fear of the Jews? Why did Thomas have to touch Jesus' wounds to believe? And the disciples went fishing? C'mon Why does Jesus need his dull-minded twelve disciples when he could have resurrected saints to preach the gospel? Why did Peter, at Pentecost, need to persuade all the devout Jews of Jesus' resurrection when so many saints were in their midst? Why did Jesus recruit Paul when He could have had Jeremiah or Ezekiel preach the gospel?

Since "whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23)," the believer is prohibited from asking questions lest they doubt and sin. Nevertheless, any rationally minded reader is compelled to at least question Matthew's gospel because of such blatant inconsistencies.

The fact that all Jerusalem ignored the raising of the dead saints exposes the fabrication of Matthew's resurrection accounts. The resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection of Jewish saints, as well as the more recent appearances of the Virgin Mary at Guadalupe, or Lourdes, or at Fatima all carry the same lack of credibility. Some might argue that more than five hundred witnessed Jesus resurrection. The alleged appearances of the Virgin Mary have occurred more recently to thousands of sincere people, but curiously Protestants not wanting to get too fanatical reject those appearances.

Paul's preaching was in vain and so is the believer's faith in God's one and only son Jesus. Too bad Jesus' father isn't more like the prolific Easter bunny. Instead of only one begotten son, he could have had many sons. The bunny is Easter's only winner and it gets the last laugh.

The Easter reality is that the laws of nature prevail regardless of religious traditions, ceremonies, and preachers preaching in vain about an imaginary event. All of which goes to prove, there is only one place where dead people get resurrected: In myth, especially religious myth.

Doubting Jesus' Resurrection Offers Plausible, Natural Alternative

(by Greg Peterson)

Doubting Jesus' Resurrection: What Happened in the Black Box? (Stone Arrow Books, 2009)

“Nothing is esteemed a miracle,” wrote brilliant Scottish philosopher David Hume, “if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country.”

Without making direct reference to Hume, Kris Komarnitsky in *Doubting Jesus' Resurrection: What Happened in the Black Box?* takes up the challenge of explaining the one case that many people DO consider to have been an observed instance of a dead man coming to life, in naturalistic terms. He succeeds, I think, because he keeps his aim comparatively modest: to present a plausible case for Christian origins absent a supernatural miracle. Other authors taking on a similar challenge have tried to explain every element of the Gospel passion story with reference to mystery cults and syncretism, or cabals and conspiracies, or pure fraud and gullibility. In aiming only to provide an alternative hypothesis for the resurrection story, and by being reasonable and kind—even generous—to believers, Komarnitsky comes off cogent and sane. It is noteworthy, perhaps, that he is not even an atheist, as he points out several times in the book, but is agnostic on the question of a god's existence. This book, then, is a matter of pure inquiry, and stands up well to scholarly scrutiny.

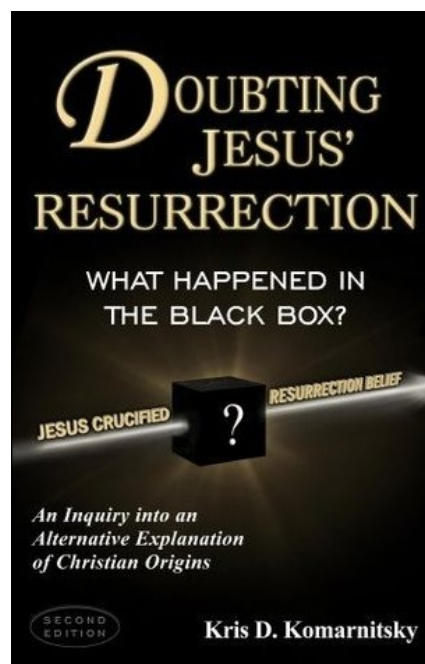
This is perhaps all the more remarkable because Komarnitsky, while certainly scholarly, is not technically an historian or Bible scholar, and makes much of his argument by digesting an impressive array of primary and secondary sources, to which he brings an open but critical mind. As a former biblical studies major and life-long Bible enthusiast, I have read the works of many of the top scholars in the field, and Komarnitsky compares favorably with the elites. I was reminded of the scene in the Wizard of Oz when the wizard told the scarecrow that he was as smart as any scholar, and lacked only official credentials. At the risk of your picturing Komarnitsky stuffed with straw, here is such a scholar, as learned and intelligent as any credentialed author I've encountered.

Late in the book, after having made a compelling case, Komarnitsky writes, “Christianity and other religions may bring enormous good to the world, but if this book is correct that Jesus did not resurrect from the dead, then many

people have a false understanding of the world. False understandings have a way of leading to unfavorable consequences over the long term.” I could not have said it better, or agree more. And Christianity itself makes great claims for valuing truth, so believers should feel welcome to examine the evidence that *Doubting* adduces, and test where the truth might best lie.

While it is said of theories in physics that the best ones can become T-shirt slogans, *Doubting* requires a bit more space than that for its hypothesis. Yet Chapter 6 of the book, two pages long, presents the case in an easily graspable and memorable format. It is the mark of a well-thought-out idea that it can be expressed so succinctly and still carry force. If I have a complaint about the book, it is that sometimes the supporting material goes beyond what it must to make its point—but that is a common fault in scholarly works. And some people—the more critical readers, perhaps (I already accepted much of what was in the book before even picking it up!) will want that extra material and additional references to dig deeper and become more convinced.

I will not lay out the specific case made in *Doubting*—you really should read this book if you're interested. But I will quote the sentence from the book that, for me, sums up its power of persuasion: “In the plausibility test, the best explanation is the one that is the most probable when measured against accepted truths outside of the question of interest.” It is this attitude that reminds me of Hume's view, and which puts Komarnitsky in the best tradition of graceful skepticism.



Atheists Talk Radio Report

“First Amendment Journalism,” Jamila Bey on *Atheists Talk* #254, January 26, 2014

Jamila Bey is familiar to atheists as a charismatic, entertaining, and insightful speaker on the social and political issues that face atheists, and particularly atheists of color. Professionally, she’s a journalist with a long career in both old and new media. She’s been a beat reporter and freelance writer. She spent ten years as an editor and producer for National Public Radio. And for the past several years, she’s hosted the Sex Politics, and Religion Hour (SPAR with Jamila Bey) on Voice of Russia radio.

Now she’s looking to do something different. She’s been running an Indigogo campaign to fund a year-long series of reports on the challenges our First Amendment faces across the country.

Producer, host, interviewer, and program notes by Stephanie Zvan.

“God in the Age of Science” Herman Philipse on *Atheists Talk* #255, February 2, 2014

Herman Philipse is a noted philosopher, professor and author. He obtained his doctorate of philosophy from Leiden University in Leiden, South Holland, Netherlands in 1983, and has been teaching the subject as professor ever since. His topics of interest include moral theory, atheism, cultural assimilation, scientism and political liberalism.

Dr. Philipse is the author of several acclaimed books, including *Atheist Manifesto*, which contains in the 2004 republication a forward by Ayaan Hirsi Ali. He is also well known for his *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*. Dr. Philipse joins *Atheists Talk* to discuss his most recent book, *God in the Age of Science: A Critique of Religious Reason*.

Producer, host, and interviewer, Carl Hancock. Program notes by Brianne Bilyeu.

“The Atheist Camel Revisted”, Bart Centre on *Atheists Talk* #256, February 9, 2013

Friend of the show Bart Centre joins us once again to catch us up on what he’s been up to.

Producer and interviewer, Carl Hancock with host and program notes by Stephanie Zvan.

“This Week in Skepticism” Minnesota Skeptics on *Atheists Talk* #257, February 16, 2014

There are many different forms and presentations of skepticism, but for many, skepticism implies a constant seeking of answers, evidence and a demand for rigor in studies and investigations. Skepticism involves asking questions and exploring all of the probable alternatives, and an unwillingness to accept claims based on hearsay or faulty logic. Skepticism and atheism are closely aligned; we can apply skepticism to arrive at atheism, and questioning religion can lead to a more in-depth appreciation of skeptical inquiry.

For this program we were joined by Travis Peterson and Erica Mahlum, organizers for the group Minnesota Skeptics. Listen in as we discuss what Minnesota Skeptics is all about, what they’ve been up to, and then we’ll chat about recent events of the past week, including the Bill Nye and Ken Ham debate, Darwin Day and how camels totally disprove the Bible. Sorry, Bible.

Producer, interviewer, host and program notes by Brianne Bilyeu.

Minnesota Atheists is the producer and the director is Carl Hancock with producers and hosts Carl Hancock, Brianne Bilyeu, Scott Lohman, 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 the AM950 KTNF studios in Eden Prairie, MN. Live steaming can be done through our web page www.mnatheists.org Original music was 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 post office box or online at <http://minnesotatheists.org/join-and-donate/radio-fund> Thanks to Brianne Bilyeu we have an *Atheists Talk* Facebook page and [Twitter.com/atheiststalk](https://twitter.com/atheiststalk).

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.

AM 950 KTNF

Cryptogram Answer

Had not free inquiry been indulged at the era of the Reformation, the corruption of Christianity could not have been purged away

Thomas Jefferson

Cable Report (by Steve Petersen and Jordan Peacock)

In part one of James Zimmerman’s interview with Jordan Peacock, they talked about science and religion as human technologies, broadly considered. Religion was discussed as a potentially adaptive response to past ecological conditions. The atheist/theist divide was contrasted with creating groups around shared values, and the separate tension between those who make meaning versus those who “unmake” it.

In part two of the interview, they took a high-level tour through modern philosophies of metaphysics and ontology (the study of what exists). The relationship between “realisms” and “materialisms” was discussed, and the structural realism of Ladyman/Ross and the assemblage theory of DeLanda were explained in brief.



Thanks to Grant Hermanson we are on Northwest Community Television (NWCT) access again. We are waiting for a regular time slot but until then go to <http://nwct.org/programming.aspx> and check the program guild for Atheists Talk to see the time and date of programs.

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

Podcasts: MinnesotaAtheists.org. Available via Itunes and YouTube. Made possible by Grant Hermanson.

Cable schedule

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

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

Minneapolis: Ch. 75. Monday 7:00 p.m. Sponsor: Steve Petersen.

Northwest Community Television (NWCT) Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, New Hope, Osseo, Plymouth and Robbinsdale, Ch. 20 check web page for date and times: <http://nwct.org/programming.aspx> Sponsor: Grant Hermanson

Rochester: Ch. 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: Ch. 14. Wednesday 10:30 p.m. Sponsor: Shirley Moll.

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

St. Paul: Ch. 15 Wednesdays 5:00 p.m. Sponsor: Jim Wright.

Stillwater: Ch., 16. Tuesday 7:00 p.m.; Wednesday 9:00 a.m. Sponsor: Lee Salisbury.

White Bear Lake, Hugo, Lake Elmo, Mahtomedi, Maplewood, North St. Paul, Oakdale, Vadnais Heights: Ch. 15. Saturday 8:00 p.m. Sponsor: Michael Seliga.

January Treasury Report

Building Fund

Bob Schmitz \$25

Total Building Fund \$25

Radio Fund

Erik Englebretson \$100

Paul Gramstead \$50

Richard P Ellingsen \$20

Steve Petersen \$15

Mark Paquette \$10

Total Radio Fund \$195

General/Visibility Fund

Jon Strand \$500

Thomas Houlton \$100

Gale & Elliott James \$55

Michelle L Tjernagel \$42

Sean Carstensen \$40

Justine Hartz \$27

Sarah C Gerold \$18

Michael D Toft \$15

Total General/Visibility Fund \$797

Total Income: \$1,017

Current Building Fund Total \$132,152

Top Expenses for January

Radio Show \$820

2014 Conference \$600

Newsletter Printing \$510

Call for April Articles

We welcome contributions from all readers of The Minnesota Atheist. While we cannot guarantee that your submission will be accepted for publication, we will carefully consider anything that is related to atheism. We would especially like to receive contributions which provide profiles of individual atheists and which report on atheist-related events in the wider community.

Because we are a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, we cannot print articles that support or oppose a specific candidate, but we can print articles that support or oppose specific causes. A good length to aim for is about 500-1000 words, and no more than about 2000 words, which comes to two pages in the newsletter. We can use text in most common formats such as Word, WordPerfect, and OpenOffice, but not Apple Pages. We encourage you to include photos or other artwork along with your submission. To reproduce well, images should be at least 300 pixels in each dimension. We can use most common image formats, including tiff, jpg, and png. Please send submissions to the editor, Jenny Nolan, at editor@mnatheists.org by 11:59 p.m. on March 22nd. All submissions may be edited for style and length.

Several past contributors have asked for the opportunity to review the edited version of their submissions before publication. We would be happy to work with contributors in this way, but we will need a few extra days to do so. If you would like to review the edited version of your submission, please indicate this in the email accompanying your submission and send your submission by 11:59 p.m. on March 17th.

We look forward to receiving your submissions. Without contributions from readers like you, The Minnesota Atheist would be needlessly constrained in its breadth and depth.

Upcoming Events

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

Lake Superior Freethinkers Monthly Membership Meeting. First Sundays, social time 9:00 a.m., breakfast 9:30 a.m. (\$13.00), program 10:00 a.m., Duluth Radisson, 505 West Superior Street, Duluth.

Freethought Toastmasters. First and third Mondays, 6:30 p.m., Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Avenue West, Saint Paul. Contact George Kane, nup@Minn.net

Freethought Lunch. First Tuesday, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Old Country Buffet, County Road B2 between Fairview and Snelling. Contact Bob or Marilyn Nienkirk, 612-866-6200.

Burnsville Book Club. First Wednesday, Dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:00 p.m. to about 9:00 p.m., Davanni's, 14639 County Road 11, Burnsville. Meet in the party room.

Atheists Talk Television Show Recording. First Thursday, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., MTN Studio A, 125 Southeast Main Street, Minneapolis. Contact Steve Petersen, 651-484-9277.

Crafty Freethinkers North. Second Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Brookdale Library, Study Room I, 6125 Shingle Creek Parkway, Brooklyn Center.

Little Canada Book Club. Second Sunday, 1:00 p.m., Caribou Coffee, 3354 Rice Street, Little Canada.

Freethought Dinner Social. Second and fourth Mondays, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Avenue South, Bloomington. Contact Bob or Marilyn Neinkerk, 612-866-6200.

Godless Gamers—Board Game Night. Second and fourth Thursdays, 6:00 p.m., Fantasy Flight Games Center, 1975 County Road B2, Roseville.

Blasphemer's Brunch. Second Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Pizza Lucé, 800 West 66th Street, Richfield.

Lunch at the Dragon House Restaurant. Third Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Dragon House Restaurant, 3970 Central Avenue, Columbia Heights. Contact Bill Volna, 612-781-1420.

Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting. Third Wednesday, 6:30 p.m., Open to all members. Contact Heather Hegi, hair@mnatheists.org for location.

Freethinking Females Evening at Chatterbox Pub. Fourth Monday, 7:30 p.m., Chatterbox Pub, 800 Cleveland Avenue South, Saint Paul.

Dinner & A Book. Fourth Tuesday, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.,

For all the latest meeting news, subscribe to Atheists' Weekly Email (AWE) at: mnatheists.org/atheists-weekly/subscribe-to-awe.html.

Also visit our Meetup page at meetup.com/minnesota-atheists.

What would
Richard
Dawkins do?
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Donations are tax deductible. Membership fees are deductible for the amount beyond their fair market value.

Student memberships include a subscription to the PDF version of *The Minnesota Atheist* delivered by email. All other memberships include a subscription to the printed version delivered by postal mail. If you would prefer the PDF version delivered by email, please check the box and provide your email address.

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Minnesota Atheists

Positive atheism in actionsm since 1991

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.

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Submit material for the
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editor@mnatheists.org
Submissions may be edited.

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Minnesota Atheists Goals

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.

Minnesota Atheists Affiliations

Minnesota Atheists is
affiliated with the Atheist
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Alliance International,
American Atheists, the
American Humanist
Association, the Council for
Secular Humanism, the
International Humanist and
Ethical Union, and the Secular
Coalition for America.

Minnesota Atheists Membership

Regular members: 215
Life members: 34
Meetup members: 1,486

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Hector Avalos, PhD
Dan Barker
Gerald Erickson, PhD
Annie Laurie Gaylor
Dick Hewetson
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The Minnesota Atheist March 2014.
Published by Minnesota Atheists
PO Box 120304
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