

The Minnesota Atheist

Atheists Talk Radio Set To Go Again!



Mike Haubrich

I am excited to announce that our *Atheists Talk* radio show is going to return to Sunday mornings beginning August first on AM 950 KTNF. This station was formerly known as “Air America Minnesota” and is now called “The Voice of Minnesota.”

The original show served as a great way for people to find out about Minnesota Atheists and the Humanists of Minnesota. Through the KTNF website's live streaming and our later podcasting, we found listeners in many parts of the world, and listeners in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area who had otherwise not know that we were here and eager to have them as members.

Our show featured great guests who brought to our show a wide range of topics related to atheism and interests shared by many atheists. We discussed science and evolution, art, science fiction, comic book physics, atheism in the military, Camp Quest and even the relationship between atheism and economic systems.

We wish to take our new show in a similar direction and have so far heard from several people

who wish to participate. I wish to thank August Berkshire, Stephanie Zvan, Greg Laden, Carrie Iwan, Lynn Fellman, Scott Lohman, Brent Michael Davids, George Kane, and Eric Harmon for being among the initial volunteers.

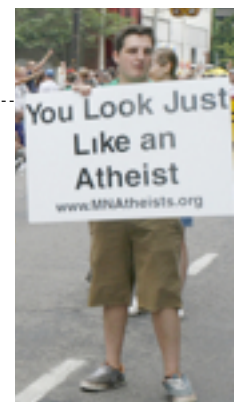
I am extending the invitation to people who have never in the past participated, as well. Many of us who worked on the show discovered that despite our initial fears, talking on the radio is actually a fun experience. It always seemed to me that interviews ended too quickly, just as great conversations were beginning. If any of our members would like to schedule a guest and then do an interview, you are welcome to work through the schedulers to do so.

Finally, funding. This radio program costs money to operate, which was the reason it was discontinued in 2009. We have a more favorable contract with the radio station now, but we still need to raise thousands of dollars to cover operating costs. To kick off our fundraising drive, Randy Quast and August Berkshire have each donated \$500. Please consider joining them, in whatever amount you can afford, by donating to the Minnesota Atheists Radio Fund! Your help is greatly appreciated.



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

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

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

Minnesota Atheists Mission Statement

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

A Variety of Activities

Most of my past President's Columns have focused on one particular aspect of our organization. I have done this because some of our newer members might not know our history, and as a way to publicly acknowledge and thank those members who have contributed to our success. I will resume this approach in future columns, focusing on such things as our website, Meetups, newsletter production, and charitable works. This month, however, I will briefly highlight a variety of activities.

"Atheists Talk" Radio

The big news this month is the restoration of our "Atheists Talk" radio program on KTNF AM 950 radio, Sundays, 8:00-9:00 a.m. starting August 1st. Mike Haubrich, the project's host and scheduler, has a cover story about this. We could use a few more volunteers to conduct interviews and for web/technical aspects. We could also, of course, use some donations to help fund this project. Please donate if you are able to help.

Foundation Beyond Belief

We are pleased to announce that Minnesota Atheists has become a charter member of the Foundation Beyond Belief's "Foundation Partners Program." The Foundation encourages both one-time and monthly donations, which it then pools and distributes on a quarterly basis to ten secular charities in areas such as animal protection, child welfare, education, environment, health, human rights, peace, and poverty. Donors vote on which charities receive funding. To find out more about how you can help, go to: <http://foundationbeyondbelief.org>.

Sean Faircloth's Visit

Sean Faircloth, the executive director of the Secular Coalition for America, gave a rousing speech at Southdale Library in Edina, detailing the many ways that religious organization are granted special exemptions and favors by our government. The Secular Coalition for America lobbies Congress and the President on behalf of non-theists to try to establish a level playing field and a truly secular government. The organization is also exploring the possibility of state secular coalitions.

To sign up for their monthly action alerts and to become a one-time or monthly donor, go to: <http://secular.org>.

Minnesota Atheists Center

Last month I listed a number of benefits to our owning a building. I forgot to mention that a building would allow us to set up a semi-professional TV recording studio with equipment donated by Jerry Rauser, so that we wouldn't have to rely only on our once-a-month time slot at the MTN cable studios.

A building would also give us a place to hold secular weddings and memorial services.

Storage

For many years our research and lending libraries were stored for free in the home of Tom and Jean Riddering (thank you!). Last year they put their home up for sale, which necessitated our finding a new storage facility. We secured a 10x10x10 *climate-controlled* storage unit, which we also use to house other MNA material, for a discounted price of \$82 per month.

Recently, the introductory deal we got on the storage unit expired and the cost was raised to the full amount of \$124 per month. We have begun looking for lower priced alternatives. If you know of any, please call me at 612-338-4548.

Juneteenth

Attendance at this year's Minneapolis Juneteenth celebration seemed to be about half of what it had been in recent years, due to a new festival location and early morning threats of rain. Nevertheless, we were well received and found more allies than we did two years ago when we last had a booth at this event. Some recent articles have noted the decline of the Black Church in America and it's no surprise that the rising tide of atheism would affect all communities.

The Bible and Slavery

In conjunction with this year's Juneteenth celebration, Minnesota Atheists member Eric Harmon spoke on "The Bible and Slavery" at the Minneapolis North Regional Library three days later. Four Christian street evangelists who had debated Eric at Juneteenth showed up and continued their lively, friendly exchange. The evangelists seemed to conclude that anything bad that happened to anyone (such as slavery) was God's will and a response to some type of sin the victims had committed.

Mpls. Gay Pride Festival & Ceremony

Minnesota Atheists has been marching in the Twin Cities Gay Pride Parade almost every year since we were the Twin Cities Chapter of American Atheists in the mid-1980s. We began staffing a booth about 2002, when the festival organizers dropped their requirement for event insurance for booths like ours.



August Berkshire

President's Column continued on page 7.

2010 Twin Cities Gay Pride Festival

by August Berkshire

This year, 41 people took part in our annual participation in the Twin Cities Gay Pride Booth and Parade. We would especially like to thank Matthew Richardson for coordinating the booth volunteers; Steve Petersen, Shirley Moll, Rachel Wilson, and August Berkshire for setting up and tearing down the booth; and Richard Trombley for his photography.

Thank you to the following people for staffing our booth and/or marching in the parade: Dylan Adams, August Berkshire, Andy Berman, Rachel Berman, Sandra Breuer, Terry Burke, Jack Caravela, Kara Grochow, Carl Hancock, Kristin Harris, Bing Haubrich, Ella Haubrich, Mike Haubrich, Grant Hermanson, Joseph Homrich, Laura Hutt, Alison James, Eli James, Dan Jensen, George Kane, Sorcha Keepers, Nikii Lambert, Colin Marx, Sameeksha Mishra, Sanjeev Mishra, Shirley Moll, David Perry, Steve Petersen, Cathy Prody, Jerry Rauser, Steve Rehn, Tom Riddering, Fabian Rivera, Neyshaliz Rivera, Nualle Schallenberger, Paul Schenck, Valerie Square-Briggs, Richard Trombley, Georgia Tsoi, and Rachel Wilson.

As usual, we drew great applause as we marched and got hundreds of new names at our booth. In fact, festival attendees were far more interested in our booth than in the religious booths that were near us!

Our "Hug An Atheist" signs, both as we marched and at our booth, were especially well received, with many attendees availing themselves of the secular solace we offered.

As part of the festival, MNA president August



Berkshire and Episcopal priest Theo Park officiated at a secular commitment ceremony for three same-sex couples that were renewing their vows to each other.





Photos courtesy of Richard Trombley.



News and Notes



by George Kane

I have for many years held that it is more important to listen to media commentators who are direct ideological opponents than those with whom I am likely to agree. To that end I try to arrange my weekday schedule so that I am in my car driving off to a restaurant for lunch during the half hour following 11:00. That way I can listen on KKMS 980 to *Jay Sekulow Live*, a production of Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice. It is the best opportunity that I've found to stay up-to-the minute on events related to the separation of church and state. I'm sure that it is not good for my blood pressure, as the purpose of the program is for Jay Sekulow and his son Jordan to roil the passions of their conservative Christian audience against strict separationists. It doesn't matter if I only catch 5 minutes of the program, as that is all that it takes to understand the events covered that day. The program is little more than two minutes of news followed by a succession of callers venting about it.

Last week their great outrage was the decision to build, two blocks from Ground Zero, a 15-story Muslim cultural center that would include a theater, a gym, a swimming pool and a prayer room that the Sekulows call a 'mosque.' Now, I have written several times before that Islam is the greatest threat around the world to secular government; but I think that this issue points up how widely divergent the positions on Islam are between atheists and conservative Christians.

Atheist organizations in the United States, including Minnesota Atheists, are convinced supporters of both religion clauses of the First Amendment, the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. Around the world, Islam poses an enormous threat to secular government, particularly in the demands by Muslims for nations to adopt Shariah law, and in the resolutions in the United Nations to criminalize blasphemy. But in the United States, Establishment Clause violations by governmental bodies endorsing Islam are extremely rare. Unlike the American Center for Law and Justice and other conservative Christian groups, we recognize the right of Muslims to practice their religion. Muslims do not lose that right because

militant *Jihadis* claim their religion as justification for violence against the US. As atheists, we recognize that if government is allowed to suppress religious exercise, it will also be allowed to impose religious orthodoxy on non-theists.

The ACLJ seeks to use the instruments of government, not to deter or identify people committed to terrorist violence, but to limit the religious practice of Islam. They want New York City government and the Landmarks Commission to stop the construction of the Muslim cultural center two blocks from Ground Zero because any evidence of Islam on "sacred ground" would be "offensive." They were likewise outraged when a Muslim group offered to buy a convent on Staten Island that the Roman Catholic diocese had put up for sale, even though no action by government was involved, because it would show "churches retreating and Islam coming in." Since atheists are secularists, we must always be mindful of Thomas Jefferson's admonition, "But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg"

The ACLJ is likewise outraged by President Obama's choice of Elena Kagan for the Supreme Court seat vacated by John Paul Stevens. In their eyes, it is bad enough that, while the Dean of Harvard Law School, she tried to exclude military recruiters from campus to enforce a school rule barring recruiting by organizations that discriminate against homosexuals. But they are infuriated that she accepted a \$20M grant to establish a Center for Islamic Studies. At this center, I presume that the course of study would include Shariah, under which homosexual conduct is an offense, but this is *education* and not *recruiting*. Should Harvard refuse to train lawyers to practice in nations where, in full or part, Shariah is in force?

News and Notes continued on page 13

President's Column (continued)

This year we began another tradition when we provided a celebrant for an ecumenical ceremony to celebrate the two-year anniversary of three same-sex couples. From now on we will have a celebrant on-call at this festival because many couples engage in commitment ceremonies during the weekend and some specifically want a secular service.

Celebrants and Officiants

For many years, Minnesota Atheists has been well-served by Paul Heffron acting as our wedding celebrant and by Steve Petersen acting as our funeral memorial officiant. We are pleased that they will be able to continue in these roles, but we could use a couple more volunteers to help them. If you're interested, please call Steve at 651-484-9277.

Gay Pride with RAFT in Rochester

Minnesota Atheists will join the Rochester Area Freethinkers (RAFT) on July 17 in hosting a booth at the Rochester Gay Pride Festival. This will be the second of

five gay pride festivals we will have a booth at again this year.

Fargo Regional Conference

On Sept. 18, the Red River Freethinkers will be hosting their first regional conference, called "Project 42." For more information, go to: <http://www.project42convention.org>.

Winter Solstice Party

Representatives from Minnesota Atheists, the Humanists of Minnesota, and the Freethought Band met to brainstorm ways to lower the admission price of our annual Winter Solstice Banquet and Freethought Follies. It was decided that after the banquet (which typically costs about \$45), we would open the doors to those who just wish to see the stage show, charging them about \$5 each. While we expect to lose some money through lost banquet sales, we hope to recover it through show-only tickets. Hopefully, this solution will enable us to have over 100 attendees at our annual event.

FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM

BY GEORGE KANE



Vq hptfdu hfnxnvho zt tzo qpyq qpo wnoyq
ryvzhqnoyr tc jvjdvmid hmptdynh ptdu svoih cnvozudk qt
qnyuvqvtzyd Mpnvhqvyzvqk, ctn qpo hvrxdn noyhtz qpyq
rthq jvjdvmid hmptdynh yno yzu ydiykh pyso jooz jodvosvzw
Mpnvhqvyzh.

-Ntjonq R. Xnvmo, *Jk Qpvh Qvro Po Hqvzgoqp*

Answer on page 18

American Humanist Association Conference

by August Berkshire

Anthony Pinn, Research Director for the Institute for Humanist Studies and former Religious Studies professor at Macalester College in St. Paul (left), and August Berkshire, President of Minnesota Atheists, spoke at the American Humanist Association national conference in San Jose, California on June 3-6, 2010. Photo courtesy of Marc Jagoe.



The Bible and Slavery

by August Berkshire



In conjunction with this year's Juneteenth celebration, MNA member Eric Harmon spoke on "The Bible and Slavery" at the Minneapolis North Regional Library three days later. Four Christian street evangelists who had debated Eric at Juneteenth showed up and continued their lively, friendly exchange. The evangelists seemed to conclude that anything bad that happened to anyone (such as slavery) was God's will and a response to some type of sin the victims had committed. Photo courtesy of August Berkshire.

Happy Harmonies

Looking for a cult-like experience without the dangerous mind control, cyanide laced Kool-Aid,* and pungent commune? Allow me to introduce you to Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros. Besides my childhood experience at Bible camp, their June 6 performance at First Ave. in Minneapolis was the closest I have come to encountering a cult experience.



by Eric Jayne

Hailing from Los Angeles (where else?), Alex Ebert formed his alter-ego—Edward Sharpe—and formed the 11-member band and released their first album, *Up From Below*, last year. Ebert performs on stage in a long white robe with a red sash while dancing (and convulsing) with a tambourine as if possessed by a circa 1968 hippie who has just consumed a fair amount of hallucinogens. He keeps his hair long, unkempt, and dons a full beard and mustache (*à la* Charles Manson). The rest of the band consists of guitarists, bassist, drummer, accordion player, ukulele player, pianist, trumpeter, banjo player, and second percussionist who plays a variety of other instruments.

At the June 6 concert I attended, the two women in the band wore long dresses with flower patterns. They waved their arms and hands to the music—less like a Bohemian hippie at a concert and more like a Pentecostal Christian at a big tent revival. One of these women, Jade Castrinos, performed alongside Ebert (aka, “Edward Sharpe”) on the song titled “Home.” The infectiously happy love song, indecently, was ranked #1 by 89.3 *The Current* listeners on the list of Top 89 of 2009.

Shortly after the band played *Om Nashi Me*, a 7-minute song that sounds like a Buddhist meditation chant set to lively piano chords, Ebert performed a one-song encore. For this last performance of the evening, Ebert sat solo on the main floor (not the stage) in the

middle of a crowded circle of concert attendees while playing the acoustic ballad Brother. It almost appeared as if John Lennon was performing “Give Peace a Chance” surrounded by adoring fans.

On the way home from the concert I tuned my radio to 89.3 *The Current*, where I first heard Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros. Less than a mile from home I heard a fantastic song that caught my godless ears. The song is titled “Hard Believer” and it’s by a

relatively new Swedish indie folk female duo called First Aid Kit. The song is about a strong-minded freethinking woman refusing to accept religion or to pretend to accept it. Here’s a portion of the lyrics: *Well I see you’ve got your bible/Your delusion imagery/Well I don’t need your eternity/Or your meaning to feel free/I*

just live because I love to/And that’s enough you see/So don’t come preach about morality/That’s just human sense to me. The song ends with this verse repetition: *And it’s one life and it’s this life/And it’s beautiful.*



Photo courtesy of Stacy Schwartz

* Yes, yes, I know it was not Kool-Aid that Jones passed out in Guyana, but that’s the way the saying goes.

PAINT THE BRIDGE

The new school year is fast approaching, which means student groups at the University of Minnesota are given the opportunity to paint the panels on the Washington Avenue Bridge. Student group Campus Atheists, Skeptics, and Humanists are again raising funds for the promotion of secularism on campus by filling their panel with atheist, agnostic, secular, humanist, and freethought quotes sponsored by the freethought community of Minnesota. For \$10 a word, you can help support CASH and have your favorite quote painted on the bridge. Small words are free, and for every nine words you buy, the tenth is free as well. To submit your quote, or if you have any questions, send an email to cash@cashumn.org.



by Grant Steves

Book Review

Perhaps the pastoral setting of Minnesota inspired Kevin Cashman to reflect on what makes a leader. His own experience has grounded him in the practical aspects of leadership. What he discovered in his reflection on leadership was that it comes from the inside. As Socrates said, “know yourself.” His conclusion is that you must first know who you are before you can lead.

This *knowing* is mastery in seven areas: Personal, Purpose, Interpersonal, Change, Being, Balance, and Action. Each of these topics is developed in a separate chapter. His method is to present examples to explain the concept; a space for the reader to write down their insights, reflections, and commitment; and assignment sheets to help the reader understand how the concepts are applied.

Personal mastery is the beginning of leadership. An individual who leads presents a highly functional character:

- 1) They are perceptive of what is not easily perceived;
- 2) They think outside their limits;
- 3) They are empathetic and not just sympathetic;
- 4) They set goals to achieve and to work toward; and
- 5) They imagine the possibilities.

This mastery is possible because the leader does not set self-limiting patterns and knows their self. As Peter M. Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, said, “People with a high level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, their growth areas, and they are deeply self-confident. Paradoxical? Only for those who do not see the journey is the reward.”

As readers complete this first pivotal chapter, they hopefully begin to understand why a leader must be acutely aware of the self. When a leader becomes obsessed with their own ego satisfaction, they reveal their character flaws. To overcome this ego problem, a leader needs to become an authentic person who realizes the value of others and knows how to be and not just how to act. Self-insight is needed to lead, and it is not something others can give a person. An organization deserves leaders who rise above themselves and who make decisions that are inclusive and not exclusive.

Kevin Cashman identifies interpersonal communication as the next mastery skill that takes the leader from their ego to building bridges to others. The ego wants to say, “We are the ones that make things happen.” The result may be that the ego-centered leader “leaves a wake of bodies in the process.” This ego-centered thinking result fails to examine the means by which the ends were achieved. We must “let go of the belief that, ‘if I am to care for something, I must control it.’” This ego attitude is contrary to the necessary character trait of openness to new ideas, but an openness that credits others for ideas that influence. In composition we use footnotes to credit the influence of others. In leadership we use recognition of others to credit their influence. It is because of that recognition that we come to admire the leadership.

The interpersonal mastery in leadership must cultivate two areas: trust and constructive conflict.

An organization that does not build these qualities into their leadership will end with failure, discontent, alienation of members, a limited pool of leaders, and a limited vision. Cashman would argue that when the

leadership only gives the appearance of accepting the opinion of others, it has destroyed an authentic leadership.

For his chapter on interpersonal mastery, he surveyed 6,403 leaders and found that they received the highest evaluations for their intellectual competency, but they received their lowest marks for their interpersonal competencies. A generalization has been made about atheists – they are more intellectual than the average group of people, but they are also more apt to have interpersonal communication problems. If this is true, we would be wise to seek a greater understanding of interpersonal communication.

This is Cashman’s fifth work on leadership. He has also taught leadership skills in a number of seminars. Over 100 universities have used his book in their curricula. His advice has appealed to a broad readership that has made it a business and leadership best-seller. Those successes are enough to recommend a book for examination. My motivation for reading and then using the book in a class I taught on leadership was because of its clear and engaging style of presentation. This book is interactive and encourages the reader to participate in developing the mastery of leadership skills. The methods that he espouses encourage a leadership of inclusiveness and recognition. It is an approach that emphasizes humanistic values and the appreciation for what humans can attain when they work together.

Leadership: From the Inside Out, Kevin Cashman.
© 2008, 215 pages.

Fifth Sunday Spaghetti Dinner



Our most recent 5th Sunday Spaghetti Dinner was held at Roseville Cental Park on May 30th. We raised \$469.19.



Juneteenth Festival

Minnesota Atheists had a booth at the Juneteenth Celebration in North Mississippi Regional Park, Minneapolis on June 19th. Staffing the booth were (from left) Dan Jensen, Eric Harmon, and Rachel Wilson, and (not shown; photographer) August Berkshire.



Photos courtesy of August Berkshire (top and right) and Steve Peterson (above).

**June
Treasurer's
Report**

Red River Freethinkers
WWW.REDRIVERFREETHINKERS.ORG



– Press Release –

Visibility Fund

Dean Borghorst (From May)	\$25.00
Jim Salutz (From May)	\$25.00
Total:	\$50.00

6/1/2010

Jon Lindgren
President, Red River Freethinkers
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701-232-7868

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Building Fund

Shirley Moll	\$50.00
James Whitney	\$25.00
Mathew Richardson	\$50.00
John McCallum	\$25.00
Vernon Young	\$100.00
Daniel Norte	\$35.72
Total:	\$285.72

Total Income: \$335.72

**Current Building Fund:
\$124,789.33**



**RED RIVER FREETHINKERS TO HOST FIRST EVER
FREETHOUGHT CONVENTION IN THE FARGO-MOORHEAD AREA**

The Red River Freethinkers group is bringing the first major freethought convention to the Fargo-Moorhead area. "Project 42: 2010 Valley Freethought Convention" will be held on Sept. 18, 2010 at the Fargo Civic Center from 8:00am to 6:00pm. The event will include five world-class speakers:

- **Dan Barker:** Co-president of the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#) and author of several books, his most recent being *Godless: How An Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists*.
- **Annie Laurie Gaylor:** Co-president of the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#), author, and executive editor of *Freethought Today*.
- **PZ Myers:** Author of [Pharyngula](#), one of the most acclaimed science blogs of all time, a biologist and associate professor at the University of Minnesota, Morris.
- **Brian Keith Dalton:** Producer and star of [Mr. Deity](#), the increasingly popular on-line comedy series which takes a look at the universe with incredibly witty insights.
- **August Berkshire:** A well-known and respected speaker on atheism for comparative religion classes in high schools, and to community and Christian colleges. In 1984 he co-founded and was the first president of the Twin Cities Chapter of American Atheists (which became Minnesota Atheists in 1991). His website is [www.augustberkshire.com](#).

The website for the convention is [www.Project42convention.org](#).

This event is part of the Red River Freethinkers' ongoing efforts "to promote freethinking through education and activism," which is the group's mission.

For further information please contact Jon Lindgren (jon.lindgren@redriverfreethinkers.org) or Trevor Nelson, event coordinator (trevor.nelson@redriverfreethinkers.org). Interviews are available.

The Red River Freethinkers, a nonprofit, educational and advocacy group, was founded in 1997 and is based in Fargo, North Dakota. Their focus is on providing educational opportunities and on fostering the growing secular community in and around the Red River Valley area. Their web site is <http://www.RedRiverFreethinkers.org>.

###

FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

It should surprise no one that the great mainstream of biblical scholars hold views friendly to traditional Christianity, for the simple reason that most biblical scholars are and always have been believing Christians.

-Robert M. Price, *By This Time He Stinketh*

News and Notes (continued)

The Secular Coalition for America, ironically, has also announced its opposition to the appointment of Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court. They point to instances in which Kagan has articulated positions that indicate a weak commitment to the separation of church and state.

By now most of you have heard that the 6-story tall “Touchdown Jesus” statue at the Solid Rock Church in Monroe, Ohio burned to the ground after being hit by lightning. The statue, officially named the “King of Kings,” stood across the street from a Hustler porn shop, which was unscathed by the storm. Evangelicals are so quick to draw a connection between a distant disaster and God’s wrath over pornography in America, how can they dismiss the obvious symbolism of this lightning strike?

The Mormon Church was found guilty by California’s Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) of 13 violations of state campaign finance reporting law in the *Yes on Prop 8* campaign that amended the state constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage. A spokesman for the Mormon Church, Don Eaton, said in an interview prior to the election, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints put zero money in this.” Yet an independent investigation revealed that the Mormon Church distributed contributions amounting to more than half of the \$45 million dollar *Yes on Prop 8* campaign. It contributed non-monetarily to the campaign as well by sending Mormon campaign volunteers as part of the Church’s “mission” program, and provided free use of church properties throughout the California. Yet the FPPC found only that Mormon leaders “failed to timely report making late non-monetary contributions” of \$36,928, and fined the LDS organization only \$5,539 dollars.



I attended Eric Harmon’s presentation on “Bondage and the Bible” (see photo), an outreach by Minnesota Atheists to the black community that we publicized at the Juneteenth celebration. It was attended by a few fundamentalist Christians who argued for biblical inerrancy, although not very well. Harmon handled them very well, although the wealth of biblical citations from which he drew did little to stem the venom and *ad hominem* attacks from the fundamentalists. Whenever such confrontations arise, I wonder whether there is any point in engaging the argument. I am sure that nothing could be said that could shake the fundamentalist’s conviction. In the audience, however, there may be some whose affiliation to the fundamentalist may be shaken by exploring his thoughts.

That night’s fundamentalist leader justified the biblical passages that approved of slavery cited by Harmon by asserting that they referred to the Jews, whom God was punishing for disobedience. But he accepted that the admonition for slaves to obey their masters referred to other slaves in later times, and that they, too, were receiving punishment from God. Under prodding by Harmon, he stated that Martin Luther King should not have led protests for civil rights, but should have accepted God’s will. Harmon said afterward that he saw the other blacks in

the audience glare in astonishment at the fundamentalist at that point.

But in a public meeting, in an attempted outreach, one cannot say what most needs to be said. I wanted to tell the fundamentalist that his moral views are deplorable.

June Cable Report

by Steve Petersen

"Summer Reading Suggestions"

For the first June show, host James Zimmerman interviewed MNA member Ryan Sutter on ideas for what to read while on vacation this summer. Ryan suggested an eclectic range of texts, including *God*, by Alexander Waugh, which consists of hundreds of vignettes on humans' depiction and beliefs in supernatural beings; and the *Godhead Trilogy*, by James Morrow. Morrow's work is a fictitious tale that asks the "big questions" set against a curious story. For those who don't have that much time this summer, Ryan recommended a 19th-century essay authored by William Clifford titled "The Ethics of Belief." Ryan claimed this essay was notable both for being ahead of its time and for its ability to cause even the modern reader to rethink their view of the world. Though out of print, Ryan pointed out that the essay is available online at sites including Infidels.org.

"Two Great Shows"

During the second show, James Zimmerman interviewed Ryan Sutter on two responses he had recently created to two famous works, and the subsequent fallout. First, Ryan discussed his review of Richard Dawkins' *The Greatest Show on Earth*, which first appeared in this newsletter, then was picked up by RichardDawkins.net where it received numerous comments. Though Ryan enjoyed the book, he felt Dawkins failed to fully accomplish the goals he set for the book. Ryan's critique of this sparked a fascinating discussion.

Second, Ryan talked about his response to the documentary *Expelled*. Instead of a frontal assault on the film's inaccuracies, Ryan felt it best to lampoon the film's trailer by creating a spoof entitled *Flattened*, which essentially remade the trailer, substituting creationism for flat-Earth belief. The episode concluded with a showing of the six-minute long mockumentary and a brief greeting by Ryan's son Syd, who assisted in creating the film.

If you are interested in having our program played on your local cable access station please contact Steve Petersen at achair@mnatheists.org or 651-484-9277.



Cable Crew: George Kane, Brett Stembridge, Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Wendy Steinberg, Grant Hermanson, Mike Haubrich, Karen Burke, Brian Knoblock and Greghten Anderson.

Podcasts: MinnesotaAtheists.org. 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. Monday 9:30 p.m., Tuesday 5:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Sponsors: David and Joanne Beardsley.

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

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

Roseville, Shoreview, Arden Hills, North Oaks, Little Canada, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Mounds View

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

St. Cloud: Ch. 12 Thursday 8:30 p.m. Sponsor: Jack Rictor.

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

South Washington County: Ch. 14. Tuesday 7:00 p.m. Sponsor: Jim Bodsberg.

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

Minnesota Atheists

www.mnatheists.org

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

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

Things to do, Places to go: A Calendar for Atheists

Sundays, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous, 3249 Hennepin Ave. South, #55 (Men's Center, in the basement), Minneapolis. Open to men and women. Contact: tcAgnostic@gmail.com.

Third Sunday, 1:00-3:30, Minnesota Atheists Monthly Meeting. (No meeting in July or August.) See front cover for details.

Fifth Sunday, Fundraiser Dinner for Building Fund. Price: -\$7.00. (August and November 2010.)

1st and 3rd Monday, 6:00p.m. Freethought Toastmasters Club. Larpenteur Estates apartment complex, 1280 Larpenteur Ave. West, St. Paul. (Park directly in back and follow sidewalk to party room.) Roger Belfay, (651) 222-2782 or George Kane, nup@minn.net.

2nd and 4th Monday, 5-7 p.m. Dinner Social. Davanni's Restaurant, 2312 W. 66th Street, Richfield. Bob and Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

1st Tuesday, 11:30 a.m., Lunch Social, Old Country Buffet, Co. Rd. B2, between Snelling and Fairview, Roseville. Bob and Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

3rd Wednesday, 11:30 a.m., Lunch Social. Dragon House Restaurant, 3970 Central Ave., Columbia Heights. Bill Volna, (612) 781-1420

4th Wednesday, Meal and a Reel. Uptown, Minneapolis (Hennepin and Lake). 6:00 meal, 7:00 movie. Details in Atheists Weekly Email.

Thursdays, 7:00, Campus Atheists, Skeptics and Humanists (CASH) meeting. See cashumn.org for details.

1st Thursday, 6:00 p.m., Atheists Talk TV Show taping. MTN Studio A, 125 SE Main St., Minneapolis. Steve Petersen, (651) 484-9277.

2nd Thursday. Rochester Area Freethinkers monthly get-together. Bill Kass, hawthorn@hotmail.com, or (507) 259-4237.

3rd Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Minnesota Atheists board meeting. Location varies. Contact George Kane, nup@minn.net.

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.



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"There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, [and] science, which is based on observation and reason. Science will win because it works."

– Stephen Hawking (from "Stephen Hawking on Religion" by Ki Mae Heussner, ABC News), June 7, 2010

**Check out our website at
mna.theist.org.**