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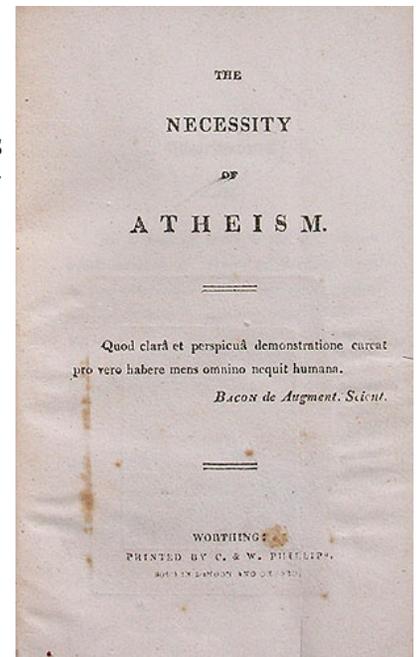
***The Necessity of Atheism* by Percy Bysshe Shelley** **January Public Meeting**



Presented by past president of Minnesota Atheists, and an active member of the atheist movement since 1984, August Berkshire

In 1811, at the age of 18, the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, aided by his friend Thomas Hogg, published an essay in pamphlet form entitled “The Necessity of Atheism”. This led to their expulsion from Oxford College. Two years later, Shelley expanded the essay as part of the Notes to his poem “Queen Mab”.

Prior to the publication of *The Origin Species* by Charles Darwin in 1859, publicly declaring oneself an atheist was rare and scandalous. Though famous as a lyrical poet, Shelley was equally interested in science and philosophy. (His wife, Mary Shelley, wrote the novel *Frankenstein*.)



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Sunday, January 23, 2022

1:00–1:15 p.m.: Zoom opens to work out any issues
1:15–1:45 p.m.: Business Meeting and board nominations (see page 2)
1:45–2:00 p.m.: Break
2:00–3:30 p.m.: Program

Virtually at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/99846973161?pwd=U0dKZD-IUQXFGUy9uQUpKYjFzdHYxdz09>

Or call in at: 13126266799,,99846973161#,,,,*487362#

Board Nominations

Minnesota Atheists holds elections for the Board of Directors every year. The board of directors consists of:

- President
- Associate president
- Chair
- Associate chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- and three directors-at-large

All positions are up for election with one director-at-large position that's completely open with no one planning to run. If you are interested or would like to know more about a board position, please contact Heather at chair@mnatheists.org or any other board member.

Nominations will open and close on January 23rd during the Business Meeting starting at 1:15 p.m. Candidates need to be nominated by another dues paying member while nominations are open. The nominee does not need to be present to be nominated. To be eligible for office, the nominee must have been a dues paying member for at least one year prior to the date of assuming office. Director-at-large nominees must have been a member for six months prior instead of one year. If you're interested in being on the board but do not meet these qualifications, consider getting your dues in now so you may qualify next year!

The elections will take place on February 20th during the February Business Meeting starting at 1:15 p.m. This will also be a Zoom meeting. The new board will take office on March 1, 2022.

Cryptogram

By George Francis Kane

Efp dqf acofp sx txqrbcyycpa edjfoxjfps axmr, dpm
sbds tbclb cr pxs lqnfj rffer sx sbfe pxs txqsb sbfcq
dmxqdsxcp.

Dpdsxjf Gqdplf, "Lqdcpznfkcjff"



News and Notes

Aborting the Constitution

By *George Francis Kane*

Rejecting with a narrow 5–4 ruling an application for an injunction to prevent a new Texas law from going into effect while

it is being tried, the Supreme Court stunned the nation more severely than it had for decades. News reports declared that *Roe v. Wade* had been overturned, and that a Texas law that would end abortions in the state had withstood a last-minute challenge. That law was certain to be copied by many other states. While the ruling probably foreshadows the ultimate intent of the court’s conservative majority, the panic that has gripped supporters of reproductive rights is still premature.

At issue in the case *Whole Woman’s Health v. Jackson* is Texas Senate Bill 8 (SB8), a new law outlawing abortion after a fetal heartbeat can be detected. This usually occurs around the 6th week of pregnancy. This provision violates *Roe v. Wade*, which held that the state’s interest in protecting life did not justify outlawing abortion until the fetus became viable, which the Court equated with the 3rd trimester. To prevent legal maneuvers to stop the state from enforcing the law, SB8 “outsourced” enforcement to any person other than government officials to bring a civil lawsuit against anyone who provides an abortion in violation of the Act, “aids or abets” such an abortion, or intends to do these things. These civil suits may be brought against anyone from the surgeon to a cab driver to a friend who gave the woman advice, with a bounty of at least \$10,000 plus legal fees.

The suit against the new law was filed in mid-July in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas. That court scheduled an August 30 hearing on a request for a preliminary injunction to prevent enforcement of the law on its September 1, 2021 effectivity date. However, on August 27 the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals issued an order pausing all proceedings in the

district court, including canceling the district court’s preliminary injunction hearing. On August 30, the plaintiffs filed an emergency application with the U.S. Supreme Court for an injunction to stay the implementation of the law.

Without holding any hearings in the matter, the Supreme Court denied the application in a one paragraph, unsigned decision. The court merely said that the filing addressed the wrong issues.

To prevail in an application for a stay or an injunction, an applicant must carry the burden of making a “strong showing” that it is “likely to succeed on the merits,” that it will be “irreparably injured absent a stay,” that the balance of the equities favors it, and that a stay is consistent with the public interest.

Where did Whole Woman’s Health’s legal team go wrong? That SB8 outlawing abortion after six weeks violates five decades of legal precedent would seem to demonstrate that they were

“likely to succeed on the merits.” There cannot be any doubt that the births of unwanted children to women who may be unable to provide proper care and home for them would be in many cases an irreparable injury. That should also meet the “balance of equities” and “public interest” standards. What did they miss?

The applicants now before us have raised serious questions regarding the constitutionality of the Texas law at issue. But their application also presents complex and novel antecedent procedural questions on which they have not carried their burden. For example, federal courts enjoy the power to enjoin individuals tasked with enforcing laws, not the laws themselves.

To me, this is astonishing. The majority of the court is saying that they cannot strike down laws even though they violate the constitution. They can only stop the government from enforcing them!

Continued on page 4

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Aborting continued from page 3

SB8 is carefully tailored to address this. Texas can pass unconstitutional laws, but the state cannot enforce them. SB8 is written so that no government official is responsible for enforcing it, because the state is leaving enforcement to private citizens in civil courts. The court decided that it cannot stay the enforcement of the law because all the named defendants but one were prohibited by the law itself to enforce it, and that the one defendant who was not a government official had signed an affidavit declaring “that he has no present intention to enforce the law.”

In denying the requested injunction, the court noted that “we stress that we do not purport to resolve definitively any jurisdictional or substantive claim in the applicants’ lawsuit. In particular, this order is not based on any conclusion about the constitutionality of Texas’s law, and in no way limits other procedurally proper challenges to the Texas law, including in Texas state courts.”

It seems, however, to be the end of this particular case. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals has stopped the trial in the District Court, and the Supreme Court has closed its door. *Roe v. Wade* still stands, however, and abortion rights remain the law of the land. Lower courts are unlikely to have the audacity to overturn *Roe*, however. That will only happen when an actual challenge to the *Roe* decision reaches the Supreme Court. That could happen during the Supreme Court term beginning in October, in the case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*. The case concerns a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks.

Republican-controlled legislatures in at least seven states are expected to implement laws that mirror Texas SB8. Meanwhile, Nancy Pelosi has promised to bring to a vote in the House a bill to make the right to an abortion a federal law. There is no hope at present, though, that 60 votes can be found in the Senate to override a filibuster of this bill. But this bill may return after the 2022 elections, when 20 Republican Senate seats are up for election.

Treasury Report

May through October, 2021

By *Chris Matthews*

Atheists Talk Fund Donations

\$0 Subtotal

General/Visibility Fund Donations

\$400 George Kane
\$300 Ross Meisner
\$200 Art Kallenbach
\$140 Ben Zvan
\$100 Erik Englebretson
\$75 Dean Borghorst
\$50 Art Searcy
\$25 Ann Zaiser
\$20 Ed Lubinski
\$15 Tim & Joanne Dunnigan
\$15 JoAnne Gill
\$290 Cash
\$130 YourCause
\$92 AmazonSmile
\$94 PayPal Giving Fund

\$1,946 Subtotal

Building Fund Donations

\$75 Dean Borghorst
\$75 Subtotal

\$2,021 Total Donations

Expenses

\$3,080 IT General
\$983 Move Research Library
\$461 Pride
\$378 Newsletters
\$822 Misc

\$5,724 Total Expenses

Current Building Fund

\$146,135



Outbreak: A Crisis of Faith: How Religion Ruined Our Global Pandemic

By Kamrin Duncan

Outbreak was written and self-published last year by Noah Lugeons, and as the title suggests, provides an argument that religion was the reason behind the American catastrophe of Covid-19. Lugeons focuses not just on the current pandemic, but on how religious institutions have had a history of negatively impacting healthcare, especially for women.

Lugeons is sarcastic and witty in his writing. However, he provides thorough evidence as to why religion is responsible for the current problems of healthcare in America.

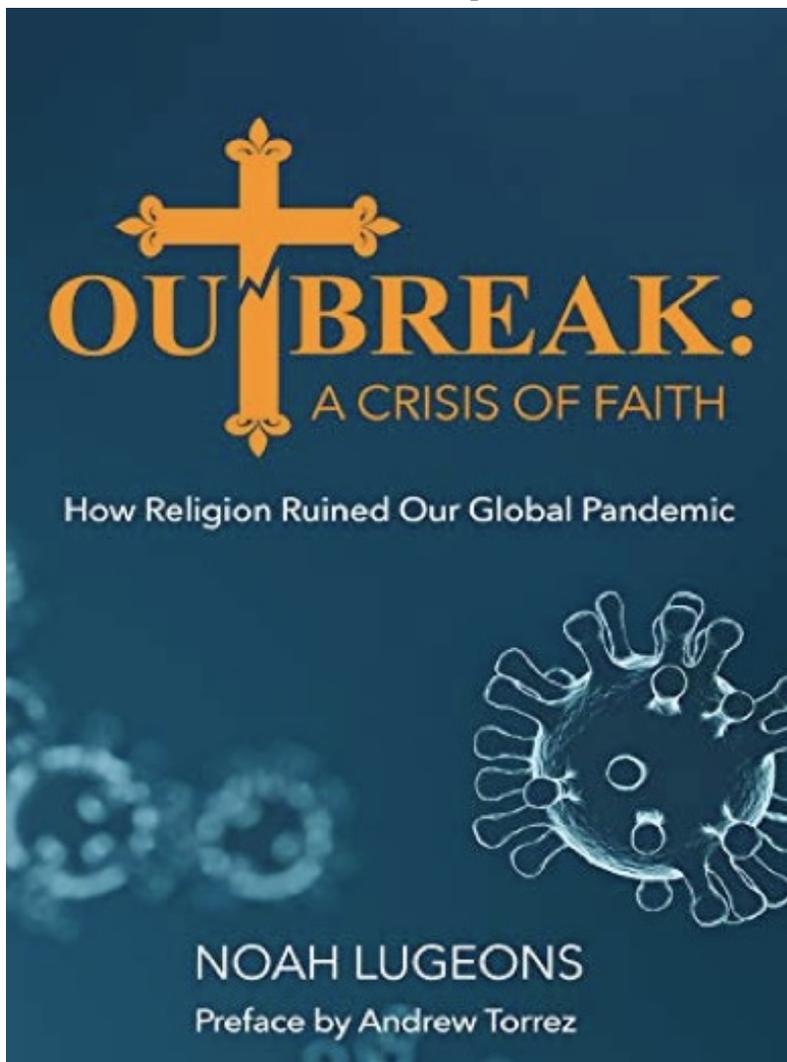
Outbreak is broken down into two parts. In part 1, Lugeons lays out how religion has affected many aspects of healthcare such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic, birth control, and vaccinations.

Lugeons dedicates an entire section of his book to heavily criticizing Republicans and the Trump administration and their relationship to evangelicals. Depending on your political affiliations you may not appreciate this portion of the book. In part 2, Lugeons specifically looks at how religion has impacted the world's response to Covid-19. Many churches and religious groups continued

to meet in large numbers despite orders against group gatherings, and many churches were granted religious exemptions to continue to gather despite the high risk involved with attending church services indoors.

Even though things are getting somewhat back to normal, there are still ongoing issues with people either outright rejecting the vaccine or not prioritizing it, leading to the ongoing spread of Covid-19 and its variants. Moreover, anti-vax extremists like Rick Wiles continue to spread misinformation about both the virus

and the pandemic. A study reported by The Wall Street Journal stated that white evangelicals represent the highest number of people resisting the vaccine among religious groups. (See citation below.) Healthcare and organized medicine has always been under attack by right-wing extremism and evangelical Christians. More recently though, as seen in the rates of vaccination among Americans living in the South, the rise of anti-expertise has been a concerning effect of a decades-long attack by religious groups in America.



Lovett, Ian. "White Evangelicals Resist Covid-19 Vaccine Most among Religious Groups." The Wall Street Journal, Dow Jones & Company, 28 July 2021, www.wsj.com/articles/white-evangelicals-resist-covid-19-vaccine-most-among-religious-groups-11627464601.

— Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*

Upcoming Events

Hybrid Freethought Toastmasters Meeting 1st and 3rd Monday of every month from 6:30–8:00 p.m.,
Larpenteur Estates Party Room,
1280 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul.
freethought.toastmastersclubs.org

Online Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting email chair@mnatheists.org for the meeting link.

Freethinking Females 2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m.,
Claddagh Irish Pub, 7890 Main St N, Maple Grove
Online Event And 4th Monday of every month at 7:30 p.m.,
NOTE: The first is in person and the second is online.
Shattering the myth that atheist groups are male dominated with a females-only event.

Blasphemer's Brunch 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30 a.m.,
Pizza Lucé, 800 W 66th St, Richfield.

Bowling for Deities Last Saturday of every month at noon,
Memory Lanes, 2520 26th Ave S,
Minneapolis.

In-person Trivia Night Every Sunday from 5:30–8:00 p.m.
Venn Brewing, 3550 E 46th St Suite 140, Minneapolis

M.A.S.H! (MN Atheists Social Hour!) Every Wednesday from 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Online In Depth – Discussion and Debate Every 4th Tuesday of the month from 3:00–4:00 p.m

For more events and instructions for connecting to online events, visit:

www.meetup.com/MinnesotaAtheists



The “Nones” That You Know

Issac Asimov

By *Milo Grika*

Isaac Asimov (January 2, 1920–April 6, 1992) was an American writer, best known for his hard science fiction, and professor of biochemistry at Boston University.

“If I were not an atheist, I would believe in a God who would choose to save people on the basis of the totality of their lives and not the pattern of their words. I think he would prefer an honest and righteous atheist to a TV preacher whose every word is God, God, God, and whose every deed is foul, foul, foul.”

— Issac Asimov

Cryptogram Answer

Men are given to worshipping malevolent gods, and that which is not cruel seems to them not worth their adoration.

Anatole France, “Crainquebille”

Get Famous (Sort of)

You too can become published by simply submitting something to The Minnesota Atheist newsletter:

Have a blog?

Let us reprint it.

Have an opinion?

Let us hear it.

Just send your input to editor@mnatheists.org and we'll do the rest.

Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations

Membership Levels

- One-year student membership \$10
- One-year individual membership \$35
- Three-year individual membership \$90
- One-year household membership \$45
- Three-year household membership \$115
- One-year sustaining membership \$75
- Three-year sustaining membership \$200
- Life membership \$600

Donation Funds

General Fund \$ _____

Building Fund \$ _____

Radio Fund \$ _____

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.

Please make checks payable to:

Minnesota Atheists.

Students, please enclose a copy of your fee statement or school identification.

Minnesota Atheists
PO Box 120304
New Brighton, MN 55112

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State ZIP _____

Just email newsletter Email address _____
(Required for student memberships and email subscriptions)

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Minnesota Atheists

Positive Atheism in action 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.

Minnesota Atheist Board of Directors

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board@mnatheists.org

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Ben Blanchard

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Associate President

Stephanie Zvan

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Chair

Heather Hegi

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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 Media

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org

Minnesota Atheists Affiliations

Atheist Alliance of America

Atheist Alliance International

American Atheists

The American Humanist Association

Council for Secular Humanism

The International Humanist and Ethical Union

Secular Coalition for America

Minnesota Atheists Membership

Regular members: 191

Life members: 50

Meetup members:

3,554

Minnesota Atheists Honorary Members

Hector Avalos, PhD

Dan Barker

Gerald Erickson, PhD

Annie Laurie Gaylor

Dick Hewetson

Robert M. Price, PhD



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