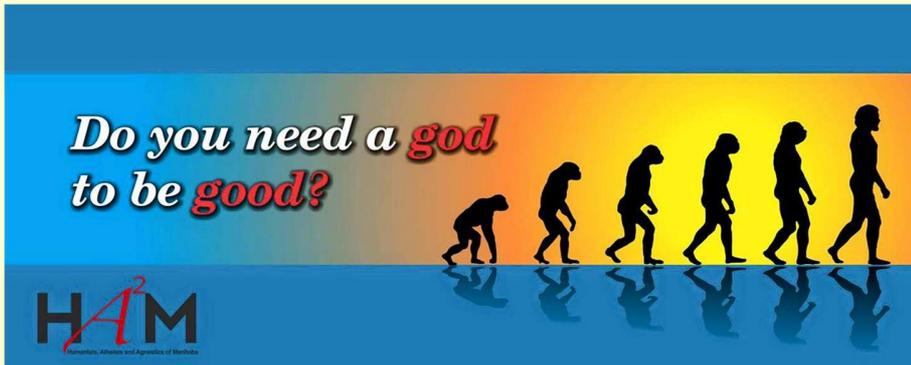


Manitoba Humanist

Join HAAM for our Summer Outreach



at the
Morden Corn and Apple Festival!

Published by and
for the Humanists,
Atheists, and
Agnostics of
Manitoba



HAAM

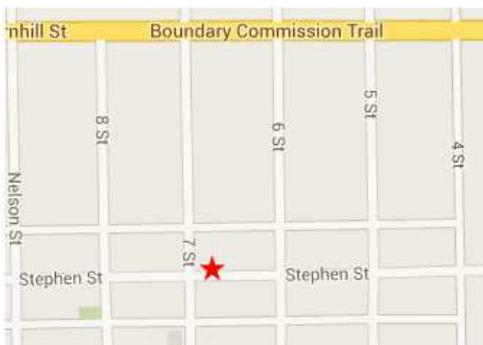
www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca

Friday August 21st and Saturday 22nd, 10 AM to 10 PM
Sunday 23rd, noon to 6 PM.

Hey everybody, it's almost Corn and Apple time! We'll be out there at our booth talking to people about what they believe and why they believe it. This year's topic will be "Do you need a God to be good?" If you're a paid HAAM member and would like to volunteer for a day (or an hour), contact us for more information.

If working at the booth is not your thing, come on out anyways! Stop by our booth for a visit! Say hello to the world's largest mosasaur, Bruce, at The Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre, and enjoy rides for the kids, all kinds of farmers' market and craft stuff, and of course all that great food! This year the headliner at the bandstand Saturday night will be the multi-platinum Canadian Rock group, PRiSM, at the Free Main Stage, 9:00 p.m.

Free corn! Free Apple cider!
Free music! And great
conversation!
Hope to see you all there!



River City
REASONFEST

September 19th and 20th,
(Saturday and Sunday)
Canad Inn Polo Park

**Hear fascinating and
inspiring speakers, including:**

- Eric Adriaans
- Hector Avalos
- Scott Carnegie
- Greta Christina
- Tracie Harris
- PZ Myers
- Lloyd "Hawkeye" Robertson
- Arthur Schafer
- Stephanie Zvan

More info on page 2.
Join your fellow Humanists!
Register NOW!

<http://rivercityreasonfest.org/>

COMING UP!

If you're new to HAAM, welcome! Our regular monthly meetings are always open to the public, but *our other events are intended for paid members only*. If you would like to check us out, you are welcome to attend one or two events before becoming a member. After that, if you wish to continue to participate, we ask that you support the group by joining. Annual fees are affordable and assist with community outreach as well as our own activities. Memberships are available at the door.

Contact and membership info is on page 6. All events are subject to change, and some details may be TBA. Past newsletters are archived on the HAAM website. Watch future newsletters, our website, Facebook page, or join us on Meetup for more information.



September 19 & 20, 2015

September 19th (Saturday) and 20th (Sunday), River City Reasonfest, Canad Inn Polo Park, 1405 St. Matthews Ave. It once seemed far off, but River City Reasonfest is now only SEVEN weeks away! We've added the schedule to the conference site, so check it out! Some of the speakers' topics are still To Be Determined, but we'll update them as soon as we have the details – so stay tuned.

You might also notice that we've added another speaker! **Eric Adriaans** is joining us. Eric is the National Executive Director of the Centre for Inquiry (CFI) Canada. His talk will focus on why Canadian secularism is at a critical point in its response to human rights in Canada and around the world, and why 2016 is a critical year in the pursuit to abolish Canada's blasphemy law (Criminal Code Section 296).

We're also planning one or two little extras for your enjoyment, so watch the website for updates on those as well.

So - if you don't have your ticket yet... what's stopping you?? Come on out! We'd love to see you there.



Visit <http://rivercityreasonfest.org/> for more information and to register.

Note: There will NOT be a regular monthly meeting in September because of the conference. See you all at Reasonfest!

Save the Dates! Upcoming meetings and events:

Saturday October 17th, monthly meeting, topic TBA
Saturday November 14th, monthly meeting, topic TBA
Saturday December 19th, Solstice party

ON THE BOOKSHELF

Greta Christina will be a featured speaker at our upcoming River City Reasonfest Conference in September. Greta has been writing for over 25 years on topics including atheism, sexuality, LGBT issues, politics, and culture. She is the author of several books and a well-known public speaker. She also is a regular contributor to AlterNet, Salon, and The Humanist, and has been writing about atheism on Greta Christina's Blog since 2005.

If you have not read her book '**Why Are You Atheists So Angry? 99 Things That Piss Off the Godless**', there is still time before the conference. The book is



available in our HAAM library for members to borrow (just contact us to get it). It's based on her now-famous speech at Skepticon IV in 2011

(<http://tinyurl.com/kbln5cc>), but the book fleshes out the topic so much more! Chapters include: "Yes, This Means You: Spiritual but Not Religious"; "Why 'Religion is Useful' is a Terrible Argument – The Santa Delusion"; and "Is Atheist Activism Effective?".

Don't miss out on this chance to read Greta's inspirational, outspoken, and thought-provoking arguments for atheist activism, and then to meet her in person!

Note that borrowing privileges are now restricted to paid HAAM members only.

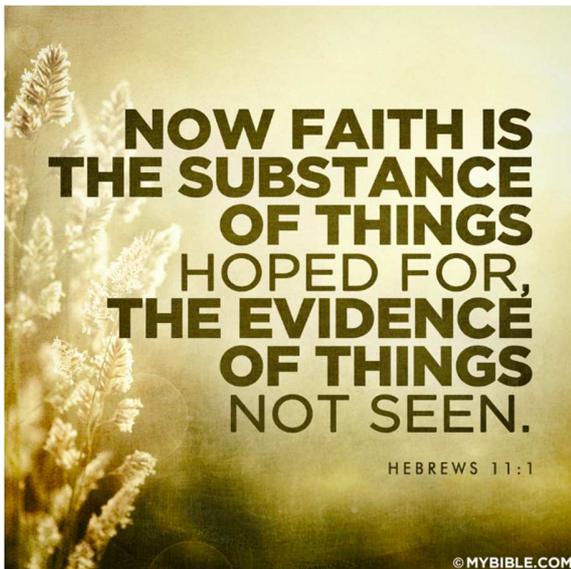


HAAM is part of the **Canadian Blood Services' Partners for Life** program. If you donate blood, let the staff know that you wish your donation to count towards the Humanist Association of Manitoba's

yearly pledge of just 15 donations. Our ID number is HUMA008484 (but don't worry if you forget the number; the staff can look us up on their list). Call 1 888 2DONATE to make an appointment.

THINK AGAIN!

Dr Arthur Schafer's presentation entitled "Is it Unethical to Talk Someone Out of their Faith?" prompted one reader to write to his local newspaper, *The Carillon*. (If you missed Dr Schafer's speech, check the June newsletter, archived on our website.) **Michael Zwaagstra** is a high school teacher and a Steinbach city councillor. His letter to the editor read, in part: *Schafer claimed that... it is morally wrong to believe in something when the evidence does not support it. Since Schafer believes that religious faith lacks evidence, it is unethical to be religious. It's certainly a neat and tidy proposition when you put it that way. However, it suffers from two fatal flaws – an incorrect definition of faith, and unsubstantiated allegations about what the evidence actually shows. Let's take a look at both in turn.*



The Christian definition of faith can be found in Hebrews 11:1, which states "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". So while it is true that faith requires belief in something we have not yet seen, it is not correct to say we are expected to believe in things with no evidence. In fact, each of the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews had solid reasons to trust God. For example, Moses was commended for leading the Israelites out of Egypt by faith. However, we also see quite clearly in Exodus 3 that God gave Moses good reasons to believe. From the burning bush to the staff that turned into a serpent, God provided Moses with plenty of evidence before sending him out to free the Israelites. So even though Moses needed faith to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, it was not a blind or irrational faith. It was built on a solid foundation.

The second major flaw with Schafer's argument is that he incorrectly summarizes the evidence. To categorically state that there is no evidence for religious faith is not only an exaggeration, it is demonstrably false. From solid philosophical arguments for the existence of God to concrete archaeological evidence supporting the accuracy of the Bible, to a strong historical case for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there are many reasons to accept Christianity.

The evidence for Christianity may not convince skeptics like Schafer. Even one of Jesus' own disciples, Thomas, refused to believe that Jesus rose from the dead until he saw him in person (John 20:24-29). However, by doing so Thomas rejected a significant amount of eyewitness testimony from the other disciples that was corroborated by an empty tomb. In other words, he chose not to accept the evidence that was available to him. It takes faith to believe in Jesus' resurrection. But that does not mean there is no evidence that it happened. Thus, Schafer is wrong to conclude that faith is unethical. To the contrary, it makes sense to have it.

HAAM's VP and Outreach coordinator, **Pat Morrow**, replied and his rebuttal was also printed in *The Carillon*: *Depending on who you talk to, there are many different definitions of faith. In Mr. Zwaagstra's column "Think Again", he offers us a definition of faith from Hebrews 11:1, and he agrees that faith is belief without seeing but not belief without evidence. This is simply a distinction without a difference.*



Mr. Zwaagstra offers the story of Exodus from the Bible as evidence. Dr. William Dever (ret) and Dr. Israel Finkelstein (University of Tel Aviv) are just two of many, many Biblical and Middle East archaeologists who, after exhaustive research, consider the Exodus never to have happened and the story to be an entirely fictional narrative. Archaeologists have been coming to the desert since the 19th Century and have simply found no evidence of the biblical Exodus. It seems that Mr Zwaagstra has demonstrated that Dr Schafer's definition

of faith coincides with the Bible's definition of faith, since he believes the story of the Exodus without evidence.

Zwaagstra mentions the "solid philosophical arguments for the existence of God" and "the concrete archaeological evidence that supports the accuracy of the Bible". He must be privy to arguments that I am not aware of, as without fail, all the major arguments for the existence of God since the time before Aquinas have fallen apart under the weight of their own built-in logical fallacies. As far as concrete evidence and accuracy is concerned, there is none that would prove the bible to be true to any great degree. I wonder if Mr. Zwaagstra gives as much weight to the archaeological and historical evidence that demonstrates many of the stories of the Bible are completely inaccurate and couldn't have happened.

In the end, not only is faith belief without evidence, it is also belief in spite of evidence. Faith is not a path to truth - in fact it very often gets in the way of truth. Faith is what we rely on when we have no good evidence. And that is why it is, as Dr Schafer explained, not ethical.

BOOK CLUB REPORT

We had a small but very lively group for our discussion of the historicity of Jesus, discussing **Nailed!** by **David Fitzgerald**, at our summer book club meeting. After 2 hours, the general consensus was that 1. Jesus was certainly not divine 2. He was probably not even a historical figure, although no one was prepared to rule that out entirely. After reading the book, we all moved our positions slightly or moderately towards the 'mythicist' side of the debate, and vowed to read more on this fascinating subject. Thanks to **Jeff Olsson** for hosting!



If you have a suggestion for a future book club, please let us know, as we are currently planning events for the fall season.

OUTREACH UPDATE

Back in March, HAAM was invited to join an international coalition of organizations promoting secularism and separation of church and state. The Secular Policy Institute (SPI) is an organization that showed great promise. However, in view of evidence that has recently come to light, we find SPI treading an ethical line that our organization and its members simply can't support. To this end HAAM has ended our affiliation with SPI.

HAAM will continue to support the advancement of humanism, secularism and the separation of church and state, and continue to build ties with other organizations, both large and small, with like-minded goals. Because in the end, nobody changes the world by themselves.

On that positive note, the Center for Inquiry is a national organization with which we are currently building ties. Our Executive have recently been inspired by CFI and its fight to the end blasphemy laws in Canada



and internationally. CFI is also representing non-believers on the federal government's External Advisory Committee of the Office of Religious Freedom, supporting

Dying With Dignity in their advocacy for medically assisted dying, and recently wrote to the Manitoba government about proselytization of children in our public schools. Their National Executive Director, Eric Adriaans, will be speaking about Canada's blasphemy law at Reasonfest. Don't miss his presentation!

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS UPDATE

Note: If you are not familiar with the recent controversy regarding religious instruction and proselytization of children in Manitoba's public schools, you can read about it in the April, May, and June newsletters (archived on our website).



In addition to HAAM's involvement in the issue, CFI also wrote to the provincial government to support secular public schools. In their letter, CFI recommended that section 80(1) [of the Public Schools Act], which currently states: "Instruction in religion may be

conducted in any school in Manitoba if authorized by a by-law passed by the school board” be altered to read “Instruction in religion may not be conducted in any school in Manitoba.” Such a modernization of Manitoba’s The Public School Act would be consistent with the diversity of contemporary society and ethics while protecting all religious and non-religious perspectives from faith-based bigotry.

CFI received a reply (dated July 15, 2015) from David Yeo, Manitoba’s Director of Education Administration Services which reads (in part): “We believe that schools should be safe and inclusive places for all children to learn. Parents have an important role in their children’s education and we support their right to choose activities that they feel are best for their children. The current legislation provides an appropriate balance and there are no plans to reopen it at this time. It is our expectation that Winnipeg School Division’s new framework will ensure that parents have a clear path to follow and that school administrators can fulfil their duty to ensure safe and inclusive environments for all students.”

Based on this reply, it appears that Manitoba has no immediate plans to remove religious accommodations and privileges in publicly funded schools. More info on CFI’s website <http://tinyurl.com/nm8hy3n>

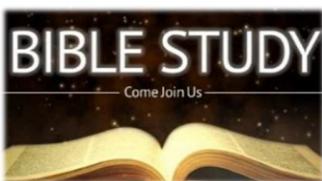
ON THE WEB

Coming soon! Watch for updates to our website in August. We will be adding more information and resources that may be of interest or assistance to our members.



New pages will include information on the following:

- Charities that we have supported in the past and can recommend
- Books presently in our library
- Links to support and counselling services
- Other secular organizations with whom we have contacts

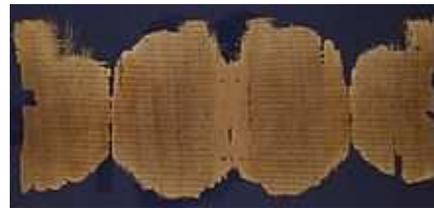


We’ll be covering the Gospels of Luke and John this month. Not every story of Jesus is included in every gospel, and several well-known ones

(like the Prodigal Son) were absent from Mark and Matthew, so they must be in Luke and/or John. Luke is

the last of the 3 synoptic gospels (those that are mainly biographical and share source material).

The gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles (which follows John) were written by the same unnamed author. Together they account for over one quarter of the New Testament, providing the framework for both the Church’s liturgical calendar and the historical outline of the story of Jesus. Luke was written between 80-100 CE, and revised further after that, but it’s not entirely clear whether it was written after Matthew or around the same time. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in Luke, and there is emphasis on loyalty to God rather than to the rulers of this world, who are alleged to take their power from Satan.



Third century Greek papyrus of the Gospel of Luke

The last gospel, John, dates to around 90-110 CE, but was likely written in stages during that time. Early church literature identifies the author as John, the disciple of Jesus, who also wrote 3 epistles, and the book of Revelation. However, modern scholars doubt that Jesus’ apostle John wrote any of these books, and authorship remains unknown. Anyone surprised?

While the first 3 gospels are quite similar, 90% of John is unique. Here are some of the differences to watch for as we read along: John is more theological than biographical, with Jesus talking openly about his divine role. John talks a lot about the relationship of the Son to the Father. It also focuses on the relation of the Redeemer to believers, the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, and the prominence of love in Christian character. Jesus’ teachings in John are largely irreconcilable with those found in the other gospels, and many scholars consider the Synoptic Gospels to be more accurate representations of the teachings of Jesus (if there was a historical Jesus). And sadly, John is the primary source of the image of the Jews acting collectively as the enemy of Jesus.

Readings for the week of:

Aug 2: Luke 1; 2-3; 4-5; 6-7; 8-9

Aug 9: Luke 10-11; 12-13; 14-16; 17-18; 19-20

Aug 16: Luke 21-22; 23-24; John 1-2; 3-4; 5-6

Aug 23: John 7-8; 9-10; 11-12; 13-15; 16-18

Aug 30: John 19-21; Acts 1-3; 4-6; 7-8; 9-10

Please share your comments or questions on our Atheist Bible Study Facebook group page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/234461256751696/>

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Contact us at:

mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com

or Phone 204-612-0601



Humanists, Atheists, and Agnostics of Manitoba



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Yes, I would like to **BECOME A MEMBER** of Humanists, Atheists & Agnostics of Manitoba

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Province: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone #: _____

Cell #: _____

Email: _____

*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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New Member Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership \$30.00
- Individual Limited Income \$10.00
- Household Membership* \$50.00
- Household Limited Income \$15.00
- Lifetime Membership \$1000.00 or more

* After July 1st, pay just ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year. After October 31st, pay full fee and get the entire next year.

DONATION (Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HA²M of:

- \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
- Other: _____

Please **DO NOT** send cash in the mail. Make cheque payable to: **Humanist Association of Manitoba** and mail to: Humanist Association of Manitoba, 112 - 230 Barkman Avenue, Steinbach, MB R5G 0Y5.

Memberships are also available by credit card on our website, or by cash or cheque at any HA²M meeting or HA²M event.