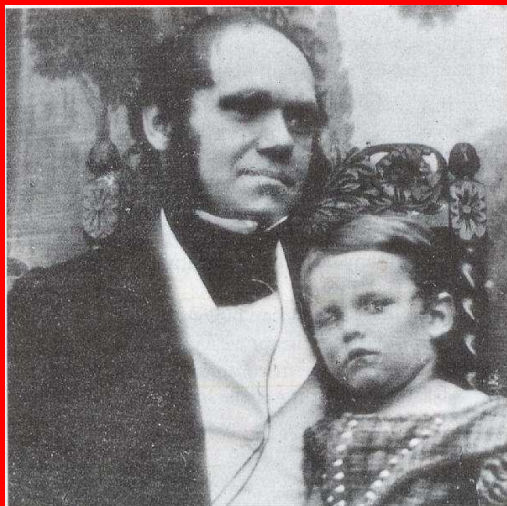


# Manitoba Humanist

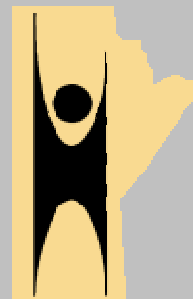


"How paramount the future is to the present when one is surrounded by children."  
- Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin and son.

Published by and for the Humanist Association of Manitoba

*"We are beyond belief"*



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## OUR FEBRUARY MEETING IS A NATURAL SELECTION

Our February meeting is once again a special Darwin-themed evening.

On Saturday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, we will be gathering at the Canad Inn, Polo Park to hear two different talks, from two different groups.

The first is post-graduate student, Dustin Geereart.

Dustin is a PhD candidate in literature at the University of Manitoba. He also did his Master's degree there, and his M.A. thesis was about literary reactions to Darwin, especially those of Lovecraft, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky.

The title of his talk is "**Darwinian Horror: H. P.**

**Lovecraft and the Culture Wars**". Here is a brief description:

*American horror fiction of the 1920's and 1930's might seem an unlikely place to look for insights into the so-called "Culture Wars" between science and religion in America and worldwide today, but the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft has long been a site for the analysis of the place of science and religion in modern culture.*

*Lovecraft was a child prodigy and autodidact who became an amateur scientist, journalist, and literary critic, only to find fame after his 1937 death with his tales of "Cosmic horror."*



"We shall see that at which dogs howl in the dark, and that at which cats prick up their ears after midnight."  
- H.P. Lovecraft

*Lovecraft spent his life investigating the intellectual implications of science, especially Darwin's theory of evolution, and expressing his concerns in fiction.*

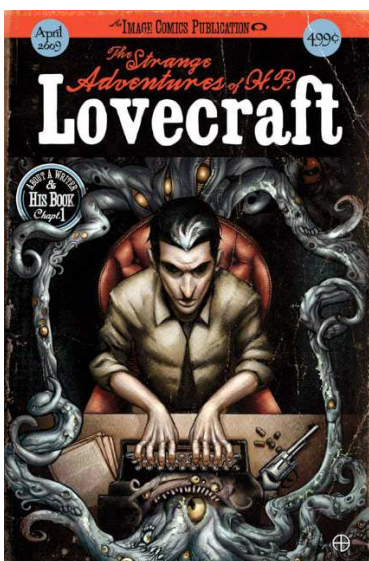
*The positions that he took often can seem often surprising given our linear view of the culture wars, but they were always based on powerful, if pessimistic, insights into the matter of science versus religion, giving them a new relevance in the last decade which may help to explain Lovecraft's increasing popularity and rising critical prominence.*

We're looking forward to this view of Darwin from a fresh, literary perspective.

We're also going to be hearing from representatives from Engineers Without Borders.

According to their website, Engineers Without Borders creates opportunities for rural Africans to access clean water, generate an income from small farms, and have improved access to the services and infrastructure they need to improve their lives. They harness the problem-solving approach and creative pragmatism of the Canadian engineering sector to address the root causes of poverty in rural Africa.

So mark February 12<sup>th</sup> on your calendar. And bring your sweetheart – because the evening is a perfect early-Valentines outing!



*“If religion were true, its followers would not try to bludgeon their young into an artificial conformity; but would merely insist on their unbending quest for truth, irrespective of artificial backgrounds or practical consequences.”*

*- H.P. Lovecraft*

## **BOOTH PROPOSAL FOR THE RED RIVER EXHIBITION**

At our recent Annual General Meeting, I raised the possibility of our group having a booth at the Red River Exhibition. Every year, the Ex has a tent space where a wide range of retailers and organizations share their wares and promote their beliefs. I felt it was an opportunity for us to do the same.

Since nobody on the Executive said “Don’t Do It!”, I have submitted an application for a booth. Now, we may not be chosen. However, if we are, I’m going to need at least a couple of people to help plan and organize this effort. At this point, all we need is perhaps 2 other people to form a planning committee. But if you’re interested, I’d like to hear from you, so drop me a line!!

*- Donna Harris*

## **MEANING WITHOUT GOD**

I do not believe in any gods. I have never had any personal experience or revelation that would make me a believer. I have studied many arguments for the existence of god, making my best effort to understand some of the more complex philosophical positions to the best of my ability and yet, here I am, an atheist. An atheist with a seemingly insatiable interest in the subjects of god and religion. This has led me to many discussions with believers as I am very curious why most people believe things that I find unbelievable. Many of these discussions become lively with lots of back and forth, as we try to come to an understanding of the other's position.

One particular point that seems to come up with regularity from the believers, and is often delivered in a tone that reflects their belief that it is the death blow to my position, is the question, "If you don't believe in god, how can you have any ultimate meaning in your life?" This is my answer to that question.

I find meaning in the fact that I am connected to and descended from every other living creature on this beautiful planet. I exist because every single one of my ancestors successfully reproduced. When I try to imagine that long chain of life and all the things that could have gone wrong but did not, I am struck with wonder and amazement that I am here at all.

I find meaning in the fact that one particular primate ancestor started living socially, developed empathy and compassion for others laying the ground work for the sense of morality that exists in us today.

I find meaning in the fact that some of those primate ancestors developed language, the ability to communicate thoughts and feelings that led to us being able to share our knowledge of this world. That led to the development of writing and allowed me the lifelong joy of books.

I find meaning in the fact that some of my ancestors developed the scientific method which provided us with a reliable way of discovering what is true about reality. That led to the discovery of the pain-killing drugs that provided comfort to my father in his dying days.

I find meaning in the companionship of family, of old friends and new. That I have them to share the laughter that doubles me over and the tears of sadness and disappointment.

I find meaning in my work. That being a nurse rewards and challenges me to be my best.

I find meaning in the love of my husband and the joy of my child.

I find meaning in the fact that my experience of this life is brief and fleeting. That my portion is small and I must therefore do what I can to savour what I have been given.

So when they ask me how I can have any ultimate meaning in my life, I have to wonder, how can anyone ask for more than this? The question itself is meaningless to me.

- Diana Goods

## **POLYGAMY, CHILDREN AND THE COURTS**

It seems odd that any Canadian would want to dictate to others how to live their lives. Even still there are those who would tell others whom they should sleep with. This is exactly what seems to be happening with the recent court case in British Columbia where the crown will decide if polygamous marriage is to be allowed in Canada. The issue of polygamy raises more than a few eyebrows within the humanist community and in society in general.

Coffee shop discussions I have participated in include a wide variety of opinions on many of the issues surrounding polygamy including personal freedom, societal norms, the legality of multi-partner unions and courts deciding who Canadians invite into their beds.

Section 293 of the Criminal Code of Canada explicitly bans polygamy and offenders can be sentenced to a five-year prison term if convicted. Bigamy is also named as a serious crime in Section 290. If polygamists are going to get away with this crime, it will be due to the outcome of a decision that will weigh religious freedom, one of our many constitutional rights, against the criminal code of Canada.

But what about the freedoms of the women who are trafficked so freely across the Canada/U.S. Border and trapped into these marriages? Should religious freedom trump a criminal charge? Certainly not.

So long as it is acceptable to indoctrinate young girls into a misogynistic system of religious belief, society will never be completely free of abusive polygamy. Credulous young girls who are so easily convinced that they should get married to old men when they reach the age of 14

or 15 years. These kids are the ones who are at risk so long as this system of religion is prospered. Yesterday, one young lady told the court how she made the decision to get married to a man who already had a few wives and was in his forties. She describes what she was thinking when she was only 17 years old. "I felt like my marriage was a revelation from God because it happened to be the same person I had seen in that dream and I accepted that," the woman, whose identity is protected from publication, told the court as she answered questions in a slow, measured tone."

If my 17 year old daughter was convinced she should marry her 18 year old boyfriend I would certainly encourage her to wait a few years before jumping into a lifelong commitment. It is no surprise that a teenager can fall madly in love and throw reason to the wind. But that is not what is happening in Bountiful. American girls are being brought across the border, having never met their aged suitor. There was no former relationship to be spoken of, no dating, no first kiss, no romance. If my daughter was convinced that she should marry someone who is over forty years old I would immediately suspect manipulation of some sort. If my daughter was being shipped to another country I would call the police, quickly.

And that's why I don't agree with some of the folks who are satisfied when the girls involved admit they wanted a marriage to an old man. These girls have been groomed for this role from their earliest youth. Taken from a larger population where the cultish beliefs of this fundamentalist church are taught, these girls are the select few who were malleable enough to accept this kind of arrangement on faith alone.

How then can society protect children who has been brainwashed into accepting this type of arrangement?

I earnestly believe that religious freedoms that exploit children need to be kept in check, made illegal, banned. Canadian standards for the age of majority need to be honored by all churches in Canada. Further more the government of Canada should ensure that the transport of any under aged children for the purpose of marriage

is illegal, whether the marriage is in Canada, United States or the middle east. Pass a law that protects children from their churches and the church leaders who would abuse them.

After all, it wasn't the government who has told these young girls who they should marry, it was the leaders of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They are the ones who should stay out of peoples bedrooms.

- Jeff Olsson  
(reprinted from  
LeaveFaithBehind.blogspot.com)

## **HAM ELECTION RESULTS**

At our recent Annual General Meeting, we held elections for spots on the Executive Committee.

Most exciting is that we now have three new members for our Executive. Hearty welcomes go to Diana Goods, Greg Christensen, and Allison Nelson.

## **POEM OF THE MONTH**

"There once was an old Heathen named Dave,  
Who kept a dead Apostle in his cave,  
'I'll have to admit,  
It looks like I've had it,  
But, someday I might want to be saved."

- Courtesy Myrna Donald

## **LAST LAUGH**

I was walking across a bridge one day, and I saw a man standing on the edge, about to jump off. So I ran over and said, "Stop! don't do it!" "Why shouldn't I?" he said.

I said, "Well, there's so much to live for!"

He said, "Like what?"

I said, "Well...are you religious or atheist?"

He said, "Religious."  
I said, "Me too! Are you Christian or Buddhist?"  
He said, "Christian."  
I said, "Me too! Are you Catholic or Protestant?"  
He said, "Protestant."  
I said, "Me too! Are you Episcopalian or Baptist?"  
He said, "Baptist!"  
I said, "Wow! Me too! Are you Baptist Church of God or Baptist Church of the Lord?"  
He said, "Baptist Church of God!"  
I said, "Me too! Are you original Baptist Church of God, or are you Reformed Baptist Church of God?"  
He said, "Reformed Baptist Church of God!"  
I said, "Me too! Are you Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1879, or Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1915?"  
He said, "Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1915!"  
I said, "Die, heretic scum", and pushed him off.

- Comedian Emo Phillips



## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Saturday, February 12, 2011**

Regular Meeting  
Location: Canad Inn Polo Park  
Time: 5:30 p.m.  
Speaker/Topic: Dustin Geereart, "Darwinian Horror: H.P. Lovecraft and the Culture Wars"  
And Engineers Without Borders

### **Saturday, March 12, 2011**

Regular Meeting  
Location: Canad Inn Polo Park  
Speaker/Topic: Andrew Woolford, Department of Sociology, University of Manitoba

### **Saturday, April 9, 2011**

Regular Meeting  
Location: Canad Inn Polo Park  
Speaker/Topic: John Hutton, Executive Director, John Howard Society of Manitoba

### **Saturday, May 14, 2011**

Regular Meeting  
Location: Canad Inn Polo Park  
Speaker/Topic: TBA

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**Jeff Olsson, President**  
**Donna Harris, Vice President**  
**Helen Friesen, Treasurer**  
**Heather McDonell, Secretary**

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**Jake Peters**  
**Grant Rogerson**  
**Neil Schipper**  
**Scott Shabaga**  
**Sophie Shulman**

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Or bring your form and the fees to any HAM meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.