

Hamilton Friends June 2019 Newsletter



Advices and Queries

34. Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.

Coffee List

June 23: Robbie McGregor (followed by
Welcome Potluck and Shower)
June 30: Bev Shepard



Calendar

Sunday 23 June: Party time! We have plenty to party about. We'll have a baby shower for our friend Nisreen's expected child, so please come and bring something for the baby, and maybe a little something for her daughter Leila -- big sisters that little can sometimes feel left out if there's too much fuss about the baby, who isn't even born yet! It's a welcome party too, now that we have all four (five!) family members at last back together, so come with food to share and ready to celebrate.



GRAND RIVER CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS POW WOW

***Lets support our neighbours!
Here is the info.....***

*** VENUE: Chiefswood Park located on Hwy 54, 13 kms east of Brandford and equidistant west of Caledonia near the hamlet of Middleport in Brant County. Detailed directions can be found on the Grand River Champion of Champions website together with schedule of events and admission information.**

*** DATE: July 26 -28. Chistina Edwards is planning to go on Saturday, July 27 and would love to join up with F/friends at 11 am on that day inside the admission gate. Please email Christina (cmeedwards64@gmail.com) if you plan to be part of this group.**

POW WOW'S ARE A LOT OF FUN! I HOPE YOU CAN COME!

-Submitted by Christina Edwards





Here is something I think Friends might enjoy reading.

It was written by a friend of mine, Charles Henderson Norman, to Washington Post columnist, Michelle Boorstein.

[Charles has also written the book *Fire in the Rock*, which is a very interesting take on the book of Exodus, supported by scientific evidence.]

Anyhow, this is what he wrote to Boorstein:

Dear Ms. Boorstein,

As a former United Methodist minister who converted to Judaism at the age of 50 (purely from conviction -- I met my wife ten years later), and who has also studied many Eastern religious traditions, I have read and thought about God from a number of points of view.

After a lifetime of thought -- which included writing a novel with a new perspective on the Exodus, which book was named to Kirkus Reviews' list of the Best Books of 2016 -- here's where I find myself today, rather near the end of an often difficult and challenging life:

All we can know of God with certainty is that He is *other than* anything in this Universe or anything that we know. We can be certain of that, because *He made it*. We do not know *how* He made it, in any sense; Genesis is neither a historical nor a scientific work, but a poem, a *metaphor* -- a term to which we shall soon return.

Beyond that *otherness*, we can be sure that *God does not intend His nature to be known*. When asked His name by Moses, He replied with *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, conventionally "I Am (as, or That, or -- ?) I Am." In antiquity, the knowledge of a person's name implied power over that person; with this

enigmatic phrase, God is telling Moses (in this teaching story -- it is almost always unwise to read the Bible strictly literally) that Moses is not to know God's true name, and can have no power over Him. *God is absolutely Sovereign*, and His nature is not for us to know. Even "His" *gender* is unknown to us; though we most often say "He," there are many Names of God and terms of Divine address in

Hebrew that are feminine, e.g. *Imoteinu*, or "Our Mother," analogous to the more familiar *Avoteinu*, Our Father.

We are taught that is a grievous error, or sin, to worship any *idol*; that is, any object or representation of God that is made with human hands. Indeed, the rabbis of old taught that even to attempt to list God's attributes or qualities was a form of idolatry -- which stands to reason; to create a *mental* image of God, and then worship that "image" as if it were truly God Himself, would be rather hugely missing the point. Who, or even what, God is, is not for us to know. He is the *Ein Sof*, the Totally Other, and we are obliged to acknowledge that fact and leave the matter there. As Arthur C. Clarke once said of the Universe, God is not only stranger than we think; He is stranger than we *can* think.

So where does this leave us?

For myself, in light of all the above, I feel free to think of God *in any way that I choose*, depending on my thought or need of the moment. If I need a Heavenly Father, a *personal* God who knows and loves me, He is that; if I wish to postulate a Cosmic Force or Principle, He can be that. Even Intelligence Itself, or Rationality -- That which allows the Universe to *make sense* -- I can think of Him in that way, too. All these are, to my mind, permissible -- *so long as I bear in mind that all these conceptions are mental constructs of my own*, and none of them is, or even could be, truly and fully God, The Holy One, Blessed be He.

When we think of God -- as we must -- *metaphor is all we have*. This is true even in Scripture, which ought not be considered the "Word of God," but the words of men, and likely a few women, thinking and speaking *about* God. Even they must resort to metaphor, which they surely understood even if they did not know the word; The mighty Hand of God, the eyes of God, even the love of God -- those are all *human* characteristics and emotions. What is there about God that is even analogous to those? We do not and cannot know. All we have is what we know, and what we are. Those are the only tools we have with which to think not only about God, but about anything.

I believe in God, most certainly; but that does not mean that I am arrogant enough to claim to know Who or What God truly is, or even in what way He can be said to *exist*. As things in this Universe exist? Who can say?

If metaphor is all we have, let us embrace it and use it freely, as the writers of Scripture did; but let us remember to remain humble in the knowledge that He is beyond our thought or understanding.

Thank you for the opportunity to express these thoughts of mine. I hope you found them worth the time to read.

Charles Henderson Norman

-Submitted by Carol Leigh Wehking

Greetings friends,

Our Clerk (Bev) can provide a copy of this thought-provoking paper as a PDF upon request. Just get in touch with her if you'd like one.

Language, Labels and Lived Identity in Debates about Science, Religion and Belief

Public discourse about science and belief is permeated by all manner of labels: terms like 'creationism,' 'Intelligent Design,' 'Darwinism' and 'New Atheism.' Some of these labels describe a belief about evolution. Others signify a conviction about how science and religion relate. Still others describe an organization, social movement, cultural trend or group of people. In a few cases, the same label (e.g. 'creationist' or 'New Atheist') serves all of these functions, with the term being used to describe both a set of beliefs and the population that supposedly holds these beliefs. Labels also, as we will see, feature in social-scientific research, where they often form the basis of survey questions designed to measure people's understanding and acceptance of aspects of science.

What is not typically questioned, however, is what people actually think about such labels. Are people aware of these terms? Do they identify with them, referring to themselves as 'creationists' or 'New Atheists'? Do these labels accurately represent people's perspectives? Drawing on interviews conducted in Canada and the UK, these questions are explored in detail.

-Submitted by Wilf Ruland