

The Minnesota Atheist

American Atheists Minnesota Conference on September 25th

A sure sign that the summer is over is the return of our monthly meetings. In September, however, we will have only a business meeting, from noon to 12:45. We are ceding the floor for the rest of the afternoon to American Atheists for their Minnesota Conference, presented by their state director, Randall Tighe.

Five speakers headline the conference:

GEORGE ERICKSON is one of our freethought community’s best known activists. He lives in Eveleth, Minnesota, the base from which he travels the Arctic in his bush plane, the Tundra Cub. He has written several proscience travel books, one of which, *True North: Exploring the Great Wilderness by Bush Plane*, was a bestseller in Canada. See page 7 for a review of his most recent book, *Eyes Wide Open*. He will speak on “Science, Faith and our Global Environment.”

CECIL BOTHWELL is the atheist councilmember in Asheville, North Carolina, who was under attack there for being an atheist. Religious bigots tried to have him removed from office but, thanks to the U.S. Constitution, it was not possible. The Secular Coalition for America has named Bothwell one of four national Secular American Leaders. He has written a book critical of evangelist Billy Graham, so he doesn’t mind being a truthful troublemaker in the Deep South. His speech topic is “We’re All in this Together: Faith and Reason and Their Consequences.”

CRYSTAL DERVETSKI, “The Sunny Skeptic” from Waseca, Minnesota, is a dynamic organizer of meetups

for younger freethinkers and is the face of the future of atheism. She will talk about “How to Work with Woo Thinking without Losing Touch with Reality.” (Woo is shorthand for pseudoscientific/ anti-scientific ideas.)

LAVANAM is a director of social work at the Atheist Centre in Vijayawada, India. He is a son of Gora and Saraswathi, founders of Atheist Centre. He has spent his life doing social reform projects, such as breaking down caste divisions and establishing criminal reform projects. Lavanam will speak on “Who Can Save the Future? Finding Safety in Community in a Complex World.”

DR. WILLIAM “BILL” VAN DRUTEN will come from Duluth, Minnesota, to add some humor to the conference. He attracted attention a few years ago by opposing Catholic-secular hospital mergers in Duluth — mergers which forced all staff and patients to adhere to Catholic doctrine regarding medical care. He also was the leading campaigner to get a Ten Commandments monument off the Duluth City Hall lawn. He will speak about “The Day Our Play Group Got Redirected.”

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IF YOU GO

What: Minnesota Atheists Monthly Meeting followed by American Atheists Minnesota Conference

Where: Southdale Regional Library, 70th & York, Edina

When: Sunday, September 19, MNA Meeting begins at noon, American Atheists Conference will be from 12:45 to 5:00 p.m.

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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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The Minnesota Atheist

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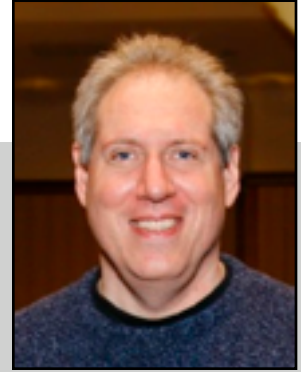
Minnesota Atheists Mission Statement

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.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Memberships

August Berkshire



This month I'd like to talk about membership in Minnesota Atheists. Keeping track of memberships (and donations) is very detailed work, and I would like to thank Steve Petersen, Shirley Moll, and Brian Knoblock for the tremendous job they do.

Steve has compiled the following data about members and supporters of our organization:

Individual Memberships:	173
Household Memberships:	35
(representing 53 members)	
Sustaining Memberships:	14
(representing 16 members)	
Life Memberships:	27
Student Memberships:	4
Newsletter Subscribers:	13
Donors not in above categories:	11

This amounts to 297 individuals who financially support us in some way. This is a decline from our all-time high, but it represents an improvement over where we were six months ago.

Last year we saw a decline in membership. I think this can be attributed to a number of factors, among them (in no particular order):

1) The Great Recession.

While we would like to believe that Minnesota Atheists is vital to our lives, the truth is that cause organizations such as ours are generally less important than food, clothing, shelter, and transportation. Let us hope that we are experiencing an economic recovery now.

2) Electronic Newsletter.

Many members have chosen to receive their newsletters via e-mail instead of as a paper copy. We appreciate this, since it saves us money. However, members do not respond to e-mail renewal reminders as well as they do to paper reminders. To overcome this, Shirley Moll has begun sending paper renewal reminders to lapsed members who were receiving e-newsletters. This has yielded good results. Thank you, Shirley and renewing members!

3) Ending Our Radio Show.

Our "Atheists Talk" radio program first ran from January 2008 to June 2009. It was a natural source of interest in our organization and an obvious, concrete example of something for which we needed money. When the show ended, these impetuses ended as well. Fortunately, we have been able to resurrect our show, and the excitement over it is coming back as well. This is leading to increases memberships and donations.

4) Much of the Newsletter is Free On-Line.

Websites that frequently add new content get more visits than those that don't. In our case, an obvious source for such material is our newsletter. Part of our mission is educational outreach, and many articles in our newsletter certainly fulfill that purpose. But this does raise the question of whether people are not becoming members (or not renewing) because they can get much of our newsletter on-line for free – so why pay for it? However, I, for one, would not like to see us cut back on the great articles we offer publicly on our website. Our hope is that people will see value in our organization that goes beyond the newsletter – and is worth supporting financially.

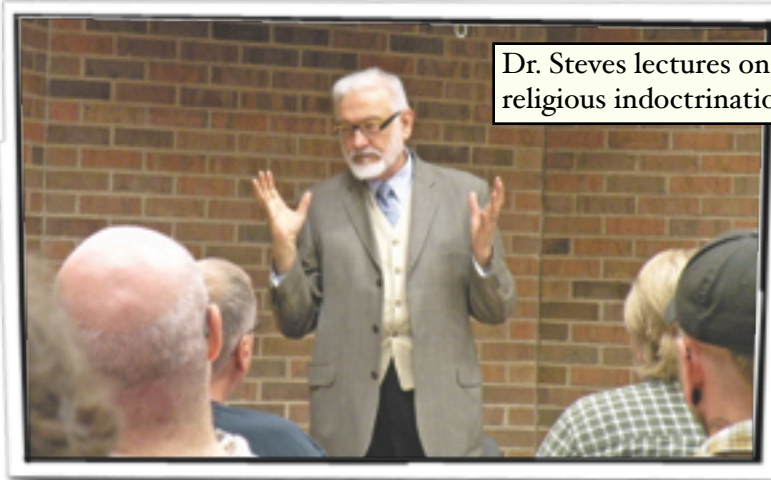
5) Many, many free events.

Often membership in an organization entitles a person to financial discounts and to attendance at special events. In contrast, virtually everything Minnesota Atheists does or sponsors is free and you don't even have to be a member to participate! Jack Caravela in particular has done a fantastic job of setting up Meetups. I would not want to change having many free events but, as with making much of our newsletter available free on-line, it does beg the question: Why bother to become a member?

President's Column, continued on page 4.

Recent Events

by George Kane



Dr. Steves lectures on religious indoctrination.

Presentation on Religious Indoctrination

On Sunday, July 25, Grant Steves gave perhaps his last public presentation for Minnesota Atheists, before he moves to Wisconsin in September. Speaking to about 40 attendees at the Golden Valley Library, Grant deconstructed the processes of religious conversion and deconversion, based on his personal journey as a Jehovah's Witness, Roman Catholic, and finally an atheist. He spoke in particular detail of the emotional context of conversion, and how cults are adept at manipulating new adherents with fear and release from crises in their lives.

After Grant's presentation, several members of the audience recounted their personal conversion and deconversion stories.

PZ Myers visits the Twin Cities

Paul Zachary (PZ) Myers, atheist activist and writer of the fabulously popular science blog Pharyngula, spoke to packed houses (attendance in the high 60s) at two Critical Thinking Club meetings in early August. His presentation to the St. Paul chapter was ironically titled "Science and Atheism: Natural Allies." His exposition showed that the two were in fact antithetical. He argued that no new facts could ever be discovered that will disprove evolution; rather, in the future there will be "Evolution Plus," that adds new mechanisms to current theory.

Further, no facts can be advanced that could ever prove the existence of a god, since that discovery would merely be another entity in the natural world, amenable to the empirical investigation of science.

The next night in Stillwater he presented an introduction to the mechanisms driving evolution, much as he would to one of his classes at the University of Minnesota at Morris. He discussed how the importance of mutation is overestimated in the popular understanding, as genetic assimilation, accommodation and the Baldwin effect are more important for changing the distribution of genes in a population in response to an alteration in the environment.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN (CONTINUED)

Membership

So what does your membership help fund? In the areas of community, communications, promotion, and education, your membership supports things like our Meetups and other gatherings; meeting room rentals and travel expenses for out-of-town speakers; newsletter printing, postage, and bulk mailing fee; our P.O. Box, phone line, and website; festival fees and free promotional handouts (pamphlets, pens, window clings, fans, etc.); cable TV fees, DVDs, and mailings; misc. supplies; storage for our library and other materials until we get a building; and providing resources for other freethought groups.

Beyond these material things, your membership supports two important causes: a rational, evidence-based worldview for individuals and advocacy for secular government for all citizens.

A religious person might easily drop \$5 a week into the collection basket, amounting to \$260 a year. In contrast, basic membership in Minnesota Atheists is only \$35 annually – less than \$1 a week.

Please consider joining, renewing, or upgrading your membership in Minnesota Atheists, our state's oldest, largest, and most active atheist organization. Together we can have a greater impact than we can separately.

New Baby!

James (this newsletter’s editor) and his wife Jennifer Zimmerman are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter, Isla Fayette, on Wednesday, July 28th. Isla was born at her home in St. Paul, weighing seven pounds, six ounces. Big brother Owen is very proud of his new sister!



FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM

BY GEORGE KANE

Jel Tqflidktrd iluqbmjkqd okbb dqj erul xqdl kjy oqiv
mdjkb kj ery jrmhej gld gqil gqxlyjw jerd ky jq zl
nqmdx rgqdh jeqyl oeq jekdv Grd ymnktdkj
lukxldtl qn Tqygkt Fmifqyl.

–Zlijirdx Imyyllbb, *Ilbkhhkqd rdx Ytkldtl*
(Answer on page 13)



News and Notes

Federal Court Finds California's Proposition 8 Unconstitutional

Federal District Court Judge Vaughn Walker's ruling in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* early in August that overturned California's Proposition 8, a constitutional amendment that defined marriage as a union between "a man and a woman," set off a predictable storm of outrage from the religious right. Tony Perkins, the President of the Family Research Council, complained on CBS' *Face the Nation* that Judge Walker should have recused himself because he is "openly homosexual."

Judges are expected to recuse themselves from cases in which they have a conflict of interest, and could personally benefit from their ruling. But clear lines are hard to draw when the standard is simply any condition that might cause others to question the judge's impartiality. If the religious right claims that a homosexual judge would be partial to a decision favoring same-sex marriage, should opponents of Proposition 8 not question the impartiality of a heterosexual judge, who would be inclined to protect what religious conservatives claim is the "special status" of traditional marriage? To assert that a homosexual judge must recuse while a heterosexual judge need not is to prejudge the merits of the case. Of course any experience may influence a judge on any case, but a personal benefit would only be evident if Walker were to apply for a marriage license. I rather like the idea of insisting that all Christian judges, or even all god-believing judges, recuse themselves from Establishment Clause cases. Realistically, I think that this idea has the same merit – legally and practically insufficient – as the demand for Judge Walker's disqualification.

But Perkins' assertion that Judge Walker is "openly homosexual" is a gross overstatement. He has never made any public statement on the question of his sexuality, and certainly none to the press. All of the assertions that he is gay are based upon an unattributed report in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that it is "an open secret." That article reported no sourcing of any

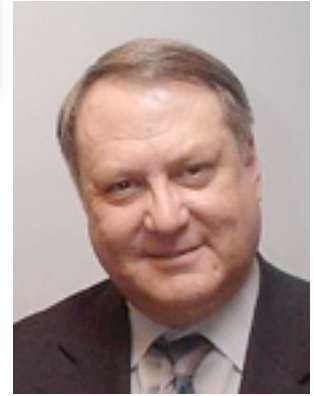
kind – neither witnesses, nor a boyfriend, nor a confidant. The story is based on nothing more than the unverified allegation of an "open secret."

Bryan Fischer, host of the American Family Association's weekday radio program *Focal Point*, wrote in

a column on *RenewAmerica.com* that Judge Walker wanted to "become a media star, the Judge Ito of the homosexual movement." That is blatant misrepresentation to "poison the water" of the meticulous decision of *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*.

Most reputable American newspapers refuse to be a party to "outing" public figures as homosexuals. Many have published standards requiring that, unless the person has stated his or her sexual orientation, they will not report it, even if other news organizations have already. Nevertheless, when right wing organizations demand that Judge Walker be disqualified because he is gay, newspapers like *The New York Times* report it. The right wing has thereby succeeded in manipulating the mainstream press into spreading their smear campaign. In assessing Walker's political leanings, no one mentions that he was appointed to the federal bench first by Ronald Reagan, then again by George H.W. Bush, and that his confirmation was opposed all the while by Senate Democrats.

At least in small part, I was disappointed in Judge Walker's decision. The reason that Minnesota Atheists supports same-sex marriage is that the rights of gays and lesbians are the target of political attack based upon religious prejudice. While the decision at one point observes that "(t)he state does not have an interest in enforcing private moral or religious beliefs without an accompanying secular purpose," yet, in his decision, Judge Walker never mentions the dominant role that



by George Kane

News and Notes continued on page 13

Book Review

by Paul Heffron

George Erickson, former president of Humanists of Minnesota and former editor of *Humanist News & Views*, has written his fourth book. This one is published by the American Humanist Association's Humanist Press. George served on the board of the AHA and was vice-president. Those of us who know him know that he has led an adventurous life and has often been on the barricades in the defense of Freethought and Humanism, frequently wielding his pen. This book is the results of George's remarkable life and the varied short-form literature he produced.

Eyes Wide Open is an unusual anthology. It contains every genre of short literary works: stories, sketches, poems, antidotes, essays, bios and more. It contains a variety of types of writing: fictional and factual, historical and personal, travel adventures, critiques of home-grown absurdities and atrocities, and so on. At various point you'll be reading George's letter to the editor, then something satirical, then something provocative, then imaginative, and so on.

A sense of history and humanism are present in this book, but it's really about humanist living by someone imbued with the values of Freethought and Humanism. This is an inspiring example of the humanist way of life or, more exactly, of a humanist way of experiencing life fully and boldly. This is not about humanity in the

abstract. As the subtitle puts it, this is about "living, laughing, loving, and learning."

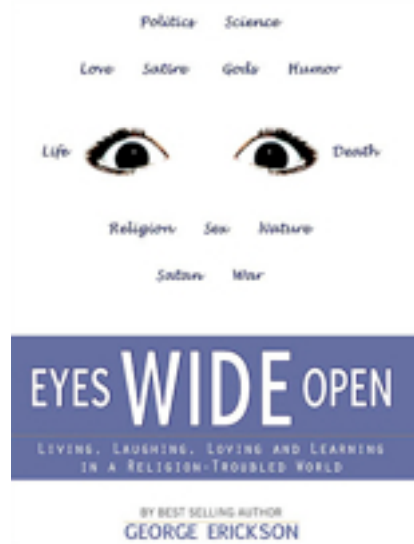
There is some science in this book. George is a science-literate person, and I especially appreciate that, because while I am pro-science, much of my reading has been in history and literature, and I am pretty thin on scientific knowledge. George expertly treats scientific topics in a concise and lucid way—topics such as plate tectonics and the functions of water—and then makes his points.

I also appreciate George's vivid descriptions of wonders most of us will never see and experiences most of us will never have. George has been all over the world and experienced many things. Thanks to his writing ability we can vicariously take in these things.

George excels at finding or making up good stories and telling them succinctly. He also has a good crap-detector, which he applies to the religious charlatans and political reactionaries of our troubled times. For good measure, he adds his views on many of the social issues that bedevil our world.

For info about this and other Erickson book, visit <tundracub.com/htmls/the_books.html>. For a signed copy of the book, send \$24.95 to

George Erickson, 4678 Cedar Island Dr., Eveleth, MN 55734. The author will cover the shipping cost. All profits go to charitable and educational causes.



George Erickson, *Eyes Wide Open: Living, Laughing, Loving and Learning in a Religion-Troubled World*. Humanist Press, 2010, 328 pages.

Help Keep Minnesota Clean

by Steve Petersen

Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup and Lunch, Sept. 12, 11:30 a.m., Lakeville, MN

On Sunday, September 12th, Minnesota Atheists will be performing its Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup in Lakeville, only 30 minutes south of downtown Minneapolis. The Cleanup is scheduled from 12:00-2:30 p.m., but with a good turnout it won't take that long. In any case, we'll meet at 11:30 a.m. at the McDonald's at 21044 Kenrick Ave, just off Highway 35 (take the 210th Street exit). At noon we'll review safety instructions and head out for the open road. Gloves and sturdy footwear are recommended. The latest in highway safety vest fashion will be supplied. Please contact either Rhonda Arkley at 952-322-1003 or Steve Petersen at 651-484-9277 or steve.petersen@mnaatheists.org with any questions. Hope to see you there!

Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup and Lunch, Sept. 26, 1:00 p.m., Rice, MN

On Sunday, September 26th, Minnesota Atheists will be performing its Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup in Rice. At 1:00 p.m. We will meet in the parking lot of the Creamery restaurant located on the west side of Highway 10 and the stop light in Rice. Some of us will have brunch at the Creamery at noon. They feature an inexpensive breakfast buffet, or you can just order off the menu. The clean-up takes two to three hours depending on the number of volunteers. Please wear sturdy shoes and bring gloves, bags are provided and stylish orange vests. Please contact Steve Petersen 651-484 9277 or steve.petersen@mnaatheists.org or Deb Doucette at 320-749-2025 for more information.

Rochester Gay Pride Booth

Members of the Rochester Area Freethinkers (RAFT) and Minnesota Atheists (MNA) staffed a booth at the Rochester Gay Pride Festival on July 17, 2010. From left: Jim Salutz, Kaitlyn Borland, Rod Cockrum, Joe Gelwicks, and (standing) August Berkshire.

Photo courtesy of Matthew Richardson.



Footprints on the Web

My digital footprint has been causing me a little stress lately now that I have joined a very competitive labor market vying for a job. Not that I'm ashamed of my digital footprint, but I feel that my outspoken support for atheism, science, and civil liberties (via secularism) may be a turnoff to prospective employers doing a little Google research for "Eric Jayne" in "Minnesota". I offer this apologetic article, in defense of my online atheistic activity, to prospective employers who may have stumbled upon this piece from their online search efforts.

In case you're not familiar with the concept, a *digital footprint* is the trail you leave behind from whatever online activities you have engaged in. To be sure, I'm not ashamed of my digital footprint but given the unpopularity of atheists in our culture and negative stereotypes that are promoted, I feel the need to persuade those who celebrate diversity in the workplace to extend that sentiment to atheists.

If there is any doubt of the social and cultural challenges atheists encounter perhaps a recent University of Minnesota study (www1.umn.edu/news/news-releases/2006/UR_RELEASE_MIG_2816.html) can mitigate some of that doubt. The study shows that atheists are the least tolerated minority group in the United States. While tolerance continues to grow for race, religion, and sexual orientation, atheists are seen as being amoral, self-serving, hedonists who don't care about community. It's not surprising that the study shows that the more educated an individual is, the more accepting they are of atheists.

I can't speak for all atheists, but one of the reasons why I shed my Christian beliefs is because I simply couldn't get past the ethnocentric idea of us vs. them that biblical stories and religious teachings promote. My compassion for people—and the mass community we call humanity—couldn't get past the idea of eternal and inhuman punishment based on

beliefs derived from one's cultural upbringing. When I researched religion even further I learned that religious texts were erroneously copied thousands of times over by scribes and translated from Aramaic to Greek to Latin and finally into English before the printing press was ever invented! Before I knew it, I had established a foundation of secular-humanistic moral philosophy and rational-based skepticism.

It wasn't until I learned about Minnesota Atheists that I was able to talk freely among other like-minded freethinkers about how frustrating it is to be ostracized by family and friends when we come out of the proverbial closet as atheists. While atheists often are accused of being pompous and condescending I submit that we atheists are often on the receiving end of anger-filled condescension from theists—who seem to claim great metaphysical and cosmological knowledge—for the simple act of rejecting a belief in their god. I think Stephen F. Roberts makes a great case for believer/non-believer camaraderie when he said: "*I contend that we are both atheists. I just believe in one fewer god than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours.*" It's simple, to the point, reasonable, and not in the least bit insulting.

So, whether you, prospective employer, are a private faith-based or public secular human service agency, you can rest assured that when you hire me you'll be getting a thoughtful, compassionate humanitarian who shares in all the glory of human rights and social justice your religion promotes. Additionally, because I simply believe in one fewer god (or prophet) than is popularly accepted, you have an opportunity to make your workplace a more diverse place of employment; and you don't have to worry about improper proselytizing because atheists don't have anything to proselytize!



by Eric Jayne

Christian Fundamentalists and Moses at the Supreme Court

I don't know how many times I have heard the erroneous assertion by Christian fundamentalists that Moses'

by Lee Salisbury

presence on a frieze on the Supreme Court Building proves that America was founded under Judeo-Christian influence, or as a Christian nation. It seems to me that if Christian fundamentalists wanted to demonstrate alleged Christian virtues of integrity, honesty, and truthfulness, they'd be more careful before making such easily provable misrepresentations.

www.snopes.com is one excellent source for checking out the truthfulness of folklore, rumor, old wives' tales and urban legends.

The Supreme Court Building was completed in 1935, 146 years after the adoption of the U.S. Constitution in 1789. A building built so many years after the founders' (generally accepted as Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin) deaths can hardly be said to represent their intentions.

In 1831 the Reverend Doctor Bird Wilson of the Episcopal church shed considerable light on the founders' religious affiliation and faith:

"The founders of our nation were nearly all Infidels, and that of the presidents who had thus far been elected [Washington; Adams; Jefferson; Madison; Monroe; Adams; Jackson] not a one had professed a belief in Christianity.... Among all our presidents from Washington downward, not one was a professor of religion, at least not of more than Unitarianism."

The Reverend Doctor Bird Wilson, an Episcopal minister in Albany, New York, in a sermon preached in October, 1831; first sentence quoted in John E Remsbert, "Six Historic Americans," second sentence quoted in Paul F Boller, George Washington & Religion, pp. 14-15

First and foremost, the Constitution makes no reference or endorsement of any god, let alone Jesus or the bible and is plainly a secular document. A.D. used as an abbreviation for the Latin words "Anno Domini" meaning "in the year of our Lord" in no way demonstrates a Christian affiliation by the document signers.

Article VI of the Constitution specifically states, "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the

United States." Accordingly a Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Jew or atheist qualifies for office. Article VI

contradicts standard Christian doctrine. Try and join any Christian denomination/church 'without' a religious test. The "no religious test" clause all by itself settles any arguments about whether America was founded as a secular nation.

The 1st Amendment, adopted in 1791, established both the church/state separation and freedom of religion. "Congress shall make no law respecting religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" makes clear that the founders did not oppose religion, rather required it be kept in its proper place. Without church/state separation we would have religious preference and lose freedom of religion.

The relief sculpture designed by Hermon McNeil appearing on the eastern backside of the Supreme Court Building is entitled "Guardian of Justice and Liberty." McNeil identifies the full frontal figures as Solon, Moses, and Confucius surrounded by several other allegorical figures. Solon and Confucius are not, as falsely claimed by some Christians, looking up to Moses. The two tablets Moses holds in his arms are blank, i.e., without the ten commandments.

The clear purpose of this building is to promote justice and liberty without religious reference. If there were a religious reference, as erroneously suggested by some, then Americans ought also to embrace Solon's Greek gods, Confucius' code of ethics, and Moses' Jehovah.

Christian fundamentalists falsely claim the frieze designed by Adolph Weinman on the east wall of the courtroom bears the Ten Commandments. Incorrect, Weinman himself stated the tablet visible between the two central male figures is engraved with the Roman numerals I through X. They do not represent the Ten Commandments but the first ten amendments to the Constitution, commonly known as the Bill of Rights. Furthermore the oak doors into the Supreme Court courtroom are not engraved with the Ten Commandments. They too have the Roman numerals I through V and VI through X.

Christian Fundamentalists and Moses at the Supreme Court (Continued)

In addition 18 lawgivers from history, Menes, Hammurabi, Moses, Solomon, Lygurgus, Solon, Draco, Confucius, and Octavian (south wall); Justinian, Mohammed, Charlemagne, King John, Lois IX, Hugo Grotius, William Blackstone, John Marshall and Napoleon (north wall), appear on the north and south walls of this courtroom. They affirm that no religion or civilization is endorsed or preferred.

Parenthetically, it should be pointed out to Newt Gingrich and all the FOX Islamophobes, who oppose the Muslim Community Center to be built five blocks from 9/11 ground zero in New York city, that Mohammed is honored in the courtroom of the United States Supreme Court Building.

Congresswoman Michele Bachmann and others have alleged that James Madison, the Father of the Constitution said, "We have staked the whole of all our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God." This statement appears no where in the writings or recorded utterances of James Madison and according to Madison scholars is completely contradictory to his character. Madison was a strong proponent of separation of church and state. Chris Rhoda in her outstanding book *Liars for Jesus* attributes this fabricated quote to one of the religious right's favorite writers, David Barton

of Texas (where else?).

Another favorite quote by the religious right is alleged to be by Patrick Henry, "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists but by Christians ... not on religions but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Patrick Henry scholars cannot find this quotation anywhere in the writings or recorded utterances of Patrick Henry.

What continues to amaze me is that so-called bible-believers promote the Ten Commandments which specifically prohibits "bearing false witness."

Yet, these same so-called Christians have no compunctions about violating the very law they falsely claim to embrace. According to the bible, "bearing false witness" is listed with other heinous sin such as "murder" "adultery" and "stealing." So those who "bear false witness" are no less a sinner than murderers, thieves and adulterers and should be condemned accordingly.

I close with a movie recommendation: "Agora" at the Lagoon Theater in Minneapolis. It is a powerful historical representation of what happened in 4th Century Alexandria when Christian fundamentalists came to power. It is a testament to why separation of church and state is foundational to America's survival.

Goodbye Cathy!

About 25 friends gathered at The Old Spaghetti Factory in Minneapolis to say farewell and best wishes to Cathy Prody, who is moving to West Virginia. Cathy served on the MNA board of directors last year, and currently serves on the Humanists of Minnesota board.

Right: Cathy receives a certificate of appreciation from MNA chair George Kane, while MNA associate president Laura Hutt joins in the applause.

Photo courtesy of August Berkshire.



Red River Freethinkers

WWW.REDRIVERFREETHINKERS.ORG



– Press Release –

6/1/2010

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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>.

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Page 1 of 1 Red River Freethinkers, P.O. Box 405, Fargo, ND 58107-0405 info@redriverfreethinkers.org

Special thanks to Tom Riddering for his assistance in improving quality of the images appearing throughout this newsletter.

FREETHOUGHT CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

The Copernican revolution will not have done its work until it has taught men more modesty than is to be found among those who think Man sufficient evidence of Cosmic Purpose.

-Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*

News and Notes (continued)

religious organizations played in the Proposition 8 campaign.

Plaintiffs in this case named as Defendants Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Attorney General Edmund G. Brown, and other state officials. All of these defendants, however, declined to defend Proposition 8. But the organization that orchestrated the campaign, protectmarriage.com –Yes On 8, A Project Of CaliforniaRenewal, stepped forward as Defendant Intervenor, and conducted the defense. The decision notes that the campaign advertisements from this group “conveyed to voters that same-sex relationships are inferior to opposite-sex relationships and dangerous to children,” a claim that they did not make at trial. Judge Walker took no notice, however, of where the funding and staffing came from.

Latter Day Saints (Mormons) contributed about half of the \$40 Million raised by the campaign, plus 80 – 90% of the door-to-door volunteers. Substantial funding was also provided by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of California and the Knights of Columbus; the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; the Eastern Orthodox Church; and the American Family Association, Focus on the Family and the National Organization for Marriage, which are run by Evangelical Protestants.

I recommend that everyone read the decision at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/35374462/California-Prop-8-Ruling-August-2010>. It is based on solid findings of fact and law that the appeals court will find difficult to overturn. The ban on same-sex marriages in California, however, remains in effect until a ruling on the appeal.

**July/August
Treasurer’s
Report**



General/Visibility Fund \$305

John Annen	\$100
Paul Larson	\$145
Donald Theis	\$50
Anne Hanna	\$10

Building Fund \$297

Central MN Atheists	\$100
Vernon Young	\$100
Daniel Norte	\$72
Thomas R. Dooley	\$25

Radio Fund \$1,155

Randall Quast	\$500
August Berkshire	\$500
Steve Petersen	\$50
Thomas R. Dooley	\$25
Arthur Scearcy	\$50
G. Bolt	\$25
Lynn Fellman	\$5

TOTAL INCOME: \$1,157

Minnesota Atheists are currently searching for an Assistant Treasurer to assist in the managing of the organization's books. The Treasurer's responsibilities take no more than an hour to an hour and a half a week, and no more computer skills are necessary than knowledge of the Quicken Financial Software. If you are interested in filling this position, please contact the MNA Board of Directors at board@mnatheists.org.

July and August Cable Report

by Steve Petersen

For the month of July, Grant Steves conducted two interviews, one with James Zimmerman (see photo at right) on *Religion's Use of Science* and the second was with Matthew Richardson on *Religion and the US Drug Policy*. For the month of August, George Kane interviewed Randall Tigue (see photo below), American Atheists Minnesota State director on *American Atheists in Minnesota*. All programs can be viewed on cable television (see schedule) or on our podcast via iTunes. I would like to thank Jack Richter for sponsoring our programs for the past several years in St. Cloud. Jack is no longer able to do this and if you live in the St. Cloud area and would like to be the sponsor, please let me know.

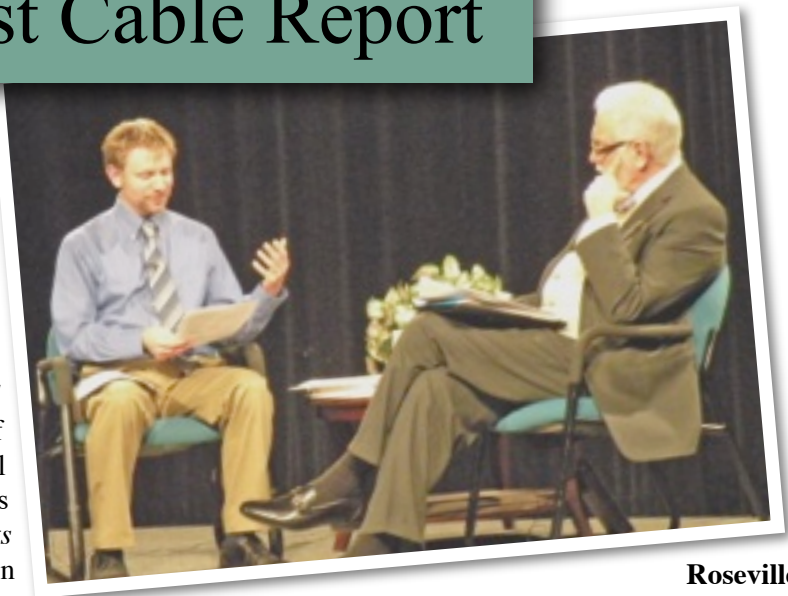
If you are interested in having our program played on your local cable access station, please contact steve.petersen@mnaatheists.org or 651-484-9277.

Cable Crew: George Kane, Brett Stembridge, Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Wendy Steinberg, Grant Hermanson, Brian Knoblock, Art Anderson, and Gretchen 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. and 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, Moundsview, New Brighton:** Ch. 14. Wednesday 10:30 p.m. Sponsor: Shirley Moll.
- St. Cloud:** A new sponsor is needed.
- 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

Join or Renew Membership

- _____ \$35 - Individual Membership
- _____ \$45 - Household Membership
- _____ \$75 - Sustaining Fund Membership
- _____ \$20 - Student (newsletter by email; send copy of fee statement or school ID)
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Donate to Special Funds

- \$_____ General Expense / Outreach Fund
- \$_____ Building Fund
- \$_____ Radio Fund
- \$_____ Monthly Donation

All memberships include the newsletter. To pay by credit card or PayPal, please visit our website.

Payment by: Check (enclosed) for \$ _____, payable to **Minnesota Atheists**.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

>> 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. See front cover for details.

Fifth Sunday, Fundraiser Dinner for Building Fund. Price: ~\$7.00. (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.) 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.



Minnesota Atheists
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"The Galpagos Islands is a province of Ecuador, nearly a thousand miles west of the mainland. Its very existence really winds up creationists. All those different creatures evolving to be different on each of the islands...that s really gotta hurt their brains."

– Craig Robinson (from his book *Atlas Schmatlas: A Superior Atlas of the World*, HNA Books, page 120)

**Check out our website at
mnatheist.org.**