

MONUMENT WARS

As reported earlier, the legal effort to place our own monument next to Fargo's Ten Commandments monument is on hold pending the outcome of a case headed for the Supreme Court. That case, the effort of the Summums to place their own monument in three Utah cities, is now scheduled for arguments on November 12. The decision probably would not be available until next year.

The cities who do not want the Summum monuments are represented by Pat Robertson's American Cen-

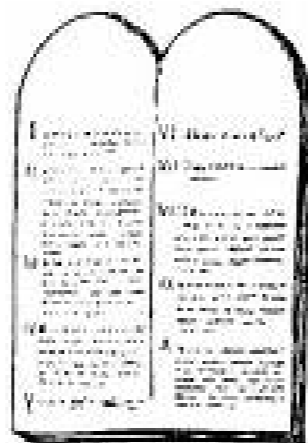
ter for Law and Justice.

Their arguments are on their web page, ACLJ.org. For a nonattorney like myself, the arguments made against the Summum, which would also be the ones used against us, seem absurd. The ACLJ argues first that free speech in public places only applies to people giving speeches and handing out literature. Local governments can edit and/or reject anything that is permanent. ACLJ goes on to say that it's OK if a local government decides to use monuments to advertise its favorite religion. This is OK, according to the ACLJ, because

voters can simply vote the officials out of office if they are displeased. Apparently, the majority can then remove one religious monument and replace it with another.

I'm unable to understand why a practice, such as establishing a state religion, seems to be OK if that religion and only that religion, were advocated by inscriptions on permanent monuments, but it would be unconstitutional if done by public speaking in the same park.

Jon Lindgren
Fargo, ND



<http://www.redriverfreethinkers.org>

Red River Freethinkers is a non-profit group organized exclusively for educational purposes.

The mission of the Red River Freethinkers is to advocate for a skeptical view of the role of religion in society and to promote critical examination of religious authority and dogma.

Articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the ideas or opinions of the Red River Freethinkers organization.

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RED RIVER FREETHINKERS

THE RED RIVER RATIONALIST

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SARAH PALIN IN A NUTSHELL

"The Constitution established the United States of America as a Christian nation," said Sen. John McCain in September 2007. In August 2008, Sen. McCain selected vice-presidential running mate Gov. Sarah Palin to give his party a bump toward the White House. And just who is McCain expecting to get a bump from by naming Sarah Palin? Most likely a bump will come from the religious right of this country who see Palin as a champion of Christianity.

So let's take a look at Sarah Palin's religious background, at what her positions have been so far on important issues like abortion, science education and gay rights, and at what some of the possible changes might be if she were to become Vice President or,

God forbid, President of the United States of America.

You don't need to dig very deep to find out that Sarah Palin has attended several different



churches in her 44 years. However, she has spent most of her life as a member of the Assemblies of God church, the nation's largest Trinitarian Pentecostal denomination. Palin hasn't been just an occasional churchgoer either, she has been a very active participant and predictably always gives credit to the almighty for the good things that have happened to her, as though she has been selected for a higher calling. It seems fair to say that, anyone who is been very active

for almost three decades in a particular church will get a lot of their worldview from that church.

So what has Sarah Palin learned from Pentecostalism? First, Pentecostalism is a reli-

gious movement within Christianity whose adherents believe, among other things, that they can receive "gifts of the spirit" from God including speaking in tongues, the gift of prophecy, and the gift of faith healing. Additionally, other churches that Palin has attended embrace dispensation, the theological system that emphasizes man's dominion over the earth, and the end-times theology that

(Sarah Palin, continued on page 2)

POINTS OF INTEREST

- For the **October RRF meeting**, we will be attending the matinee showing of the movie 'Religulous' on Sunday October 19th at the Century 10 theater. After the movie, we will be meeting at Atomic Coffee on Broadway. For questions, contact Lilie Schoenack at 701-306-0630.
- The **Science Religion and Lunch Seminar (SRLS)** is held every Tuesday from 12-1pm at NDSU.
- MSUM's **Campus Free-thought Alliance (CFA)** meets the 1st and 3rd Thursday each month at 7pm.
- NDSU's **Atheists, Agnostics and Secular Humanists (AASH)** meets at NDSU every other Wednesday at 7:30pm.

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ATHEISTS AGNOSTICS AND SECULAR HUMANISTS AT NDSU

Atheists Agnostics and Secular Humanists (AASH) is a student organization at NDSU that meets twice per month to discuss topics of interest to the group. The group is open to the public and the membership fee is \$1 per semester.

Organizers Mandy Klocke and Stephan Loew are now accepting suggestions for potential speakers and ideas for movies that the group could view together and then discuss afterwards.

Meetings are set to be held every other Wednesday

night in one of the meeting rooms on the upper level of the Memorial Union at NDSU beginning this month.

For more information, email athiestagnosticsecularhumanist@gmail.com.

(Sarah Palin, continued from page 1)

Pentecostals believe is a necessary era before Jesus Christ's second coming. Palin has spent her entire adult life involved in the apocalyptic hysteria of Pentecostals who generally adopt a literalist interpretation of the Bible and believe that Biblical prophecy is infallible. Not surprisingly, Palin supports our troops in Iraq, stating that our presence there is a "task that is from God."

Because of her religious views, Palin opposes sex education in our public schools and has argued that students should be taught creationism. Palin

worked to ban certain books from the library in her home town of Wasilla, Alaska because they contained inappropriate language. She believes that the contents of the Bible are literally true and that the earth was created 6,000 years old. Palin believes that the government should punish anyone who has an abortion or performs one, even in the case of rape or incest. She opposes stem cell research, opposes spousal benefits for domestic partners and stands against the "radical Homosexual agenda". Palin's hometown church is currently promoting an exciting new

initiative meant to help in curing homosexuality through the power of prayer.

If this track record and these affiliations are any indication of how Sarah Palin would most likely lead this country if she and Sen. John McCain were to win the Presidential election next month, then we would expect to see an increase in faith-based initiatives, a reduction in secular equality, and a shaky wall of separation between state and church.

**Jason Schoenack
Fargo, ND**

RELIGULOUS

A new movie debuted Friday October 3rd called 'Religulous' starring Bill Maher. From the official Religulous website, "The documentary Religulous follows political humorist and author Bill Maher as he travels around the globe interviewing people about God and religion. Known for his astute analytical skills, irreverent wit and commitment to never pulling a punch, Maher brings his charismatic honesty to an unusual

spiritual journey."

Information released about the movie indicate that it addresses religion in general and Christianity, Scientology, Mormonism and Islam in particular. Some movie screeners thought that Maher treated the subject of Islam more lightly than he did Christianity, "possibly because of how dangerous it can be to criticize Islam". As one Religulous blogger put it, "People seem to be treating Islam with kid gloves. I wonder how long before other

religions start adopting that tactic [violence and intimidation] as they become threatened by critics?". During the course of the movie, Maher visits the Wailing Wall, the bible belt of the Unites States, Salt Lake City in Utah, and several other locations while interviewing religious leaders and

followers. Some film experts suggest that Religulous is a calculated repost to Ben Stein's pro-creationist movie called "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed" that debuted back in April of this year.

"I hate religion. I think it's a neurological disorder."
 - Bill Maher

The end of the movie is a fiery call to action for Freethinkers everywhere to come out.

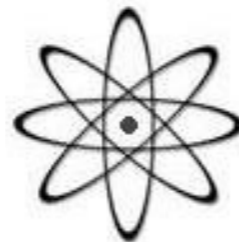
CAMPUS FREETHOUGHT ALLIANCE AT MSUM

The Campus Freethought Alliance (CFA) at Minnesota State University Moorhead is a group of freethinking, skeptical, humanistic students who want to create a community of those who value thinking. The CFA promotes free

thought through open discussion and advances humanism through campus and community events. It encourages freedom from superstition and dogma, challenges misrepresentations of the non-religious, and works to ad-

vance secular ethics and human values. Above all, it defends science, reason, and freedom of inquiry.

The CFA is a community open to everyone and is proud that it's members' worldviews are wide-ranging.



SEPTEMBER RRF MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The September potluck/meeting at Jon and Elaine Lindren's home in North Fargo was a great success. The food and conversation were superb as always.

Jon Lindgren gave an update on where we are with the 10Cs monument lawsuit (see back page) and Carol Sawicki confirmed that the 501c3 process is not complete but is moving along.

We learned that there is a new Atheist group organizing in Grand Forks. RRF member and webmaster Eric Ashton drove to Grand Forks to attend one of their first meetings and to represent

the RRF. Eric exchanged contact information with them and we look forward to future communication and collaboration with them.

We had a very welcome visitor at our September meeting. Mr. Scott Forscherler drove from East Grand Forks to Fargo to attend our meeting. Not only did Scott brave the atmosphere of intense curiosity at Jon and Elaine's, and successfully navigate Lew Lubka's direct questioning on religion and ethics, but Scott also generously volunteered to give a talk to our group at our November meeting. The exact name and topic of Scott's talk will be communi-

cated via the RRF newsgroup and next month's newsletter. Scott is a philosophy instructor at Northland Community and Technical College in East Grand Forks, MN.



SOUNDS LIKE PAPAL BULL TO ME

It's October. And when I think of October I think of Halloween. When I think of Halloween I think of witches. And when I think of witches I think of the church-sanctioned witch hunts and witchcraft trials that ran rampant for several hundred years resulting in the execution of countless innocent people.

We have all heard the various details on how the pious treated those who they found guilty of witchcraft, but more shocking to me is, how on God's green earth did the insanity keep going for so long? I'm sure there could be lots of reasons, but my recent curiosity has lead me to Heinrich Kramer and the Malleus Maleficarum.

Heinrich Kramer was born in France in 1430. He became a Dominican friar and eventually an Inquisitor in Germany for the Catholic Church. Early in his career, Kramer

was hell-bent on eradicating the scourge of witches that was descending on the Rhineland. He worked vigorously to try and prosecute supposed witches but was prevented from doing so by the local authorities. In response, Kramer appealed to pope Innocent VIII requesting explicit authority to prosecute witches in Germany and in 1484 Kramer received this authority via the papal bull Summis desiderantes affectibus. A papal bull is basically a glorified letter (but legally-binding) that is issued by a pope. The papal bull officially recognized the existence of witches and also endorsed Kramer as an inquisitor of the Catholic Church. Despite this tactic of Kramer's, the papal bull failed to convince the local authorities to allow Kramer to prosecute witches, so he promptly retired and focused his energies on composing a

volume containing all of his various views on witchcraft. In 1487, Kramer published the Malleus Maleficarum (Latin for "The Hammer of Witches").

The main goals in the Malleus Maleficarum were to refute arguments claiming that witchcraft did not exist, to



prove that witches were more often women than men, and to instruct magistrates on how to successfully identify and convict witches. In an attempt to bolster the book's legitimacy, Kramer included the Summis desiderantes affectibus bull as the preface of the book. This gave the false impression that the pope had endorsed the book via the bull, when in fact ,the bull was originally only intended to endorse Kramer as an inquisitor. Kramer then submit-

ted his Malleus Maleficarum to the University of Cologne's Faculty of Theology hoping that they would endorse it. Instead,

the faculty condemned it as unethical, illegal and inconsistent with Catholic doctrine. Soon afterward Kramer was denounced by the Inquisition and the Catholic Church eventually banned the book entirely.

Despite all of this, the Malleus Maleficarum became the standard handbook for witch-hunters and Inquisitors. The work was published a total of sixteen times and it fueled the fires of the Inquisition for over 200 years.

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