



Central Minnesota *Friends Free of Theism*

February
2010

Friends Free of Theism (FFOT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the separation of church and state and provides information and community for freethinkers in the central Minnesota region.

Darwin Day: A New Bane of Creationists

Written by Charles Wallace (modified)

On February 12, 2010, people throughout the world celebrated the birthday of a great man of science, Charles Darwin. Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection has been hailed as one of the greatest scientific theories of all time. In a nutshell, Darwin discovered that all species that exist on the earth today, including man, are descendants of a common ancestor that had been endlessly modified over time through natural selection. In the 150 years since Darwin wrote "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection," or the "Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life," science has unequivocally demonstrated the fact of evolution. One group of people today, though, are not celebrating man's triumph in understanding the natural world. They are the creationists, or as they call prefer to call themselves, after many lost court cases, intelligent design proponents.

Before Darwin, the western world relied primarily upon the creation accounts in the Genesis for understanding of how life began. Christians, like Jews and Muslims, mistakenly assumed that if their scriptures were a divine revelation by the creator, they must be trustworthy and reliable. If the scriptures were not reliable, how could anyone discern truth from fiction? When Genesis states that all the species on earth had been created directly by god, and that god created man in his own image, believers took it at face value. The notion that Genesis could be wrong was inconceivable to the faithful before the onset of modern science.

While most Christians have reconciled their faith with this fact, creationists refuse to accept evolution, preferring instead to hold on to their belief that the bible is the word of god and cannot be contradicted. Creationists have no science to back up their antiquated beliefs. Instead, they use ad homonym attacks against Darwin, evolutionary biologists, and humanists.

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FFOT Monthly Membership Meetings

When: The third Monday of the month at 7:00 pm

Where: St. Cloud Public Library or the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Hall

See the FFOT website Events Calendar on the FFOT website for up-to-date information about meetings and events: <http://freeoftheism.org/>



Visit the online freethought store:

www.evolvefish.com

Does God Exist? Local Upcoming Debate

August Berkshire will debate Dr. Joe Boot (Ezra Institute for Contemporary Christianity) on the topic "Does God Exist?"

When:
Wednesday,
February 24
8:00 pm



Location:
St. Cloud State University:
Atwood Ballroom

For example, at The Legacy of Darwin conference held in Castle Rock, Colorado last fall, Dr. John G. West, from the Discovery Institute, gave a shallow, and quite pathetic, talk on Darwin Day in America. His entire talk was a show case for the use of misinformation and logical fallacies. One might think a talk about Darwin would include a discussion of evolutionary science. And for a few minutes he did manage to completely twist and distort evolutionary theory. But the majority of his talk was nothing more than rants against the ACLU, the AAAS, eugenics, abortion, moral relativism, and atheism. Despite his ramblings, West was perfectly clear about one thing. The real reason he is against Darwin's evolutionary theory of natural selection is because he hates what it implies about humanity; humans aren't the center of the universe, they are not created in the image of god, they are not going to live forever, and from a cosmic perspective, they are not all that important. These are hard facts to accept when one is filled with fundamentalist Christian hubris.

Whether the celebration of Darwin Day continues or not, we can all be thankful that the world will continue to celebrate his ingenious insight into the natural world. Evolution is a fact that will never go away.

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Irish Blasphemy Law Not Widely Enforced

By Steven Rehn

On July 11, 2009, Ireland passed the Defamation Bill. It went into effect on January 1, 2010. The most surprising aspect of this is the 'blasphemy clause' which effectively makes it illegal to criticize any religion. The punishment is a fine of €25,000 (about \$35,000). The only definition of 'blasphemy' I've been able to find related to this bill is:

"Blasphemous matter" is defined as matter "that is grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters held sacred by any religion, thereby causing outrage among a substantial number of the adherents of that religion; and he or she intends, by the publication of the matter concerned, to cause such outrage."

There have been quite a few attempts by atheist groups or individuals to challenge the law by publishing material which appears to violate the definition above, but so far none have been challenged. While at first glance it may seem as though this law not being enforced would be a good thing, remember that until it is enforced it cannot be challenged and the Irish public will not come to understand what's wrong with this sort of legislation. Public outrage is the only thing that will kill this sort of bad legislation. If it is saved for a high-profile case, this law could do far more damage.

Freethought Organizations

American Atheists:

<http://www.atheists.org/events>

American Humanist Association:

<http://www.americanhumanist.org/conference/>

Atheist Alliance International:

<http://www.atheistalliance.org/>

Atheists for Human Rights:

<http://www.atheistsforhumanrights.org/>

Atheists United:

<http://www.atheistsunited.org/>

Camp Quest:

www.camp-quest.org

Freedom From Religion Foundation:

www.ffrf.org

Humanists of Minnesota:

www.humanistsofmn.org

Lake Superior Freethinkers:

www.lsfreethinkers.org

Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers:

<http://maaf.info/>

Minnesota Athiests:

www.mnatheists.org

Red River Freethinkers:

www.redriverfreethinkers.org

Secular Coalition for America:

<http://www.secular.org/>

SCSU: <http://ssaatscsu.wordpress.com/>