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<http://www.redriverfreethinkers.org>

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

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.

Red River Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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RED RIVER FREETHINKERS

THE RED RIVER RATIONALIST

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LOOK TO THE MASTER OF FASCISM

A little more than a half-century ago, hundreds of thousands of our ancestors died battling fascism in World War II, yet, if asked, very few people can tell you what fascism is. Blame it on our education system, the uneasiness it causes us to talk about it, or the political shock jocks of radio and television who call anything they happen to disagree with "fascism." Fascism, however, is an extremely important subject today. Everyone should have a clear idea as to exactly what fascism is given fascism has given us many of the most brutal government regimes in recent history.

So, what is fascism? I asked that question of about a hundred college students, and

what I received was some vague mumbling that could describe any number of political philosophies, including communism, which is completely at the other end of the political spectrum. Three students felt fascism was a style of dress. Only one had any informed explanation of what is meant by fascism. This lack of knowledge is troubling.

So, what is fascism? To which I will reply, "Don't ask me, ask the person who designed fascism, Benito Mussolini." His definition of fascism can be found online simply by typing "The Doctrine of Fascism" into any search engine. What I will do, however, is attempt to condense his defi-

nition of fascism into this very limited space of a "letter to the editor."

Fascism embraces the idea of personal responsibility, or as Mussolini states: "It conceives of life as a struggle in which it behooves a man to win for himself a really worthy place." Fascism endorses religion. "The Fascist conception of life is a religious one," as both Italy and Germany strived to make their nations Christian nations. Under Mussolini, the Catholic Church became the national church of Italy. Germany moved toward Protestantism. In fact, the Baptist

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FREETHOUGHT DAY 2009 RECAP

Last month on September 23-24, Dr. PZ Myers, evolutionary biology professor at the University of Minnesota Morris spoke to students and the community during events held at NDSU, MSUM, and at the Fargo Theater. At 6pm on Sept 24th, the Red River Freethinkers sponsored a free showing of Julia Sweeney's monologue 'Letting Go of God'.

Several hundred turned out to hear PZ talk at MSUM

and NDSU. So many attended the showing of Letting Go of God that many had to return for the 9:30pm showing, or listen to the monologue which was played over the theater speakers outside the seating area.

After the movie and his talk, PZ and many others gathered at the Radisson in Fargo to discuss things further.

Dr. Myers' activism goes on every day on his increasingly popular science blog **Pharyngula**: "*Evolution, development, and random biological ejaculations from a godless liberal*" <http://scienceblogs.com/pharyngula/>

Freethought Day 2009 was a successful, educational event that helped to raise awareness in the community around Freethought and critical thinking. ■

POINTS OF INTEREST

- The next RRF meeting will be held at Atomic Coffee on Sunday October 18, 2009 from 1 to 3pm. The Red River Freethinkers are happy to welcome **John McDonough** to discuss his book "Will the Real God Please Stand Up".
- The next Science, Religion, and Lunch Seminar will be at 12pm Tuesday October 20 in the Mandan Room in the Memorial Union at NDSU, featuring a talk by Abby Gold entitled "The Atheist Jew".

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World Convention was held in Berlin shortly after Hitler assumed power.

“The Fascist State sees in religion one of the deepest of spiritual manifestations and for this reason it not only respects religion but defends and protects it.” “Peace,” according to the fascist, “will only come when people surrender to a Christian dream of universal brotherhood.”

Fascism opposes materialism. “Fascism is therefore opposed to all individualistic abstractions based on 18th-century materialism.” Fascism opposes liberalism. “Fascism is definitely and absolutely opposed to the doctrines of liberalism.” Fascism opposes socialism. “Fascism is therefore opposed to socialism.” Fascism opposes labor unions.

Fascism sings praises to its military. “It is also Power which makes its will felt and respected beyond its own frontiers.” Fascism opposes world organizations such as the United Nations. Fascism has a go-it-alone mentality. “Fascism will have nothing to do with universal embraces.” “Fascism also honors its war dead.” “Fascists knew how to die.” “Fascism can point to its fallen heroes and its martyrs.” I cannot help but think of all this veteran hero-worshipping going on today.

Industry and fascism also merge for the benefit of each other. Under both Italy and Nazi Germany, huge tax reductions and government grants were given to businesses. Under fascism the elite (wealthy) rule. Capitalism rules. Gov-

ernment regulations were practically nonexistent. The idea was dog eat dog. The best man will win. To end this – from my own book:

Mussolini has reportedly made the statement:

“Fascism should rather be called corporatism, as it is the merging of government and corporate power.” That quote has been rebuffed as a possible fraud, however, as other researchers have been unable to track down the original quote’s source. At any rate, the fact remains that fascism and corporate power fit very well together. Before fascism, the interests of big business were treated favorably over the interests of the citizens of both Italy and Germany, and it was big business that gave rise to the fascist dictatorships in both countries. As such, the interests of big business are guarded in fascist countries with what Paul Bigioni terms as “remarkable ferocity.”

Now if any of this sounds like the country in which you currently live, I would not be surprised at all. ■

**David L. Johnson
Forman, ND**



POPE KEEPING TABS ON SCIENCE, APPOINTS FRANCIS COLLINS

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences is the body that gives the Vatican up to date information on what’s going on in the sciences.

Established by Pope Pius XI in 1936 to promote the sciences, the Academy has as its goal to “promote the progress of the mathematical, physical and natural sciences, and the study of related epistemological questions and issues.”

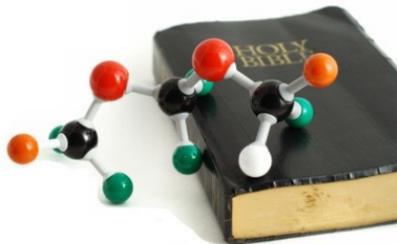
On October 14, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Dr. Francis Collins to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. This appointment is somewhat controversial since Collins is in favor of using some types of embryos for embryonic

stem cell research, and he believes that an embryo made by cloning is fundamentally different from an embryo made from an egg and sperm. Collins argues that, because cloned embryos are different, it is morally permissible to create and destroy them for research. The Catholic Church rejects these views.

On July 8, 2009, President Barack Obama nominated Collins to be Director of the National Institutes of Health. Though the US Senate unanimously confirmed him, speculation about whether or not his religious views would influence his leadership of the NIH has been ongoing.

According to Collins, his parents were “only nominally Christian” and he was a self-proclaimed atheist by the time he was in graduate school. But after his parents passed away, Collins began to reevaluate his religious views and eventually decided to become an evangelical Christian.

In his 2006 book “The Language of God”, Collins considers scientific discoveries to be an “opportunity to worship.” ■



FREETHINKERS KEEP IT REAL

It amazes me how much effort it takes, for those who want to keep things real, to continuously monitor and call out the misinformation that is being shamelessly spread to the unsuspecting about non-belief, evolution, our country’s Christian heritage, and numerous other hot topics.

“Atheists don’t have morals, and have no reason to be moral”.

“The United States of America was founded as a Christian nation”.

“Evolution is just a theory, not a fact”.

“The burden of proof lies on the non-believer to prove that there is no God”.

If someone doesn’t continue to go through the effort of calling out and correcting this misinformation, then less-skeptical listeners will hear statements like these and fall victim to this agenda-based nonsense.

Although those who are spreading misinformation are definitely to blame, another part of the problem is that many people, for various reasons, simply never developed the critical thinking skills that help them to determine true from false, probability from improbability. For Freethinkers, these are the folks who have fallen through the cracks, and they only need the hand of reason to pull them back up and help them to develop an information-filtering mechanism that allows them to arrive at rational decisions on their own, based on facts and reason, and not on popular opinion or dogma.

Why do Freethinkers distrust religion so much and feel that they need to actively monitor and question claims made by it’s proponents? One reason is that Freethinkers are typically very familiar with history. History documents the centuries of oppression and exploitation perpetrated by the institutions of organized religion,

when those religions had almost limitless power over everyone within their reach. Another reason is that, in recent decades, many large religious groups have become very active and successful at influencing public policy in the US, such as, what should be taught in our public schools. This alarms Freethinkers and prompts them to remind everyone about what has happened in the past when we have seen religious groups get entangled with politics, bad things.

So what can Freethinkers do? The game is the same as always. In the US, both sides work within a legal framework to press for what they think is right. So Freethinkers need to continue to voice their opinions and stand by them with action. As an example, Freethinkers should vote for leaders who agree that our children and young people need to be taught valuable critical-thinking skills in our schools, and that we need to empower them to arrive at reasonable conclusions about reality and the world that we live in. This early guidance will help these future adults for the rest of their lives to make sound decisions when faced with the truth-claims of proponents of voodoo, astrology, divinity, magic, the devil, Ouija boards, ghosts, resurrection, or Intelligent Design.

Like any species that feels threatened, religion and superstition are understandably fighting tooth and nail for any ground that they can get or hold on to. Ultimately, in our increasingly global age of diversity, tolerance, instant communication, and information-sharing, any group that continues to insist that their way is the only real correct way, are probably not going to last forever, or contribute much to the long-term durability of our shared futures together. ■

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