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NAZIS, EARTHWORMS AND DODGY JOURNALISM

REPORTING ON THE 2010 GLOBAL ATHEIST CONVENTION, FAIRFAX JOURNALISTS BARNEY ZWARTZ & JACQUELINE MALEY, IN THEIR RESPECTIVE ARTICLES, “DAWKINS DELIVERS THE SERMON THEY CAME TO HEAR” AND “DAWKINS DERIDES SAINTHOOD AS PYTHONESQUE” BOTH MISQUOTED EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGIST RICHARD DAWKINS, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN A MISUNDERSTANDING BEING PROPAGATED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE AUSTRALIAN MEDIA AT THE DETRIMENT OF RICHARD DAWKINS’ NAME.

(JASON: INTENTIONAL MISQUOTING IS THE CREATIONIST'S ONLY DEFENSE IN LIEU OF EVIDENCE).

THEIR ARTICLES ARE ALSO TERRIBLY BIASED, GUILTY OF QUOTE MINING AND THUS FULLY MISREPRESENT WHAT ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE AT THE CONVENTION, BUT MORE ON THAT LATER. FIRST, LET’S GET A FEW SIMPLE FACTS STRAIGHT.

MARY MACKILLOP’S CANONISATION BY ”POPE NAZI” WAS ”PURE MONTY PYTHON”, THE WORLD’S MOST FAMOUS ATHEIST TOLD THE WORLD’S FIRST GLOBAL ATHEIST CONFERENCE IN MELBOURNE YESTERDAY.

… SO READS THE OPENING PARAGRAPH OF ZWARTZ’S ARTICLE.

A FEW MORE PARAGRAPHS IN, DAWKINS IS QUOTED AS SAYING

”WHEN I’M ACCUSED, ‘WHY ARE YOU GOING AFTER EASY TARGETS, THE FUNDAMENTALIST NUTBAGS, WHY DON’T YOU TAKE ON THE REAL THEOLOGIANS?’, WELL, THE REAL THEOLOGIANS LIKE POPE NAZI BELIEVE IN MIRACLES.”

BARNEY ADDS:

POPE BENEDICT XVI, FORMERLY JOSEPH RATZINGER, WAS CONSCRIPTED INTO HITLER YOUTH, AS WERE ALL GERMAN BOYS, WHEN HE TURNED 14.

MALEY SIMILARLY STATED:

DR DAWKINS SAID HE WAS OFTEN CRITICISED FOR ATTACKING EASY TARGETS SUCH AS CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS INSTEAD OF SERIOUS THEOLOGIANS SUCH AS “POPE NAZI”, A PRESUMED REFERENCE TO POPE BENEDICT.

LET’S GET OUR FACTS STRAIGHT, RICHARD DAWKINS DID NOT LABEL POPE BENEDICT A NAZI. THAT IS SOMETHING BOTH FAIRFAX RELIGION REPORTERS GOT UTTERLY WRONG.

CHECK OUT WHAT RICHARD DAWKINS ACTUALLY SAID — THANKS TO FOOTAGE PROVIDED TO THE YOUNG AUSTRALIAN SKEPTICS BY THE MEDIA TEAM AT THE GLOBAL ATHEIST CONVENTION.

BLATANTLY EVIDENT IN THIS CLIP, RICHARD DAWKINS USES “POPE NAZI” AS A SHORTHAND DESCRIPTIVE PHRASE FOR “THAT POPE WHOSE NAME I’VE FORGOTTEN (POPE PIUS XII) — WHO’S ALSO UP FOR CANONISATION AND WAS AIDING AND ABETTING THE NAZIS DURING THE WAR”. NOT POPE BENEDICT.

CARDINAL SECRETARY OF STATE, EUGENIO PACELLI (LATER TO BECOME POPE PIUS XII) ALAS, MANY JOURNALISTS (WHO WERE NOT AT THE GLOBAL ATHEIST CONVENTION MIND YOU, BUT READ THE FAIRFAX PIECES AND THUS FELT OBLIGED TO ADD THEIR MEASLY 2 CENTS AS IT NO-​​DOUBT SUITED THEIR PRE-​​EXISTING POSITIONS AND BIASES) CONTINUALLY REPEATED THIS MISQUOTATION, ADDING TO THE DEFAMATION OF RICHARD DAWKINS AND TO THE ERRONEOUS IDEA THAT CONVENTION WAS MADE UP MOSTLY OF NAME-​​CALLING AND RIDICULE — WHICH COULD NOT BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH.

(JASON: OBVIOUSLY, THE MEDIA IN AUSTRALIA IS WELL REPRESENTED BY GHOST WORSHIPPERS).

ANDREW BOLT IN HIS BLOG POST “NO FAITH IN THEIR HATRED” WRITES:

I’D HAVE HOPED THAT THE ATHEISTS CONVENTION’S SPEAKERS WOULD HAVE REASSURED ME NOT JUST BY FINE WORDS BUT FINER EXAMPLE THAT A GODLESS SOCIETY WILL NEVERTHELESS BE A GOOD ONE.

(ANDREW: THAT IS TYPICAL RELIGIOUS DISHONESTY. WE BOTH KNOW THAT YOU WOULD NEVER BE REASSURED THAT ANY SOCIETY NOT GOVERNED BY THE CHRISTIAN GHOST COULD BE A "GOOD ONE").

BUT THE CONVENTION’S SPEAKERS MANAGED TO CONFIRM MY WORST FEAR.

(NO ANDREW - THAT IS YOUR "CONFIRMATION BIAS" THAT CONFIRMED YOUR WORST FEAR. YOU HAD THAT CONCLUSION BEFORE YOU EVER STEPPED INTO THE EVENT. YOU ONLY SEARCHED FOR STATEMENTS THAT YOU COULD TWIST TO MAKE IT APPEAR THE WAY, YOU NEEDED IT TO APPEAR).

NO, IT’S NOT THAT GOD MAY ACTUALLY EXIST, AND BE CROSS THAT I DOUBTED. IT’S THAT IF THE CHRISTIAN GOD REALLY IS DEAD, THEN THERE’S NOT MUCH TO STOP PEOPLE HERE FROM BEING BARBARIANS.

(ANDREW - THE CHRISTIAN GOD IS DEAD: IN CHINA, INDIA, RUSSIA, SOUTHEAST ASIA, HALF OF AFRICA, MUCH OF EUROPE, AND ALL OF THE MUSLIM WORLD. BY CALLING MOST OF THE WORLD "BARBARIANS" YOU HAVE EXPOSED THE FACT THAT IT IS YOU WHO ARE DOING THE NAME-CALLING AND NOT THE ATHEISTS. AND IF YOU REALLY WANT TO SEE A LONG HISTORY OF BARBARITY - READ YOUR BIBLE. AT LEAST ALL THE BARBARIANS LISTED ABOVE DON'T BELIEVE IN A GOD WHO TELLS PEOPLE TO EAT THEIR OWN CHILDREN).

BUT WHAT DID THEY SHOW ME INSTEAD? FIRST THERE WAS THE WORLD’S MOST FAMOUS ATHEIST, FORMER OXFORD DON AND SELFISH GENE AUTHOR RICHARD DAWKINS, WHO SMEARED JOSEPH RATZINGER AS THE “POPE NAZI”…

(ANDREW - WRONG AGAIN. HE WAS REFERRING TO POPE PIUS 12. IF YOU CAN'T GET THE FACTS STRAIGHT, MAYBE YOU SHOULD GET OUT OF JOURNALISM, AND INSTEAD, WRITE FOR THE CHURCH NEWSLETTER).

THE INSULT TO THE POPE IS TRULY VILE.

(ANDREW - ALL INSULTS ARE VILE. IF THEY ARE FALSE THEN THEY QUALIFY AS SLANDER. IF THEY ARE TRUE THEN THE VILE INSULT IS VALID).

AS A 14-​​YEAR-​​OLD, RATZINGER WAS CONSCRIPTED BY THE NAZI REGIME INTO THE HITLER YOUTH, THEN COMPULSORY FOR ALL GERMAN BOYS.

MELANIE PHILLIPS WROTE IN “DAWKINS PREACHES TO THE DELUDED AGAINST THE DIVINE”:

(MELANIE: THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN BE CONSIDERED "DELUDED" ARE THE ONES WITH NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THEIR BELIEFS - YET BELIEVE THEM ANYWAY. THIS WOULD NOT APPLY TO THE AUDIENCE AT THE CONVENTION. THIS WOULD, HOWEVER, APPLY TO ALL GHOST WORSHIPPERS: PEOPLE LIKE YOU, MELANIE).

LIKE REVIVALISTS FROM AN ALTERNATIVE UNIVERSE, 2500 HARDCORE BELIEVERS IN THE ABSENCE OF RELIGION PACKED INTO THE GLOBAL ATHEISTS CONVENTION IN MELBOURNE LAST WEEKEND TO GIVE A HERO’S WELCOME TO THE HIGH PRIEST OF BELIEF IN UNBELIEF, RICHARD DAWKINS.

(MY COMMENT: DOES THAT SOUND LIKE AN UNBIASED REPORTER TO YOU? WHAT MELANIE IS DOING HERE IS CALLED "THROWING IT BACK." SINCE HER BELIEFS ARE BASED ONLY ON WISHFUL THINKING AND ANCIENT MAGICAL MANUSCRIPTS, SHE ATTEMPTS TO BRING NONBELIEVERS DOWN TO HER LEVEL BY ACCUSING THEM OF BELIEVING WHAT SHE BELIEVES.

MELANIE: "REVIVALISTS" REFERS TO RELIGION NOT SCIENCE; "HARDCORE BELIEVERS" DESCRIBE RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS NOT SCIENTISTS; THEY DON'T BELIEVE IN THE ABSENCE OF RELIGION, WHATEVER THAT MEANS, THEY BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE PRODUCED NO EVIDENCE TO JUSTIFY THEIR BELIEF IN YOUR ANCIENT GHOST; "HIGH PRIESTS" ARE FOUND IN RELIGION NOT SCIENCE; "BELIEF IN UNBELIEF" MAKES ABOUT AS MUCH SENSE AS EVERYTHING ELSE YOU'VE SAID - WHICH ISN'T SAYING MUCH - AS EVIDENCED BY YOUR NONSENSICAL REFERENCE TO AN "ALTERNATE UNIVERSE."

SO FAR I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY EVIDENCE THAT YOU ARE EVEN CAPABLE OF A RATIONAL THOUGHT).

THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE GOD DELUSION WAS SIMILARLY FAWNED OVER BY THE AUSTRALIAN MEDIA, WHICH UNCRITICALLY LAPPED UP EVERYTHING HE SAID.

(WRONG AGAIN MELANIE. AS YOU, ANDREW BOLT, ZWARTZ, AND OTHERS PROVE).

THIS WAS EVEN AFTER (OR PERHAPS BECAUSE) HE REFERRED TO THE POPE AS A NAZI, WHICH MANAGED TO COMBINE DEFAMATION OF THE PONTIFF WITH IMPLICIT HOLOCAUST DENIAL.

(MELANIE: YOU NEED TO GO BACK TO JOURNALISM SCHOOL. YOU APPARENTLY MISSED THE SECTION ON "FACT-CHECKING").

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD PUBLISHED THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM

NEIL ORMEROD, PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, STRATHFIELD

IT SEEMS THAT WHEN THEIR ARGUMENT FAILS TO CONVINCE, ATHEISTS TURN TO PERSONAL ABUSE AND HYPERBOLE.

(NEIL: WHEN CHRISTIAN'S ARGUMENTS FAIL TO CONVINCE, THEY TURN TO A PILE OF STRAW, A STAKE, AND A MATCH).

THE POPE IS A NAZI, STEVE FIELDING IS LESS INTELLIGENT THAN AN EARTHWORM AND SOPHISTICATED THEOLOGIANS ARE NO BETTER THAN FUNDAMENTALIST WINGNUTS BECAUSE THEY ”GET DOCTORS TO PROVIDE TESTIMONY THAT SOMEONE WAS CURED FROM CANCER.”

(NEIL: THAT IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU COPY-AND-PASTE INSTEAD OF DOING YOUR OWN RESEARCH. NOW YOU ARE JUST SPREADING THE MISREPRESENTATION OF DAWKINS' COMMENTS.

I DON'T KNOW HOW INTELLIGENT STEVE FIELDING IS (THOUGH HE DID A GREAT JOB OF HIDING WHATEVER HE DID HAVE), BUT SINCE SOPHISTICATED THEOLOGIANS DO GET DOCTORS TO PROVIDE TESTIMONY THAT SOMEONE WAS CURED FROM CANCER, THEN IT APPEARS THAT THEY ARE, IN FACT, NO BETTER THAN FUNDAMENTALIST WINGNUTS).

THE PRESENT POPE WAS NOT A NAZI. HE WAS CONSCRIPTED INTO THE HITLER YOUTH AT THE AGE OF 14. TO EQUATE THIS WITH NAZISM IS NOT RATIONAL.

(NEIL: NEITHER IS MISQUOTING).

I SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT SENATOR FIELDING, WHATEVER HIS FAILINGS, IS LESS INTELLIGENT THAN AN EARTHWORM. RIDICULE IS A POOR SUBSTITUTE FOR REASON.

(NEIL - BUT SINCE YOU CREATIONISTS REFUSE TO USE YOUR REASON, IT IS THE ONLY WEAPON AVAILABLE TO YOU).

AND AS A ”SOPHISTICATED THEOLOGIAN”, I KNOW OF NO COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE SOUGHT TESTIMONY FROM DOCTORS ON MIRACULOUS CURES.

(NEIL: THEN MAYBE YOU NEED TO SPEND LESS TIME TUNING THE CHOIRBOYS AND GET OUT MORE, BECAUSE, OBVIOUSLY MANY HAVE).

THIS IS SOMETHING THE CHURCH UNDERTAKES AND DOES NOT REQUIRE THE ATTENTION OF THEOLOGIANS…

(NEIL - WHAT DO YOU THINK THE CHURCH CONSISTS OF ... PLUMBERS?)

THE HERALD SUN JUMPED ON THE MISQUOTE IN “CREATING SAINTS ‘PURE MONTY PYTHON”:

RICHARD DAWKINS UNLEASHED HIS INFAMOUS BLUNTNESS, LIKENING THE IMPENDING CANONISATION OF MARY MACKILLOP TO A MONTY PYTHON SKIT.

THE OXFORD PROFESSOR AND DEVOUT ATHEIST ALSO REFERRED TO THE POPE AS A NAZI.

(DEAR HERALD SUN: I CAN UNDERSTAND MISQUOTING BY JESUS' FOLLOWERS - THAT IS PRETTY MUCH ALL THEY DO - BUT AREN'T YOU PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS TRAINED TO DO RESEARCH?

AND YOU GUYS ARE DOING IT AGAIN: "DEVOUT" IS A WORD THAT APPLIES TO RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS. AS JOURNALISTS I WOULD EXPECT YOU TO HAVE ACCESS TO A DICTIONARY. CHRISTIANS DO TOO - THEY JUST NEVER LIKE WHAT THE DEFINITIONS SAY).

IN THE AGE

NICK SIBLY, ARCHIES CREEK.

RICHARD DAWKINS IS JUST ANOTHER FUNDAMENTALIST WINDBAG.

(MY COMMENT: NOTICE HOW THEIR ACCUSATIONS ALWAYS DESCRIBE THEMSELVES - PERFECTLY?).

INTOLERANCE BRINGS DIVISION AND HATE.

(NICK: AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT RELIGION HAS MEANT TO THE WORLD - NONE MORESO THAN THE 3 DESERT DOGMAS).

IT’S TIME WE WERE ALL MORE ACCEPTING OF EACH OTHER.

(NICK: THAT'S RICH COMING FROM SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES THAT NON-CHRISTIANS DESERVE TO BURN IN HELL FOR ETERNITY).

WHAT WE NEED IS MORE REASONABLE DEBATE AND LESS STICKS AND STONES.

(NICK: THE ONLY PROBLEM IS, THAT REASONABLE DEBATE IS IMPOSSIBLE WHERE ANY RELIGION IS CONCERNED BECAUSE RELIGION IS BASED ON THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF REASON.

LISTENER: GO BACK TO NICK'S OPENING LINE ABOUT DAWKINS "THE FUNDAMENTALIST WINDBAG" - THESE PEOPLE ARE TOO DIM TO EVEN REALIZE HOW HYPOCRITICAL THEY ARE).

NOW, ONTO EARTHWORMS. I WOULD LIKE TO REMIND EVERYONE THAT RICHARD DAWKINS DID NOT PROCLAIM THAT STEVE FIELDING HAS THE IQ OF AN EARTHWORM — AT LEAST NOT ON STAGE AT THE GLOBAL ATHEIST CONVENTION. IT WAS OF COURSE A PRIVATE UTTERANCE HE MADE TO ROBYN WILLIAMS FOLLOWING THE ABC’S Q&A ON MONDAY NIGHT. NOT REALLY RELEVANT TO DAWKINS’ PRESENTATION AT THE GLOBAL ATHEIST CONVENTION, IS IT?

(JASON: DAWKINS NEEDS TO BE MORE CAREFUL WHEN EXPRESSING PERSONAL OPINIONS. BESIDES, I DON'T THINK IT IS FAIR TO INSULT EARTHWORMS).

SO, WHY ARE WE HEARING ALL THIS CRAP ABOUT EARTHWORMS AND NAZIS IN THE OPENING PARAGRAPHS OF ARTICLES REPORTING ABOUT THE CONVENTION? WHY IS FAIRFAX FAILING SO MISERABLY TO OBJECTIVELY REPORT FAIRLY ABOUT THE CONVENTION? WHY ARE THEY MISQUOTING, AND QUOTE MINING?

(JASON: THAT'S JUST BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR THE CREATIONISTS. IN A MODERN, EDUCATED WORLD THEY ARE BECOMING AN OBSOLETE EMBARRASSMENT. THEY ARE DESPERATELY FIGHTING TO HOLD ONTO THEIR ANCIENT MYSTICAL BELIEFS - WHICH GET SLAUGHTERED ALMOST EVERY DAY BY NEW DISCOVERIES IN SCIENCE).

IN MY OPINION, ZWARTZ AND MALEY SHOULD OFFER A FORMAL RETRACTION AND APOLOGY TO RICHARD DAWKINS. ALSO, IF FAIRFAX WOULD LIKE AN EXAMPLE OF OBJECTIVE REPORTING, I HAVE FOUND AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE: CHRIS MULHER, AN ANGLICAN MINISTER WITH DEGREES IN ENGINEERING, PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY. HE BLOGGED ABOUT THE CONVENTION VIA THE ABC RELIGION BLOG.

HERE’S WHAT HE HAD TO SAY ABOUT DAWKINS’ PRESENTATION IN “GIVING THANKS IN A VACUUM”:

“THE FACT OF YOUR OWN EXISTENCE IS THE MOST ASTONISHING FACT YOU WILL EVER HAVE TO FACE. DON’T YOU EVER GET USED TO IT.”

WITH THOSE WORDS RICHARD DAWKINS LAUNCHED AN INTERESTING, AND LESS-​​POLEMICAL-​​THAN-​​THE-​​OTHERS, TALK SPANNING THE ORIGINS OF SPECIES, OF LIFE, OF THE UNIVERSE AND PERHAPS OF BILLIONS OF UNIVERSES.

THE UNIVERSE WE LIVE IN AND THE FACT OF OUR EXISTENCE IS TRULY A CAUSE FOR GRATITUDE. GRATITUDE FOR OUR INDIVIDUAL EXISTENCE AND FOR THE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION WHICH FROM THE BLIND FORCES OF PHYSICS PRODUCES ALL THAT WE KNOW AND GIVES IT THE ILLUSION OF DESIGN.

(CHRIS: YOU REPRESENT THE NEW FACE OF CHRISTIANITY - THE PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN: UNAFRAID TO ACCEPT SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY. CHRISTIANS WHO WORSHIP A GOD WORTHY OF LOVE - NOT THAT MONSTROUS, EVIL ABOMINATION WORSHIPPED BY LITERAL FUNDAMENTALISTS IN BOTH THE CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM WORLDS).

DOES HE MEAN TO SAY THAT RICHARD DAWKINS’ PRESENTATION WASN’T A MILITANT CALL TO ARMS AND AN OUTRIGHT MOCKING OF RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS? RICHARD DAWKINS’ PRESENTATION WAS ACTUALLY A HUMBLE ONE ABOUT SCIENCE, THE ORIGIN OF LIFE, AND HOW LUCKY WE ARE? WOULDN’T HAVE KNOWN THAT AFTER READING FAIRFAX!?

(JASON: AS MOST OF US HAVE LEARNED. TRUTH COMES IN A DISTANT SECOND TO SENSATIONALISM. THAT IS BECAUSE THEY MUST COMPETE FOR SURVIVAL - TRUTH SIMPLY DOESN'T SELL WELL).

IN THE COMMENTS SECTION, MULHER EVEN TAKES THE CHANCE TO CLARIFY DAWKINS’ COMMENT IN THE Q&A:

WITH THE REGARD TO THE “POPE NAZI” COMMENT, THIS WAS IN RELATION TO THE CREATION OF SAINTS. RICHARD DAWKINS WAS SAYING IT WAS RIDICULOUS TO MAKE MARY MACKILLOP AND THE POPE OF THE NAZI ERA, POPE PIUS XII (WHO WAS ALSO UP FOR BEATIFICATION AROUND THE TIME MARY MACKILLOP WAS), INTO SAINTS. UNFORTUNATELY, HE FORGOT THE NAZI-​​ERA POPE’S NAME AND REFERRED TO HIM AS “POPE … NAZI” (WITH QUITE A GAP BETWEEN THE WORDS “POPE” AND “NAZI” AS HE TRIED TO REMEMBER THE CORRECT NAME). HE WASN’T CALLING THE CURRENT POPE, BENEDICT, A NAZI (OR EVEN PIUS XII FOR THAT MATTER).

(CHRIS: THAT KIND OF HONESTY IS FOUND IN PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY - NEVER IN FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANITY).

ZWARTZ, MALEY, THIS GUY IS RUNNING CIRCLES AROUND YOU.

IN A FURTHER EXAMPLE OF ACTUAL JOURNALISM, IAN ROBINSON VIA ON-​​LINE OPINION WROTE:

DAWKINS SPOKE OF THE GRATITUDE WE SHOULD FEEL FOR OUR GOOD FORTUNE IN BEING THE PRODUCTS OF AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS THAT COULD HAVE SO EASILY NOT RESULTED IN US, THEN POSED THE QUESTION, “GRATITUDE TO WHOM?” HE THEN DISCUSSED HOW AT FIRST HUMAN GRATITUDE WAS DIRECTED TOWARDS IMAGINED GODS, BUT AS HUMAN’S EVOLVED THEY CAME TO REALISE THAT THIS WAS NOT JUSTIFIED AND THEIR GRATITUDE IS MORE AND MORE TURNING TOWARDS THE UNIVERSE ITSELF, AND OUR DUTY TO NURTURE AND CARE FOR THOSE PARTS OF IT WITHIN OUR POWER. ALSO,

…AFTER DAWKINS’ TALK, WHEN ONE OF THE QUESTIONERS IDENTIFIED HERSELF AS A CHRISTIAN, SOME PEOPLE IN THE AUDIENCE WERE TEMPTED TO SHOUT HER DOWN — BUT DAWKINS SILENCED THEM AND INSISTED SHE BE HEARD, LISTENED RESPECTFULLY, AND GAVE A DETAILED ANSWER TO HER QUESTION.

WHAT A DIFFERENT PICTURE THESE TWO PIECES PAINT? ONE FROM AN ATHEIST, ONE FROM AN ANGLICAN, NO LESS.

I AM VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO THE RETRACTION AND APOLOGY FROM ZWARTZ AND MALEY IN ALL FAIRFAX NEWSPAPERS, AND ALSO IN ALL SUBSEQUENT NEWS PAPERS THAT GOT IT WRONG, IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

(JASON: NOW YOU'RE THINKING LIKE A CREATIONIST!).

JASON BALL IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE FREETHOUGHT UNIVERSITY AND ALLIANCE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE SECULAR SOCIETY. HE ALSO SERVES ON THE COMMITTEE OF THE RATIONALIST SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA.

[UPDATE: BARNEY ZWARTZ HAS ADMITTED IT WAS AN HONEST MISTAKE, AND HAS OFFERED TO MAKE AN APOLOGY TO RICHARD IF HE ASKS FOR ONE.

(BARNEY: WHEN YOU MAKE A MISTAKE, IT IS NOT THE DUTY OF YOUR VICTIM TO ASK FOR AN APOLOGY - IT IS YOUR DUTY TO OFFER ONE. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU PEOPLE DON'T GET BACKWARDS?).

JACQUELINE MALEY REFUSES TO ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY, SHE CLAIMS USING THE WORD “PRESUMABLY” EXCUSES HER FROM MAKING THE INCORRECT CONNECTION.

(JACQUELINE - I HAVE THE PERFECT CAREER MOVE FOR YOU: CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST. THEY TOO, NEVER LOOK UP THE DEFINITIONS OF WORDS, LIKE "PRESUMABLY," BECAUSE WORDS NEVER SEEM TO MEAN WHAT YOU NEED THEM TO MEAN).

SHE ALSO ADDED THAT “RICHARD DAWKINS IS BIG ENOUGH TO TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF, ALTHOUGH YOUR CONCERN FOR HIM IS TOUCHING!”

(JACQUELINE - CAN YOU PLEASE RETURN TO ADULTLAND INSTEAD OF ACTING LIKE A RUDE LITTLE PUBESCENT SNOT?)

CHRIS LATTA (A READER) MADE THE INITIAL CORRECTION ABOUT PIUS XII IN THE COMMENTS SECTION OF THE ABC RELIGION BLOG, NOT CHRIS MULHER, AS I HAD THOUGHT. CHRIS MULHER HOWEVER, HAS SINCE MADE THE CORRECTION IN HIS BLOG POST.

UPDATE 2: ANDREW BOLT HAS PUBLICLY REFUSED TO CORRECT HIS MISTAKE. TO BE EXPECTED, I GUESS, HE DOESN’T HAVE VERY GOOD HISTORY OF FACT CHECKING, NOR ADMITTING WHEN HE’S WRONG.

(AND JASON - THAT DESCRIBES CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM PERFECTLY: THEY ARE ALL IN TOTAL DENIAL OF SCIENCE AND REALITY. THEY LIVE IN A LITTLE FANTASY WORLD INHABITED BY GHOSTS, DEMONS, ANGELS, AND DEVILS. THEY ARE ADULTS WHO PLAY "PRETEND").

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

NASA SCIENTISTS PROBING 600 FEET BENEATH AN ANTARCTIC ICE SHEET WERE AMAZED TO FIND SOPHISTICATED LIFE WHERE THEY HAD EXPECTED TO FIND A FEW MICROBES AT BEST. THE TEAM PUT A VIDEO CAMERA INTO THE DARK SUBFREEZING WATER AND FOUND A SHRIMP-LIKE CREATURE CLINGING TO THE CABLE WHEN THEY PULLED IT BACK UP, AS WELL AS A TENTACLE THEY BELIEVE CAME FROM A FOOT-LONG JELLYFISH.

"THEY ARE LOOKING AT THE EQUIVALENT OF A DROP OF WATER IN A SWIMMING POOL THAT YOU WOULD EXPECT NOTHING TO BE LIVING IN, AND THEY FOUND NOT ONE ANIMAL BUT TWO," A TEAM BIOLOGIST TOLD AP. "WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE." SCIENTISTS SAY THE FIND SIGNALS THAT THEY MAY NEED TO RETHINK THEIR IDEAS ON HOW MUCH LIFE CAN THRIVE IN HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS, BOTH ON EARTH AND IN PLACES LIKE THE MOONS OF JUPITER.

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ABROAD

THE MIDDLE EAST - ORIGIN OF THE DOMESTICATION OF DOGS

SCIENTISTS HAVE DISCOVERED THE ORIGIN OF THE DOMESTICATED DOG—SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. MOST DOGS IN THE WORLD ARE DESCENDED FROM THE MIDDLE EASTERN GRAY WOLF, A TEAM OF GENETICISTS FOUND. THE RESEARCHERS ANALYZED THE DOG GENOME, USING 900 ANIMALS FROM 85 BREEDS, AND THEN COMPARED IT TO 200 WILD GRAY WOLVES FROM AROUND THE WORLD. CERTAIN GENETIC MARKERS UNIQUE TO THE MIDDLE EASTERN WOLF POPULATION WERE FOUND IN MOST OF THE DOGS.

"MANY WOLF POPULATIONS MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE GENOMIC DIVERSITY OF DOGS, BUT THE DOMINANT SIGNAL COMES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST," ROBERT WAYNE, THE LEAD RESEARCHER, TELLS NPR. THE FINDINGS ARE CONSISTENT WITH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS IN ISRAEL OF 12,000 YEAR-OLD DOG SKELETONS BURIED WITH THEIR MASTERS.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

PLATO (428 – 348 B.C.E.) 80 YEARS

HE WAS A CLASSICAL GREEK PHILOSOPHER, MATHEMATICIAN, WRITER OF PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUES, AND FOUNDER OF THE ACADEMY IN ATHENS, THE FIRST INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING IN THE WESTERN WORLD. ALONG WITH HIS MENTOR, SOCRATES, AND HIS STUDENT, ARISTOTLE, PLATO HELPED TO LAY THE FOUNDATIONS OF NATURAL PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY. PLATO WAS ORIGINALLY A STUDENT OF SOCRATES, AND WAS AS MUCH INFLUENCED BY HIS THINKING AS BY WHAT HE SAW AS HIS TEACHER'S UNJUST DEATH.

ALTHOUGH THERE IS LITTLE QUESTION THAT PLATO LECTURED AT THE ACADEMY THAT HE FOUNDED, THE PEDAGOGICAL FUNCTION OF HIS DIALOGUES, IF ANY, IS NOT KNOWN WITH CERTAINTY. THE DIALOGUES SINCE PLATO'S TIME HAVE BEEN USED TO TEACH A RANGE OF SUBJECTS, INCLUDING PHILOSOPHY, LOGIC, RHETORIC, MATHEMATICS, AND OTHER SUBJECTS ABOUT WHICH HE WROTE.

“WE CAN EASILY FORGIVE A CHILD WHO IS AFRAID OF THE DARK;

THE REAL TRAGEDY OF LIFE IS WHEN MEN ARE AFRAID OF THE LIGHT.”