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Is Creationism a Threat to Human Rights?

Monday, October 8, 2007



As if the world needed another crazy development, the Council of Europe, the continent's central human rights body, last week declared creationism to be a threat to human rights. The group's Parliamentary Assembly approved a resolution stating that creationism is promoted by "forms of religious extremism."

As Reuters reported:

The Council, based in the eastern French city of Strasbourg, oversees human rights standards in member states and enforces decisions of the European Court of Human Rights.

The resolution, which passed 48 votes to 25 with 3 abstentions, is not binding on the Council's 47 member states but reflects widespread opposition among politicians to teaching creationism in science class.

The text of the resolution leaves no doubt about the Council of Europe's judgment. "For some people the Creation, as a matter of religious belief, gives a meaning to life," the text acknowledges. "Nevertheless, the Parliamentary Assembly is worried about the possible ill-effects of the spread of creationist ideas within our education systems and about the consequences for our democracies. If we are not careful, creationism could become a threat to human rights which are a key concern of the Council of Europe."

Anyone looking for evidence of a secularized culture should take a quick look at this resolution. When the official human rights institution of Europe has to explain that "some people" believe that the divine creation of the universe "gives a meaning to life," this can only mean that Europe (at least as represented by the Council of Europe) has forgotten even its Christian memory.

This body is seriously concerned that creationism is not only a threat to their secularized educational systems, but to democracy itself. Human rights could be endangered, the Council claims, if the continent is "not careful."

Someone must be passing out paranoia pills in Strasbourg. But more than secular paranoia is operating here. A closer look at this resolution indicates the centrality of Darwinian evolution to the secular worldview. Any breach in the wall defending evolution can lead, they are sure, to disaster.

"Creationists question the scientific character of certain items of knowledge and argue that the theory of evolution is only one interpretation among others," they argue. "They accuse scientists of not providing enough evidence to establish the theory of evolution as scientifically valid. On the contrary, they defend their own statements as scientific. None of this stands up to objective analysis."

So the initial cause of the offense is that creationists argue that evolution is only one theory among others. Creationists also "question the scientific character of certain items of knowledge," they assert. This rather awkward wording amounts to the charge that creationists deny the larger structure of naturalistic thought. Any doubt about the meaning of that charge is removed when the text goes on to state:

We are witnessing a growth of modes of thought which, the better to impose religious dogma, are attacking the very

core of the knowledge that we have patiently built up on nature, evolution, our origins and our place in the universe.

And:

The Assembly has constantly insisted that science is of fundamental importance. Science has made possible considerable improvements in living and working conditions and is a not insignificant factor in economic, technological and social development. The theory of evolution has nothing to do with divine revelation but is built on facts.

That last sentence is truly amazing. Evolution is simply based upon “facts,” they claim — a claim that would make most evolutionary scientists blush.

But the group’s commitment to naturalistic evolution is unconditional. The Council even suggests that the meaning and importance of evolution touches the totality of life and drives the development of societies: “Evolution is not simply a matter of the evolution of humans and of populations. Denying it could have serious consequences for the development of our societies.”

The Council also attempts to root creationism in a political agenda to replace democracy with a theocracy. Look carefully at these two paragraphs:

Our modern world is based on a long history, of which the development of science and technology forms an important part. However, the scientific approach is still not well understood and this is liable to encourage the development of all manner of fundamentalism and extremism. The total rejection of science is definitely one of the most serious threats to human rights and civic rights.

The war on the theory of evolution and on its proponents most often originates in forms of religious extremism which are closely allied to extreme right-wing political movements. The creationist movements possess real political power. The fact of the matter, and this has been exposed on several occasions, is that some advocates of strict creationism are out to replace democracy by theocracy.

I would be most interested to see any evidence put forth to back up this claim. The group claims that such knowledge “has been exposed on several occasions” but fails to mention even one such occasion.

The Council also asserted that respectable faiths had found a way to accept and accommodate evolutionary theory. “All leading representatives of the main monotheistic religions have adopted a much more moderate attitude,” they advise.

The Council of Europe’s resolution is clear evidence of the fact that a secularized society desperately needs naturalistic evolution as the metaphysical foundation of its worldview. Any threat to evolution is seen as a threat to democracy and human rights — and democracy and human rights are understood in an entirely secular framework as well.

This resolution is so extreme that, at first glance, it appears to be a farce or parody. Sadly, it is not. This is no joke. This is the shape of a secularized future.

