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No apology is made for the number of column inches given over to the amazingly successful 'Protest the Pope March & Rally'... There are articles and pictures on pages 2; 3 and 4.

Here on page 1 you'll discover information on our October meeting as well as an invitation to establish links with a Preston Hospice.

Details of the imminent Holyoake Lecture in Manchester are on page 2 as well as an interesting sounding lecture 'The rise of the people of no religion in the West since 1950' closer to home - Preston - in November.

A copy of a complaint made to the BBC about their coverage of the Pope's visit is also on page 2 - the BBC's reply is on page 4.

The whole of page 3 is given over to LSH's Eric Long's personal experience of the PtP Rally.

Photo's and some pertinent quotes about that event are on page 4.

Page 5 contains a report on LSH's brand new Exploring Humanism Course and the start of Talk No.4 in our Preston Outreach series - John Wayland's excellent 'Humanism & Morals' [*concludes page 6*]

Page 6 also has our regular feature 'What Our Friends Are Doing' - check that out - there are some very interesting talks to go to.

And (of course) our usual cartoons & quick quotes in between.

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If It's The **LSH** AGM It Must Be October

Wednesday 20th October 2010
meet at 7.30 for 8pm [*prompt*] start

October's **LSH** meeting is our Annual General Meeting where attendees will receive the Chairman's report of the previous year's activities – Details of the LSH financial accounts – Elect honorary officers of the group and the executive committee.

The requirement to give members at least 21 days notice of the AGM was met both in the notice on page 1 of the last **Newsletter** – and reiterated verbally at the LSH meeting on 15th September.

Nominations of members who have prior approval – duly seconded by fully paid-up members – and notices of resolutions must be received by the secretary at least seven days before the meeting

[i.e. by 14th October].

Any member whose nomination for Honorary Office does not lead to election shall be considered as a nominee for ordinary membership of the Committee.

Introduction to St Catherine's Hospice

Ian Dewar – Hospice Chaplain and Head of Education at St Catherine's Hospice, Lostock Hall, Preston has extended an invitation to **LSH** to attend an 'Introduction to St Catherine's Hospice' session* which is "*...intended to provide insight into the work of the Hospice and give us the opportunity to develop long-term relationships with local faith groups.*"

I have provisionally accepted an invitation [for two attendees] on behalf of **LSH**.

10am – 12,30pm Friday 19th November 2010
Anyone wishing to accompany me should let me know as soon as possible.

*Talk about aims of Hospice – Discuss latest national 'End-of-Life-Strategy' – Tour of Hospice – Q & A – Refreshments and Lunch.

Each session will comprise of [up to] 15 people - most of whom will doubtless be representatives of various faith groups. But, if we are serious about advancing our arguments for non-religious patients to not only be acknowledged but accommodated, then we should take every opportunity to make our voice heard - and by those who can do something!

What's On?

Couple of things coming up – book early now to avoid disappointment

University of Central Lancashire
School of Education and Social Science

Tim Curtis
Memorial Lecture 2010

'The rise of the people of no religion in the West since 1950'

Guest Speaker **Professor Callum Brown**
University of Dundee

7.00pm, Wednesday 10th November 2010
Mitchell and Kenyon Cinema, Foster Building

Admission is free. Programme and tickets obtainable from:
The School of Education and Social Science
University of Central Lancashire, PR1 2HE
Telephone 01772 893053 or 892250
or e-mail AJGritt1@uclan.ac.uk or dhoward1@uclan.ac.uk



Holyoake Lecture 2010: John Harris

Thursday 21st October 2010

For our second annual Holyoake Lecture in Manchester, Professor John Harris speaks on:

'Taking the "human" out of Humanism'

Chaired by humanist philosopher, Raymond Tallis.

'Discovery and innovation are creating new technologies which challenge our notions of humanity to and beyond breaking point. These technologies will improve cognitive powers, extend life expectancy and enable us to interact intimately with machines. It is certain that in the future there will be no more human beings but we may hope that there will still be beings for whom the philosophy of humanism, almost certainly under a new name, is relevant and important.'

Speaker: John Harris is the Lord Alliance Professor of Bioethics at the University of Manchester. He has written widely on biotechnology and ethics, including 'Enhancing Evolution: The Ethical Case for Making Better People', 'Clones Genes and Immortality' and 'On Cloning' for the Thinking In Action series.

Note change of venue: Main Hall, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FZ

Doors open 6pm for 6.30pm start

Tickets available online:

<http://www.humanism.org.uk/shop/tickets>

Or call **020 7079 3580** (office hours)

The Complaint:

I would like to complain in the strongest terms about the outrageous bias displayed by the BBC during the recent state visit of Pope Benedict XVI. How can it be that significantly smaller protests by much less diverse groups; objecting to the Chinese Prime Minister's visit in February 2009 was an unending feature of BBC News (TV and Radio) – accompanied by a stream of critics invited to voice their views: and yet a demonstration as significant as that which occurred in London on Saturday 18th September received next to no coverage at all? ...

[an event The National Catholic Register itself was compelled to describe as "... *easily the largest public protest Benedict XVI has ever faced on one of his foreign trips, and one of the largest protests against a pope in modern history.*"]

Anybody relying on the BBC for news might be forgiven for assuming there have been no objections to his visit at all - let alone 'between 15,000 - 20,000' protestors who succeeded in bringing the centre of London to a standstill.

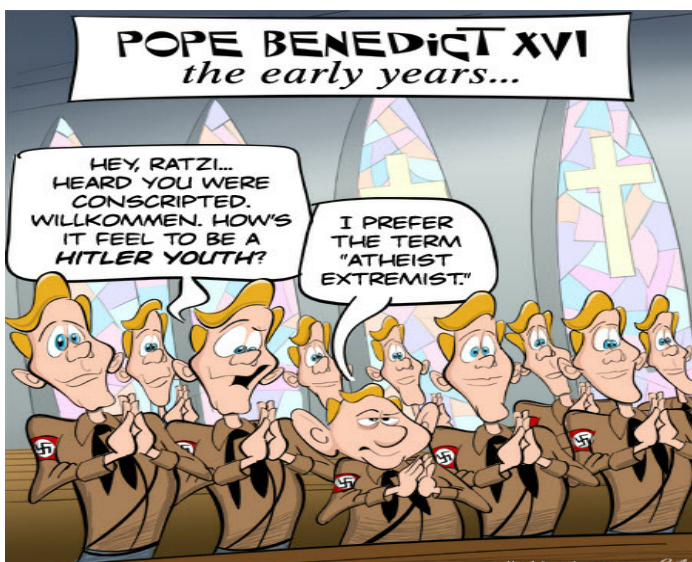
Furthermore - despite the Pope's persistent references to aggressive secularism there was a

noticeable paucity of secularists (aggressive or otherwise) invited onto the BBC to defend those charges.

Could it simply be that the BBC don't like China but do like The Vatican – and have permitted their predilection to prevail over that impartiality it is supposed to be famed for?

Or could it be something more sinister?

For The BBC's Reply go to page 4



“ ... having never taken part in a protest march before...”

From LSH member Eric Long

Arriving at the Protest the Pope assembly point I walked into the crowd near the front feeling a little nervous, having never taken part in a protest march before.

Shortly afterwards a middle-aged couple stepped in beside me, carrying a wooden placard with the hand painted message “The Pope Is Mad” on one side and “All Religions Are Child Abuse” on the other - and I immediately felt more at home.

As we waited for the march to start a smartly dressed interviewer and his accompanying TV camera man interviewed those carrying banners and placards for a French TV channel.

The British media, by contrast, were conspicuous by their absence.

We had to keep moving forward every ten minutes or so as more and more people arrived and gathered at the rear of the march assembly point.

Finally, after a moving speech from Sue Cox - and renditions of “You’ll Never Walk Alone” and “Stand By Me” - we were off!

Along some parts of the route from Hyde Park Corner to Downing Street people lined the streets to watch us pass.

A few rows in front of me the woman in the PVC nun’s outfit drew plenty of attention.

“What do we want?”,
“A Secular Europe”,
“When do we want it?”,
“NOW!”

... the chant went, with [amongst many others]
“Children’s / Women’s / Gay Rights are Human Rights”.

In the course of the march a couple of vertically challenged people asked me how far back the protesters went. I had to tell them that there looked like many thousands of people and there was no way I could see to the back.

Eventually an announcement came from the truck carrying loudspeakers and the chant-leader at the front of the march that “We are 10,000 strong” and shortly afterwards “We are 12,000 people” ... to huge cheers.

When we got to our Downing Street destination - and more & more marchers caught up with us - it soon became clear that the far greater number of protesters than anticipated was going to create a problem.

Pleas to move down the road were largely ignored as everyone thought for themselves (not something that the Hyde Park pilgrims could be accused of doing) ...

“ ... never taken part in a protest march before...”

... Continued

... and decided that moving away from the truck carrying the speakers was not going to be the best way of hearing what was going to be said.

Eventually the police closed the opposite side of the road and an audience of what by then was close to 20,000 people (if reports are to be believed) settled to listen to the speakers.

These are the three that come to mind whilst writing:-

Richard Dawkins received a huge cheer when introduced and proceeded to defend secularism from ludicrous Nazi comparisons.

He explained that Hitler was baptised a Catholic and never renounced that religion.

The Catholic church in Britain claims to have 5 to 6 million members and although there may be that many people baptised as Catholics the vast majority of these are lapsed.

Clearly then, if the church wishes to claim all these people as part of their number then they must also claim Hitler.

Geoffrey Robertson, who to be fair to him had a book to promote, took up far too much time and left the later speakers very rushed when the police demanded the roads be cleared.

But at least he started with a very good point about the Vatican hardly having the qualifications to call itself a state when states must have citizens and the chances of anyone being born in an area of Rome occupied only by celibate priests is very low indeed!

Journalist **Johann Hari** urged the police present to go and arrest the wanted international criminal at large in London and told the Pope “*You want to repent?...Repent from your prison cell*”.

And then it was all over.

A thoroughly enjoyable day.

Peaceful, good humoured, at times almost joyous ... and from what I saw not even a hint of trouble.

Speeches, chants, costumes ... but the stars of the show for me were the numerous banners . . . from the thought provoking to the crude.

Three humorous ones were: the word

- “Sinfuls” above a picture of a meerkat;

- “If I was a billionaire paedophile I’d make my car look like an ice cream van”;

-and the “Kylie for Pope” banner with a picture of Ms Minogue wearing a mitre.

Let’s face it; she couldn’t do a worse job!

“Thanks Eric” [Ed] ... For many (many) more comment - reports - pictures - facts & figures (etc) simply Google ‘Protest The Pope’

What A Day!

Protest The Pope Procession & Rally Makes History!

The National Catholic Register wrote:

"... this was easily the largest public protest Benedict XVI has ever faced on one of his foreign trips, and one of the largest protests against a pope in modern history."

And yet 'Vatican TV & Radio' (aka The BBC) gave far less coverage of this uplifting [to secularists] but worrying [to religionists] outpouring of public feeling than it does to most other protests ... (see page 4)

And from the religion and society think-tank Ekklesia.

'Public gaffes made by Pope Benedict and his retired senior adviser Cardinal Kasper, in aligning atheism with Nazism and describing Britain's social mix as being 'like a Third World country', show that the church needs to re-learn how to communicate by listening, not lecturing' -

Ekklesia's Simon Barrow added:

"The pontiff has misjudged his wider audience by pandering to exaggerated fears of antagonism to religion, rather than building bridges of understanding and cooperation between the peacemaking and justice-loving heart of Christianity and those of other or no faith committed to doing good in a plural society."

*Many more pictures available at:

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=293721&id=26806660922#>

More articles from the event inside



The Reply:

Dear Mr Abbott [Reference CAS-311122] Thanks for contacting us.

We understand that you felt BBC coverage of the Papal Visit was biased in favour of Pope Benedict XVI and/or the Catholic Church.

The visit by Pope Benedict XVI was the first ever State visit by a Pontiff and was of huge historic significance to millions of Catholics and other people in the UK. It was entirely appropriate that the BBC, as the nation's broadcaster, would provide coverage of the event.

The Pope's Visit 2010 has to a certain extent divided public opinion and been the subject of much debate. In order to offer both balance and perspective to this historic occasion, the BBC marked the visit with coverage of the five major ceremonies across BBC television, radio and online, as well as using documentaries and other output to look at different aspects of the Catholic Church's affairs.

As is absolutely right for an independent news organisation, this included transmitting some programmes which investigated issues that have negatively affected the Catholic Church, such as the recent child abuse scandals.

In its News and Current Affairs coverage of any subject the BBC is always committed to impartiality and accuracy, seeking also to reflect the different

sides of any debate.

The coverage of the current Papal visit was no different, and careful planning went into making sure that we provided the most comprehensive and authoritative coverage for our audiences.

However, we do acknowledge your concerns and we'd like to assure you that we've registered your complaint on our audience log.

This is a daily report of audience feedback that's circulated to many BBC staff, including members of the BBC Executive Board, channel controllers and other senior managers.

The audience logs are seen as important documents that can help shape decisions about future programming and content.

Thanks again for your feedback.

Kind Regards ... Elaine Kelly

Quick Quote

"Isn't it a remarkable coincidence, almost everyone has the same religion as their parents?

Religions run in families.

If we had been brought up in ancient Greece, we would all be worshipping Zeus and Apollo. If we had been born Viking, we would be worshipping Thor."

Richard Dawkins

Quick Quote

"Quidquid latine dictum sit, altum viditur."

(Whatever is said in Latin sounds profound)

Off To A Flying Start!

The LSH hosted 'Exploring Humanism' Course – written and led by GMH's Robin Grintner & Anna Whitehead – got off to a good start on Saturday 25th September.

The Committee Room at the Gt Eccleston Village Centre* was 'just' big enough to accommodate the eight participants - plus Robin & Anna ... but nevertheless served us very well indeed.

The original course was designed to run over six weeks but to overcome excessive travel and room hire costs Robin & Anna have worked hard to re-design it to fit into three X three-hour sessions – each session now comprising of two modules instead of the original one ... Consequently this first week covering 'Humanist Beliefs & Practice' and 'The Historical Roots Of Humanism' was necessarily 'busy' to say the least ... a lot to fit in!

However, by the end of the morning those there all agreed it had been interesting; informative; thought-provoking; stimulating; [at times] challenging but also entertaining.

That enthusiasm augers well for the remaining two sessions – and I (for one) am eagerly anticipating next week 'Humanist Moral Values' and 'How Humanists Handle Moral Dilemmas' as well as the concluding session 'The Meaning And Purpose Of Life For Humanists' and 'Humanism Today' - concluding with a review of the course.

A comprehensive review of the completed course will feature in next month's Newsletter

[*With more than a passing sense of irony we were amused to discover the downstairs rooms were being used by a 'Crystal Healing' group - but I'm pleased to be able to report no-one with us was tempted to invest in Chakra Jewellery [£30] (*to balance the energy centres of the body encouraging more efficient healing, to feel more energized and to have a more positive outlook on life*) ... Money Toads [£5] (*to be placed facing the door during the daytime, to attract abundance, and faced away from the door during the night time, to keep the abundance in the home*) ... or Oracle Cards [£12] (*for divination and inner guidance*)]

'Make it idiot proof and
someone will make a better idiot'

alternatively

'Nothing is foolproof to a sufficiently
talented fool'

LSH Outreach Talk No.4

Humanism and morals

John Wayland

One of the claims in defence of religion and against the atheist/humanist position is that without religion a moral system is impossible. This assertion is usually based on two separate grounds, first that we derive our moral beliefs from laws handed down by God and second that God provides the sanction in the next world (the ultimate reward or punishment at the day of judgment) which gives us the incentive to behave in a moral way.

To take the first of these two, that in effect we would have no knowledge of right or wrong if God did not set out for us a code of ethics, the humanist would ask if this code is right simply because God says so or because it is, in a way which would need further explication, right in itself.

The religious answer to this, I believe, is that God tells us that this code is right for both reasons: God has chosen this code because it is right in itself.

I suggest however that if this is indeed the line of argument taken by religion, then a serious difficulty arises: there must be some underlying reason why this code has been chosen and not some other.

In other words no moral code can be arbitrary. If not arbitrary, it must be capable of being defended by argument, and argument is something which we as human beings sustain by virtue of our powers of reason.

It is quite true that religions do provide certain basic rules of behaviour, and these rules are in many cases shared in common across many cultures. They are nonetheless rules which can be seen as essential prerequisites for social living, rules which we have worked out for ourselves. "Do as you would be done by" (the Golden Rule) is not the preserve of the religions alone: it was first enunciated several centuries before Christ.

The serious difficulty I mentioned earlier in the religious account of morality is that morality described as a social and cultural entity has all the hallmarks of a human, not a divine construct. It therefore seems to be capable of existing independently from the idea of a divine being.

The second leg of the religious argument is that without the knowledge that our actions are scrutinised by an all-seeing eye (and therefore punished or rewarded according to our deserts) there would be no reason for us to behave in a . . .

Humanism and Morals - continued

... way which was not utterly selfish: morality would be a meaningless concept.

Humanists maintain however that this is not how the world actually works.

As a social and cooperative animal we recognise that rules of conduct are vital to successful communal living. In fact so important are moral standards to us that we attach a particular emotional importance to them: we are shocked and alarmed when confronted with acts of blatant dishonesty or cruelty.

I think that this explains why, when public figures are caught in an act of duplicity, they try and escape this emotional response by admitting only to a "mistake", rather as if they'd totted up a column of figures and got them wrong. When Hillary Clinton's boastful claim that she'd braved a hail of bullets when leaving a plane at a war zone airport was shown to be quite false she said lamely that she had "misspoken".

She was clearly exceedingly uncomfortable with the idea that she had lied.

There is a special concern associated with serious crimes which explains why these remain the exception rather than the rule, and why stable communities persist. Most people expect other people to share their standards, a fact which the confidence trickster exploits time and time again. Our laws are designed to reinforce moral disapproval in order to ensure that the number of moral outlaws is restricted to a level which does not threaten society's stability.

The greatest danger in the religious claims for special insights into morality is that religions are necessarily resistant to change: if the moral code has divine authority, who are we to change it? The sacred texts however give no guidance to a world where new ethical dilemmas are being thrown up regularly by advances in science and technology. There are now some exceedingly difficult decisions to be made, for example, in how long to maintain life artificially, or how best to use our ability to create life artificially, and the churches are as powerless as the rest of us in coming to a judgment which can satisfy everyone.

Religious leaders in the 21st century can also make pronouncements of great folly and inhumanity, like the Anglican bishop who declared that the floods of 2007 were God's judgment on our immorality as a nation ... *Concluded next column. . . ►*

6.. . . or the Imam in Tehran last month who declared that volcanoes erupted to show divine displeasure at the immodest clothing worn by young women.

The Geneva convention outlaws collective punishment, but, according to these clerics, this message has not yet penetrated the celestial regions.

I do not wish to deny however that religion has inspired many people to live exemplary lives of self sacrifice and genuine altruism, and that they would maintain that it is their religion which sustains them in their desire to serve others.

The humanist would ask them if this life of service to others would cease if they became convinced that their religion was based on a falsehood. I suspect that most would answer in the negative, because they would recognise that what they were doing was worthwhile in its own right.

Those who would answer in the positive must then explain why it is first necessary to serve God before serving their fellow humans.

Next Month ... Talk No. 5 - 'Why I'm A Humanist'

What Our Neighbours Friends Are Up To

Cumbria Humanists

www.cumbria-humanists.org.uk

730 Wed 15 Sept: Morton C/unity Centre, Wigton Rd, Carlisle.

Isle of Man Freethinkers

www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk

12.30 Sun 12th Sept -

12.00 Thurs 6th Sept: Lunch Alessandros Restaurant, Douglas

Liverpool Humanists

<http://livehum.org>

7.30 Thurs 9th Sept: 07 Café Bar, 103 Mount Pleasant, L3 5TB

Greater Manchester Humanists

<http://gmh.humanist.org.uk>

7pm Wed 5 Sept: Friends Meeting Ho, Mount St, M2 5N

South Cheshire And North Staffs Humanists

www.humanists.org.uk

7.30 Tues 22 Sept:

Humanist Society of West Yorkshire

www.wyhumanists.org.uk

Amnesty Preston

www.preston.amnesty.org.uk

7.30pm Mon 13 Sept: St Augustines Parish House,
St Augustines Place. Preston

Lytham St Annes & Blackpool Amnesty

www.amnesty.org.uk/lytham

7.30pm Mon 4 Sept: Church Rd Centre Methodist Church;
Church Rd, St Annes.

Don't Forget - If you have trouble parking at Great Eccleston for our meetings you can use The Farmers Arms Car Park

** With apologies - the [hyperlinks](#) are for those reading this 'on-line' **