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"An excellent conference – can't wait 'til next year. Congratulations to the organisers – can't fault it!"



As a relative newcomer to the BHA it was good to have the opportunity to meet other members of local groups. It was good too to hear Andrew Copson. His morning address was impressively comprehensive, showing (I feel) great insight and clarity ... (and Marilyn Mason). I found the whole event stimulating & enjoyable: well organised and chaired (kept to time-table very well!) All contributors gave well-prepared and thought-provoking papers though it would have been good if they'd had a little longer to speak. I appreciate that would have been difficult without curtailing the very valuable 'Question-Time' . . . . Excellent venue & catering ... Looking forward to the next one!!"

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"Very enjoyable event – Well organised.



"Great. 10/10"

Venue suitable for the size of conference. Enjoyed the presentations & discussions. Panel discussion was an excellent idea. The task for the break-out groups was a little overly-intellectual: some group members felt the language was elitist and inaccessible. Good tea, coffee & lunch arrangements. I had some difficulty hearing presentations & discussions & questions if delegates did not use the microphone properly (or at all).



"Copson – good questions to launch conference. Break-outs – would have liked more time to do two groups ie different topics / perspectives (though in practice seemed that discussions converged) and less lunch. As we had time for GALHA meeting, this used lunch-time more effectively, but for others, time could have been better spent in two break-outs. Panels – good, open debates. Venue etc – good - apparently hearing loop had problems for users. Convenient for city, at lower costs than hotel meeting rooms and had good 'community payback' values."



"I found the event to be very interesting and intellectually stimulating. The speeches were good. The venue was very good. The main hall was just the right size for the number of delegates. The AV facility was adequate. The venue is conveniently located just a short walk from a principle railway station. The refreshments were good and plentiful."



"Good event – particularly for an outsider like myself – superb! So glad I came! Some speakers weren't brilliant at using the microphone optimally – perhaps lapel microphones could be better."

"The event went very well. The venue was ideal. The speakers were excellent. The catering was very good."

"Excellent in all aspects. Important to have Andrew (or someone from 'Central BHA Office') at these localised meetings."

"Well informed and interesting speakers – relevant to humanism and to much of the discussions had the previous day ... Pleased I attended."



**Bertrand Russell** begins his [1930] essay *'Has Religion Made Useful Contributions to Civilization?'* with these words:

*"My... view on religion is that of Lucretius. I regard it as a disease born of fear and a source of untold misery to the human race."*

He ends his essay with this:

*"The knowledge exists by which universal happiness can be secured; the chief obstacle to its utilization for that purpose is the teaching of religion.*

*Religion prevents our children from having a rational education; religion prevents us from removing the fundamental causes of war; religion prevents us from teaching the ethic of scientific co-operation in place of the old fierce doctrines of sin and punishment.*

*It is possible than mankind is on the threshold of a golden age; but, if so, it will be necessary first to slay the dragon that guards the door, and this dragon is religion."*

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From  
The  
Committee  
Room

Next **LSH** Committee Meeting 09.30am Sat 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 2011  
Meeting Room – Great Eccleston Village Centre  
All 'paid-up' **LSH** members welcome

The relevant 'attachments' have been forwarded to all those who have indicated their intention to attend. Any other **LSH** member who would like copies should contact me in the usual way... [Ed]

#### **Agenda**

1. Attendees & Apologies
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. Matters Arising
4. Interim Treasurer Report
5. **NWHumanists** - Conference
6. Proposal - to revise Membership Pricing
7. Social Networking Updates
8. Forthcoming Activities
9. Query £50 DiD Donation
10. A GRAM Day Out
11. Navigating the LSH Website CD
12. A.O.B.
13. Meeting Ends

#### **Time/Day/Date of next Committee Meeting**

09.30 – 12noon - Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2012

#### **Reminder**

**October is our A.G.M.**

**7.30pm Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

See page six 'next meeting' for details.



*'... It's easy if you try'* atheistcartoons.com/BA

#### **Standing Orders**

If you're a member of **LSH** – or thinking of joining – have you considered the benefits of setting up a Standing Order?

It would be convenient for you – not having to remember when your renewal is due or think about having the right change with you for meetings.

It would assist us – not having to remind you when your renewal is due or having change when you attend meetings.

It would also provide us with a regular; more reliable revenue stream each month which would be a tremendous help when planning future expenditure.

To find out more or obtain our bank account details – simply contact:

Ian Abbott [Chairman] or  
John Wayland [Treasurer].



University of Central Lancashire  
School of Education and Social Science

**Tim Curtis**

**Memorial Lecture 2011**

**"A surprising resilience":  
Historians of British Conservatism since 1945**

Professor Sir Brian Harrison  
*University of Oxford*

7.00pm, Tuesday 22nd November 2011  
Mitchell and Kenyon Cinema, Foster Building

Admission free. Programme and tickets obtainable from:  
The School of Education and Social Science  
University of Central Lancashire, PR1 2HE  
Telephone 01772 893799 or 892250  
or e-mail [amcallister1@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:amcallister1@uclan.ac.uk)  
or [dhoward1@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:dhoward1@uclan.ac.uk)

**A**t our August meeting we heard Dan Dennett's entertaining address to the 2007 AAI Convention [reported in September's Newsletter] – in which he made reference to the book – 'Philosophers Without Gods – Meditations On Atheism And The Secular Life' - (edited by Louise M. Antony).

I'm pleased to report that this book is now in our **LSH** library – and include a taster here.

This is an extract from Joseph Levine's:

**'From Yeshiva Bochur to Secular Humanist':**

*'In the end, I do think one loses something significant when one loses belief in God. I admit that the idea that my life was somehow a matter of concern to the ultimate power of the universe provided me with a sense of my own significance that I lost when I lost that belief. I also miss the comforting thought that however dark the world seems, the bright light of redemption may be just around the corner. (Of course, we may have to do our share to attain it, but the point is we have a powerful ally on our side.) Finally, with God gone, so is eternal life. I've had to confront the reality of death in a new way.*

*To that sense of loss just described I have two responses. First, I say, "Welcome to life as it is rather than how it only seemed to be in your fantasy." For human beings, growing up is often a matter of facing painful truths, and the loss of this sort of transcendence and moral guarantee must be swallowed and dealt with along with many other aspects of reality; in particular, as mentioned, the ultimate nature of death. This is one way to read the story of Adam and Eve, of course, Human innocence can no longer be sustained now that we've eaten from the "tree of knowledge." So be it. The Nietzschean in me says, "Deal with it."*

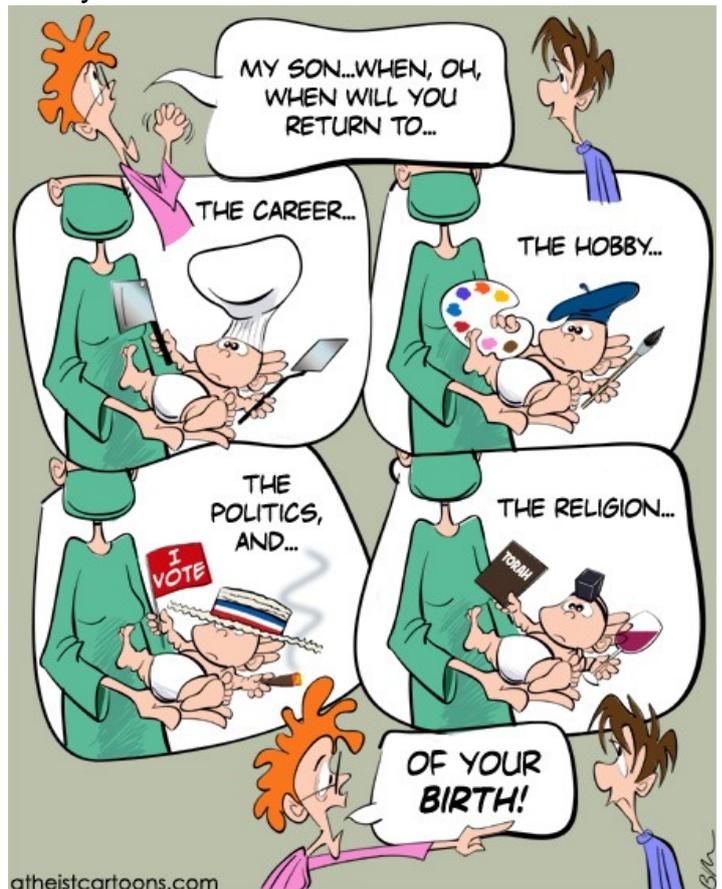
*But then, as with the tree of knowledge story, I think there is a way in which this loss of theological transcendence can be seen as an opportunity as well. In line with what I take as a common theme of both Nietzsche and Kant, we can turn this indifference of the universe to our lives and projects into the opportunity to make ourselves the ground of our own significance. As rational intentional agents we can see meaning and significance where we ourselves make it. To quote Kant, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." What's within us needs no validation from the starry heavens – its significance is internally certified.*

*So there is no guarantee that good will triumph over evil, and we must be the authors and creators of our own significance. That we can be the ground of our own significance - and, I would argue, have always been, though we hid it from ourselves behind a veil of mythology – is really a profound*

... Continued ... ►

**3 From Yeshiva Bochur to Secular Humanist ...continued**  
*...miracle in its own right,*

*worthy of Kant's wonder and awe. Once we rid ourselves of this veil imposed by religious ideology and practice, we face formidable challenges: We must face our own death without the comfort of an afterlife; we must endow our projects with significance from within; we must find it in ourselves to fight for justice though the odds may be against us; we must self-consciously build a new sense of community based on recognition of our and others' autonomous choices. Can we succeed? I don't know, that's the whole point. Still, it's all we have, and it's a noble project to try.*



**Quick Quote**

"Should one continue to base one's life on a system of belief that - for all its occasional wisdom and frequent beauty - is demonstrably untrue?"

- Charles Templeton,  
 former right-hand man to Billy Graham  
 in Farewell to God.

**And Another**

"I refuse to prove that I exist" says God, "For proof denies faith, and without faith I am nothing."

- Douglas Adams

## Child abuses at madrassas in Lancashire

According to recently released figures the number of complaints concerning physical abuse in madrassas\* in Lancashire are rising ... but not the number of prosecutions.

Over the last three years there have been 37 complaints to the authorities of assaults and mistreatment of children – some as young as five years old – and yet only one member of staff has been successfully prosecuted.

The vast majority of Muslim boys and girls from primary school age upwards attend madrassas to learn the Koran.

Salim Mulla, the chairman of the Lancashire Council of Mosques said his organisation was working hard to crack down on the issue.

According to official figures, there have been 19 reported incidents of physical abuse in 2010-2011. However; the police were only called to eight, and of those, only three led to a criminal inquiry ... and that resulted in just one caution ... [14 complaints were recorded in 2009-2010 - four in 2008-2009]

There have been no reported incidents of sexual abuse since 2008-2009. Then only two allegations were made – neither of which led to prosecution.

Lancashire has over 200 madrassas registered with Council of Mosques: however Mr Mulla has concerns about the unknown number of home madrassas, which fall outside any regulations and guidelines whatsoever which he admits "... is a big challenge for all of us."

He went on to say: "*Whether it is one case, or 19 cases, it is still one case too many. We have written to all of the mosques and madrassas and have said no sort of corporal punishment should be given to children, and have implemented a no touching policy. We have held seminars with a criminal barrister and mosque leaders about the consequences of child abuse. Everyone in the mosques and madrassas are CRB checked. But we do have concerns about home madrassas as they have no guidelines and we don't have a say with those.*"

The county council and police have launched an initiative to ensure teachers are aware of the law on safeguarding children.

*\*Madrassas are classes for boys and girls [usually] held in mosques every night after-school.*

## Crem-encounters

At a recent family visit the grandmother of two small children shared with me a conversation she'd overheard between the two cousins talking about the death of their Granddad:

1<sup>st</sup> Boy: *Do you leave a mark after you've died?*

2<sup>nd</sup> Boy: *Yes – you leave a mark on the lives of everybody who loves you.*

1<sup>st</sup> Boy: *I know that but I mean do you leave a real mark?*

2<sup>nd</sup> Boy: *What do you mean?*

1<sup>st</sup> Boy: *You know – like a fly. A dead fly leaves a mark doesn't it?*

## Remembrance Sunday

**LSH** will [again] be laying a wreath on behalf of our friends at UKAFHA in Preston's Remembrance Day Parade. The wording on our card will be:

*'Laid by Lancashire Secular Humanist on behalf of the United Kingdom Armed Forces Humanist Association. In memory of the non-religious service men and women who also gave their lives for us – we will remember them.'*

Anybody who would like to take part should assemble at The Covered Market in Preston by

**10am on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November**

If you would like to make a small contribution to help with the cost of the wreath you can [either] send a cheque to John Wayland [**LSH** Treasurer] or Ian Abbott [**LSH** Chair] – or pay via PayPal on our Website.

### [Invent your own heading for this...]

Two women have now died in Edinburgh and [at least] three other deaths have occurred in London following advice from pastors to stop taking HIV medication and rely on prayer instead.

HIV prevention charity African Health Policy Network (AHPN) says a growing number of churches have been telling people the power of prayer will "cure" their infections.

AHPN said it believed the Synagogue Church Of All Nations (SCOAN), which has UK headquarters in Southwark, London, may be one of those involved in such practices.

The church is headed by Pastor T. B. Joshua, Nigeria's third richest clergyman, according to a recent Forbes rich-list.

The church's web-site, which was set up in Lagos, Nigeria, shows photos of people the church claims have been "cured" of HIV through prayer ... "Cancer Healing" and "Baby Miracles" are also advertised.

## Armed Forces Cuts – but £22,000,000 p.a. still spent on Christian Chaplains

Source ... NSS website

A Freedom of Information request to the Ministry of Defence by the National Secular Society has revealed the Armed Forces spend £22 million annually on Christian chaplains and currently employ 280 chaplains across all three services.

Stephen Evans, spokesperson for the National Secular Society said:

*“A significant part of a chaplain’s role is to provide pastoral support – but to all service personnel, not just the religious. It is therefore important to question the Christian monopoly in this area.”*

All chaplains employed by the MoD are commissioned officers. Their starting salary is £37,172 on appointment, rising to £55,857 after 15 years’ service - senior chaplains receive more.

The NSS has written to defence minister Andrew Robathan to question the spending, asking that either churches assume funding of their chaplains themselves, or that the MoD converts the role of chaplains into a secular “pastoral care” service, for which anybody can apply.

A MoD spokesman has said the spending of £22m a year on military chaplaincy is “currently being assessed”.

The MoD employs and funds chaplains, but their authority comes from their Sending church. At present, the permitted Sending churches are Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist / URC / Congregational, Church of Scotland / Presbyterian, Elim\* and Assemblies of God\*.

The armed forces also retain five civilian chaplains to care for Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish and Muslim recruits.

There have been calls for the establishment of Humanist chaplains, who would offer support to those with no spiritual beliefs.

Stephen Evans, said:

*“If the MoD determine there is a place for pastoral support in the military in addition to counselling and psychotherapy services already offered, then those positions should be open to any professionals with the skills to provide necessary support, regardless of their religion or belief.*

*If religious groups want specific representation, then they should fund their own chaplains, and not expect salaries to be paid from the military budget, which is already under immense strain.”*

\*These Sending churches - Assemblies of God and Elim actively denounce homosexuality

Stephen Evans commented: *“The attitudes of some of the Sending churches hardly seem consistent with a service that describes itself as committed to equality and diversity. The appropriateness of any “moral leadership” such chaplains can offer the armed forces is highly questionable.”*

## Compulsory Worship Continues! ...

... the oxymoronic way to start the school day

Peers in the House of Lords rejected moves to make collective worship in schools optional, rather than compulsory. The law in England & Wales states that children at all publicly-funded schools “shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship”.

One amendment would have given community schools the freedom to decide for themselves whether or not to hold acts of religious worship.

A second amendment would have given pupils the right to withdraw themselves from worship, where it is conducted by the school.

A further amendment would have allowed 15 year old or older pupils to withdraw themselves, building on the NSS success for 6<sup>th</sup> form pupils’ self-withdrawal.

The amendments were moved by NSS Hon. Ass. Lord Avebury who said: *“It is time for the long-standing tradition which no longer reflects the beliefs of more than a tiny fraction of the people to be jettisoned”.*

- *England & Wales are alone among Western democracies in requiring such enforced worship in community schools.*

## It’s Bordering on OCD!

Despite the fact that – as reported in last month’s LSH Newsletter – the Blackpool Christian Café owner; whose café boasts a television displaying perpetual Bible quotes to his customers, was not arrested – not prosecuted – not even threatened with prosecution - and not told to remove or switch off his TV ...

Added to which, because this non-story made virtually every Christian publication around the globe [and seems to have grown with the telling\*] the café owner later received a letter from his local police explaining the situation and apologising for any misinterpretation which may have been perceived ... STILL Christian apologists persist in trying to make as much mileage out of it as possible.

It even made Prime Minister’s Questions [26<sup>th</sup> Oct.]

Northern Irish politician Jeffrey Donaldson [DUP]: MP for Lagan Valley; asked David Cameron:

*“... and here in the UK, if you display a bible verse on the wall of a café you face prosecution. Was Anne Widdecombe right when she said that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, hedgehogs have more rights than Christians?”*

Thankfully the PM treated that [banal] part of his question with the attention it deserved:

*“ ... Anne Widdecombe is often right – not always right; but often right”*

.....

*[\* if such an insignificant episode in a little café in a small northern town can be embellished so much over such a short period of time just think what 2,000 years did for that tale of the bloke who managed to make a fish-butto go a long way.]*

## Next Meeting

**Caution:** *This month's meeting deals with important but distressing issues which some may find disturbing - Young people and those likely to be upset by the subject matter should consider carefully before attending!*

## Child 'Witches'

**Stepping Stones Nigeria** is a Lancaster-based charity working in conjunction with **PACT** (Prevent Abuse of Children Today) in response to the widespread child rights violations that take place in Nigeria. In particular, child witchcraft-related abuse and child trafficking.

Increasing numbers of children in the Niger Delta are forced to the streets and trafficked as a result of a deeply held belief in child 'witches' and also due to persistent violent conflicts, poverty, abuse, torture, rape, or being orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

The deeply held belief in and fear of child witchcraft cuts across all tiers of society.

This fear stems from the belief that a spiritual spell can be given to a person through food and drink. The soul of the person who eats this spell will then leave the body to be initiated in a gathering of 'witches' and 'wizards'. An initiated person will have power to wreak havoc, such as causing diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, hepatitis, typhoid, cancer. All problems in life are seen to be the handiwork of these 'witches'.

In recent times, it is thought children have become the target for initiation by elderly 'witches' as it is believed that they are more susceptible to their spells and are quicker in action.

The major causes of child witchcraft, abandonment and killings are:

- Religious profiteering
- Extreme poverty
- Disintegration of the extended family structure
- Ignorance and superstitious beliefs
- Broken marriages

**Stepping Stones Nigeria** and **PACT** seek to engage with faith organisations. They try not to denounce any faith; however, the role of churches, especially some of the new Pentecostals, in spreading the belief in child 'witches', cannot be underestimated.

There are numerous so-called pastors in the region branding children as 'witches' for economic gain and personal recognition.

**Stepping Stones Nigeria** and **PACT** call for people of all faiths and none to stand up and support the fight to protect innocent children from the abuse caused due to a belief in child witchcraft.

Belief in child 'witches' in the Niger Delta is linked to the widespread viewing of Nigerian ['Nollywood'] 'home movies': watched by the vast majority of people in the region.

Continued next column ... ►

This has resulted in child 'witches' being:

- Abandoned, isolated, discriminated against and ostracised from their community
- Taken to the forest and slaughtered
- Disgraced publicly and murdered
- Bathed in acid
- Poisoned to death, often with a poisonous local berry ('asire')
- Buried alive
- Chained and tortured in churches in order to extract confession

It beggars belief that such practices continue in a country which has such close associations with the modern 'Westernised' world!

## What Our Neighbours Friends Are Up To

**Cumbria Humanists** e-mail - [oldcodger2@btinternet.com](mailto:oldcodger2@btinternet.com)  
*Sadly Cumbria Humanists is currently dormant enquiries can be directed to George Weston at the above e-mail address.*

**Isle of Man Freethinkers** [www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk](http://www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk)  
*Unfortunately problem with IoM Website at time of going to press  
Web-site well worth a visit when up & running again*

**Liverpool Humanists** <http://livehum.org>  
No details posted - for update see website

**Greater Manchester Humanists** <http://gmh.humanist.org.uk>  
7pm Wed 9 Nov: Friends Meeting House, Mount St, M2 5NS  
**Tim Kyle** – Greater Manchester Probation Trust  
Working with offenders to reduce re-offending

**South Cheshire And North Staffs Humanists** [www.humanists.org.uk](http://www.humanists.org.uk)  
7.30 Mon 7 Nov: Unitarian Meeting House, A34 [opp. Lidl (parking)]  
& Travelodge, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1QS  
**Steve Hurd**; Ch Exec Uganda Humanist Schools Trust

**Humanist Society of West Yorkshire** [www.wyhumanists.org.uk](http://www.wyhumanists.org.uk)  
7 Thus 10 Nov: **Swarthmore**, 3-7 Woodhouse Sq, Leeds, LS3 1AD  
**Mark Edon**: Secretary, British Centre for Science Education  
**'Talking To Creationists'**

**Lytham St Annes & Blackpool Amnesty** [www.amnesty.org.uk/lytham](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/lytham)  
7.30pm Mon 1st Aug: Church Rd Centre Methodist Church;  
St Annes. FY8 5PX

## LSH Meetings - The Small Print

**Lancashire Secular Humanists** is a group for free-thinking individuals living lives informed by **Logic, Science & Humanity**

All **LSH** meetings are 'open' meetings. Anyone is invited to join in our discussions regardless of whether they are humanist – secularist – religious – undecided – or [just] interested.

*We are people who enjoy participating in intelligent discourse between ourselves and with others about wide ranging subjects on the understanding that the only common denominator will be that nobody resorts to dogma in defence of a contention.*

*Being freethinkers there are many things we secular humanists will not agree on between ourselves, but there are matters on which we do take a firm and unanimous stand ...*

*We do not condone discrimination of any sort - nor do we hate religious people ... Such views are entirely contrary to any humanist philosophy and we reserve the right to exclude any person promoting them!*

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

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