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Milestone:
George William Foote's atheist *Freethinker* celebrates 130 years

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Boy mutilated:
US mother injures her young son by carrying out a crude circumcision

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France's veil ban sparks huge Muslim protest – in London

France's controversial veil ban came into force last month, sparking protests from Muslim groups. Ironically, the biggest protest took place in London where a group of women in full black burqas gathered outside the French Embassy. Shouting slogans and bearing banners with the words "Shariah 4 France", "Nicolas Sarkozy Burn In Hellfire" and "Niqab: Honour For Women", they proved to be the most vocal opponents to the new law.

France was placed on a high state of alert after Al Qaeda issued warnings that it would attack the county for implementing the ban.

A number of Islamic extremists from the UK had planned to join protesters in Paris but were intercepted by police at the French border.

Anjem Choudary, head of the outlawed Islam4UK which advocates sharia law, was turned back. Officials served Choudary with a legal notice informing him that the French Interior Ministry was banning him permanently.

Abu Izzadeen and Omar Bakri, both controversial figures based in Britain, also tried to get to the event but were stopped by police.

Those who break the new French law can be fined 150 euros, or £132.

Two niqab-wearing women, taking part in a demonstration against the law outside Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, were arrested by French police on the first day of the new law.

"We were held for three-and-a-half hours at the police station while the prosecutors decided what to do. Three-and-a-half hours later they told us: 'It's fine, you can go'," said 32-year-old Kenza Drider, who made regular international media appearances in her brown and cream niqab in the run-up to the ban.

Police said the women were arrested for taking part in an unauthorised demonstration and not because their faces were covered.

Drider, a 32-year-old Muslim convert, said she would be prepared to contest the legislation at the European Court of Human Rights.

"[Wearing the veil] is not an act of provocation," she said. "I'm only carrying out my citizens' rights, I'm not committing a crime ... If they (police) ask me for identity papers I'll show them, no problem."



Kenza Drider being hauled off by French Police

But a bizarre alliance of right-wing nationalists and militant feminists joined forces to support the ban.

"We view this ban as an assault on our human rights, and those staging counter demonstrations are solely here to cause trouble," shouted Aisha, a 28-year-old mother-of-two.

"The feminists say it oppresses women, while the nationalists just don't like to see Muslims in France," she said. "It's a strange alliance, but one which the French government clearly wants to win over in time for next year's presidential election."

Although she kept her veil free to avoid arrest, Aisha made it clear that she was contemptuous of the kind of people who want to stop her wearing the niqab or the burqa.

French police admitted they would enforce the ban with extreme caution because of fears of provoking violence. They fear Muslims extremists will use the law to provoke fights with officers, while rich visitors from countries like Saudi Arabia will also cause trouble.

Continued on page 4

Taking the *Freethinker* into a new era

BARRY DUKE ON THE 130TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MAGAZINE

In March, 2008 – 127 years after George William Foote launched the *Freethinker*, primarily as a response to what he regarded as the vicious treatment meted out to secularist campaigner Charles Bradlaugh by a religious Victorian state and to thumb his nose at prevailing laws to prevent the impious from airing their views – Britain at last got shot of its blasphemy laws.

The *Freethinker* then had what contemporary marketeers would call a USP – a unique selling point: from issue one Foote worked hard to offend and disgust. No other publication at the time had the balls to take on the religious establishment in this way. It was, as historian David Nash pointed out in an article in *History Today* (October, 1995), "a punchy, forthright and popular paper which used a combination of ridicule and comic representation as an antidote to the serious-minded Christian writing and the drier material which appeared in secularist papers like the *Secular Review* or Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*."

The first *Freethinker* issue declared it would use "any weapons of ridicule or sarcasm that



George William Foote

may be borrowed from the armoury of Common Sense".

Perceived forms of religious hypocrisy were exposed through short sarcastic news items, "profane jokes" and satires on biblical absurdities or immorality, written up in a manner reminiscent of the modern tabloid press.

Foote, Nash pointed out, saw the *Freethinker* "as a publishing venture whose time had come" and its willingness to use eye-catching illustration made it capable of competing for a whole new popular audience. Though Foote reached his target audience through the usual distribution channels, where it was frequently read alongside other papers as light relief, many encountered the publication alongside other street literature. Chance encounters with the *Freethinker* could come as a shock to those unaccustomed to seeing Christianity treated with such contempt. The hero of Mrs Humphrey Ward's 1888 novel *Robert Elsmere* needed the support of a lamppost after laying eyes on the paper.

It sent shudders not only along the spines of the pious. Although the paper was a central pillar of the secular movement, some more respectful secularists and libertarians shunned Foote's tactics completely. Indeed, even today, there are many in the humanist movement who will have no truck whatsoever with it, convinced that the publication is far too rude and aggressive. Interestingly, virtually all less confrontational secular publications have long since gone to the wall.

From its earliest issues the *Freethinker* was closely watched by the police and other authorities. Home Office files testify to the fear and revulsion which shook many people when confronted by the paper. One correspondent from Croydon – outraged by the December 24, 1882 edition, which had a grotesque depiction of the "Raising of Lazarus" – implored that: "Surely we have

some law by which so horrible a thing can be at once suppressed."

Of course there were such laws. But the then Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt – despite being "appalled" by the *Freethinker* – decided not to "meddle with the paper". However, the common laws relating to blasphemy allowed prosecutions by private individuals, and Sir Henry Tyler, a long-time foe of Bradlaugh and a champion of Christianity, filed a private prosecution.

Foote was tried, found guilty and sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment with hard labour. In the aftermath of what proved to be one of the most famous brushes with the religious laws of England, Foote declared: "Blasphemy is entirely a matter of opinion. What is blasphemy in one country is piety in another. Progress tends to reduce it to a matter of taste."

So, is there still a need for the *Freethinker*? This is a question I put to an independent business promoter based in Spain. I sought a meeting with him after it was decided by the board of G W Foote that something needed to be done to reverse a falling readership and his response was heartening: "I believe people need the *Freethinker* as much now as they did back in 1881. Britain may be a more rational place than it was in Foote's time, but religious zealotry, with big money supporting it, continues to flourish in the UK and elsewhere, and there has never been a better time than this to actively promote the magazine. For chrissake, whatever you do, don't give up on it."

So, in its 131st year of unbroken publication, I have vowed to do everything in my power to breathe new life into the magazine. This is not something I can do on my own, and, for starters, I throw down this challenge to subscribers: get copies of the magazine to relatives, friends and acquaintances, and ask them to take out a subscription.

And if you have any ideas on promoting it in any other way, please contact me with your thoughts. Meanwhile, in the coming months, we will look at other means of revitalising the magazine, and getting it out to a bigger audience.

At this point I would like to express my thanks to the Scottish Humanists, who last month donated £1,000 to the *Freethinker* fund. Donations such as these will help fund the future marketing initiatives, and hopefully make it possible for us to celebrate our 150th anniversary in 2031.



BARRY DUKE
FREETHINKER
EDITOR

the freethinker

the voice of atheism since 1881

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NSS Executive Director again denounces the Holy See at the UN

AT the plenary session of the United Nations Human Rights Council earlier this year, Keith Porteous Wood, Executive Director of the National Secular Society, accused the Holy See of failing in its duties in relation to child abuse, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

He pointed to major contributory factors cited by Geoffrey Robertson QC in his book *The Case of the Pope*: “procedural deficiencies of Canon Law, the selfish desire to protect the Church from scandal by harbouring and trafficking paedophile priests, and the negligent supervision of bishops by the CDF office of the Holy See, headed for the previous two decades by Cardinal Ratzinger”.

Robertson asserted that “The Holy See’s grave and extensive breaches of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its contempt for its reporting obligations over the past thirteen years, should ... justify its expulsion.”

Porteous Wood called attention to the fact that when he made similar accusations at the Council on September 22, 2009, the Papal Nuncio did not deny them, but claimed that a report, then twelve years overdue, was being “finalised as we speak”. It still remains to be filed.

He also pointed out that, since Robertson’s book was published in 2010, Vatican letters to the Bishop of Tucson and the Irish bishops had been made public, making clear the Holy See’s determination to keep wrong-doing from the secular authorities.

He also drew the Council’s attention to Robertson’s conclusion that “It is a serious reflection on the competence and resolve of the ‘18 experts of high moral standing’ who have been elected to the [Committee on the Rights of the Child] that they have done and said nothing about the Vatican’s 13-year failure to deliver a report, during the period when widespread child abuse by its priests has been extensively publicised.”

Porteous Wood also commended to the Council a written statement he had prepared on this matter and concluded by calling again on the Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Rights of the Child to hold the Holy See to account for:

- Its breach of its obligations under the CRC;
- Its disregard for its duty of care to the abused children;



Geoffrey Robertson QC, author of *The Case Against the Pope*

- Its systematic cover-up of thousands of cases of abuse; and
- Its failure to adequately control those put in positions of trust with children.

The representative of the Holy See did not exercise its right of reply to comment on, or even deny, the accusations.

Meanwhile, it was reported last month that the Vatican has been served with court papers stemming from decades-old allegations of sexual abuse against a now-deceased priest at a Wisconsin school for the deaf.

Jeff Anderson, an attorney for the man making the allegations, said he had been notified the papers were successfully filed through official diplomatic channels.

Bid to relaunch International Freethought Association

AN Anglo-French conference to discuss relaunching the International Association of Freethinkers, first founded by Charles Bradlaugh and his supporters in 1880, is to take place between 12 noon and 5pm on Saturday, May 14, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Speakers will be Terry Liddle, founding member of the Freethought History Research Group, Jean-Marc Schiappa, of the Institute for Research and DStudies on Freethought, France, Catherine Le Fur, of the National Federation of Freethinkers, and Bryan Niblett, author of *Dare To Stand Alone: The Story of Charles Bradlaugh* and Emeritus Professor at the University of Wales. Admission is free.

The Vatican’s US-based attorney, Jeffrey Lena, said he still has to evaluate the papers to determine whether they meet the requirements imposed by US law. “It’s premature to comment what will happen next in the case,” he said.

The lawsuit was filed nearly a year ago in federal court on behalf of Terry Kohut, now of Chicago. It claims that the Pope and two other top Vatican officials knew about allegations of sexual abuse at St John’s School for the Deaf outside Milwaukee and called off internal punishment of the accused priest, the Rev Lawrence Murphy.

Last October a US federal judge asked the Vatican to co-operate in the serving of court papers. The Vatican was not obliged to comply with the request.

In January, Anderson said representatives of his office served the lawsuit at the Vatican’s office of the Assessor for General Affairs, but it was returned via Federal Express. At the time, the Vatican’s lawyer, Lena, said the lawsuit should have been served through diplomatic channels as would be done with any foreign state.

Kohut’s lawsuit alleges that Murphy molested him for several years starting around 1960 while Murphy worked at the school for the deaf. The lawsuit contends Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican secretary of state, and his predecessor, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, conspired to keep quiet decades of abuse allegations against Murphy.

Murphy, who died in 1998, has been alleged to have sexually abused some 200 boys at the deaf school from 1950 to 1974. In 1996, Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland complained about Murphy in a letter to the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the powerful Vatican office led by then-Cardinal Ratzinger from 1981 until he became pope in 2005.

That office initially ordered Weakland to hold a canonical trial against Murphy in 1997 but later changed course after a letter from Murphy. The Vatican noted Murphy’s advanced age, failing health and lack of further allegations.

Anderson also has a pending lawsuit in Oregon against the Vatican for a man who claims he was abused at his Catholic school in the 1960s. Anderson has asked a federal judge to require the Pope and the other Vatican officials to testify.



Catholic priests are the *real* victims of abuse, claims Bill Donohue

AMERICA's conservative and controversial Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights last month bought a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* to attack "those who are distorting the truth about priestly sexual abuse."

In the form of a lengthy letter from League President Bill Donohue, the ad said of Catholic priests: "There is no other group in the US which is subjected to such abuse."

And it asked: "What accounts for the relentless attacks on the Church? Let's face it. If its teachings were pro-abortion, pro-gay marriage and pro-women clergy, the dogs would have been called off years ago."

The letter contrasts with recent expressions of repentance heard in the Seattle Archdiocese. A commentary at Seattle's Jesuit-run St Joseph Church talked of "a communal responsibility, a responsibility too often avoided in our culture and in our Church".

The commentary followed a recent \$166-million settlement between Northwest Jesuits and plaintiffs, mainly Native Americans, who claimed abuse at schools in Washington and Alaska. It spoke of "repentant listening that is needed in the Church".

"Where would we all be, for instance, had not many voices, including those of victims and of people in the pews, spoken up and told the awful truth about clergy sexual abuse and the way the Church handled it, when speaking up was regarded by many as an act of disloyalty?" Fr Michael Ryan, pastor of St James Cathedral, asked in a recent homily.

Donohue, by contrast, charged that "some are exploiting this issue for ideological and financial profit".

He also took issue with allegations of widespread child rape from victims and their advocates.

"Let's get it straight – they weren't children and they weren't raped," Donohue alleged. "We know from the John Jay study that most of the victims have been adolescents, and that the most common abuse has been inappropriate touching (inexcusable though this is, it is not rape)."

"The *Boston Globe* correctly said of the John Jay report that 'more than three-quarters of the victims were post-pubescent, meaning the abuse did not meet the clinical definition of pedophilia.' In other words, the issue is homosexuality, not pedophilia."

He was referring to a 2004 study by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, which



Catholic zealot Bill Donohue

was paid for by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Using the study, Donohue argued that claims being litigated are "almost all old

cases," and that "most of the abuse occurred during the heyday of the sexual revolution, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s".

Donohue paid to have his views published in a newspaper that has been critical of and frequently at odds with the Church.

The New York Times has lately devoted extensive coverage to a scathing grand jury report, which said that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia took no action against more than three-dozen priests accused of improper behaviour.

In the ad, Donohue attacked The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). He called it "a professional victims' group, dogmatic in their convictions; their hatred of the Catholic Church is palpable".

France's veil ban may be impossible to enforce

Continued from page 1

The law will be very difficult to apply on certain estates, said Patrice Ribeiro, of the Synergie police union.

Referring to two Paris suburbs where riots regularly break out because of alleged discrimination against Muslims, Ribeiro said: "I can't see police going to book dozens of veiled women doing their shopping in Venissieux or in Trappes. It will be the same when a police officer is about to arrest a veiled Saudi who is about to go into Louis Vuitton on the Champs Elysees. In all cases, the forces of order will have to be measured and cautious in their behaviour."

Synergie has already instructed its members to view the ban as a low priority, and Ribeiro said there would inevitably be incidents.

Mohamed Douhane, another Paris police officer and Synergie member, said he and his colleagues also expected provocation by a minority.

Douhane added: "Fundamentalist movements are eager to raise the stakes. The police know they will be held responsible for any public order disturbances."

Police have already been warned not to arrest women in or around mosques.

With tensions running high within the country's six-million-strong Muslim community, officers have been told to look out

for members of the public who might try taking the law into their own hands and strip Muslim women of their veils. Members of the public are advised to call the police, who will in turn have four hours to consider whether an offender should be fined.

This will apply to all garments which cover the eyes, although scarves, hats, and sunglasses are excluded.

As well as a mosque, Muslims will also be able to put on a veil in the privacy of their own homes, a hotel room, or even a car as long as they are not driving.

Police have already complained that they will have to waste time on burqa-chasing, with Denis Jacob, of the Alliance police union, adding: "We have more important matters to be dealing with."

The new ban will mean France is officially the second country in Europe, after Belgium, to introduce a full ban on a garment which immigration minister Eric Besson has called a walking coffin.

While French women face the fines and civic duty guidance if they break the law, men who force their wives or daughters to wear burqas will face up to a year in prison, and fines of up to £25,000.

Posters went up in town halls across France reading: "The Republic lives with its face uncovered."

Oregon woman reads Bible, then tries to circumcise her baby boy

A 29-YEAR-OLD Oregon woman told a Portland police detective that she'd been inspired to circumcise her baby after reading the Old Testament.

The only problem was that Keemonta Peterson's son was already three months old. And she was aware that pediatricians at the Doernbecher Children's Hospital wouldn't circumcise him because he was too old. So she took a box cutter to the baby's penis.

According to papers filed in Multnomah County Circuit Court last month the unemployed mother of four now stands accused of first- and second-degree assault and first-degree criminal mistreatment.

Peterson told police was she a follower of "the Hebrew religion", and she had watched some YouTube videos about circumcision. Then around midnight on the morning of last October 24 – using the box cutter as a scalpel and a pair of pliers as a tourniquet – she ritually mutilated the child.

When the bleeding wouldn't stop, she tried to stitch her baby up. Her 13-year-old son looked on in distress. After two hours of uncontrolled bleeding, Peterson decided she needed help and called 911.

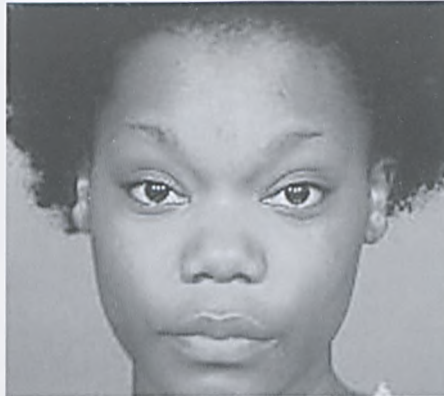
Medics rushed the infant to OHSU, where he was initially listed in critical condition.

Deputy district attorney John Casalino laid the facts before the court in a memorandum opposing Peterson's attempt to get out of Multnomah County jail. Peterson had been locked up since her arrest on March 8.

According to the prosecution, a doctor described the baby's condition upon arrival as life threatening, and the pain as immense. But today the boy appears to have recovered, with no apparent permanent injury.

At a hearing last month, the prosecutor tried to persuade a judge not to make it easier for Peterson to get out of jail pending trial. But Peterson's attorney, Scott Raivio, argued her bail – set at \$50,000 – should be reduced. His arguments were supported by a Close Street Supervision deputy, who noted Peterson has strong family support and had been attending mental-health counselling three times a week before she was booked in jail.

Judge David Rees then lowered Peterson's bail to \$5,000. She posted \$500 – the required ten percent – and she was released and allowed to see her four children, who are staying with family members, during supervised visits.



Keemonta Peterson

According to the prosecution, Peterson said she has concerns about her mental health. She told the Oregon Department

of Human Services that in the past she has been overcome with paranoia, and she and her children would stay inside. A month after the botched circumcision, she said she suffered "auditory hallucinations" and manic episodes that prevented her from sleeping for days.

An Oregon Health & Science University spokeswoman said it was true that pediatricians at OHSU won't perform circumcisions on boys older than four weeks because of the increased pain, need for general anesthesia and greater risk of bleeding. But urologists at the hospital would perform the procedure on boys older than four weeks.

Peterson's trial is provisionally scheduled for June.

History of Unbelief conference in San Diego

AN international conference due to take place in the US later this year will bring together scholars for the first-ever academic appraisal of the history of unbelief. Titled *Toward a Reasonable World: The Western Heritage of Humanism, Skepticism, and Freethought*, the conference is being hosted by San Diego State University, and will be held from September 16 to 18 at the Town and Country Resort in San Diego.

The conference is timed to coincide with the 500th anniversary of the birth of Michael Servetus, considered the modern father of Unitarianism. Servetus, a Spanish physician, mathematician, translator, and theologian was burned at the stake in 1533 for denying the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus.

Academics from around the world will discuss Michael Servetus, as well as the major currents leading to the contemporary world of Unbelief – the French Enlightenment, America's Founding Fathers, Unbelief among the Romantic Poets, 20th-Century Humanism, and the rise of a Modern Global Atheist Community.

"While many people know of Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, few are aware of the background to these contemporary exponents of skepticism," says Dr J Gordon Melton, Director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion at Santa Barbara, a co-sponsor of the conference. "Our conference provides the historical context for understanding the unbelief we see today, from Bill Maher to Sam Harris."

The keynote address by Ronald L Numbers, Hildale Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin Madison, will examine the contribution that a revived Creationist worldview has made to the parallel rise of modern unbelief. Another highlight will be a breakfast Q&A session with Greg Epstein, the Humanist Chaplain at Harvard and author of *Good without God*. Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-founder of the Freedom from Religion Foundation, will discuss the role that feminists from Mary Wollstonecraft to Anne Nicol Gaylor have played in shaping unbelief, while Anthony Pinn will discuss humanism and atheism in the African American context.

Unbelief is defined as a lack of belief or faith, especially in religious matters. It encompasses a variety of movements and philosophies, such as atheism, skepticism, rational religion, agnosticism, humanism, secularism, and freethought. While the conference focuses on the heritage of unbelief in Europe, it also features presentations on the tradition of non-theist thinking and the rise of modern atheism and skepticism in Asian contexts – especially India and China.

For more information, please visit the website: <http://reason.sdsu.edu/>, or call or write Rebecca Moore, Department of Religious Studies, San Diego State University, 619-594-6252; email remoore@mail.sdsu.edu.

Musician and DJ Mike Harding wants

Most people know Mike Harding as a comedian, folk musician, writer, Radio 2 DJ, and “a really cool old dude” (he’s actually only 66). But a lesser known fact about Harding is that he has been tirelessly campaigning to get a full apology from the Catholic Church for abuse meted out to pupils at St Bede’s College in Manchester, between 1955 and 1963.

Scores – possibly hundreds – of former pupils, including Harding, were abused by a towering figure of authority there: its rector, Monsignor Thomas Duggan. Harding, who contacted the *Freethinker* last month to draw its attention to his campaign, says he is motivated largely by the knowledge that many of his former classmates’ lives were irredeemably blighted by Duggan.

“What really disgusts me,” says Harding, “is that the Bishop of Salford, the Right Reverend Terence Brain, is more concerned with the insurers than with the victims. So far there are 57 individual cases of physical and sexual child abuse that we’re aware of, and if all of those cases went to court the Church could stand to lose a lot of money. I think he’s been told by the insurers not to make a proper apology.”

Duggan was at the school between 1950 and 1966, and for 16 years abused at will, according to his victims, who are now in their 50s and 60s. Then in 1966 he was suddenly removed from the school and sent to Langho, near Blackburn.

“You wouldn’t think of telling your parents,” said Harding. “They wouldn’t have believed it.”

The diocese recently told a delegation of former pupils that, oddly, there appear to be no extant records about Duggan at all, although Harding believes that he died a couple of years after being removed from St Bede’s.

According to Paul Malpas, a businessman based in Ireland who was in the year below Harding at school, Duggan “used to meet boys in the corridors, put his arms around them and rub his face into theirs, whilst asking ‘are you being pure boy?’”

“On other more secluded meetings he would put his arms round boys and lean into them, rubbing his face and his body



Mike Harding

into theirs, groaning and moaning into their ears or sometimes, with the more naive boys, [he would] threaten them with expulsion from the school for nothing in particular, just to put the fear of god into them.

“As a punishment of last resort – and this could be for failing a monthly Latin test or some such ‘evil’ crime – a pupil would be sent up to Duggan. His preferred method of punishment was to tell the pupil to remove his clothing below his waist and stand naked in front of him whilst he spoke to the boy of his poor record. He would then either lean him over the arm of a sofa or put the lad over his knee and wallop him with a strap, at the same time fondling his rear end, presumably to make the pupil more pliant.”

Harding was one of the (slightly) luckier ones and was never sexually abused. “I don’t know why – maybe he didn’t fancy me. But I used to get a hammering from him physically. My best friend – who I’ve known since the age of five and went through school with – was [sexually abused]. I’m so angry about it all.”

And with good reason. For although Harding moved on successfully into adult life, forging a career in music and comedy – these days he makes Radio Two’s folk show, which is on at 7pm on Wednesdays – he says that the campaign with which he is involved, to get a full apology from the Church for what happened at St Bede’s, is motivated largely by the knowledge that

many of his former classmates’ lives were blighted by experiences at the hands of Duggan.

“There are two cases that I know of for sure that were terminal,” says Harding. “There was one guy who threw himself under a train and another who died in a crack den in Manchester. Both were abused and it marked them for life.”

Harding’s involvement in the campaign began last year, but recent meetings with representatives from the diocese of Salford, which was directly responsible for the school at the time, have failed to produce a result.

At one meeting it was admitted that the Church had long known about Duggan’s behaviour at St Bede’s. “Some of the boys who were abused by him had gone into the priesthood and so it was known about. But if these ru-

mours were going around for so long, why was nothing done earlier?” asks Harding. “Father Barry O’Sullivan, who came as a representative of the diocese, said that he’d been waiting for it to come up for years.”

Harding says that it’s not the campaign’s intention to bring approbrium on the school, which is now an independent grammar that accepts girls and boys, and is no longer entirely run by priests – though there are several on its governing body, including the chairman.

“It’s changed beyond all recognition,” he says. “What I want is a full apology from the church in the same way that an apology was made for the industrial schools in Ireland.”

“All these men have come forward after all these years,” says Harding, “because they want the truth out. Many are not young men any more and they want some kind of closure. At the time they each thought they had been singled out because there was some defect in them. But it wasn’t their fault and the Church owes them an apology.”

“What I’ve seen so far is a statement by the Bishop of Salford that makes it look as if the abuse is something that was ‘reported’ and ‘alleged’. He’s not actually acknowledged that it took place.

“What the Church has always done is see this kind of abuse as being in breach of canon law, and dealt with it by moving priests around and putting them in safe

nts a full apology from the RC Church

houses. But in fact these were criminal acts that took place.

"I lost my religion when I was 14 because of the barbarity of that school, the hypocrisy of the priests – Duggan wasn't the only abuser – and because I had a theological problem with the notion of an omniscient creator who saw it all. I began questioning my faith because of physical abuse at school and it led me to question the whole of Christianity.

"I think what we've heard about so far may turn out to be the tip of an iceberg."

Reporting on the St Bede's scandal for the *Manchester Evening News* in March, Deanna Delamotta posed the question: "Why doesn't the Catholic Church defrock priests who abuse children?" She then interviewed Richard Scorer, who is head of serious injury at Manchester law firm Pannone regarding paedophile priest Father William Green, who taught at St Bede's College.

Green admitted 27 assaults on children in his care and was jailed for six years in October 2008 for "systematically" sexually abusing a string of boys over 20 years ago. But Scorer, who acted for Green's victims against the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford – the diocese includes St Bede's – is concerned that Green has yet to be laicised (de-frocked).

He also feels that an apology issued by the Bishop of Salford does not go far enough in condemning Duggan.

The bishop had said: "I am shocked and saddened by the complaints from some former pupils of St Bede's College which have been brought to the attention of our Safeguarding Commission ... Although it is not suggested that there was a culture of institutional abuse at St Bede's, nevertheless the abusive behaviour which has been reported has no place within the Catholic Church. I acknowledge and am deeply sorry for the pain and distress reported to have been suffered by those affected."

Brain's lame response did not surprise Scorer. "I am concerned that the apology has been extremely guarded, but sadly this is not unusual. These situations need a full and frank apology. We have been aware of Monsignor Duggan and his alleged abuse of pupils at St Bede's for some time and have been in discussion with victims."

Scorer has worked to win compensation for child-abuse victims since the early 1990s, and Delamotta reported that "he is still as fired up to do battle on victims'

behalf as when he first came face to face with the lifelong effects of abuse during the North Wales children's home inquiry in the mid 1990s when 40 places of care were in the spotlight".



Monsignor Thomas Duggan

Between 1999 and 2002 he represented victims of paedophile priest Father Michael Hill, who was convicted of multiple sex offences against children. As a result the Catholic Church was shamed into sweeping reforms of the way it investigates abuse claims. Hill, a known paedophile, was moved to another chaplaincy by former Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, at the time bishop of Arundel and Brighton.

Other high-profile Scorer cases include that of Christopher Carrie, who alleged he was abused as a child by Father John Tolkein, the priest son of *Lord of the Rings* author J R R Tolkien. The RC Archdiocese of Birmingham paid Carrie an undisclosed five-figure sum in damages.



William Green: in jail but still a priest

And in 2005 he acted against leading RC public school Ampleforth College after it emerged that dozens of boys were sexually abused there over a 30-year period. In 2006, he took action against the RC Diocese of Leeds for turning a blind eye to paedophile priest David Crowley who sexually abused altar boys.

Asked whether he had a personal grudge against the Catholic Church, Scorer said: "No, not at all. I'm not a Catholic, but I married one. It's the environment that allows abuse to happen that I'm against and the cover-ups where, following allegations, paedophile priests were simply shunted from place to place where they continued to abuse children.

"Now I see a problem on the horizon in Islamic religious schools, or madrassas. Here we have a situation where thousands of children are going for several hours religious instruction a day and the potential for abuse is high. Leading Muslims have also voiced their concern."

Last month, a Muslim cleric was found guilty of sexually assaulting two young boys. Mohammed Hanif Khan was convicted of three separate sexual assault charges. Khan, 42, now living in Sheffield, committed the crimes against children in his care at a mosque in Stoke-on-Trent. Part of Khan's role was to lead prayers and give Islamic education lessons to boys at evening classes – just the kind of environment Scorer feels could provide the sinister setting for abuse.

Scorer added: "For most of our clients it's not about the money. For instance, if the Catholic Church had held up its hands up and said 'we're sorry' the victims would have been satisfied. Fundamentally they wanted acknowledgement from the Church that they were wrong.

"The amounts paid out in these cases aren't huge, unlike the US where you get very big awards because they are made by juries. Here awards are made by judges under the rules of normal personal injury cases.

"They don't seek to punish the wrongdoer, but to put the victim in the financial position they would be without the abuse. Because so many victims have spent their early lives in the care system the Church has argued that as adults they wouldn't have amounted to much anyway.

"I try to get the best settlement possible and to ensure part of that goes towards paying for therapy. Some never get over the abuse but others go on to live a happy and fulfilled life."

The man who loved cows

A recently published book portrays Mahatma Gandhi – ‘the Father of India’ – as a ‘sexual weirdo, a political incompetent, a fanatical faddist, implacably racist and a ceaseless self-promoter’.

GARETH TAYLOR reports on the row that followed its publication.

In the years after his assassination in 1948, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – known as “Mahatma” (great soul) – was all but deified in a huge body of reverential articles, books, documentaries and even a movie. But recently more critical studies have been made of the “Father of India”, and the latest – *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi And His Struggle With India* by Joseph Lelyveld – was banned last month by the Gujarat government.

The book suggested that Gandhi was, among other things, a bisexual and a racist, and it so incensed the Indian government that it announced a planned amendment to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. The amendment would make it an offence, punishable with a jail sentence, to “disrespect” Mahatma Gandhi. Critics of the amendment denounced it as a form of “blasphemy” law that would put India on par with neighbouring Pakistan, which has draconian blasphemy laws and is a major oppressor of free speech.

Unfazed, Law Minister M Veerappa Moily confirmed his ministry was examining the need to amend the Act, and told *The Indian Express*: “Mahatma Gandhi is revered by millions, not just in India but across the world. We can’t allow anybody to draw adverse inferences about historical figures and denigrate them. Otherwise history will not forgive us. That is why the need is being felt to amend the Act.”

In the book, Pulitzer Prize winner and former *New York Times* executive editor Lelyveld alleges that Gandhi had an affair with a South African German-Jewish architect and bodybuilder Hermann Kallenbach, for whom he supposedly left his wife Kasturba in 1908.

The Wall Street Journal review of the book said that it recast Gandhi as “a sexual weirdo, a political incompetent, a fanatical faddist, implacably racist, and a ceaseless self-promoter, professing his love for mankind as a concept while actually despising



Many put Gandhi on par with Jesus. This archive picture shows a young Gandhi with his secretary, Sonia Schlesin, and his alleged gay lover, Hermann Kallenbach.

people as individuals”. Lelyveld also claims that Gandhiji was a racist who only professed love, and that he hated South African blacks.

A well-referenced website called Gandhi Unmasked (www.mohandasgandhitruth.com/) provides evidence of Gandhi’s racism with quotes taken from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Government of India. Here is his 1908 description of black South African prison inmates: “Only a degree removed from the animal.” Also, “Kaffirs are as a rule uncivilized – the convicts even more so. They are troublesome, very dirty and live almost like animals.” – (CWMG, Vol VIII, pp 135-136).

The site also reveals that in his 1949 *Reflections on Gandhi*, George Orwell wrote that “one question every pacifist had a clear obligation to answer was: ‘What

about the Jews? Are you prepared to see them exterminated? If not, how do you propose to save them without resorting to war?’ Orwell recorded Gandhi’s answer, which was: “German Jews should commit collective suicide.”

The site also carries a review of *Gandhi: Behind the Mask of Divinity* By G B Singh, who claimed that a god-like Gandhi was the creation of Christians.

In his review of the book, Baldev Singh wrote: “The making of the Gandhi myth started in South Africa by white Christian clergy. Rev Joseph J Doke, a Baptist Minister, was the first to write the biography of M K Gandhi. Soon many other European and American clergymen and writers rushed in to make their input. John H Holmes, a Unitarian pastor from New York praised Gandhi in his writings and sermons with titles like *Gandhi: The Modern Christ*, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Greatest Man since Jesus Christ*, and *Mahatma Ji: Reincarnation of Christ*.”

Singh added: “Impressed with lavish propaganda about Gandhi in the West, the Hindu propaganda machine came into action and it churned out a plethora

of literature to elevate Gandhi to the status of a 20th-century Hindu god. Portraits of Gandhi depicted him as Hindu avatar and Christian saint. The Indian government under Prime Minister Indra Gandhi financed one-third of the cost of the production of the movie *Gandhi* for the portrayal of Gandhi as ‘an absolute pacifist’.

“The Christian clergy had an ulterior motive in building the Gandhi myth. They thought that elevating Gandhi to a 20th-century messiah and then converting him would open the flood-gate for evangelising Hindu masses. Little did they realize that Gandhi hoodwinked them with his insincere statements about Christianity. He was a die-hard Hindu, a true believer and defender of the caste order – the essence of Hinduism.”

Not surprisingly, Gandhi was dismissive

of atheism, and fundamentally misunderstood the atheist position. Goparaju Ramachandra Rao (1902-1975), best known as Gora, devoted his life to propagating atheism in India. In 1940, he and his wife Saraswathi Gora co-founded the Atheist Centre in a small village in the Krishna district, and Gora sought to engage Gandhi in a discussion about atheism.

Gandhi, in a dismissive reply to a letter from Gora, wrote: "Atheism is a denial of self. No one has succeeded in its propagation. Such success as you have attained is due to your sincere work among the people round you. I am sorry I cannot invite you to come here. I have no time to spare for talks."

Later, however, Gandhi agreed to meet Gora, who explained to him that "atheism bears a positive significance in the practice of life. Belief in God implies subordination of man to the divine will. In Hindu thought man's life is subordinated to karma or fate. In general, theism is the manifestation of the feeling of slavishness in man. Conversely, atheism is the manifestation of the feeling of freedom in man. Thus theism and atheism are opposite and they represent the opposite feelings, namely, dependence and independence respectively."

He also told Gandhi: "Acceptance of atheism at once pulls down caste and religious barriers between man and man. There is no longer a Hindu, a Muslim or a Christian. All are human beings. Further, the atheistic outlook puts man on his legs. There is neither divine will nor fate to control his actions. The release of freewill awakens Harijans and the depressed classes from the stupor of inferiority into which they were pressed all these ages when they were made to believe that they were fated to be untouchables. So I find the atheistic outlook helpful for my work. After all, it is man that created god to make society moral and to silence restless inquisitiveness about the how and the why of natural phenomena. Of course God was useful though a falsehood. But like all falsehoods, belief in God also gave rise to many evils in course of time, and today it is not only useless but harmful to human progress. So I take to the propagation of atheism as an aid to my work. The results justify my choice."

Gora observed: "Gandhiji had the same views and prejudices against atheism as the common man. But in his characteristic way he clothed them with courtesy ... Evidently he thought that atheism had developed in reaction to the misbehaviour of god-believers and that better conduct on their part would render atheism unnecessary. But I felt differently. The theistic outlook is fundamentally defective and it

is bound to corrupt social behaviour. The misdeeds of the theists are neither whims nor forced by circumstances but the direct consequences of their theistic outlook. So the call for atheism is not out of disgust for the present conduct of people who profess the theistic faith, but out of a desire for a better way of life ..."

Ghandi's reputation took another hit in an article last month in the online *Secular News Daily*. Luis Granados, a Washington, DC, attorney penned a piece entitled *Return of the Sacred Cow*, in which he posed the question: "Did a million Indians die because of what Gandhi said about the cow?"

His article was prompted by a news report that hundreds of Hindu "god experts" converged on New Delhi last month to press their demand for a law prohibiting the killing of cows in India. Not only would domestic production of beef be banned, but its importation as well. They submitted a petition to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and vowed to step up their campaign at a rally, followed by a nationwide protest campaign.

Wrote Granados: "Hindu anti-beef agitation has a long and sorry history. There is conflicting evidence about the treatment of cows in ancient times, but after the Muslim occupation Hindu god experts became more fastidious about cow protection as a way of asserting moral superiority over their grubby conquerors. Conversely, Indian Muslims placed a great emphasis on their Baqra Id celebration, at which an animal (often a cow) is slaughtered to commemorate the sacrifice of Abraham, as a way of thumbing their noses at the Hindus.

"In 1881, a Hindu treatise called *Ocean of Mercy to the Cow* generated widespread agitation over the issue. The following year a charitable foundation was established to feed India's wandering cows, then numbering in the hundreds of millions, because so many of these 'beloved' animals were allowed to die of starvation. No corresponding effort was made on behalf of India's millions of impoverished humans.

"Activists sought a declaration from India's British rulers that the cow was a 'sacred animal' that could not lawfully be killed, but the high court rejected that petition, which would certainly have caused trouble among the 25 percent of Indians who were Muslim. By 1893, mass demonstrations against cow-killing resulted in rioting from Bombay to Rangoon; 107 humans died in the argument over saving cows.

"In the 20th century, the cow cause was taken up by no less a god expert than Mohandas Gandhi himself. In 1920, he told

a crowd of Hindus that 'I would not regard him a Hindu who is not prepared to give his life to save a cow. Cow-protection is dearer to me than life itself. Were it the duty of a Muslim to kill a cow, as it is his to do his prayer of repentance, I would have told him, 'I should have to fight with you also.' Fighting with Muslims over cows is exactly what Hindus proceeded to do. More rioting broke out in 1924; over a hundred died at Kohat, and 4,000 had to be evacuated from the town."

Granados asked: "When you see a cow, is 'holy' the first thought that comes to mind? When I see a cow, my first thought is 'Watch where you step'. To Gandhi, though, 'The cow is a poem of pity. One reads pity in the gentle animal. She is the mother to millions of Indian mankind. Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God ..."

Granados added: "Why hone in on cows? Why not sheep? Or trout? Or cabbage? They're all lower orders of creation, too, and equally speechless. No logical explanation; just more purple prose: 'The central fact of Hinduism, however, is cow-protection. ... Cow-protection is the gift of Hinduism to the world ...'"

Granados pointed out that "Cow agitation, nurtured by 'Great Soul' Gandhi at every turn, was a critical factor leading to the split-up of India and Pakistan ... In 1939, the Muslim League headed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of Pakistan, published a report entitled *Muslim Sufferings under Congress Rule*, listing in grim detail more than 100 reports of Muslims who were violently attacked, killed, or looted between July 1937 and August 1939, mostly due to their insufficient sympathy for cows. The very next year, the Muslim League adopted its "Pakistan Resolution," demanding a separate homeland upon Indian independence. When partition came, a million humans died as a result.

"India is drifting steadily toward god-expert dominance, and was recently named as the second-worst country in the world in terms of hostility to religious minorities. The renewed demands for a ban on beef are one more step down that road."

Granados concluded: "I haven't the slightest problem with anyone who chooses, for reasons of health, compassion, ecological consciousness, or even religion, not to kill cows or consume beef. Or pork. Or shrimp. Or alcohol. More power to them, because that leaves more for me. I don't have a problem if they try to encourage others to follow their lead, as loudly as they want. When someone wants to pass a law preventing me from consuming these things, though, that's a cow of a different color."

Defeating the ag

AUBREY DE GREY thinks that we can end ageing, and it looks like he might just be right. Award-winning author of *The Theory of Aging*, and Chief Science Officer at the California-based SENS Foundation, he speaks to PETER

PB: *Why do you think we should end ageing?*

ADG: The fundamental reason we should work to develop medicine against ageing is because ageing is bad for you. It makes people ill. There are many views on how long people might like to live, but there's really no debate about the fact that people don't like to get ill. They don't like their loved ones to get ill. That's the important thing.

It's worth restating that the human body is just a machine. It's a very complicated one, but it's a machine all the same, which means that if you can stop it from getting ill, it's not going to die. At the very least, it'll have a far lower probability of dying any time soon than it would if it were ill. There will be a longevity side-effect of the medical defeat of ageing, but it's only a side-effect. I don't work on longevity; I work on stopping people from getting ill.

PB: *How do you reply to the claim that this is too far into wishful thinking to be taken seriously, or that it is at best in an "ante-chamber to science"?*

ADG: The only way to reply to claims like that in relation to radical technological proposals of any sort is to look at the details. We look at where we are now, where are we aiming to get to, what is the route from here to there, and we look specifically at what remains to be done, and seek these answers not on an abstract basis, but actually from the world's leaders in these fields. That's exactly what I've done.

PB: *Who are the friends of ageing?*

ADG: Most people, I find, are intrinsically apprehensive when one talks about the defeat of ageing. Fear of the unknown overwhelms them. They forget that we have a problem today; that we'd rather not get Alzheimer's disease or heart disease and the like. They continue to worry about the sorts of things they envisage as drawbacks of a post-ageing world such as overpopulation, dictators living forever, or inability to pay pensions, or – whatever else it might be. I find this extremely frustrating, because ultimately it is a complete abandonment of any sense of proportion. I find it extraordinary that people are willing to indulge in this sort of denial.

But it's not extraordinary from a psychological point of view because until quite re-

cently – until I came along – it has been perfectly reasonable to take the view that the defeat of ageing was a very long way away simply because so many people had tried and failed spectacularly. So one has the choice to spend one's life either preoccupied by this inevitable, ghastly thing that is going to happen to us, or, alternatively, to find some way of putting it out of our minds and getting on with our miserably short lives.

The latter is far preferable, because of course it's better to be happy. So it doesn't matter how irrational our rationalisations are; what psychological manipulation tricks we happen to use, so long as they succeed in tricking us into forgetting that we have a problem today. Until recently, I had viewed that with some sympathy. Only now, when we do have a way forward, and we really are within striking distance of defeating ageing, does that attitude become a massive part of the problem.

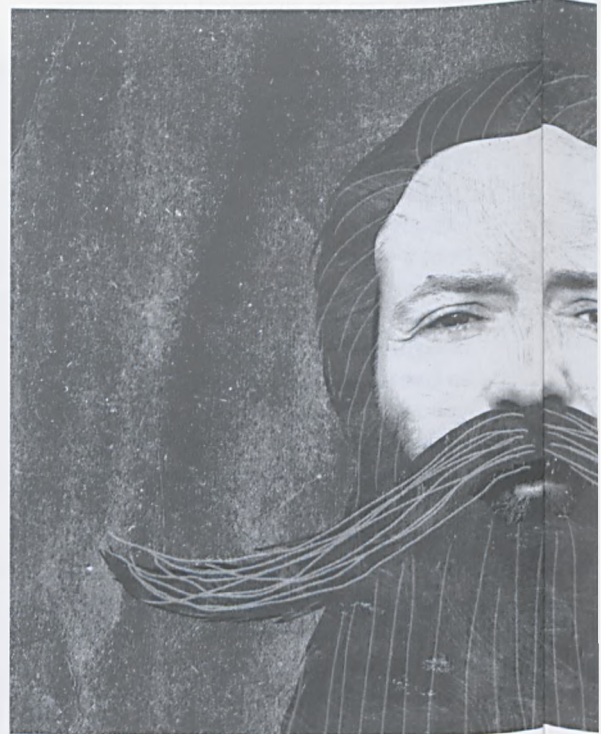
PB: *How do you reply to Sherwin Nuland's claim that "living for such long periods would undermine what it means to be human"?*

ADG: It's pathetic. The worst of it is that Nuland is a surgeon. He actually works in the medical profession. For a journalist to think in a wishy-washy way is one thing, but for a surgeon to do so is just inexcusable. Nuland doesn't want to get Alzheimer's disease any more than the rest of us do.

PB: *How do you ground your moral system, and how did it lead you to conclude we should end ageing?*

ADG: The way I think about my moral system is similar to the way I go about deciding about technological things, namely: I look for ways to factor out things, or to side-step my ignorance. One of the biggest difficulties I've had in engaging with specialists in the biology of ageing is that most of them are basic scientists, in that they're driven by the desire to find things out for the sake of finding things out. They're curiosity driven. I am very much goal-directed, focusing on developing technologies which benefit humanity.

A lot of the practical difference between those two styles comes down to the need for knowledge. Basic scientists are not very good at technology, because it's hard to see where to stop, or where they've learnt enough. Technologists can be very bad at basic sci-



ence because they don't see the value in just finding things out, even if you don't know what use it's going to be.

There's a big chasm between the two types of discipline. I think I span that chasm reasonably well, in that I understand the use of both ways of thinking. But I am primarily a goal-directed technologist, which means that I am interested in finding ways to achieve these ends, irrespective of answering questions we can't yet. With ageing, I attempt to find ways to repair the different types of molecular and cellular damage that accumulate in ageing, and if we can do it, we don't need to know very much about how the different kinds of damage are caused by metabolism in the first place.

To come back in a rather roundabout way to the question, when it comes to my moral structure, it's the same deal. So to take, for example, the existence or non-existence of some omnipotent being. During my teen years I went to and fro on this point. But starting from about seventeen, I've not been at all bothered by this point, I've been what I would call proudly agnostic.

I realised around that time that I would not undergo any significant change in how I ran my life in consequence of coming down

e ageing process

ght. Awarded a PhD from Cambridge University for his 1999 book *The Mitochondrial Free Radical* foundation, de Grey is challenging the zeitgeist that getting old and frail is an unalterable
ks to PETER BRIETBART. (Illustration and photograph: Many Artists Who Do One Thing.)



on one side or the other of the question. I was already doing things for humanitarian purposes, and not because God was telling me so, but because I felt like doing them. I didn't really know why I felt like it, but it never bothered me. I thought, "Well, if I'm doing God's work already then it doesn't matter whether I'm doing it for one reason or another." That kind of reasoning has driven my approach to morality ever since.

PB: *What do you think is the most difficult issue of an ageless humanity?*

ADG: That's a dangerous question, because we're in no danger of getting to be a post-ageing species for at least 20 years, or perhaps a bit longer. Other technologies will develop in the meantime. So our ability to actually describe the world in twenty years in other ways is minimal. That means that we have to be extremely careful in getting any kind of firm view as to what our major problems will be. However, we can certainly identify candidates, such as overpopulation and environmental concerns, but they're rather poorly thought out. For example, the rate of change of the population as a result of the defeat of ageing is going to be pretty damn slow compared to other technological changes. After all, we'll only be getting

older one year per year. There won't be any thousand-year-old people for nine hundred years whatever we do. There are more interesting things, by virtue of their arising from the widespread anticipation of living longer. For example, the economy will be structured very differently, because people will have different goals and expectations regarding what they need to do in terms of financial security, inheritance and so forth. There's a lot of interesting questions regarding risk, too.

We probably won't be so keen on going out there in fragile four-wheeled things if we know that the chance of our dying in them is more than from any other cause of death. At the moment it's very small compared to ageing. Ten or so years ago I predicted that driving would be outlawed when we defeat ageing, but I've since changed my mind. I realised that a better prediction is that we'll simply throw money at the problem, and invest in much, much safer cars with the sorts of technology that we've actually already got, only it costs a lot. Right now it's not considered good value for money, but we'll change our minds.

PB: *People like holding onto property and power. What is to stop monopolies on wealth or values, leading ultimately to societal stagnation?*

ADG: On the wealth side I'm not worried at all. The overwhelming power in the world resides in democracies, and that'll stay true. China is the only exception, but it won't outpace all the other societies. The fact is that you and I have the same number of votes as Bill Gates and Richard Branson. We're not going to be in a position wherein the minority have power if we remain in a democratic world. Ultimately, there's one thing that drives politicians and their policies, and that's getting re-elected.

That's about not pissing off the general public too much. So different countries have different levels of, say, taxation, but that's because it reflects general public opinion. The US for example has lower taxes even on the rich, but that's possible only because it doesn't lose them votes. It will be the same deal in a post-ageing world. If the defeat of ageing and the consequent impact on longevity were to cause a significant shift in the distribution of

wealth across people of different ages then there would be a popular response.

Similarly with regard to the way people run their careers. A lot of people are worried about retirement, but we must keep in mind that people's chronological age and biological age will have been uncoupled. So people will be able to retire at the same age as they do now, but they will neither be able, or even inclined, to retire permanently. They'll be able to go back to work at some point, and be able to do something different with, say, the next 40 years of their lives. Golf will lose its novelty value if you're able to keep up with your daughter on the dance-floor. But there may be a requirement, or some incentive, to encourage people to quit their jobs after a few decades even if they might otherwise not have done so, and to go into something different next time. There are all manner of different ideas, but this is unashamedly hand-waving speculation. The utility of such speculation is to point out that it's ridiculous to get too concerned, simply because there are so many options out there.

PB: *Even if we grant that it's all conceptually sound, should we worry that the technology would only be available to a wealthy minority?*

ADG: First of all, people will want these technologies. They will vote for them, and it will be impossible to restrict them. But there's a second, more compelling reason, which is that these technologies will pay for themselves really really quickly. What we have at the moment with hi-tech medicines looks scary, because most of it is not available to most people. However, it's not a remotely valid precedent, simply because these technologies don't pay for themselves. The main things that need to be treated by expensive medicines are age-related diseases. You treat people and you slightly postpone their progression into ill health, but only slightly. And then you have to spend a lot more money keeping them in that state until they die. So you spend more money than before to not a great deal of effect. Whereas, if we have medicines that actually work against ageing, then we have the converse situation. It's a situation whereby people never reach a state in which they are consuming the enormous

(Continued on p12)



Aubrey de Grey in conversation with Peter Brietbart

amount of medical resources that they currently do when they're in a bad way.

All we'd have to do is periodically top people up with repair and maintenance therapies. If that were the whole story, we still wouldn't have an argument because those repair and maintenance therapies do add up over time, but what also has to be taken into account are the other, indirect economic benefits.

First, the increased productivity of those who currently have to look after the elderly, and number two, that the elderly will be fit, able-bodied and contributing wealth to society rather than consuming wealth. We end up with an unequivocal situation in which it would be economically suicidal for any nation to not get people these therapies, irrespective of their ability to pay for them on the spot. The precedent we do have today is not hi-tech medicine, but basic education. If a state doesn't pay to have children educated, then twenty years down the line it'll be economically crippled. That is an argument that works well even in tax-averse societies like the USA.

PB: *When we confirmed this interview, I started asking around for people's opinions on ending ageing. A very staunch view of one person I asked was that overpopulation was a problem already, and that he wouldn't want to live in a world where he couldn't have plenty of kids. He thought ending ageing would make large families impossible.*

ADG: Well let's take that view head on. I have my pithy response to those who say they don't want to live in that world, which is "Well volunteered". We won't be tying people down and rejuvenating them by force.

My serious answer is that we must ask who should be choosing between the high death rate and the low birth rate if we accept that we really do have to make that choice.

There are no solutions that involve an exponentially increasing population. Should it be us who chooses, or should it be humanity of the future? That's the choice we are given, because if we sit here today and think "Oh dear that doesn't sound very nice, let's not go there", then we are delaying the date at which these therapies arrive, and so we are explicitly condemning a cohort of future humanity to an unnecessarily painful and early death, simply because we decided not to develop these therapies. Whereas, conversely, if we get on and do our stuff and develop these therapies as soon as scientifically possible then the humanity of the future, the cohort in question, will have the choice. They may decide that actually they fancy having a lot of kids and that they should maintain a higher death rate, either by not using the therapies or some other means. But they may, equally, decide that actually people should live a lot longer, or that we can live longer if we don't want to have kids. I personally have never wanted to have kids, and others like me are entitled to that view, that we'd like to be our own next generation. It's hard to argue that we should be denied our human right to carry on living by an argument that only really applies to other people.

PB: *You consider it a human right? The right to live beyond what we might call a "natural" life span?*

ADG: Remember that I said that the longevity component is a side-effect of being healthy. Now there are certain things we can put together here to make exactly that case. Firstly, when ordinary people are healthy, we don't think that they should be made to die. Not many people argue about that. Secondly, when ordinary people are not healthy we think that medicine should, in general, be applied to get them back to health, irrespective of how long ago they were born.

In our current state of medical expertise we have the problem that how long ago one was born has a significant impact on how effective our medical capabilities are. But if that were no longer true, if we could take someone who was unwell and could make them healthy again, irrespective of their chronological age, then we have a very different matter entirely. If we accept that ageism is a bad thing, and that old people are people too, then it's very difficult to argue against the case for developing and applying medicines that get people who are chronologically old into a good state of health, especially given that it will cause them to live longer.

PB: *Charlie Chaplin, speaking at the end of The Great Dictator: "The hate of men will pass and dictators die and the power they took from the people will return to the people and so long as men die, liberty will never perish ..." Do we want an immortal Kim Jong Il?*

ADG: I get this question a lot, and so I have my glib answer prepared. The last time I checked, dictator was fairly high on the league table of risky jobs. Most dictators don't die of ageing. I don't enjoy universal agreement on this point. There are some people for whom it is the number one reason that scares them about a post-ageing world. The fact is that if there were more risk of them living longer because they didn't have ageing, that would simply increase people's inclination to make sure they die of something else. There are people who want to assassinate dictators anyway, but it's seen as not worth the effort because they might only have ten or so years to wait anyway.

When we emerge into the world as adults, we want to be the next generation of people in charge. Much as we may love our parents, to always have our childhood authority figures watching over us looks pretty awful. Can it be avoided? Absolutely. It's really a facet of periodic retirement. The way that

things are today, the passing on of power, whether it be in government, family or business, is largely structured in the context of ageing. That's fine as things stand today, but it's ridiculous to suggest that we could not also have a structure for the turning over of power that did not rely on the existence of ageing. We already have elements of that in certain areas of society now.

One example is term limits in government. Within a family, there are people of different chronological ages with historically different power that arose from the fact that junior members of the family were initially incapable of taking care of themselves. So we have a slope whereby the older someone gets, the more power they have, the more knowledge they have and so on. But it doesn't have to be that way. It could be that when you're really an adult, say over 50, then everyone at that age would be treated as equals irrespective of how far over fifty they were and what their initial familial relationships were. This will involve a cultural shift, and it'll be easier in the context of having fewer kids, since a progressively higher proportion of people will be over fifty.

PB: *What question do you wish you were asked more often?*

ADG: "How large a cheque should I write for you?" What I do is get the science behind the development of anti-ageing treat-



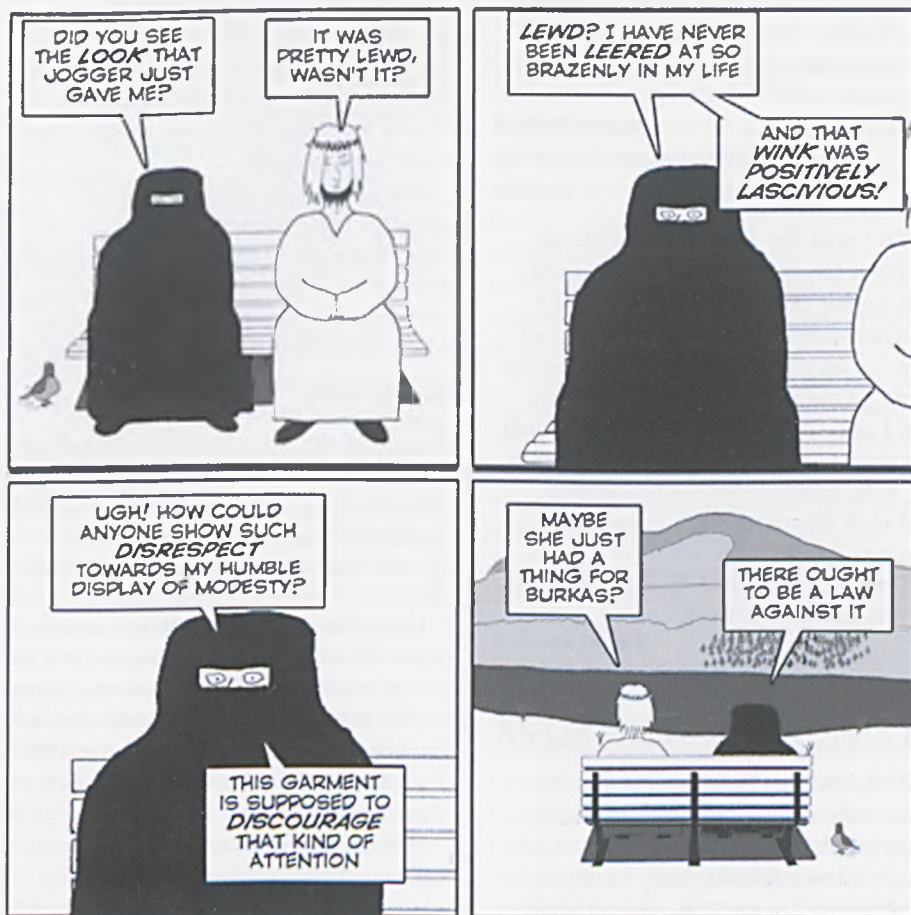
ments done. That requires three things. Number one is that it requires a solid scientific foundation. So the reason we can make predictions about the future, albeit speculative ones, is because we can describe in detail what is already in existence and where we're going from here. So a good level of precursor technology has to exist. Number two is that the people who are best placed to take that precursor technology forward in the appropriate directions must be enthusiastic about doing so. They have to be cog-

nizant of the potential applicability of their work to the defeat of ageing in concert with other people's work. Number three is that they have to have the resources to go about actually doing this.

I realised about 15 years ago that we now have the foundations in place, that's when I developed the SENS (Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence) concept. Number two is something that I've been working on whether or not I had any money over the past 15 years; getting to know the world's scientific leaders in the relevant areas. We're not missing people who know what they're doing. So the only missing link is number three, the financial resources to get the work done. Biology is irreducibly expensive.

• You can learn more about de Grey's foundation at <http://www.sens.org/>

Jesus & Mo



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Subscription inquiries and events notices

PLEASE note that all inquiries regarding *Freethinker* subscriptions should now be addressed to:

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points of view...

A DIG IN THE POST BAG – LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

ADDRESS LETTERS TO BARRY@FREETHINKER.CO.UK.
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CHRISTIAN VOICE'S STEPHEN GREEN

I WAS interested to see your report in the *Freethinker* (March) of the alleged abuse of his wife and children by Christian Voice's Stephen Green.

Whatever the truth of this, your readers might be interested in this anecdote: representing Feminists Against Censorship, I opposed Mr Green at a Law Society dinner debate in 1992, on the issue of whether sado-masochistic sex should be decriminalised.

In my speech I was talking about how the police say they do not have the resources to investigate the volume of cases of domestic abuse, so how could it be justified to spend police resources and court and prison expenditure attempting to stop people's mutual fun?

I think everyone was somewhat surprised when Mr Green abruptly left the hall after my speech, missing the vote which he roundly lost. Hmmm.

Still on Stephen Green, his organisation Christian Voice took up the case of the two Christian hoteliers' right not to have to offer double beds to same sex couples in what is also their own home.

I think there is a freedom of conscience issue here as well as gay rights. Is it significant that this case of refusing a same-sex couple a double bed was brought against little people – an isolated Christian couple who also did not give double rooms to unmarried heterosexual couples and say they have nothing against gay people.

Surely, there is a place for specialist Christian hotels which advertise themselves clearly as Christian and allow only married couples to share a bed?

I have been involved in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues since 1971, but this new lack of tolerance, and suppression of people's right to their beliefs

– Christians now being the targets rather than LGBTs – is not the kind of world we aimed for in the Gay Liberation Front back in the 70s.

We did not want the state to dictate what people could do. We wanted a liberated society for everyone and believed that LGBTs could lead the way.

Now we have the spectre of the Human Rights Commission investigating whether lesbian and gay hotels are breaking the law by discriminating against heterosexuals. Perhaps we shouldn't be allowed to have gay hotels.

Is this really a better world? Live and let live I say.

Nettie Pollard

Feminists Against Censorship
London

I TOO read the *Daily Mail* article on Stephen Green which tells us not only that he has divorced, but remarried a Kenyan woman. His ex-wife speaks of him "... on TV, spouting verses from the Bible". One verse he won't be spouting, I guess, is Matt 19 v 9: "And I shall say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery."

There is no suggestion of fornication by any party in this case.

Ray McDowell

Co Antrim

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

TO CLAIM that there is no Islamic fundamentalism ignores Wahhabi and Salafi Islam (neither are by any means universal among Muslims). Wahhabism is a movement founded in the 18th century which reasserts monotheism and reliance on

the Koran and the Hadith, rejecting the interpretation and jurisprudence which has developed since mediaeval times.

Salafi Islam is a 20th-century movement which (without going too deeply into its complexities) emphasises the purification of Islamic doctrine, adhering to the Koran and the Sunnah, and rejecting later interpretations.

Fundamentalism began as a descriptor of early 20th-century American-Christian Protestant movements which defined faith in an absolutist and literalist manner, seeking to purify or reform beliefs and practices according to self-defined fundamentals of faith. It is very difficult to see how the application of the term to the Wahhabi and Salafi revivalist movements, which rely on Islam's founding documents, is other than valid and reasonable.

Islam, like other religions, is diverse; consequently criticism of one Islamic sect need not apply to others. Fear of criticising Islam is not a sane or intelligent response, nor is the line that nothing is too bad to claim about Islam, that claims need not be supported by evidence.

While it is possible to advocate the separation of church and state and remain a religious believer, there always has been a strand in secularism which denies religious claims, including the claim that morality and religion are integrated, and rejects religion.

If the National Secular Society were to reject the latter strand, denying that it is an atheist organisation and remove the claim on the masthead of the *Freethinker* that it has been "the voice of atheism since 1881" I am afraid I should have to resign my membership.

When freethinkers reject faith as a sufficient basis for religious claims, they cannot rely on prejudice or conviction as a basis for their own arguments. Secularist



claims rest on the evidence and on cogent argument, nothing else.

Will religious secularists be willing to work with atheist secularists who tolerate anti-religious polemic not based on evidence? And does the same material convince people to reject religious claims?

Colin Mills
Amersham

ANTI-SEMITISM

DAVID Anderson (*Points of View*, March) asks if Jews are anti-Palestinian.

As the Palestinians (Philistines) are a Semitic people, then the Jews are themselves being anti-Semitic.

In fact, it might be said that the Jews, still being a tribe, are anti everyone. To quote from C M Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (p34, 1875): "Islam and the commonwealth of Jews are as great secret conspiracies, friends only of themselves and to all without, of crude, iniquitous heart, unfaithful, implacable ..."

That's about right!

W K Harper
Stoke-on-Trent

THE response by correspondents in last month's *Points of View* to my legitimising use of "Islamophobia" calls for clarification.

I really cannot let David Anderson's letter on anti-Semitism go without response. No-one is going to call him an anti-Semite because he criticises Israel or the Jewish faith. And he is not to be labelled anti-British or anti-American because he is critical of these governments. I am frequently critical myself.

The point is that the Palestinians and other Arabs persistently refuse to make peace, contantly threaten genocide. There is only one Jewish state and no other country in the world is denied recognition the way Israel is.

Not to condemn this is certainly anti-Semitic.

Derek Wilkes
London

JESUS' EXISTENCE

ROBERT Stovold (*Points of View*, April) thinks that I need to prove my claim that Jesus existed (or "exists" as he puts it). He makes it plain that he is not claiming that Jesus did not exist, but his reaction to my claim belies that. He claims that the "burden of proof" rests with me, not him. However, I do not claim to prove anything, nor do I allege anything unusual. I only claim that the evidence points to Jesus' existence and I have outlined that evidence in a book that Mr Stovold refuses to read. I have also outlined the evidence in an article in this journal and elsewhere.

Mr Stovold is free to disregard the evidence I present, but that does not entitle him to demand proof, especially before he has examined any of it. History is not a precise discipline, only a best guess, based on whatever evidence is available.

Steuart Campbell
Edinburgh

'O' NOT 'OH'

A CUTTING composition by Jack Hastie (*Thanksgiving*, March *Freethinker*).

But a small point of grammar: the correct form of address is the one-letter word "O" (usually capitalised, depending on placement), thus "O Lord", "O Caesar", *et al.* It is Latin, perhaps meaning "Great", or "Mighty", and has the same function as the word "My" used when addressing notables, as in "My Lords, Ladies, and gentlemen", for example. It denotes the higher status of the persons addressed.

The word "oh" is an expression of surprise, or mild pain, so it is not the word with which to indicate deference to authority or superiority.

P J Wain
Cleethorpes

DINOSAURS IN THE BIBLE

ROBERT Smith (*Points of View*, March) complains that there is no mention of dinosaurs in the Bible, so how dare Christians claim them?

Well, that's precisely what all creationists do these days, based on a four-verse description in Job (40: 15-18) to which they apply a spectacular display of desperate, lunatic extrapolative "reasoning".

Once they establish Behemoth was in fact a dinosaur, then it becomes OK, indeed mandatory if sequential reasoning is respected, to include dinosaurs in Noah's menagerie (small and juvenile specimens, of course).

I urge him to read (with suitable anti-gusset-busting precautions) *The Great Dinosaur Mystery and the Bible* by Paul S. Taylor or *The Great Dinosaur Mystery – Solved!* by Ken Ham. If such books were not so preposterously misleading to the under-informed, they might be amusing. Ham is director of the stupidest museum in the world (www.creationmuseum.org) where animatronic dinosaurs may be seen (and ridden!) in the company of humans. Well, they must have been contemporaries because the biological science of Genesis doesn't work properly if they weren't. Of course, all dinosaurs were vegetarians in those days, before Adam rashly initiated sin and death, though they depict people other than Adam and Eve (ie after The Fall) cavorting in The Garden with plant-eating Tyrannosaurs.

There are also dragons in the Bible, apparently. Further crazy extrapolation of Bronze Age scriptural fragments – you might have thought this particular barrel had been fully scraped – has resulted in a new book from Answers in Genesis, *Dragons: Legends & Lore of Dinosaurs*.

James Merryweather
Scotland

WOMEN AND RELIGION

MAY I draw readers' attention to a rather surprising quote I have just stumbled upon? former United States President Jimmy Carter last month declared: "The discrimination against women on a global basis is very often attributable to the declaration by religious leaders in Christianity, Islam, and other religions that women are inferior in the eyes of God. Many traditions teach that while men and women are equal in value, God has ordained specific roles for men and women. Those distinct duties often keep women out of leadership positions in their religious communities ..."

This quote prompted the *Washington Post's* Paula Kirby to pen one of the most scathing anti-religious pieces I have ever read. She ended *Religion Lies about Women* with these words:

"Religion is one lie after another: the lie of original sin, the lie of eternal life, the lie of hell, the lie of answered prayer, the lie that life can have no meaning without religion, the lie that religion is the source of morality, the lie of creationism, the lie of a spy-in-the-sky who hears your every word and reads your every thought. And to this list we must add the lie that it views men and women as equal.

"It has got away for so long with the kind of lunatic word-games that allow death-by-torture to be presented as an act of love, and eternal torment in the flames of hell to be seen as a necessary act of justice, that we should perhaps not be surprised that it has also managed to dupe its followers into seeing the systematic suppression and silencing of women as an act of liberation and equality.

"Nevertheless, it is a lie, like all the others: a cynical and wicked lie. It is time women everywhere woke up to it."

Seeing these words in print in an AMERICAN publication leaves me thinking that atheists are at last seeing the fruits of their struggles, and that the tide is turning in a way many of us would never have anticipated a decade or so ago.

Let's keep up the pressure.

Barrie Stein
Liverpool

the freethinker

EVENTS & CONTACTS

i information **w** website **e** email

Birmingham Humanists:

w www.birminghamhumanists.org.uk. 0845 2015135.

Brighton & Hove Humanist Society: **i** 01273 227549/461404. The Lord Nelson Inn, Trafalgar St, Brighton. Wed, May 4, 8pm: Barry Duke: *130 Years of the Freethinker*. Wed June 1, 8pm: Lorna De Smidt: *Choosing to Live without Religion*.

w <http://homepage.nfworld.com/robert.stovold/humanist.html>.

Bromley Humanists: Meet second Thursdays at 2pm at the H G Wells Centre **e** asad.65@hotmail.com.

Central London Humanist Group: **i** Chair: Alan Palmer. Sec: Josh Kutchinsky.

e info@centrallondonhumanists.org.

w www.meetup.com/central-london-humanists

Chiltern Humanists: Enquiries: 01296 623730.

Cornwall Humanists: **i** Patricia Adams, Sappho, Church Road, Lelant, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3LA. Tel: 01736 754895.

Cotswold Humanists: **i** Phil Cork Tel. 01242 233746.

e phil.cork@blueyonder.co.uk.

w <http://www.cotswold.humanist.org.uk>.

Coventry and Warwickshire Humanists: **i** Tel. 01926 858450. Roy Saich, 34 Spring Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 2HB.

Cumbria Humanist Group: **i** Tel. 01228 810592. Christine Allen

w www.secularderby.org **e** info@cumbria-humanists.org.uk.

Derbyshire Secularists: Meet at 7.00pm, the third Wednesday of every month at the Multifaith Centre, University of Derby. Full details on

w www.secularderby.org

Devon Humanists:

e info@devonhumanists.org.uk

w www.devonhumanists.org.uk

Dorset Humanists: Monthly speakers and social activities. Enquiries 01202-428506.

w www.dorsethumanists.co.uk

East Cheshire and High Peak Secular Group:

i Carl Pinel 01298 815575.

East Kent Humanists: **i** Tel. 01843 864506. Talks and discussions on ten Sunday afternoons in Canterbury.

Essex Humanists: Programme available **i** 01268 785295.

Farnham Humanists: 10 New House, Farm Lane, Woodstreet Village, Guildford GU3 3DD.

w www.farnham-humanists.org.uk

Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA):

1 Gower St, London WC1E 6HD. Tel: 0844 800 3067.

Email: secretary@galha.org **w** www.galha.org

Greater Manchester Humanist Group: **i** John Coss:

0161 4303463. Monthly meetings (second Wednesday, 7.30pm) Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester. Phone John Coss for details.

Hampstead Humanist Society: **i** N I Barnes,

10 Stevenson House, Boundary Road, London NW8 OHP. Tel: 0207 328 4431.

w www.hampstead.humanist.org.uk

Harrow Humanist Society: Meets the second Wednesday

of the month at 8pm (except Jan, July and August) at the HAVS Centre, 64 Pinner Road, Harrow. Wed, May 11, AGM

i Secretary on 0208 907-6124

w www.harrow.humanist.org.uk

e Mike Savage at mfsavagamba@hotmail.com

Humani – the Humanist Association of Northern

Ireland: **i** Brian McClinton, 25 Riverside Drive, Lisburn BT27 4HE. Tel: 028 9267 7264 **e** brianmccinton@btinternet.com.

w <http://www.humanistni.org/>

Humanist Association Dorset: Information and programme from Jane Bannister. Tel: 01202 428506.

Humanist Society of Scotland: 272 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4JR, 0870 874 9002. Secretary: secretary@humanism-scotland.org.uk. Information and events: info@humanism-scotland.org.uk or visit www.humanism-scotland.org.

uk Media: media@humanism-scotland.org.uk. Education: education@humanism-scotland.org.uk.

Local Scottish Groups:

Aberdeen: 07010 704778, aberdeen@humanism-scotland.org.uk. **Dundee:** 07017 404778, dundee@humanism-scotland.org.uk. **Edinburgh:** 07010 704775, edinburgh@humanism-scotland.org.uk **Glasgow:** 07010 704776, glasgow@humanism-scotland.org.uk **Highland:** 07017 404779, highland@humanism-scotland.org.uk.

Humanist Society of West Yorkshire: **i** Robert Tee on 0113 2577009.

Isle of Man Freethinkers: **i** Jeff Garland, 01624 664796. Email: jeffgarland@wm.im **w** www.iomfreethinkers.org

Humanists4Science: A group of humanists interested in science who discuss, and promote, both.

w <http://humanists4science.blogspot.com/>

Discussion group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/humanists4science/>

Isle of Wight Secular and Humanist Group. **i** David Broughton on 01983 755526 or **e** davidb67@clara.co.uk

Jersey Humanists: Contact: Reginald Le Sueur, La Petella, Rue des Vignes, St Peter, Jersey, JE3 7BE. Tel 01534 744780

e Jerseyhumanists@gmail.com **w** <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Jersey-Humanists/>

Lancashire Secular Humanists: Meetings 7.30 on 3rd Wed of month at Great Eccleston Village Centre, 59 High St, The Square, Great Eccleston (Nr. Preston) PR3 0YB.

www.lancashiresecularhumanists.co.uk **i** Ian Abbott. Wavecrest, Hackensall Rd, Knott End-on-Sea, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire FY6 0AZ 01253 812308 **e** ian@lanzere.demon.co.uk

Leicester Secular Society: Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB. Tel. 07598 971420.

w www.leicestersecularsociety.org.uk

Lewisham Humanist Group: **i** Denis Cobell: 020 8690 4645. The Goose, Rushey Green, Catford SE6. Meetings on third Thurs, 7.30pm. May 19: Subject: *Topical Ethical Discussion*.

w www.lewisham.humanist.org.uk

Liverpool Humanist Group: **i** 07814 910 286.

w www.liverpoolhumanists.co.uk/

e lhghumanist@googlegmail.com. Meetings on the second Wednesday of each month.

Lynn Humanists, W Norfolk & Fens: **i** Edwin Salter Tel: 07818870215.

Marches Secularists: **w** www.MarchesSecularists.org

e Secretary@MarchesSecularists.org

Mid-Wales Humanists: **i** Maureen Lofmark, 01570 422648 **e** mlofmark@btinternet.com

Norfolk Secular and Humanist Group: **i** Chris Copsey, 1 Thistledown Road, Horsford NR10 3ST. Tel: 0160 3710262.

Northants Secular & Humanist Society: For information contact Ollie Killingback on 01933 389070.

North East Humanists (Teesside Group):

i C McEwan on 01642 817541.

North East Humanists (Tyneside Group):

i the Secretary on 01434 632936.

North London Humanist Group: Meets third Thursday of month (ex.August) 8 pm at Ruth Winston House, 190 Green Lanes, Palmers Green, N13 5UE. Plus social events. Contact Sec: 01707 653667 **e** enquiries@nlondonhumanists.fsnet.co.uk **w** www.nlondonhumanists.fsnet.co.uk

e enquiries@nlondonhumanists.fsnet.co.uk

w www.nlondonhumanists.fsnet.co.uk

North Yorkshire Humanist Group: Secretary: Charles Anderson, 01904 766480. Meets second Monday of the month, 7.30pm, Priory Street Centre, York.

Oxford Humanists: Chair: John White, 01865 891876.

e jdwhite@talk21.com

Peterborough Humanists: **i** Edwin Salter Tel: 07818870215.

Scottish Humanists: **w** www.ScottishHumanists.org.uk. Free membership. Charity SC042124. Next meeting June 5, Old Course Hotel, Prestwick. **i** 07935272723

Sheffield Humanist Society: **i** 0114 2309754. University Arms, 197 Brook Hill, Sheffield. Wed, May 4, 8.00 pm: Iaian Crowe: *Ethical Issues in Dealing with Violent Criminals*.

South Hampshire Humanists: Group Secretary, Richard Hogg. Tel: 02392 370689 **e** info@southhantshumanists.org.uk **w** www.southhantshumanists.org.uk

Somerset: Details of South Somerset Humanists' meetings in Yeovil from Edward Gwinnell on 01935 473263 or **e** edward.gwinnell@talktalk.net

South Place Ethical Society. Weekly talks/meetings, Sundays 11am at Conway Hall Reockway Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Tel: 0207242 8031/4

e programme@ethicalsoc.org.uk. Monthly programmes on request.

Suffolk Humanists & Secularists: 25 Haughgate Close, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1LQ. Tel: 01394 387462.

Secretary: Denis Johnston.

w www.suffolkhands.org.uk **e** mail@suffolkhands.org.uk

Sutton Humanists: **i** Alan Grandy: 0208 337 9214 **w** www.suttonhumanists.co.uk

Watford Area Humanists: Meet on the third Tuesday of each month (except August and December) at 7.30 pm at Watford Town and Country Club, Watford **i** 01923-252013

e john.dowdle@watford.humanist.org.uk **w** www.watford.humanists.org.uk

Welsh Marches Humanist Group: **i** 01568 770282

w www.wmhumanists.co.uk **e** rocheforts@tiscali.co.uk.

Meetings on the 2nd Tues of the month at Ludlow, Oct to June.

West Glamorgan Humanist Group: **i** 01792 206108 or 01792 296375, or write Julie Norris, 3 Maple Grove, Uplands, Swansea SA2 0JY.

Please send your listings and events notices to barry@freethinker.co.uk or to PO Box 234, Brighton BN1 4ND

Notices must be received by the 15th of the month preceding publication.