



Atheists and Agnostics for a Better World

Dorset Humanists

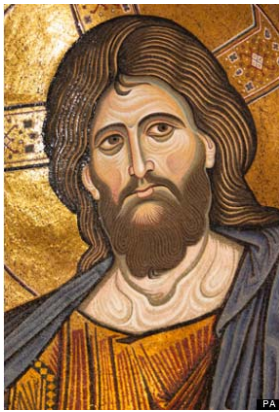
May 2014

A PARTNER OF THE
BRITISH HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION

■ Saturday 10th May 2.00pm

Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Avenue, BH9 1TW

Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?



Turn up early to guarantee a seat at our exciting debate with Moorlands College of Christian Theology. In the last couple of decades Christian evangelists have revived literal belief in the resurrection with increasingly sophisticated

arguments. Can the 'empty tomb' be rationally explained? Is the resurrection really 'one of the best-attested facts in history'? In this debate, Dorset Humanists will go head-to-head with students from Moorlands College in what promises to be an extremely lively event.

David Warden and Dean Robertson will be representing Dorset Humanists. David has a degree in theology and has maintained a lifetime interest in New Testament studies and Christian apologetics. Dean Robertson has listened to hundreds of hours of religious debates and had a face-to-face chat with Christian philosopher William Lane Craig. Dean joined Dorset Humanists after attending one of our previous debates with Moorlands College. Moorlands debaters will be introduced on the day.

■ Wednesday 28th May 7.30pm

Green House Hotel, 4 Grove Road Bournemouth BH1 3AX

Human Trafficking in the UK

A talk by Dr Mel Semple

In 2012 more than 2,000 potential victims of human trafficking were identified in the UK, a quarter of whom were children. The five most prevalent countries of origin were Romania, Poland, Nigeria, Vietnam and Hungary. However, wider global, cultural practices have their part to play so definitions of trafficking are contested. Sexual exploitation and labour exploitation were the two most prevalent exploitation types reported. Mel has undertaken academic research into this appalling crime and is well-placed to give us an authoritative account of the current situation in the UK and discuss whether the Draft Modern Slavery Bill (2013) will address the problems of trafficking. Mel has taught sociology and social policy at Southampton University. She has written on Marxism, feminism, and human trafficking and is writing a book *The Foot Soldiers of Suffrage*, about the unsung heroes of 'First Wave Feminism'.



Send bulletin updates to chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk or phone 07910 886629

Website: dorsethumanists.co.uk Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists

■ **Saturday 14th June 2.00pm**
Moordown Community Centre, Coronation
Avenue, BH9 1TW

Buddhism and Humanism

A talk by Sally Bannister and Kelsang
Lekchog (Claire Bannister)

Claire and Sally Bannister were brought up
by two atheist-humanist activists.
Independently of each other they developed
an interest in Buddhism and Claire was
eventually ordained as a Buddhist nun. In
this talk Claire and Sally, daughters of Jane
and Dennis Bannister who for many years
were leading members of Dorset
Humanists, will explore questions such as
'Can Buddhists be atheists/humanists?',
'What is Buddhism?' and 'What do
Buddhists get up to?'

■ **Wednesday 25th June 7.30pm** Green
House Hotel, 4 Grove Road Bournemouth
BH1 3AX

The Case for Agnosticism

A talk by Kate Holden. This talk will present
a balanced argument for agnosticism. Kate
will consider difficulties associated with
proving God's existence and the nature of
God. It will also examine the atheist position
and suggest that, in many ways, both
theism and atheism are comparably weak
from a philosophical perspective. Kate
studied for a BA in Philosophy and an MA in
Philosophy and Religion at Heythrop
College, University of London. After
graduation she worked at the Tony Blair
Faith Foundation, contributing to the 'Face
to Faith' education programme which
inspired her to become a teacher. She will
start her first teaching post at Christ the
King St Mary's Sixth Form College in
Sidcup this coming September.

■ **Thursday 1st May 7.30pm and every
first Thursday of the month**



Moon in the Square, Exeter
Rd, BH2 5AQ

Dorset Humanists Social evening

Our next social evening will
be at Moon in the Square.
Join us for an interesting chat

over a drink or two and get to know other
like-minded people. See you there!

☎ Dean 07713 858773

Other local events of interest...

■ **Wednesday 14th May 7.30pm**
Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub at The
Brunswick, Charminster, BH8 8PX

An Atheist's Guide to the Alpha Course

Tickets £3 via website:

📧 bournemouth.skepticsinthepub.org

☎ Chris 01425 673477

*Upcoming talks for West Dorset Humanists
at the Wessex Royale Hotel, 32 High Street,
Dorchester £3.00...*

■ **Thursday 29th May 7.30pm**
**Science and Religion: Complementary or
Contradictory?** A talk by government
scientist David Nunn

■ **Thursday 26th June 7.30pm**
**Thomas Hardy and the Poetry of
Unbelief** A talk by John Hubbard

Quote...Unquote

"Western economies are growing more
unequal on a never-ending trajectory that
tears apart the social fabric, puts
democracy in hock to plutocrats, holds
down the poor, and cements the children
of the wealthy in unearned privilege."
*Polly Toynbee, former president of the
British Humanist Association*
Guardian 2 May 2014

Send bulletin updates to chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk or phone 07910 886629

Website: dorsethumanists.co.uk Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists



BHA School Volunteers programme

On Saturday 26th April a group of Dorset Humanists attended a BHA training day for school volunteers. The event was designed to enhance the knowledge, skills and confidence of Humanists who are enthusiastic about providing schoolchildren with the opportunity to learn about Humanism. Sara Passmore, Head of Education and Promotion at the British Humanist Association (photo above) was the lead trainer.

One of the key objectives of Dorset Humanists is to provide schools in Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset and with assistance and resources to help them integrate Humanism into the curriculum. Last year we set up the Dorset Humanists Schools Education Project, chaired by Chris Street, to help achieve this objective. Some years ago we succeeded in ensuring that Humanism is part of local RE syllabuses but we perceive a lack of knowledge and confidence in RE teachers, many of whom are unqualified in this subject specialism, to actually engage pupils in the study of Humanism. Perhaps the biggest challenge we face is increasing the number of invitations we get from local schools. The BHA school volunteers scheme could really help us through national publicity and by providing a link between schools and local volunteers.

The BHA is training members to work with teachers to have a 'meaningful impact' on the education of young people and increase students' understanding of Humanism. The government recommends that Humanism should be studied in schools as an example of a secular philosophy. In practice, this

most often happens in religious education lessons where pupils are also learning about religious approaches to life but it can also happen across all areas of the school.

The BHA supports the 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural' (SMSC) development of pupils and believes that schools should develop their pupils' thinking skills through teaching critical thinking and philosophy. The BHA supports a broad and balanced education for all young people, and recognises the importance of SMSC development of pupils as crucial for individual pupils and for society as a whole. It believes that schools should provide opportunities for non-religious 'spiritual development', the development of curiosity, thinking skills and creativity, and that 'values education' should be part of Citizenship Education, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), and Sex and Relationships Education (SRE).

All National Curriculum subjects provide opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and BHA school volunteers can contribute to this development in primary and secondary schools by increasing the level of awareness and understanding about Humanism.

This is where BHA school volunteers can really add value to the classroom. Using their life experience and knowledge they can help to bring an added dimension to the classroom in helping children and young people think about issues from a different perspective.

<https://humanism.org.uk/education/schoolvolunteers/>

■ Terry Milton will represent *Dorset Humanists Schools Education Project* at Bishop Wordsworth's Multibelief Day on 21st May to explore with Year 10 issues of prejudice and discrimination, ethics and find out about Humanism. Bishop Wordsworth's School is in Salisbury and regularly invites us to participate in such events.

<http://dorsethumanistschoolseducationproject.blogspot.co.uk/p/members.html>

Send bulletin updates to chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk or phone 07910 886629

Website: dorsethumanists.co.uk Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists

Dorset Humanists at the Cambridge Union

This House Believes the Catholic Church is a Force for Good – motion defeated



On Thursday 25th April, Dorset Humanist and council member for Atheism UK **Chris Street** took part in a debate at the Cambridge Union opposing the motion

'This House Believes the Catholic Church is a Force for Good'. Sara Passmore, Head of Education and Promotion at the British Humanist Association also opposed the motion.

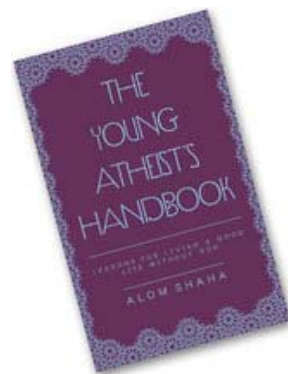
Father Andrew Pinsent, Research Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, opened the debate by listing the achievements of famous Catholics such as Dante. Arguing that Catholicism has become a 'lightning rod for general animosity' towards religion, he concluded that this was both unfounded and wrong. Chris Street cited a recent UN Report on the Rights of the Child and a list of Pope John Paul II's apologies for the Church's wrongdoings. Peter Williams, a speaker for 'Catholic Voices', argued that scandals such as child abuse were not a 'general' reality while the Church's large-scale health and charity schemes were. He claimed that the Catholic Church was actually the 'greatest force for good in the world there has ever been'. This view was taken on by David Greenwood, Chairman of 'Stop Church Child Abuse UK', who compared the Church to a 'rampant, power-thirsty company on Wall Street'. He painted a dystopian picture of a Church functioning on 'psycho terror' operating something comparable to a 'totalitarian' regime. *Evening Standard* writer Melanie McDonagh pointed out that so much charity is in some way founded on the Catholic idea of the 'brotherhood of man'. Sara Passmore argued that we all do good in our individual lives and that religion was not necessary for this process.

Debate Result: Ayes: 82 Noes: 85 Abstentions: 65 The motion failed to carry.

Adapted from a press release by Talia Zybutz.

'Young Atheist's Handbook' sent to every secondary school in England and Wales

On Tuesday 29th April, the British Humanist Association sent a free copy of *The Young Atheist's Handbook: Lessons for Living a Good Life without God* to every secondary school in England



and Wales. Funded entirely from donations by thousands of people from all around the country, the initiative is part of the BHA's work to ensure that young people have access to resources that enable them to come to their own decisions about their values and beliefs.

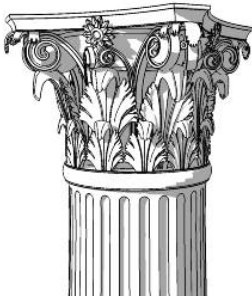
The Young Atheist's Handbook was written by science teacher Alom Shaha and tells the story of his upbringing in a Bangladeshi Muslim community in South East London, how he overcame inner conflict over his atheism, and the lessons he learnt in leading a good life, full of awe and wonder, based on humanist principles.

Commenting on the success of the initiative, BHA Chief Executive Andrew Copson said, 'We couldn't be happier that young people everywhere will now have access to this wonderful book. Alom's message will no doubt inspire young people who are looking to find fulfilment and meaning in their lives, whatever their family background.

'In a large number of schools, pupils will have access to a number of religious perspectives on life's bigger questions, but not to what most non-religious people believe and how they find happiness and satisfaction in their daily lives. We believe schools should be places where pupils are free to encounter the full range of philosophies and worldviews available to them in modern Britain.'

Send bulletin updates to chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk or phone 07910 886629

Website: dorsethumanists.co.uk Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists



Letters & Emails

Write to Dorset Humanists,
58a R L Stevenson Avenue
Bournemouth BH4 8EG or
email chairman
@dorsethumanists.co.uk

*From Peter Hadfield on a possible
debate/discussion in June/July*

Thanks very much for raising this topic at your meeting. I do understand the reasoning with regard to your position as Chairman. I disagree that the science of climate change should not be debated provided that such a debate serves to enlighten rather than divide and misinform. Debating an outsider does not really appeal to me. If you have ever debated a creationist about evolution you will know how fruitless and frustrating it can be and I have found the same with many 'sceptics' who come to my channel because the tactics both groups use are identical. They throw out spurious 'facts' and refuse to give sources. I am interested in your views because, unlike creationists and conspiracy theorists, humanists by and large accept science and understand the scientific method. The main point of difference between you and me, it seems, is the sources we are using to form our beliefs. So perhaps we could have an open discussion about that. The question you posed in the last Bulletin was an excellent starting point: "This situation raises difficult questions about how educated people are supposed to inform themselves and the trustworthiness of political bodies and internet sites which claim to represent an 'authoritative consensus'." I think a discussion/debate like this would be informative and lively.

■ Peter is out of the country at the moment but we will contact him again as soon as possible.

From Ken Fagg

At our meeting on 12th April, a member asserted that global warming was causing crops to wither and this would lead to starvation. But overall food production

continues to rise year on year. Warmer weather encourages more vegetation to grow more rapidly in more places. We can see roses and geraniums and strawberries growing only in our warmer seasons. Russia and Canada, the two largest countries in the world, will be able to grow many more crops in areas currently ice-bound for much of the year. Global cooling stunts growth.

Another member insisted that at a future meeting on global warming we should discuss what to do about it and not waste time debating whether or not global warming is happening. This is putting the cart before the horse. The globe has been warming for 10,000 years since the last ice age. Over millions of years it has moved to the extremes of ice ages and back again many times without any help from Man. The small increase in temperature in the 20th century is well within the scope of normal natural fluctuations.

A good test is to make predictions based on a scientific theory and see if they come true. Global warming has failed this test.

Far more dangerous than warming is global cooling. Meteorite impacts and major volcanic eruptions spew out dust and ash. This can block out much of the sunlight for years and lead to global cooling, crop failures, famine and mass deaths of livestock and humans. Such an event occurred in the 6th century – the Dark Ages – and was probably due to a massive eruption of the volcano at Krakatoa in Indonesia. Such events will happen again. There are many calderas around the world (including a large one under the Yellowstone National Park) just waiting to explode, unpredictably but probably sometime in the next 100 years. It is quite possible therefore that by the end of the 21st century, rather than benefiting from the global warming predicted by the green lobby, we shall, in fact, be suffering from global cooling. Man's influence on the climate is puny compared with the power of Nature.

Although heavily subsidised by taxpayers, consumers will have to pay much higher prices if we go for renewable energy. The poor will suffer most. Is this what we want?

Send bulletin updates to chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk or phone 07910 886629

Website: dorsethumanists.co.uk Twitter: @dorsethumanists Facebook: Dorset Humanists



Dorset Humanists
Chairman's View
May 2014



Economics lecturer Douglas Lock, who spoke lucidly, passionately and informatively without notes for over an hour at our recent Green House Hotel meeting, is a fierce opponent of what he sees as economic spin. He explained that recent economic growth is largely an effect of population growth (up 3-4 million since 2005) and a bigger labour force. Real GDP per head has declined since 2005. The Coalition Government promised to cut national debt. In fact, it has ballooned from £750bn to well over a trillion today. The number of food bank users has exploded from 61,000 to 350,000. On wages, he claims that 'workers in Britain are in the sixth year of a squeeze on their incomes that has cut real wages by more than 9 per cent since early 2008 – the deepest and most sustained period of decline since reliable records began in the mid-19th century.... On the Office for Budget Responsibility's central projection, median real full-time wages in 2017 will be at roughly 2000 levels – a near 20-year stagnation in earnings.' Douglas, a local Labour Party chairman, is pessimistic about the likelihood of the Labour Party abandoning the economic orthodoxy of fiscal austerity. He suggested that a big part of the problem is voter passivity and apathy. As consumers of news, we appear to be more interested in David Moyes than in our slow but steady return to levels of inequality last seen before the First World War. He has offered to speak to us again in the autumn about French economist Thomas Picketty's recent book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014) which is expected to 'transform debate and set the agenda for the next generation of thought about wealth and inequality.' Picketty claims that 'the main driver of inequality – the tendency of returns on capital to exceed the rate of economic growth – threatens to generate extreme inequalities that stir discontent and undermine democratic values'. But economic trends are not irreversible. Picketty notes that political action has been effective in past and can be again in the future.

Humanism is not aligned to any political party but we are obviously in favour of truth not lies and spin, democracy not the plutocracy of the super-rich, and greater equality rather than economic growth being creamed off by the few. Humanists want everyone to have a fair opportunity to live a fulfilled life and economics is central to that goal. We will bring you more events dedicated to this topic as we approach the next, very uncertain, General Election.

David Warden