



Dorset Humanists

Chairman's View

November 2011



Aubrey de Grey, a prominent anti-ageing scientist (below left), believes that people who are now in their 50s can look forward to another 30 years of active and healthy life, that people now around 30 may live to 150, and that before long human beings will live to 1,000. This was just one of the revelations of Chris



Street's fascinating *Transhumanism* presentation and discussion evening. Just think how many degrees you could accumulate, how many musical instruments and languages you could master, and how many wedding anniversaries and Christmases you might have to celebrate. Should we not put as much effort into trying to cure or impede ageing, which kills 50,000 people every day, as we do other forms of disease? Meanwhile, I hope you are doing everything you can to maintain your body in good repair.

Charity4Children is running a half-day workshop on the morning of 22nd November to explore how local voluntary, community and faith sector organisations might become involved in running children's centres in Poole. The purpose of the workshop will be to explore what barriers there may be to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) involvement. How worried should Humanists be about faith sector organisations running children's centres? I don't think we should jump to conclusions about faith sector organisations wanting to 'proselytise' children but I do think we should have a presence at these discussions and ask pertinent questions about how equality and diversity will be ensured (for example, in the recruitment of non-religious care workers) and about the motivations of different organisations in seeking such opportunities. Please let me know quickly if you can go along and I will send you the details.

William Lane Craig is one of the world's foremost academic apologists for Christianity and he has just completed his *Reasonable Faith Tour* in the UK. If you want to know what we're up against try his *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (3rd edition 2008). Craig, who is a professor of philosophy at a theological

college in California, has debated with a number of the 'new atheists' such as A. C. Grayling, Daniel Dennett, Victor Stenger, Christopher Hitchens and Stephen Law. Richard Dawkins has famously declined to be bullied into having a debate with him, describing him as an apologist for divinely-inspired genocide (*Guardian*, Oct 20). Craig himself downgraded God's involvement in the slaughter of sinful Canaanites to mere 'ethnic cleansing' (*The Oxford Student*, Oct 27).

Craig is no intellectual slouch however. He has doctorates from Birmingham University and Munich University and was tutored by world-class theologians. His books help to underpin global evangelism. *Reasonable Faith* is hard-hitting and well-written and his attacks on atheism are uncompromising. He argues that if there is no God then life is without ultimate significance, value or purpose. If God does not exist then we are thrust into a 'purposeless universe to live a purposeless life'.

He claims that the 'atheistic worldview is insufficient to maintain a happy and consistent life' and that atheists have to adopt the 'noble lie' of meaning and purpose in order to make life tolerable. He claims that the human existential predicament is 'desperate' and that biblical Christianity succeeds precisely where atheism breaks down. This is challenging stuff but Craig fails to fully understand the alternatives. If God exists then the desperate human existential predicament is the denial of freedom and responsibility, and therefore of our very humanity. The 18th century Enlightenment released us from this predicament and the rationalist and Humanist tradition continues its struggle against the intellectual and moral prison of biblical Christianity.

The most outrageous claim in his book is that, as atheists do not believe in 'objective morality' then, 'on the atheistic view, there's nothing really wrong about raping someone' (p175). He's not saying that atheists are likely to rapists. Only that we have no philosophical basis for saying that rape is 'objectively wrong' because the only basis for objective morality (moral values that really 'exist') is theism. This kind of reasoning only goes to show how little faith Christianity has in the *human* struggle against evil and tyranny and its abdication of ethical responsibility to a morally-dubious god. It's also very silly to claim, as he does, that moral values 'exist' in the same way that physical objects exist (p179).

We've invited Moorlands Bible College students to debate the unreasonableness of Christianity with us next year so start doing your homework. You can be sure the Bible students will be doing theirs and they will be going out in to world to make yet more converts. Let's make their task just a little more difficult.



Craig: "Atheists have no basis for condemning rape".

David Warden