



## A Christian Response to 'Against All Gods'. Part Two: Ethical respectability

Peter S. Williams

### Contra Grayling: A Christian Response to 'Against All Gods' (Part Two: Ethical respectability)

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[Image]

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A.C. Grayling, Professor of Philosophy at Birbeck College, University of London, begins his self-described 'polemic' against religion with a question and an answer:

'Does Religion deserve respect? I argue that it deserves no more respect than any other viewpoint, and not as much as most.'<sup>1</sup>

Thereafter, Grayling's critique of 'all gods' is primarily a double-barrelled assault upon:

- § the intellectual respectability of faith in God and,
- § the ethical respectability of religious believers and institutions as such.

Part one of this review focused upon the question of intellectual respectability. Part two will focus on ethical matters.

### The Evils of Religion

Grayling defends his book's polemical tone:

If the tone of the polemics here seems combative, it is because the contest between religious and non-religious outlooks is such an important one, a matter literally of life and death, and there can be no temporising.<sup>2</sup>

I would have thought that the more important the issue, the more important it would be not to alienate those with whom you disagree by calling them names. And as Grayling observes, 'The debate has become an acerbic one...'<sup>3</sup> One would think that an acerbic debate is likely to involve more heat than light. Indeed, Grayling acknowledges:

We might enhance the respect others accord us if we are kind, considerate ... truthful ... aspirants of knowledge ... seekers after the good of humankind, and the like.<sup>4</sup>

And he admits that:

Neither set of characteristics has any essential connection with the presence or absence of specific belief systems, given that there are nice and nasty Christians, nice and nasty Muslims, nice and nasty atheists.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, Grayling is keen to:

criticise religions both as belief systems and as institutional phenomena which, as the dismal record of history and the present both testify, have done and continue to do much harm in the world, whatever good can be claimed for them besides.<sup>6</sup>

This is an odd criticism which amounts to saying that even if religion does overwhelmingly more good than evil, it is reasonable to critique religion on the basis of the harm that it does cause. That's rather like conducting a debate about the merits of public transport by pointing out that trains sometimes crash, whilst being prepared to acknowledge that trains are much safer than cars.

Grayling points out that: 'no wars have been fought, pogroms carried out, or burnings conducted at the stake, over rival theories in biology or astrophysics.'<sup>7</sup> This may be, strictly speaking, true. However, what one makes of this observation rather depends upon one's view of sundry acts that have been inspired and/or

justified by various scientific theories (anyone for scientific racism, eugenics, or abortion?). To respond that there is a difference between science being used or twisted to justify something and science *actually* justifying it is to open the door for religious believers to make a parallel defence of religion.

On the issue of witch-burning, mentioned by Grayling (an issue that should of course be understood within its historical context), social scientist Philip J. Sampson observes that: 'the number of witchcraft prosecutions has often been greatly exaggerated, and we now know that the Inquisition tended to moderate rather than incite them.'<sup>8</sup> Historian William Monter writes: 'the mildness of Inquisitorial judgments on witchcraft contrasts strikingly with the severity of secular judges throughout northern Europe.'<sup>9</sup> According to historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'in general the established church was opposed to the persecution [of witches].'<sup>10</sup>

With Keith Ward, I think it clear that: 'religion does some harm and some good, but most people, faced with the evidence, will probably agree that it does a great deal more good than harm, and that we would be much worse off as a species without any religion.'<sup>11</sup> This is not to deny that Christians (even 'born-again' Christians of intrinsic rather than extrinsic religious belief) have done many terrible things throughout history (we are, after all, sinners). But, as Ward argues, 'There are some unequivocally evil religious beliefs [and] there are also some unequivocally evil non-religious beliefs. What makes beliefs evil is not religion, but hatred, ignorance, the will to power, and indifference to others.'<sup>12</sup> Religion should no more be tarred with the brush of its worst examples than should politics or science. As William Wilberforce said: 'Just as we would not discard liberty because people abuse it, nor patriotism, nor courage, nor reason, speech, and memory – though all abused – no more should we eliminate true religion because self-seekers have perverted it.'<sup>13</sup>

In fact, some forms of religion at least do a great deal of good. As secular humanist Richard Norman cautions:

I recognize that religion has inspired not only some of the worst but also some for the best human achievements. It has inspired social and political movements to improve the lot of human

beings, such as in the abolition of the slave trade, the civil rights movement, campaigns for peace and against world poverty and famine. It has inspired many of the greatest cultural and artistic achievements... To present religion and its works in a wholly negative light would in my view be hopelessly unbalanced.<sup>14</sup>

All of this aside, as Tom Price observes:

It seems to me that the entire argument commits what we might call 'The Guilty by association fallacy', which is that religion is assumed to be incorrect and unbelievable because some people become radicalised. That is just bad logical structure. Whether or not religion leads to violence doesn't affect whether or not it is true. The resurrection of Jesus as an event, the evidence which you are presented with and asked to base Christian belief upon, is completely independent from the behaviour of his followers. Alister McGrath gave the example of doctors: 'Just because we saw what Harold Shipman did, doesn't mean that we say that all doctors are bad.'<sup>15</sup>

## Religion and the Public Sphere

In his earlier book, *The Meaning of Things*, Grayling writes: 'Tolerance is a rare and important virtue. It has its limits, but they are usually drawn too tightly and in the wrong places.'<sup>16</sup> Now he believes that, 'It is time to reverse the prevailing notion that religious commitment is intrinsically deserving of respect, and that it should be handled with kid gloves and protected by custom and in some cases law against criticism and ridicule.'<sup>17</sup> I would agree that it is not religious commitment *per se* that deserves respect; but rather *the person* with a religious commitment who deserves respect, and whose commitment (all things being equal) should therefore be respected – that is, at least *tolerated* – in a free society. As Grayling writes, 'The point to make in opposition to the predictable response of religious believers is that *human individuals merit respect first and foremost as human individuals*.'<sup>18</sup> Christianity agrees with Grayling on this point; there is no basis in Christian theology for valuing one person more highly than another, certainly not on the basis of what they believe:

Shared humanity [and the Christian would add 'being made in the image of God'] is the ultimate basis of all person-to-person and group-to-group relationships, and views which premise differences between human beings as the basis

of moral consideration, most especially those that involve claims to possession by one group of greater truth, holiness, or the like, start in absolutely the wrong place.<sup>19</sup>

'Amen' to that. Grayling's point may have bite against some religions, but is in fundamental agreement with Christianity. Indeed, Grayling's position is an expression of Humanism that derives from the Christian roots of Humanism in the Renaissance (and ultimately, of course, within the Bible), with scholars such as the Dutch humanist and theologian Desiderius Erasmus. Grayling writes:

It is time to demand of believers that they take their personal choices and preferences in these non-rational and too often dangerous matters into the private sphere, like their sexual proclivities. Everyone is free to believe what they want, providing they do not bother (or coerce, or kill) others ... it is time to demand and apply a right for the rest of us to non-interference by religious persons and organizations – a right to be free of proselytisation and the efforts of self-selected minority groups to impose their own choice of morality and practice on those who do not share their outlook.<sup>20</sup>

I agree that our democratic system could be better constructed to the end of representing the views of the population and to deciding issues on the merit of relevant arguments. However, we do live in a democracy, and there is hardly a question of religious minorities *imposing* their own choice of morality and practice on those who do not share their outlook. (Indeed, quite the opposite is often the case, as the recent debate about Catholic adoption agencies demonstrates.<sup>21</sup>) Grayling may well complain about, 'people of religious faith, who take themselves to have an unquestionable right to respect for the faith they adhere to, and a right to advance, if not indeed impose (because they claim to know the truth, remember) their views on others.'<sup>22</sup> However, as a Christian, it is not so much *my faith* that I think has a right to be respected, as *my person* as a human being who has a right to respect. This is not a right that excludes dissent or robust intellectual questioning from those who do not share that faith. Nor does it exclude artistic polemics by comedians, cartoonists, script-writers and others. However, it does extend to the right to expect detractors not to engage in personal *ad hominem* attacks, or to attack straw man caricatures of my position. This

right is in fact no more than the expectation that those who want to criticise my beliefs should be held to the same standards of civil academic discourse as should apply when the boot is, so to speak, on the other foot.

Moreover, Grayling clearly takes himself to have a right to advance – and even, as we will see, to impose – *his* views on others precisely because *he* claims to know the truth (at least to know the truth better than any religious believer knows it). Complaining about religious believers engaging in precisely the same type of activity, for precisely the same reason, mires Grayling in a double standard (this mire deepens the more one reads of Grayling's polemic). Ironically (and leaving aside Grayling's assertion that all religious beliefs are non-rational preferences), in his advocacy of the belief that 'Everyone is free to believe what they want, providing they do not bother (or coerce, or kill) others ...',<sup>23</sup> Grayling is both:

§ *bothering* religious people by writing a polemic against their beliefs (something I am happy for him to do), and

§ advocating *coercing* religious believers.

His position seems to be that people should be free to hold whatever religious beliefs they like without fear of coercion etc., *just as long as they don't believe that their beliefs should accompany them into public sphere*; in which case they should be coerced not to do so. Since Grayling's beliefs entail the coercion of others, *according to his own criteria* he should not be free to believe as he does! Grayling has clearly drawn the limits of tolerance too tightly, and has thereby fallen within his own definition of intolerance:

an intolerant person ... wishes others to live as he thinks they ought and ... seeks to impose his practices and beliefs upon them.<sup>24</sup>

Grayling's suggestion goes far beyond his previous affirmation, in *The Meaning of Things*, that, 'The only coercion should be that of argument...' Grayling wants to be free to affirm the following proposition: 'People should be coerced not to bring their religious beliefs into the public sphere.' But he surely doesn't want to be *coerced* into affirming this proposition. In which case, he should accept that other people should not be coerced into affirming it either, and are therefore free to affirm the contrary proposition: 'People should be free to bring their religious beliefs into the public sphere.' Grayling can't have it both

ways without falling foul of a self-expecting double standard.

Indeed, Grayling adopts another self-expecting rule when he pleads for 'a right to be free of proselytisation' – for what is *Against All Gods* but an act of proselytisation for secular humanism? Surely everyone should have the right to invite public debate concerning their own worldview; and equally everyone should have a right not to read, listen to, watch or engage in conversation concerning such issues when it is offered. For example, Jehovah Witnesses and Secular Humanists alike should, I believe, have the right to knock at my door offering literature and discussion (not that the latter ever do). And I should have the right to invite them in for a chat, or to politely send them away, as I see fit. Grayling says nothing about the rights of the religious not to be proselytised by the non-religious (his proposed rights therefore discriminate against the religious). Let me be clear, I don't want any such right - I want secular humanists to be free to write public books like *Against All Gods* – but in return it seems only fair to expect the right of public reply.

Grayling affirms the need to 'return religious commitment to the private sphere...'25 Unfortunately, there are at least some forms of religious belief which are *essentially* public-minded. For example, Christianity is by its very nature both a missionary religion and a religion that takes serving others seriously. Such beliefs simply *cannot* be relegated to the private sphere whilst remaining themselves. One cannot simply ban the public proclamation of the 'gospel' message, or public acts of Christian charity, without thereby effectively banning Christianity itself. If Grayling is really committed to excluding all religion from the public sphere, both demanding and applying a right of the non-religious to 'non-interference', he is therefore necessarily committed to banning Christianity.

### **I don't like the cut of your jib**

Grayling offers an evidence-free psychoanalysis of religious believers who, 'enter the public domain wearing or sporting immediately obvious visual statements of their religious affiliation...'26 According to Grayling:

one at least of their reasons for doing so is to be

accorded the overriding identity of a votary of that religion, with the associated implied demand that they are therefore to be given some form of special treatment including respect ... although eccentricities of dress and belief were once of little account in our society, when personal religious commitment was more reserved to the private sphere – where it properly belongs – than its politicisation of late has made it.<sup>27</sup>

However, it is not hard to imagine other motives besides the one Grayling attributes. One wonders whether Grayling would say the same things about wearing the colours of one's home football team, or nation. If wearing an immediately obvious visual statement of one's religious association is a political act, is it to be frowned upon *on that account alone*? In which case wouldn't wearing union-jack swimming trunks on the beach – especially abroad – be equally suspect? And if the latter suggestion is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the former, is the suspect nature of the political act in question a matter of its religious content alone? In which case is Grayling advocating that we repudiate any and all religious expression, however minor? Or is the purported problem here a matter of degree? For there is an obvious difference between wearing a small cross on a chain on the one hand and carrying a full-sized cross through the streets at Easter on the other. Does Grayling want to enforce a ban against both forms of expression, or only the latter? Grayling is vague about just *how illiberal* he is.

Grayling's sweepingly illiberal attitude to religion verges upon paranoia. He asserts:

When any of these imprisoning ideologies are on the back foot and/or in the minority, they present sweet faces to those they wish to seduce: the kiss of friendship in the parish church, the summer camp for young communists in the 1930s. But give them the levers of power and they are the Taliban, the Inquisition, the Stasi.<sup>28</sup>

No wonder Grayling thinks we should be tough on religion and tough on the causes of religion. A 'zero tolerance' approach is apparently the only way to save Western civilization from a Church of England Inquisition. Comedian Eddie Izzard once performed a hilarious act which involved just such an inquisition, featuring 'Church of England cake or death', in which the religious authorities forced people to choose between a nice slice of cake or death. In other words, it is hard to take Grayling's

sweeping paranoia seriously. Against this, Grayling would no doubt reply:

in its concessive, modest, palliative modern form Christianity is a recent and highly modified version of what, for most of its history, has been an often violent and always oppressive ideology ... a medieval monk who woke today ... would not be able to recognise the faith that bears the same name as his own.<sup>29</sup>

While it is certainly a pity we have no medieval monks to whom to pose this question, it could be considered to be something of a red herring. Perhaps pre-Reformation (and Counter-Reformation) medieval Christianity was aberrant *by the standards of authentic New Testament Christianity*, which is after all the only standard that truly counts. But if Grayling is right about contemporary Christianity having at least one form that is an aberration in its concessive and modest nature, then he is wrong about all religion being on a par with the Stasi. Grayling can't have it both ways.

## Can an atheist be a fundamentalist?

Grayling thinks not. I beg to differ. Grayling is annoyed by:

Religious apologists [who] charge the non-religious with being 'fundamentalists' if they attack religion too robustly, without seeming to notice the irony of employing, as a term of abuse, a word which principally applies to the too-common tendencies of their own outlook. Can a view which is not a belief but a rejection of a certain kind of belief really be 'fundamentalist'? Of course not...<sup>30</sup> However, Grayling himself points out that being non-religious, or more specifically being an 'atheist', is at best a partial description of a broader non-religious worldview: 'As it happens, no atheist should call himself or herself one.... A more appropriate term is "naturalist", denoting one who takes it that the universe is a natural realm....'<sup>31</sup> In popular usage, 'atheist' is used as a synonym for 'metaphysical naturalist', and while *strictly speaking* atheism may or may not be incapable of the fundamentalist qualification, metaphysical naturalism ('atheism' *in its popular sense*) certainly *is* capable of the feat, as the existence of Richard Dawkins amply demonstrates. Grayling seeks to ward off the fundamentalist label as applied to his own position by playing on an equivocation concerning the meaning of 'atheism'.

Grayling asserts: 'It is also time to put to rest ... a phrase used by some religious people when talking of those who are plain-spoken about their disbelief in any religious claims: the phrase "fundamentalist atheist."<sup>32</sup> The mere fact that 'fundamentalist' is used to qualify 'atheist' in this phrase should tip Grayling off to the fact that it is *not* intended to describe those who are merely 'plain-spoken about their disbelief in any religious claims'. However, Grayling seems to think that 'fundamentalist' is necessarily a redundant qualifier when linked to atheism, and he poses the following rhetorical question: 'What would a non-fundamentalist atheist be? Would he be someone who believed only somewhat that there are no supernatural entities in the universe...?'<sup>33</sup> While the concept of an atheist with doubts is apparently incomprehensible to Grayling, it seems to make just as much sense as a 'Sunday Christian' to me. Nevertheless, I suggest that a better answer to Grayling's question is that 'fundamentalist atheist' signifies *an atheist who thinks that belief in God is a pernicious intellectual and ethical fault that should be actively opposed by right thinking non-believers*. In other words, a fundamentalist atheist is a member of the movement *Wired Magazine* dubbed 'The New Atheism' in a November 2006 cover story by contributing editor and agnostic Gary Wolf:

The New Atheists will not let us off the hook simply because we are not doctrinaire believers. They condemn not just belief in God but *respect* for belief in God. Religion is not only wrong; it's evil. Now that the battle has been joined, there's no excuse for shirking. Three writers have sounded this call to arms. They are Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett.<sup>34</sup> *Against All Gods* is clearly another salvo from the 'New (or 'fundamentalist') Atheist' camp.

In 2006, Darwinist Michael Ruse had a notoriously ill-tempered exchange of e-mails with Daniel Dennett in which the former labelled the latter's book *Breaking the Spell* 'really bad and not worthy of you':<sup>35</sup>

I think that you and Richard [Dawkins] are absolute disasters in the fight against intelligent design – we are losing this battle ... what we need is not knee-jerk atheism but serious grappling with the issues – neither of you are willing to study Christianity seriously and to engage with the ideas – it is just plain silly and grotesquely immoral to claim that Christianity is simply a force for evil,

as Richard claims – more than this, we are in a fight, and we need to make allies in the fight, not simply alienate everyone of good will.<sup>36</sup>

Astonishingly, Ruse then took the opportunity to criticise Dawkins on the front cover of Alister and Joanna McGrath's joint response to *The God Delusion* (entitled *The Dawkins Delusion*), where Ruse stated:

*The God Delusion* makes me embarrassed to be an atheist, and the McGraths show why.

Ruse continued his debate over tactics with fundamentalist atheists in an article for *Skeptical Inquirer* that lamented the fractured state of atheism in the face of 'creationism' (which for Ruse is a term that encompasses Intelligent Design theory):

at the moment, those of us against creationism live in a house divided. One group is made up of the ardent, complete atheists. They want no truck with the enemy, which they are inclined to define as any person of religious inclination – from literalist (like a Southern Baptist) to deist (like a Unitarian) – and they think that anyone who thinks otherwise is foolish, wrong, and immoral. Prominent members of this group include Richard Dawkins ... Daniel Dennett ... and Jerry Coyne ... The second group ... contains those who have no religious belief but who think that one should collaborate with liberal Christians [by which Ruse means theistic evolutionists] against a shared enemy, and who are inclined to think that science and religion are compatible.<sup>37</sup>

Ruse acknowledged that in this in-house debate:

The rhetoric is strong and nasty. I have accused Dennett of being a bully and someone who is pig ignorant of the issues. He has told me that I stand in danger (perhaps over the point of danger) of losing the respect of those whose respect I should crave ... Dawkins has gone even further; in his new, best-selling book, *The God Delusion*, Dawkins likens me to Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister who tried to appease Adolf Hitler.<sup>38</sup>

Ruse pragmatically replied to Dawkins that, 'When Hitler [i.e. 'creationism'] attacked Russia [i.e. theistic evolution], England and America gave aid to Stalin [i.e. 'liberal' Christians]. It was not that they particularly liked Stalin, but they worked on the principle that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.'<sup>39</sup> Ruse ended his article with a plea for unity: 'Fundamentalism, creationism, intelligent design theory – these are the real threats. Please God – or non-God – let us quit fighting ourselves

and get on with the real job that faces us.'<sup>40</sup> However, it seems unlikely that this plea will be headed by the likes of Professor Grayling, for as Ruse points out:

The Dawkins-Dennett school allows for no compromise. Religion is false. Religion is dangerous. Religion must be fought in every way. There can be no working with the enemy [even 'liberal' theistic evolutionists]. Those like me who work with religious people are like the appeasers before the Nazi's.<sup>41</sup>

Hence, one answer to Grayling's rhetorical question about what a non-fundamentalist atheist would be is that they would be like Michael Ruse!

'Might it be,' asks Grayling with tongue firmly in cheek, 'that a non-fundamentalist atheist is one who does not mind that other people hold profoundly false and primitive beliefs about the universe, on the basis of which they [sweeping generalization alert] have spent centuries mass-murdering other people who do not hold exactly the same false and primitive beliefs as themselves – and still do?'<sup>42</sup> Of course not; but then Grayling poses a false dilemma. It's not that atheists like Michael Ruse don't *mind* that other people hold what they consider to be false beliefs; it's just that they would prefer to engage believers in an intelligent and respectful debate whenever possible, as opposed to issuing the atheistic equivalent of a fatwa upon anyone with the temerity to disagree with them. (I am tempted to write 'disagree with their primitive beliefs' to make a point about Grayling's chronological snobbery;<sup>43</sup> after-all, naturalism goes back to the pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece.)

## Can Humanism be religious?

According to Grayling, 'Humanism in the modern sense of the term is the view that whatever your ethical system, it derives from your best understanding of human nature and the human condition in the real world.'<sup>44</sup> It seems to me that a Christian could make this humanistic claim. However, Grayling asserts that humanistic ethics 'means that it does not, in its thinking about the good and about our responsibilities to ourselves and one another, premise putative data from astrology, fairy tales, supernaturalistic beliefs, animism, polytheism, or any other inheritances from the ages of human kind's remote and more ignorant past.' Aside from another glaring example

of chronological snobbery, Grayling does nothing to justify his assertion on this score. For example, if one thinks that the best understanding of human nature and the human condition is that humans are the fallen creation of the biblical God, then one is naturally *bound* to premise putative data from supernaturalistic beliefs in one's thinking about the good. Grayling admits, 'It is possible for religious people to be humanists too';<sup>45</sup> but he immediately qualifies this admission by stating that religious people cannot be humanists 'without inconsistency';<sup>46</sup> although he immediately withdraws this accusation and instead asserts that religious people cannot be humanists without 'oddity, for there is no role to be played in a humanistic ethic by their (definingly religious) belief in the existence of supernatural agencies.'<sup>47</sup>

Having already pulled up Grayling concerning his definition of religion (in Part One), we need not do so again. However, we can observe that Grayling does nothing to justify his assertion that religious beliefs have no role to play in an ethic which derives from one's best understanding of human nature and the human condition in the real world. Instead, Grayling simply seems to be *assuming* that naturalism is true and hence deducing that humanism must be naturalistic.

Grayling suggests that we, 'Consider what humanists aspire to be as ethical agents.'<sup>48</sup> Given the worldview of the naturalistic secular humanist, one might well wonder *why* they aspire to be ethical agents (it doesn't sound as if Nietzsche would approve), or (more importantly) how they can justify belief in such concepts as good and evil, right and wrong.<sup>49</sup> Grayling doesn't even mention these issues. According to Grayling, non-religious humanists, 'wish always to respect their fellow human beings, to like them, to honour their strivings and to sympathise with their feelings.'<sup>50</sup> O brave new world that has such people in it! Grayling doesn't say why Nietzsche doesn't count as a humanist. But it seems to me that one might be forgiven for deriving a different impression from the rest of Grayling's book, replete as it is with accusations of intellectual retardation and the desire to coerce religious believers to contradict their consciences if these should lead them to stick their noses into the public sphere. And then Grayling drops a metaphysical clanger, asserting that:

in all cases the humanist's approach rests on the

idea that what shapes people is the complex of facts about the interaction between human nature's biological underpinnings and each individual's social and historical circumstances.<sup>51</sup> This is a clanger because it amounts to a denial of libertarian free will, which is a pre-requisite for personal responsibility, which is a pre-requisite for ethics. Since I am not Grayling, I will at least indicate an argument for this claim: What is the difference between a rock hitting you on the head and me hitting you on the head? What leads you to consider it irrational to hold the rock morally responsible but rational to hold me morally responsible? If 'I' am an entity the behaviour of which is shaped by nothing but interactions between the biological underpinnings of my human nature and my social and historical situation, then I am surely analogous to the rock (which is likewise an entity the behaviour of which is shaped by nothing but interactions between *its* physical nature and its environment). Hence, one might well conclude that not only *may* humanism be religious, but that humanism had better be religious on pain of self-contradiction.

## Conclusion

In Part One I concluded that Grayling offers next to nothing by way of serious engagement with the purported grounds of any religion, nor of his own 'non-religious outlook'. Instead, he substitutes straw men, red herrings and false dilemmas for the careful accuracy his subject demands; he substitutes sweeping, hasty generalizations for evidence-based inferences; and he repeatedly substitutes assertion for argument. Indeed, in my judgement *Against All Gods* is the weakest of the recent trickle of 'New Atheist' publications (those who have read my reviews of *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins will understand that this is really saying something!).

Most disappointing of all, as we have seen in Part Two, Grayling advocates the self-excepting, intolerant double-standard that society should demand and apply (i.e. enforce): 'a right for the [non-religious] to be free of proselytisation',<sup>52</sup> a demand which logically entails that Christianity should be made illegal.

Far from it being time to 'return religious commitment to the private sphere'<sup>53</sup> – an act of oppression that can only fuel the fires of religious

fundamentalism – I suggest that now, more than ever, is the time to encourage respectful debate between people with different worldviews on the common ground of their shared humanity. If a Christian and a secular humanist cannot agree on that, then the future looks bleak indeed.

I don't disagree with everything Grayling has to say. I applaud his recommendation that: 'The idea of good defeats – those in which you learn, or give, or allow the better to flourish – is an important one.'<sup>54</sup>

## Recommended Resources

See those listed in Part One of this article

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(Oberon Books, 2007) p. 7.

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, p. 18.

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, p. 30.

(IVP, 2000) p. 133.

(Brighton: Harvester, 1983) p. 67.

(Penguin, 1969) p. 37.

? (Lion, 2006) p. 7.

p. 35.

? (Hodder & Stoughton, 1997) p. 185.

(London: Routledge, 2004) p. 17.

15 Tom Price, 'Can you teach an old dog new tricks?'

(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001) p. 7.

, p. 15.

, p. 17, my italics.

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21 cf. Rees Mogg, 'Adopt change after 2000 years? Never!'

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35 Michael Ruse in William Dembski, 'Remarkable exchange between Michael Ruse and Daniel Dennett'

36 Ruse in 'Remarkable exchange'

Volume 31, No. 2, March/April 2007, pp. 39–40.

38 Ruse, 'Fighting the Fundamentalists', p. 40.

39 Ruse, 'Fighting the Fundamentalists', p. 41.

40 Ruse, 'Fighting the Fundamentalists', p. 41.

41 Ruse, 'Fighting the Fundamentalists', p. 40.

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43 Art Lindsley, 'C.S. Lewis on Chronological

Snobbery'

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49 Paul Copan, 'The Moral Argument for God's Existence'; William Lane Craig, 'The Indispensability of Theological Meta-Ethical Foundations for Morality'; Luke Pollard, 'Does Morality Point to God?'; Peter S. Williams, The Moral Argument (audio); J.P. Moreland, 'Right and Wrong as a Key to the Meaning of the Universe' (audio)

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#### **Related articles/study guides:**

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