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Religious cartoons special edition



'Unless we show some solidarity – unashamed, noisy, public solidarity – with the Danish cartoonists, then the forces that are trying to impose on the free West a totalitarian ideology will have won; the Islamisation of Europe will have begun in earnest. Do not apologise!

– Ibn Warraq, prominent Muslim dissident

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THE Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, has a passion for newts. Which probably goes a long way to explain his fondness for another slippery little creature called Dr Yusuf al Qaradawi.

The slimy Qaradawi has enjoyed Livingstone's hospitality, and has even been publicly embraced by the Mayor, who regards him as a "moderate" Muslim. It is true to say that this "world-renowned" Egyptian "scholar" has, on his visits to the UK, made all manner of soothing sounds. But Qaradawi is a double-dealing fraud: what he says outside of Britain is another kettle of amphibians altogether.

When he visited the UK in 2004, he was attacked by a number of groups who accused him of using *fatwas* and other public statements to advance intolerant beliefs. Qaradawi has supported suicide bombings, and more specifically the killing of Israeli children, as well as American civilians in Iraq. In his book, *The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam*, Qaradawi supports the execution of all males who engage in homosexual acts. He has also stated that he "personally supports" female circumcision, albeit one of the less extreme forms of female genital mutilation. He has said that Muslims who have turned away from their faith "deserve killing". Although Qaradawi says that he believes that domestic violence is undesirable, he has supported a husband's "light beating of a difficult wife."

Qaradawi has also made some unequivocal statements about secular democracy: "Secularism may be accepted in a Christian society but it can never enjoy general acceptance in an Islamic society", and "Since Islam is a comprehensive system of *Ibadah* (worship) and *Shariah* (legislation), the acceptance of secularism means abandonment of *Shariah*, a denial of the Divine guidance and a rejection of Allah's injunctions."

Clearly, Qaradawi is a master of the art of *al-takeyya* – the Islamic principle of lying to the infidel. Abdullah Al Araby, writing in *Islam Review*, explains that "unlike most religions, within Islam there are certain provisions under which lying is not simply tolerated, but actually encouraged ... When dealing with Muslims, one must keep in mind that Muslims can communicate something with apparent sincerity, when in reality they may have just the opposite agenda in their hearts. Bluntly stated, Islam permits Muslims to lie anytime that they perceive that their own well-being, or that of Islam, is threatened."

It therefore came as no surprise to discover Qaradawi's fingerprints all over last month's attempt at blackening Denmark's image throughout the Muslim world over those cartoons. According to various news reports, last December Qaradawi was among a number of senior officials and prominent Islamic scholars who were handed a dossier concerning the

Jyllands Posten cartoons by a delegation of Danish Muslims, led by controversial Copenhagen cleric Abu Laban (see page 5). The dossier turned out to be distinctly dodgy. It included three grossly offensive and pornographic depictions of Mohammed, which had never appeared in the Danish paper – or anywhere else. Only then did all hell break loose.

Freethinker editor BARRY DUKE on those troublesome cartoons



Later, in interviews in Denmark, Laban, said, in English, that he "regretted" the boycotts of Danish products, and would personally do nothing to harm Denmark or its economy. He was immediately exposed by Danish television as an out-and-out liar and hypocrite – a seasoned practitioner of *al-takeyya*. The man who once declared that "mockery against Mohammed deserves the death penalty" was shown speaking in Arabic, in full support of the boycott, on al Jazeera TV.

When interviewed last month on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Denmark: In the Eye of the Cartoon Storm* Laban was unable to give a satisfactory explanation for the three additional cartoons in his delegation's dossier, other than to say they were there simply as examples of Danish "Islamophobia".

I may be way off beam here, but it seems more than a tad suspicious that the cartoon controversy erupted months after the cartoons first appeared – and had been reprinted, apparently without fuss, in an Egyptian newspaper – at the precise moment that the British government was making a last-ditch attempt to pass incitement to religious hatred legislation. Indeed, a day before New Labour's shock defeat over the Bill, resulting in a much-emasculated version being passed, the Saudi-based *Arab News* ran a leader in which it stated "Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's categorical refusal to apologise on the [cartoon] issue because it would be against the laws on freedom of speech is disingenuous. It would be perfectly within the bounds of political propriety for him to say how appalled he was, and that the editor of *Jyllands Posten* should go. That would come well within the bounds of his freedom of speech.

"In any event, if it does go against the law, the answer is simple: change the law. Follow the British example: outlaw religious hatred. Once Prime Minister Tony Blair gets a new religious hatred bill through Parliament, it will be a criminal offence in the UK to publish cartoons like the Danish ones [my italics] ...

"Blair understands there are limits to freedom of speech, just as there are to freedom of action; people do not have the right to stir up riots and racial hatred, encourage mass hysteria or heap

abuse on religion any more than they do to rob, rape, cheat or kill. *Arab News* added: "Were Prime Minister Rasmussen to follow Blair's lead and introduce a similar law in Denmark, Muslim anger would vanish, not least because the UK bill, although protecting all religions from attack, is in fact designed specifically with Islam in mind [my italics]. Rasmussen has to think about Denmark's political and economic interests. But he needs to realise what Tony Blair has realised – that Muslims are now an integral part of his country and that to attack their faith is to attack them. Freedom of speech has to be balanced by the freedom not to have one's faith abused and ridiculed."

Clearly, the Muslim world had high hopes for the Bill. I am certain that Qaradawi and his poisonous cronies, key players in generating the mass hysteria which subsequently cost almost 100 lives, cynically did so in order to help New Labour get its misbegotten legislation through. And they hoped that other countries would follow the British example. Denmark just happened to be a convenient whipping boy. The whole issue may well have blown over if Blair had not signalled, time and time again, his government's willingness to appease a religion which brooks absolutely no criticism, but demands the right to lash out, with complete impunity, at anyone who does not treat Islam with grovelling reverence.

John O'Sullivan, writing last month in *National Review Online*, observes that "the Danish cartoons were not all as crude and pointless as some critics have alleged in their earnest search for reasons to hold 'both sides' guilty. One cartoon shows the Prophet with his turban evolving into a bomb. Insulting? Maybe. Blasphemous? Perhaps. Or maybe a perfectly fair comment on the arguments of radical Islamists that their religion justifies the murder of innocent bystanders; on the subsidies that Muslim governments give to suicide bombers, and on the thousands of Muslims baying for blood (and occasionally obtaining it) in response to a caricature."

He points out that by adding three additional cartoons to the dossier "the radical Islamists committed the very blasphemies that they now use as an excuse for attacks on Danes and Christians".

"Vile though it is, this trickery at least demonstrates the uselessness of appeasing their demands for censorship.

"If they are granted, our concessions will merely be the springboard for a further attack on Western liberty. And if we disobligingly refuse to furnish them with a pretext, the Islamists will manufacture one as Hitler used to manufacture border incidents in order to justify his planned aggressions. So we might as well fight in the first ditch rather than the last."

Stick to the newts, Livingstone, they might be slippery little buggers with forked tongues, but at least they aren't venomous!



A film, a song, and an inflatable sex doll called Mustafa Shag inflame religious passions

FURIOUS over the fact that a gay cowboy movie, *Brokeback Mountain*, was attracting more attention and critical acclaim than any of the recent spate of "Christian message" films churned by Hollywood, devout film-goers took solace in the knowledge that another piece of religious propaganda was about to hit the big screen.

End of the Spear is a new movie made by evangelical Christians which tells the true story of a son who makes peace with an Amazon tribe who killed his missionary father. The faithful were gurgling with glee over its impending release. Even the demented American televangelist Jerry Falwell exhorted Christians to pack cinemas where it was about to be shown.

Then a Colorado pastor, Jason Janz, discovered that – horror of horrors – the handsome young actor in the main role, Chad Allen, was a gay activist, and a lapsed Roman Catholic.

"This story is perhaps one of the most precious, well-known mission stories of the last century," foamed Janz, who is now spearheading a campaign against the film. "I believe it was bad judgment to cast one of Hollywood's foremost gay activists in the leading role."

The uproar is a blow to the movie's producers, who were hoping for a unified "Passion of the Christ"-type turnout. "It's disappointing," says Jim Hanon, the film's director and co-writer. "Especially because the message of the story is that you should reach out in love to people you disagree with."

When the movie's producers offered the part to Allen they didn't know he was gay. Ultimately, the decision to leave Allen in the role was left to the man upon whom the movie is based, Steve Saint. Allen was recruited to play both Steve and his slain father in the film.

"My dad was my hero, and the thought of someone playing him that advocates that lifestyle made me very uncomfortable," said Saint. "But I realised it wasn't for me to condone or to condemn what Chad does or doesn't do. That is God's prerogative. And I feel that God had his hand in setting up this complex scenario for Chad to play this part."

Meanwhile, Janz has persuaded more than 100 pastors to join him in signing a letter to the movie's producers, saying that they couldn't in good conscience support the film.

Outrage of a different sort blew up last month in Thailand when it was discovered that a song by popular Thai rapper Joey Boy contained verses from the Koran. Joey Boy, whose real name is Abhisit Opasiemlikit, was forced to

apologise for the song, and the album on which it appeared was immediately withdrawn from sale. The rap artist said he had no idea that the song, which was produced eight years ago, contained passages from the "holy" book.

"I have sent a formal written apology to the Sheikhu'l Islam of Thailand (the Muslim Religious Leader's Office)," he said.

Suki Kamol Sukosol Klamp, who wrote the song, said he had "sampled" the offending section from a world music album.

"I deeply apologise to all Muslim people for my unintentional mistake," he said. "I just learned what was featured in the song's introduction, and as soon as I realised, I asked Sony BMG to immediately recall the CDs."

In the UK – where Muslims appear to be competing with one other to see who can make the most foolish complaints – outrage was expressed last month over an inflatable sex doll called Mustafa Shag.

The new product was launched by Ann Summers, leading British high street retailer of erotica, and within days Mustafa incurred the wrath of Muslims who claimed the name defiled the prophet Mohammed.

Mustafa was one of the names given to the prophet, and bestowing it on "an inflatable escort for your hen-night adventures" was considered highly offensive. The Summers catalogue boasts that "Mustafa comes with his own penis. Blow him hard to inflate him and watch his 7 incher come to life."

The Manchester Central Mosque wrote to the firm, calling on it to withdraw the product. "You have no idea how much hurt, anguish, and disgust this obnoxious phrase ["Mustafa

Shag"] has caused to Muslim men, women and children," reads their letter.

"We are asking you to please relent on compassionate grounds, and have our Most Reverend Prophet's Name "Mustafa" (Peace Be Upon Him) and the afflicted word 'shag' removed as soon as possible."

In the light of this controversy, Ann Summers decided to examine its options, but its chief executive, Jacqueline Gold, said she was reluctant to withdraw the item from sale.

"We don't want to offend, but this feels like political correctness gone mad," she said. "If anyone has a better name for a blow-up doll, please let us know."

A day later, after the story received extensive press coverage, Ann Summers reported a huge demand for Mustafa – so big in fact that the company said that it looked as if they would have difficulty supplying stocks to people scrambling for the doll.

The moral of the story is that if you want to boost sales of a product, make sure that it raises the wrath of religious nuts, then laugh all the way to the bank.

One last thought: how galling it must be for those who attacked the Mustafa doll not to be able to call for a Muslim boycott of Ann Summers. That would have been tantamount to calling on Muslims to boycott Danish bacon.



'Resist self-censorship' says NSS

UNDER pressure, the European Commission is drawing up a code of conduct committing the media to exercise "prudence" when reporting on Islam and other religions.

Franco Frattini, the European Union Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security said the EU faced the "very real problem" of trying to reconcile "two fundamental freedoms, the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion" and appealed to European media to "self-regulate".

He said such self-censorship would send an important message to the Muslim world. If they agree to the new charter, "the press will give the Muslim world the message: we are aware of the consequences of exercising the right of free expression, we can and we are ready to self-regulate that right."

Commenting on the move, Keith Porteous Wood, Executive Director of the National Secular Society, said: "We must not allow the present controversy, which has been whipped up by religious extremists, to rush us into actions that would impose near-Islamic rules on to countries that are not Islamic. Regardless of whether such countries restrict free speech for themselves, they should not be permitted to roll out those repressive measures on to the rest of us. We will be urging the European media to reject or ignore any code of conduct that requires them to limit further what they say on legitimate matters of interest. And we will join any campaign of resistance to Islamist demands at the United Nations to restrict free expression."

Atheist loses case against priest

AN Italian atheist lost his legal crusade against the Catholic Church last month when a judge rejected his attempts to sue a priest for saying that Jesus existed 2,000 years ago.

Luigi Cascioli, 72, had argued that his hometown priest and former schoolmate had effectively broken an Italian law meant to protect the public from being conned.

But instead of granting Cascioli his request to bring the case to court, the judge recommended magistrates investigate him for slandering the priest.

The 76-year-old priest said he was delighted by the news. 'Thank God it's over,' Righi told Reuters. 'I'm glad it has ended like this, because imagine if it had gone on and on.'

Cascioli, author of a book called *The Fable of Christ*, said the court had not yet informed him of the ruling. But he was not surprised, and said he would appeal to Italy's highest court, and then to The Hague.

Asked about the possibility that he would be tried for slander, Cascioli chuckled, saying that to prove he lied, prosecutors would have to prove that Jesus existed. "They don't have any proof," he said.

Ontario legislates against religious tribunals

ONTARIO has formally passed legislation to prohibit the use of religious tribunals to settle family law disputes such as custody and divorce.

The bill was introduced after Premier Dalton McGuinty promised last year to prohibit the use of religious rules, called Shariah law, to settle Muslim family law cases.

McGuinty surprised many when he announced he would not only ban Shariah, but would also prohibit all religious arbitrations in Ontario.

The Canadian Jewish Congress said it was disappointed with the new law.

"It assumes that faith-based approaches to arbitration are innately exploitative," said Mark Freiman, honorary legal counsel for the Canadian Jewish Congress Ontario Region.

"This view is insulting to all women and to the faiths to which Ontarians adhere. It should concern all people in this province."

Attorney-General Michael Bryant says passage of the legislation means there will be only one law for all Ontarians, regardless of their religion.

Vatican may have found Pope John Paul's 'miracle'

THE Vatican may have found the "miracle" they need to put the late Pope John Paul one step closer to sainthood – the medically inexplicable healing of a French nun with Parkinson's disease.

Monsignor Slawomir Oder, the Catholic Church official in charge of promoting the cause to declare the late Pope a saint, told Reuters last month that an investigation into the healing had cleared an initial investigation by doctors.

Oder said the "relatively young" nun, whom he said he could not yet identify, was cured of Parkinson's after praying to John Paul following his death last April 2.

"I was moved," Oder said in a telephone interview. "To think that this was the same illness that destroyed the Holy Father and it also kept this poor nun from carrying out her work. To me, this is another sign of God's creativity."

John Paul suffered from Parkinson's Disease during the last decade of his life. His body trembled violently and he could not pronounce his words or control his facial muscles.

Oder said Church investigators would now start a more formal and detailed probe of the suspected miracle cure.

Evidence sought

The process that could lead to sainthood for John Paul began in May when Rome archdiocese published an edict asking Catholics to come forward with evidence "in favour or against" John Paul's reputation of holiness.

One proven miracle is required after John Paul's death for the cause to lead to beatification. It must be the result of prayers asking the dead Pope to intercede with God. Miracles are usually a physical healing that doctors are at a loss to explain.

Another miracle would be necessary between beatification and eventual sainthood.

Oder said his office had received many letters and e-mails from people claiming they had been miraculously cured or otherwise helped with a serious problem after praying to the Pope even while he was alive.

But under Church rules, only those "miracles" which occurred after the Pope's death can be investigated and eventually used as proof of holiness.

The month after John Paul died, Pope Benedict dispensed with Church rules and put him on the fast track to sainthood. The quick start means John Paul could be beatified and so declared a "blessed of the Church" within a few years if a miracle can be attributed to his

intercession with God.

Oder said he and other members of the investigating team were convinced that John Paul "is already a saint" but he could not say how long the bureaucratic procedure might take.

In past centuries, the saint-making procedure has often been long and expensive, but many Catholics believe that John Paul's life of suffering and service was clear to all.

Many of the people who knew or worked with John Paul are alive. This could speed up the case significantly because witnesses would be readily available to testify.

US bigot targets military funerals

ANOTHER American soldier has returned home from Iraq in a body bag. He was 22-year old Private Jonathan R Pfender of Evansville, Indiana. At his funeral, his family and friends were shocked to be confronted by a group of anti-gay Christian demonstrators led by the Baptist minister of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, the Rev Fred Phelps.

Why were they there? Was Pfender gay? Apparently not, but Phelps and his followers were present to make the point that American soldiers are being killed in Iraq as vengeance from God for fighting for a country "that harbours homosexuals". Pfender's funeral was not the first to be targeted by Phelps. He and his followers have picketed dozens over the last few years. His motivation: Phelps insists that the US government has allowed gays to take over America, and that his church had been bombed by gays. As a result God is punishing the government by killing soldiers with bombs and sending them home in body bags.

Pfender, 22, an Indiana soldier with the 101st Airborne, was killed last December 30 in Bayji, Iraq. He was the third soldier assigned to the 101st Airborne, based in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to die in the closing weeks of 2005. To date, over 2,000 US soldiers have died in Iraq since the start of the war in 2003.

Cartoons quote

"THE global over-reaction to the publication in a privately owned newspaper in a Western secular society shows that there are increasing numbers of Muslims who expect to be able to control what non-Muslims do in their own countries."

– *Miranda Devine, Sydney Morning Herald*

Evangelist apologises for Sharon remarks

CHRISTIAN Broadcaster Pat Robertson has apologised for comments he made on television suggesting that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's massive stroke earlier this year was a result of God's wrath for ceding land to Palestinians.

Robertson's apology followed an announcement by Israel's Tourism Ministry that it had cut the evangelist from plans to build a Christian heritage centre near the Sea of Galilee.

Robertson, in a letter addressed to Sharon's son, Omri, expressed sympathy over Sharon's condition and asked for forgiveness. (Last month Omri was sentenced to nine months in prison plus a £36,000 fine for raising illegal campaign contributions for his father.)

"I ask your forgiveness and the forgiveness of the people of Israel for remarks I made at the time concerning the writing of the holy prophet Joel and his view of the inviolate nature of the land of Israel," Robertson wrote. He added that his comments were, in retrospect, "inappropriate and insensitive".

On his 700 Club YV programme, Robertson had said that Sharon's stroke was a result of divine wrath.

"God has enmity against those who divide my land. He was dividing God's land, and I would say woe unto any prime minister of Israel who takes a similar course to appease the European Union, the United Nations, or the United States of America. God says: 'This land belongs to me. You'd better leave it alone.'"

In his letter, Robertson explained that he was saddened by Sharon's condition and considered him a "kind, gracious and gentle man". He added that he feels "very passionate" about the safety of Israel and has stood "against all of the threats of the nation's enemies."

The Israeli Tourism Ministry and Robertson were about to sign a funding deal to establish a pilgrimage and tourism centre in hills near the Sea of Galilee before the ministry "reconsidered the deal and realised that we cannot sign with Robertson or anyone who supports his view."

Tourism Ministry spokesman Ido Hartuv added that the decision regarding Robertson's participation did not signify a rejection of evangelicals as a whole, and that negotiations would continue without him on the project. Israel had planned to provide at least 35 acres for the Christian heritage centre, with evangelicals raising \$50 million to build it.

Reports said the centre would include a theme park, auditorium and outdoor theatre.

Last year right-wing Israeli activists performed a *Pulsa Dinura* – a kabbalistic ceremony in which God was asked to curse Sharon. Twenty people participated in the ceremony, which took place at the ancient cemetery.

According to the participants, the ceremony was authorised by rabbis.

"It was a call for the angels of destruction to kill Sharon," said one participant, Michael Ben-Horin.

Rabbi Yosef Dayan of the West Bank settlement of Psagot, who also participated in the ceremony, told *Ynet News*: "About eight months ago, when Sharon's (pullout) plan was gaining support, rabbis thought, for the first time, of performing a *Pulsa Dinura*."

Women were excluded from the ceremony, because participating rabbis ordered that those taking part "must be married (no widowers or divorcees), over 40 years of age and bearded".

"Everyone was dressed in black, except for one person who was dressed in white," he said. "The ceremony took place in the ancient cemetery in Rosh Pina, near the grave of Shlomo Ben Yosef, the hanged pre-state activist."

The ceremony was conducted mostly in Aramaic. Attorney Baruch Ben-Yosef, who

was also on hand for the ceremony, told *Ynet*: "We read the *Pulsa Dinura* prayer so the lord would take the murderous dictator who was murdering the people of Israel."

"We said the prayer near the grave of Shlomo Ben-Yosef, as he is Sharon's antithesis. Ben-Yosef sacrificed his soul for the people of Israel, while Sharon is robbing the nation. We hope the Lord will take him from us."

Rabbi Davan said questions were raised regarding Sharon's religion some two hours prior to the ceremony, as the ceremony may be conducted only against people who are Jewish according to *halacha* (traditional Jewish law).

"The kabbalist rabbis told us not to do it, but eventually it was decided to perform the ceremony, as Sharon is considered by the public to be Jewish," he said.

A few months ago unidentified right-wing activists sent Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz a letter in which they threatened to perform a *Pulsa Dinura* ceremony against him.

Russian paper shut down over cartoon

THE municipal daily *Gorodskiy Vestnik* (Town News) in Volgograd, Russia, was closed down in mid-February after the paper carried an article headlined "There must be no room for racists at the top", along with a cartoon depicting Christ, Moses, Buddha and Mohammed watching television together.

The television screen showed two groups of people ready to start fighting, with a caption "We have never taught them to do that". The Volgograd's mayor's office said that acting head of the city administration Andrey Doronin signed the ruling that shut the paper down.

Volgograd Prosecutor's Office has launched an investigation under article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code "Inciting ethnic or religious strife" over the publication.

After the recent Muslim caricature controversy, Russian media organisations have been ordered not to publish anything that could be construed as offensive to any religion or they risk losing their licences.

Russia's media and culture watchdog, the Federal Service for the Oversight of Legislation in Mass Communications and the Protection of Cultural Heritage, has pledged to take a tough line against any organisation accused of "insulting religious feelings".

A spokesman said: "Measures envisaged in Russian legislation, including the cancellation of registration, will be taken if any Russian media issue materials insulting religious feelings."

After *Gorodskiy Vestnik* published the cartoon, regional prosecutor, Leonid Belyak, wrote in a letter to the editor: "Given the real-

ities of the complicated inter-religious situation in the world and Russia, publications of such cartoons may provoke an inappropriate reaction from believers, may give extremist forces cause to incite religious discord and have very negative consequences."

The editor, Tatyana Kaminskaya, objected to the investigation and said the cartoon was designed as a protest against religious and inter-ethnic intolerance.



Earlier, the row was re-ignited in France when the left-wing satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* published the 12 Danish cartoons and added some of their own.

Under the title *Mahomet débordé par les intégristes* (Mohammed overwhelmed by fundamentalists), the front page showed a cartoon of a weeping Prophet Mohammed saying "C'est dur d'être aimé par des cons" (It's hard to be loved by morons).

Compared to a regular circulation of 100,000 sold copies, this edition was a great commercial success. 160,000 copies were sold, another 150,000 were in print later that day.

Cookies for vampires

IN an attempt to learn more about the Danes and their relationship with their Muslim population of some 100,000, to better understand the background to the cartoon controversy, I unearthed an amusing little item concerning "Jewish" cookies.

According to a report last December in the daily Danish newspaper *BT*, a group of Muslims got the hump over this popular product, made with cinnamon and hazelnuts, because of the word "Jewish" in its name. The cookies enjoy their highest sales in Denmark in the pre-Christmas period. There is nothing particularly Jewish about them. Indeed, they are not even kosher.

Demonstrating a degree of tolerance rarely seen among his Muslim counterparts, Denmark's chief rabbi, Bent Lexner, said that he did not see any problem in renaming the product, if that would make the prickly Muslims happy. But he did add: "I think that it would be better to educate Muslims to respect the culture of the majority in Denmark, if they want the majority to respect their culture."

The story found its way onto the Dhimmivatch website, and prompted a lively debate. One posting made this point: "Sorry to be serious about a trivial matter, but I don't think the Rabbi's response was the right one. This is classic 'thin end of the wedge' (or should that be biscuit?) territory. Changing the name, however 'non-Jewish' this biscuit is, concedes that the word 'Jewish' is in itself offensive to Muslims – ie it concedes that Muslims are allowed to be inherently anti-Semitic. It's the word, not the biscuit, that is important here. The PC brigade makes much of 'PC' language, and language is without doubt an important battlefield. The Rabbi makes an elegant statement, but, without getting hot-headed about the issue, he does need to stand firmer."

Another correspondent wrote: "It's funny how they [the Muslims] find so many tiny things 'offensive' – but just look at all the things they DON'T find offensive:

"Mass murder of infidels, female genital mutilation, beheadings of infidels, slavery, suicide bombing, honour killings and car-b-cues.

"Nary a word about the above, but ice-cream cone swirls and Piglet cartoons send them into paroxysms of injured feelings."

It was at this point that I remembered reading once about the grisly ingredients of a special pastry eaten during the Jewish holiday of Purim, and wondered whether Muslims in Denmark had this story in mind when they voiced their objection to the Jewish cookies.

A few years back, the Middle East Media and Research Institute (MEMRI) published excerpts of a translation of a piece which had appeared in the Saudi-Arabian daily newspa-

per *Al-Riyadh* on March 10, 2002. Guest columnist Dr Umayma Ahmad Al-Jalahma, of King Faysal University in Al-Dammam, in commenting on the Jewish holiday of Purim, said: "I chose to speak about Purim because it is connected to the month of March. This Jewish holiday has some dangerous customs that will, no doubt, horrify you, and I apologise if any reader is harmed because of this.

"During this holiday, the Jew must prepare very special pastries, the filling of which is not only costly and rare – it cannot be found at all on the local and international markets.

"Unfortunately, this filling cannot be left out, or substituted with any alternative serving the same purpose. For this holiday, the Jewish people must obtain human blood so that their clerics can prepare the holiday pastries. In other words, the practice cannot be carried out as required if human blood is not spilled!!

"Before I go into the details, I would like to clarify that the Jews' spilling human blood to prepare pastry for their holidays is a well-established fact, historically and legally, all throughout history. This was one of the main reasons for the persecution and exile that were their lot in Europe and Asia at various times.

Jewish zealot jailed for knife attack on gays

AN ultra-Orthodox Jew has been given a 12-year jail term for stabbing three people during a gay pride march held in Jerusalem last year. Yishai Schlisel told police he wanted to kill homosexuals "in the name of God" for parading in the holy city.

One man and two women were hurt when Schlisel attacked the colourful crowd of dancing, kissing revellers. The gay pride march was held after Israel's top court overturned a municipal order banning the event.

Jerusalem's mayor had opposed the march, describing it as a provocation, and the city's Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities had also protested against it. Speaking after his arrest, Mr Schlisel said: "I have come to kill in the name of God."

A Jerusalem court convicted him of attempted murder.

"This holiday [Purim] begins with a fast, on March 13. The holiday continues on March 14; during the holiday, the Jews wear carnival-style masks and costumes and over-indulge in drinking alcohol, prostitution, and adultery. This holiday has become known among Muslim historians as the "Holiday of Masks."

"Today, I would like to tell you how human blood is spilled so that it can be used for their holiday pastries. The blood is spilled in a special way. How is it done? For this holiday, the victim must be a mature adolescent who is, of course, a non-Jew – that is, a Christian or a Muslim.

"His blood is taken and dried into granules. The cleric blends these granules into the pastry dough; they can also be saved for the next holiday ... The blood of Christian and Muslim children under the age of 10 must be used, and the cleric can mix the blood [into the dough] before or after dehydration.

"Let us now examine how the victims' blood is spilled. For this, a needle-studded barrel is used. These needles pierce the victim's body, from the moment he is placed in the barrel. The victim's blood drips from him very slowly. Thus, the victim suffers dreadful torment – torment that affords the Jewish vampires great delight as they carefully monitor every detail of the blood-shedding with pleasure and love that are difficult to comprehend.

"There is another way to spill the blood: The victim can be slaughtered as a sheep is slaughtered, and his blood collected in a container. Or, the victim's veins can be slit in several places, letting his blood drain from his body.

"This blood is very carefully collected – as I have already noted – by the 'rabbi,' the Jewish cleric, the chef who specialises in preparing these kinds of pastries.

"The human race refuses even to look at the Jewish pastries, let alone prepare them or consume them!"

This preposterous fantasy, which sounds like a fusion of the Brothers Grimm and Monty Python, was said by an embarrassed *Al-Riyadh's* editor Turki al Sudairy "to have slipped through the cracks" and "should never have been published".

But, given that the article was run in two parts over two consecutive editions, his apology looked a little lame. More serious is the fact that this sort of garbage is grist to the mill of many newspapers in Muslim countries, and it is no wonder that so many Muslims are imbued with a world view so skewed by a diet of religious nonsense that they are quite unable to differentiate between fact and fantasy.

How long will it be before some Muslims hot heads object to hot cross buns, and croissant, which resemble the Islamic crescent moon symbol?

– Barry Duke

THE motivation of the Iraqi woman would-be suicide bomber in Jordan, Sajida Rishawi, has been the subject of considerable speculation in the media, including the December *Freethinker* article, "The Puzzle of the Suicide Bomber", and a comment on it in the readers' letters in January.

The author of the article came to the conclusion that fame was the spur, while the letter-writer put it down to the woman's being trapped in a loveless marriage. However, as Sajida displayed no relevant emotion when interrogated, nor any sign of general insanity, neither of those motives could possibly account for so extreme a response as mass murder linked to suicide.

Belief in an enticing posthumous reward is more plausible, but in that case surely some consequent feelings of guilt and frustration at her failure to detonate her belted bomb would have been apparent in the woman's demeanour during her televised confession. Besides, the Islamic tradition does not promise women the same tangible afterlife reward for martyrdom as it does their menfolk.

No; her true motive was, I am certain, simply obedience. She explained that her husband had made two explosive belts. He wore one himself and fitted her with the other, teaching her how to control it and pull the detonating cord. When the prearranged time came, in a large hotel function-room in Amman, he successfully detonated his bomb, while she, in the opposite corner of the room, tried to emulate him, but her bomb failed to explode.

When captured, she apparently did not even contemplate claiming that she had deliberately prevented explosion of the bomb. Not only would this have ensured her a free pardon: she would still have escaped her supposed loveless marriage, and it would not have robbed her of any of her fame – in fact, rather the reverse. But it would have been an admission of disobedience to her late husband.

The Arabic word *islam* means submission – intended primarily as the unconditional submission of a male Muslim to Allah, but secondarily as the submission of a Muslim wife to her husband, who must interpret for her Allah's revealed will.

Not that Islam is the only religious tradition to regard unquestioning obedience to authority as

The Sin of Obedience

the highest moral principle. The Judaic scripture explains human suffering, in Just-So style, by positing the "sin of disobedience" perpetrated by Adam and Eve in eating "the forbidden fruit" with dire consequences for all human beings (and even other species of animal) for ever afterwards. This fruit is said to confer on our first

BARBARA SMOKER probes the supposed virtue of obedience

parents the "knowledge of good and evil", which God presumably wished to keep from them; but how they could be held guilty of the sin of disobedience, or anything else, before acquiring that knowledge, is not made clear.

Since Christianity swallowed the Old Testament as well as the New, it naturally adopted approval of blind obedience – an ethical principle which proved to be so useful to rulers, feudal lords, slave owners, the military,

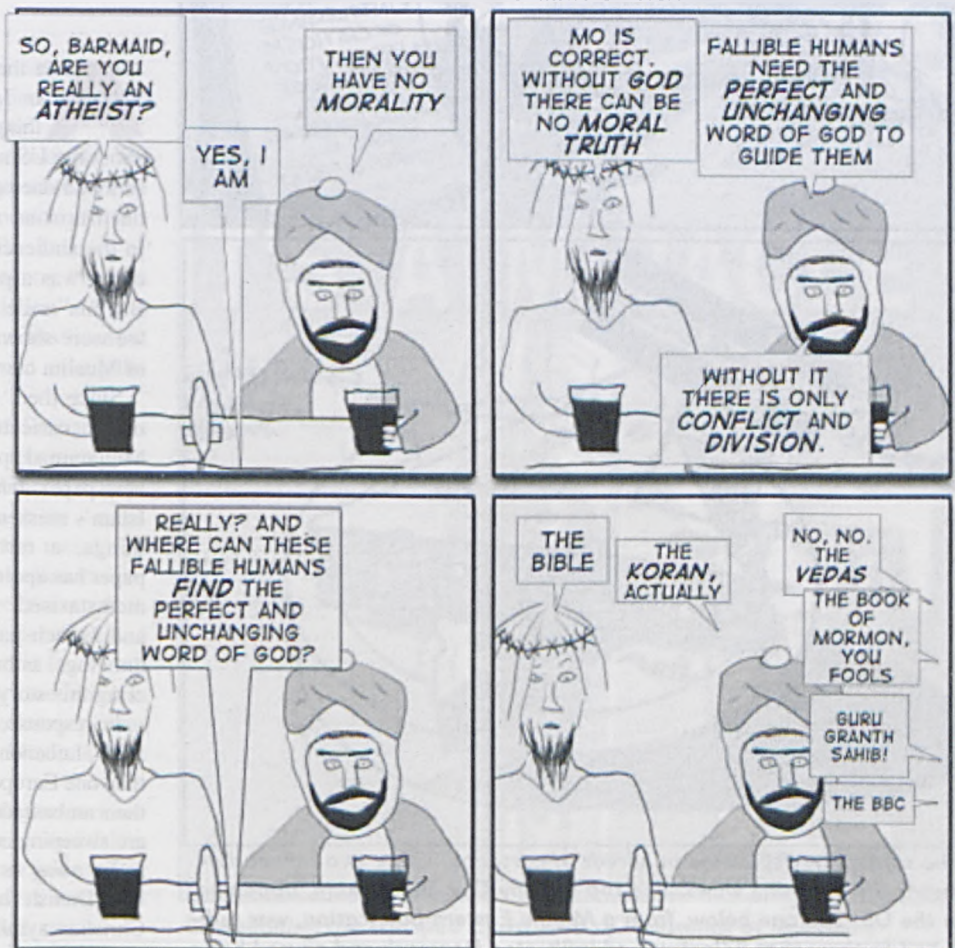
captains of industry, and administrators, that they have all incorporated it in their jurisdiction. National dictators, particularly, have demanded total obedience from their people.

Thus it was, historically, that under Adolf Hitler the Nazi leaders apparently did not even consider that their highest moral responsibility might be to their individual consciences based on a true assessment of how they were instructed to act in terms of general welfare, rather than to absolute obedience to the demands of the party machine and its Fuhrer. The outcome, at the post-war Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, was the almost universal plea "I was only obeying orders", which the Allied victors disdained (though citizens of the Soviet Union must have understood it from their similar ideology on the opposite side).

Small children, before they are able to reason adequately, have to be schooled, of course, in unreasoning obedience, for their own safety. (The Catholic Church has traditionally put "the age of reason" at about seven years.) But that initial principle of blind obedience to authority should be replaced gradually by reasoned ethics as young people attain maturity.

The Nazis thus exhibited repressed moral development; as, too, do god-worshippers, especially Muslim fundamentalists and their submissive wives.

Jesus and Mo



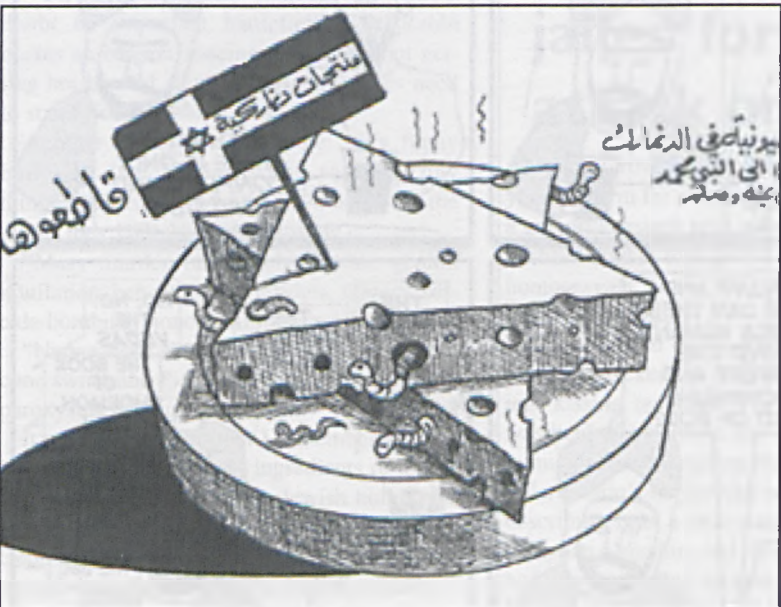
Cartoons quote

"THESE extremists should be told: you can't complain that Islam is being tarred with terrorism, then instantly threaten to terrorise those who have thus depicted Islam. It is perverse. Yet Jack Straw grovels like a spaniel, even though the cartoons have not been printed here."

– Jasper Gerard, *Sunday Times*



Contrary to what Muslims say, images of Mohammed have existed for centuries. The image on the right is a 1928 German advertisement for a meat extract product which depicted Mohammed as a saint.



The controversy spawned hundreds of cartoons. These two reflect diametrically opposing views. The top one, by Cox and Forkum, appeared in the US. The one below, from a Middle Eastern publication, was published to show that "Zionism had infiltrated Denmark and caused harm to the Prophet Mohammed".

Standing up for the right to mock

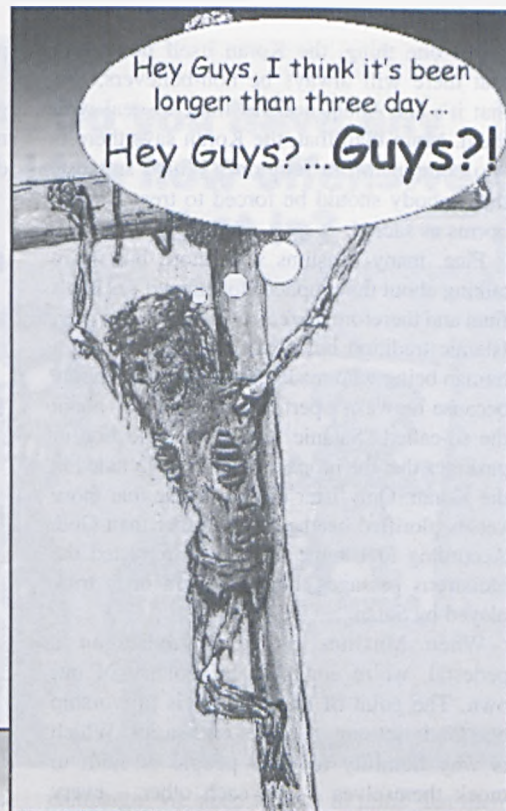
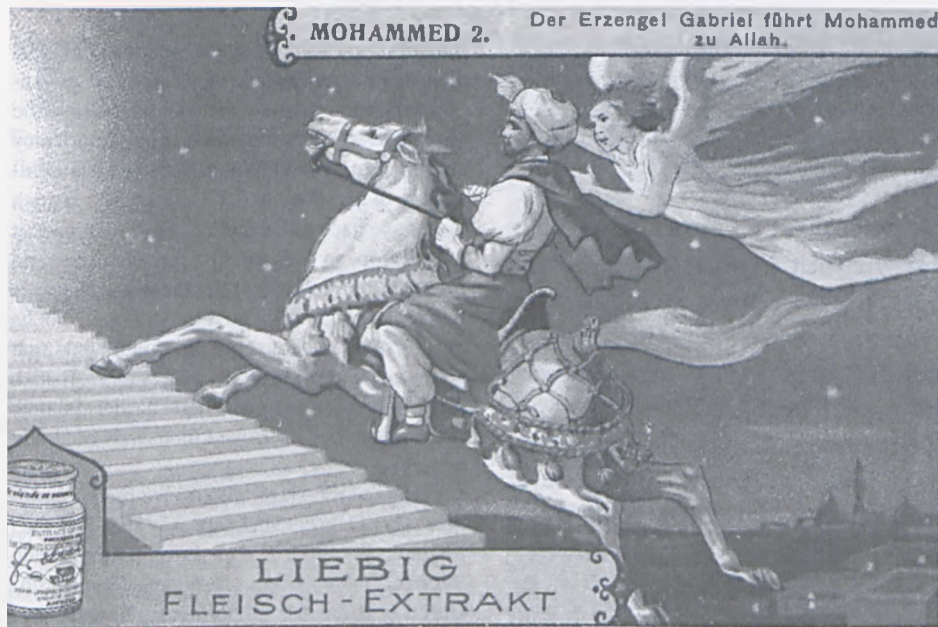
Two Muslim clerics, Irshad Manji and Warraq, comment on the cartoons controversy

At the World Economic Forum in January, I observed something revealing. In a session about the US religious right, a cartoonist satirised one of America's most influential Christian ministers, Pat Robertson. In the audience, chuckling with the rest of us, was a prominent British Muslim. But his smile disappeared the moment we were shown a cartoon that made fun of Muslim clerics.

Since then, a fierce fight has erupted over caricatures of the prophet Muhammad published by the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*. One showed Islam's messenger wearing, among other things, a turban-bomb. Although the paper has apologised, the controversy has metastasised. A Norwegian magazine and French paper recently reprinted the drawings, as have other broadcasters and publications while covering this story.

In response, Muslim rioters torched Scandinavian missions in Syria, Lebanon and Iran. Bomb threats have hit the offices of more than one European newspaper. Various Arab countries have recalled their ambassadors from Copenhagen. Boycotts of Danish products are sweeping across supermarkets in the Arab world, and Muslims as far away as India and Indonesia are pouring into the streets to burn Danish flags — which feature the cross, among the holiest of Christian symbols. Last week, thousands of Palestinians shouted "Death to Denmark!" Copenhagen has evacuated Danish citizens from the Gaza Strip and has sternly warned nationals in the West





...d for centuries. The one on the left is an early Persian depiction of Mohammed preaching. On the right which depicts the archangel Gabriel guiding Mohammed up to Allah.

for the right < religion

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Bank to get out as well. Muslims themselves are getting pummelled in the riots: four died in Afghanistan on one day alone.

Arab elites love such controversies, for they provide convenient opportunities to channel anger away from local injustices. No wonder President Emile Lahoud of Lebanon insisted that his country "cannot accept any insult to any religion". That's

rich. Since the late 1970s, the Lebanese Government has licensed the Hezbollah-run satellite television station al-Manar, among the most viciously anti-Semitic broadcasters on earth.

Similarly, the Justice Minister of the United Arab Emirates has said that the Danish cartoons represent "cultural terrorism, not freedom of expression". This from a country that promotes its capital as the "Las Vegas of the Gulf", yet blocks my website – muslim-refusenik.com – for being "inconsistent with the moral values" of the UAE. Presumably, my site should be an online casino.

Muslims have little integrity in demanding respect for our faith if we don't show it for others. When have we demonstrated against Saudi Arabia's policy to prevent Christians and Jews from stepping on the soil of Mecca? They may come for rare business trips, but nothing more. As long as Rome welcomes non-Christians and Jerusalem embraces non-Jews, we Muslims have more to protest against than cartoons.

None of this is to dismiss the need to take my religion seriously. Hell, Muslims even take seriously the need to be serious: Islam has a teaching against "excessive laughter". I'm not joking. But does this mean that we should cry "blasphemy" over less-than-flattering depictions of the prophet Mohammed? God, no.

(Continued on p10)



Lamponing the crucified Christ: two of thousands of less-than-respectful images of Jesus found on the web. Christians may loathe such mockery, but rarely react to it with violence.

For one thing, the Koran itself points out that there will always be non-believers, and that it's for Allah, not Muslims, to deal with them. More than that, the Koran says there is "no compulsion in religion". Which suggests that nobody should be forced to treat Islamic norms as sacred.

Fine, many Muslims will retort, but we're talking about the prophet Mohammed – Allah's final and therefore perfect messenger. However, Islamic tradition holds that the prophet was a human being who made mistakes. It's precisely because he wasn't perfect that we know about the so-called "Satanic Verses"; a collection of passages that the prophet reportedly included in the Koran. Only later did he realise that those verses glorified heathen idols rather than God. According to Islamic legend, he retracted the idolatrous passages, blaming them on a trick played by Satan.

When Muslims put the prophet on a pedestal, we're engaging in idolatry of our own. The point of monotheism is to worship one God, not one of God's emissaries. Which is why humility requires people of faith to mock themselves – and each other – every once in a while.

Irshad Manji is a visiting fellow at Yale University and author of *The Trouble with Islam*. The comment above first appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*. She attracts a great deal of hate mail from Muslim zealots. The following two are typical of the messages she receives.

The first reads: "One message for u manji... u are nothing but a devil a fuckin devil. please I beg u ... Go jump off a cliff, u will do the world a huge favor. u are totally whacko in head and ur existence is a shame to everyone. u just like to bask in ur shortlived fame in the media, supporting the zionists because u can get lots of money from those rich bastards. u dont speak for the Muslims, i read ur book and it is the biggest piece of crap ever. please do not call urself a Muslim. i hope u burn in the deepest fires of hell for leading ppl to such great falsehood. i saw that picture of u with the fucker rushdie and for a second I saw two devils staring out at me. if u wanna sink dont take ppl with u. u target weak Muslims and drag them into hellfire with u. i cannot comprehend what must be happening in ur brain. please kill urself and burninhell u *dajjals* left hand. P.S. ur hair looks terrible with the sharp ends, like ur heart which has thorns in it."

The second says: "I hope you enjoy your life now, make the most of it. Spend all that dirty money you made. Cos you going to hell. I hope allah forgives you. Actually, i dont, i honestly hope that ariel sharon, bush, blair and all them other punks gang bang you in hell. You would love that (actually i think they wont go near you with a barge poll) spend some of that money on

plastic surgery love, you need it (bad)."

To which Irshad retorted: "Why would a good Muslim boy like you recommend cosmetic surgery to me? Isn't that promoting decadent Western values?"

'A democracy cannot survive long without freedom of expression, the freedom to argue, to dissent, even to insult and offend. It is a freedom sorely lacking in the Islamic world, and without it Islam will remain unassailed in its dogmatic, fanatical, medieval fortress; ossified, totalitarian and intolerant'

Best-selling author and Muslim dissident Ibn Warraq argues that freedom of expression is our western heritage and we must defend it against attacks from totalitarian societies. If the west does not stand in solidarity with the Danish, he argues, then the Islamisation of Europe will have begun in earnest. This article first appeared in the German publication, *Spiegel*.

THE cartoons in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* raise the most important question of our times: freedom of expression. Are we in the West going to cave into pressure from societies with a medieval mindset, or are we going to defend our most precious freedom – freedom of expression, a freedom for which thousands of people sacrificed their lives?

A democracy cannot survive long without freedom of expression, the freedom to argue, to dissent, even to insult and offend. It is a freedom sorely lacking in the Islamic world, and without it Islam will remain unassailed in its dogmatic, fanatical, medieval fortress; ossified, totalitarian and intolerant. Without this fundamental freedom, Islam will continue to stifle thought, human rights, individuality; originality and truth.

Unless we show some solidarity – unashamed, noisy, public solidarity – with the Danish cartoonists, then the forces that are trying to impose on the free West a totalitarian ideology will have won; the Islamisation of Europe will have begun in earnest. Do not apologise.

This raises another more general problem: the inability of the West to defend itself intellectually and culturally. Be proud, do not apologise. Do we have to go on apologising for the sins of our fathers? Do we still have to apologise, for example, for the British Empire, when, in fact, the British presence in India led to the Indian Renaissance, and resulted in famine relief, railways, roads and irrigation

schemes, eradication of cholera, the civil service, the establishment of a universal educational system where none existed before, the institution of elected parliamentary democracy and the rule of law? What of the British architecture of Bombay and Calcutta? The British even gave back to the Indians their own past: it was European scholarship, archaeology and research that uncovered the greatness that was India; it was British government that did its best to save and conserve the monuments that were a witness to that past glory. British Imperialism preserved where earlier Islamic Imperialism had destroyed thousands of Hindu temples.

On the world stage, should we really apologise for Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe? Mozart, Beethoven and Bach? Rembrandt, Vermeer, Van Gogh, Breughel, Ter Borch? Galileo, Huygens, Copernicus, Newton and Darwin? Penicillin and computers? The Olympic Games and football? Human rights and parliamentary democracy?

The West is the source of the liberating ideas of individual liberty, political democracy, the rule of law, human rights and cultural freedom. It is the West that has raised the status of women, fought against slavery, defended freedom of enquiry, expression and conscience. No, the West needs no lectures on the superior virtue of societies who keep their women in subjection, cut off their clitorises, stone them to death for alleged adultery, throw acid on their faces, or deny the human rights of those considered to belong to lower castes.

How can we expect immigrants to integrate into Western society when they are at the same time being taught that the West is decadent, a den of iniquity, the source of all evil, racist, imperialist, and to be despised? Why should they, in the words of the African-American writer James Baldwin, want to integrate into a sinking ship? Why do they all want to immigrate to the West and not Saudi Arabia?

They should be taught about the centuries of struggle that resulted in the freedoms that they and everyone else for that matter, cherish, enjoy, and avail themselves of; the individuals and groups who fought for these freedoms and who are despised and forgotten today; the freedoms that much of the rest of world envies, admires and tries to emulate." When the Chinese students cried and died for democracy in Tiananmen Square (in 1989), they brought with them not representations of Confucius or Buddha but a model of the Statue of Liberty."

Freedom of expression is our Western heritage and we must defend it or it will die from totalitarian attacks. It is also much needed in the Islamic world. By defending our values, we are teaching the Islamic world a valuable lesson, we are helping them by submitting their cherished traditions to Enlightenment values.

This is an opposing view, posted by Shaykh Riyad Nadwion, the Muslim Council of Britain's website, on February 6 under the heading *It's a Question of Love, Newsnight, not Fear!*

AS Muslims across the world voice their displeasure at cartoons in Europe depicting the Prophet of Islam as a terrorist, and journalists repeat the well-worn mantras of "wake-up call", "freedom-of-speech in danger", "Muslims must conform to our norms", and "secularist traditions under threat", many are still wondering "What is all the fuss about?"

On the BBC *Newsnight* programme, Mr Stephen Green of "Christian Voice", who had earlier led the campaign against the staging of *Jerry Springer the Opera*, supported the cartoons by arguing that Islam is different. As he puts it, "Christians do not blow up bombs on the London Underground". I urge Mr Green to reflect on the fact that as a Muslim who loves and respects Jesus (on whom be peace) I was also deeply offended by the clips I saw of the Jerry Springer show, and the fact that a devout Christian like Mr Bush had invaded Muslim countries and probably caused the deaths of 150,000 Muslims in less than five years did not prevent me from writing a strong letter of protest against that opera.

These cartoons are being hailed as a barometer of freedom and European tradition and many Western commentators have begun to swallow this "spin" – hook, line and sinker. A prime example of this was Mr Tim Whewell's report on *Newsnight* yesterday, in which the newspaper editor who engineered this controversy, Flemming Rose, called for a debate about how much the "receiving country" and "migrant community" have to compromise. For good measure, Mr Whewell included in his report a scroll through several anti-Zionist cartoons from Arab newspapers, without pointing out that nowhere in the Muslim world will you find a disparaging cartoon of the Prophet Moses. Nor did Mr Whewell bother to look for the numerous examples of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim cartoons in the Israeli press.

The first point that seems to have eluded these journalists, and also happens to be very convenient for a certain interest group, is that Muslims still love and respect their Prophet – genuine love that is, as usual, hard to express in words.

Indeed, it is difficult to find comparisons in today's Britain to convey the intensity of this sentiment to a Western audience. Perhaps the public emotion for Princes Diana upon her death and the respect for the Queen Mother can help to elaborate the point. These were people who had relatively little impact on the daily lives of those who adored them and yet I doubt that there would be any newspaper in Britain today that would publish a derogatory cartoon of either of these women. To grasp a glimpse of the attach-



ment Muslims have to their Prophet, one would need to combine the feelings of respect and love for these two women in the British consciousness and multiply it a hundred times over. The Prophet's words and deeds impact the lives of Muslims around the world every day in countless ways, from the way they greet each other in the morning to the last words they pray at night. He is for them the perfect example of guidance and compassion, and is dearer to a Muslim than his own family.

The second point that appears to evade journalists is that these cartoons, whilst undoubtedly very effective tools for creating tension between Palestinians and Europeans in Palestine, and between Muslims and Christians worldwide, were produced with the full knowledge of the impact they would have on the Muslim heart. When someone takes a conscious decision to offend 1.5 billion people across the world, "good journalism" requires a search to discover the underlying motives. What we were offered in Mr Whewell's report, however, was superficial gloss and inaccurate comparisons.

The time has come for the editors of programmes such as *Newsnight* to stop furthering the agenda of others by scaring people into believing that they are about to be imprisoned by a Muslim army. Instead, they should start asking intelligent questions. Shouldn't "free speech" also provide the freedom to ask why there are so many pro-Israel journalists campaigning to promote Anthony Browe's *Triumph of the East* and Giselle Littman's "Eurabia" theories of scaremongering?

To Muslims I say, in expressing your feelings on this matter, please do not play into the hands of those who have orchestrated this

campaign. We need to bear in mind that their objective is not simply to denigrate the Prophet but to create *fitna* (strife in our world) between Muslims and the rest of the world. They study our history; they know that this technique has been employed successfully in the past. In Muslim Spain, there was a coordinated campaign of sending people to stand outside Mosques after *Juma* to curse the Prophet. The aim was to provoke excessive reaction and create friction with the non-Muslims, and sadly it worked. This campaign was the beginning of a long process that eventually culminated in the forced removal of Muslims from Spain altogether.

Difficult as it may be to control the eruption of feelings and anger in the face of such provocation, it is absolutely imperative that we maintain focus on the real source of this problem and not get entangled in the traps they have set for us.

Our responses must be both measured and wise so that our impulsive reactions do not become a source of celebration for our antagonists. Our love for the Prophet should manifest itself in our words and our actions. Our claim to love him will appear hollow if our actions violate the standard of conduct he has set for us.

Of course, we must let people know how we feel and the injustice done by this act of spiteful mockery, but for those of us who may feel that they must respond with equally spiteful generalisations and calls for extreme actions, in contravention of the teachings of the very Prophet that we are supposed to be defending, they must realise that they would be doing exactly what was expected of them by those who have instigated this problem in the first place.

Fanning the flames of hatred



“There’s an organisation of more fundamentalist Muslims in Denmark that we haven’t seen before. This is doubtless due to the increased polarisation of Danish society. When Danes and Muslims distance from each other, each side finds new allies. One way of bonding with new allies is to find new enemies—for example, anyone who doesn’t interpret Islam in the same way that you do. It’s an unfortunate trend that doesn’t benefit anyone at all.”

“THE problem is that many Muslims have a hard time understanding that all values are open to discussion in the Danish public arena. Nothing’s sacred – and anyone who has an idea that certain issues are untouchable is bound to clash with someone at some point.”

– Professor Torben Ruberg Rasmussen of the University of Southern Denmark’s Centre for Middle East Studies, Oct 2004

Radical Liberal MP Naser Khader told the newspaper that he had also noticed how well-informed extremist Muslim groups were becoming. “The image of these groups has changed quite a bit over the past two to three years, and the methods have become much more aggressive. I used to experience aggressive behavior when I was at political meetings, but now it’s moved into the private sphere. I can be confronted with it when I’m out with my children,” said Khader, who declined to elaborate on his negative encounters.

In 2003, a BBC television *Newsnight* report made a connection between increasing fundamentalist activity in Denmark and the British-based Muslim organisation, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. Speaking on the *Newsnight* programme, a British Muslim leader, who did not want to be identified for fear of reprisals, prophetically said “I believe that if *Hizb Ut Tahrir* are not stopped at this stage, and we continue to let them politicise and pollute the youngsters’ minds and other gullible people’s minds, then what will happen in effect is that these terrorism acts and these suicide bombings that we hear going on in foreign countries, we will actually start seeing these incidents happening on our doorstep.”

After the bomb attacks in London, the spokesman for the Danish branch of *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, Fadi Abdullatif, was charged with calling for the killing

of members of the Danish government. On a flyer distributed in Denmark, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* said: “So, travel to help your brothers in Falluja and exterminate your rulers if they block your way.”

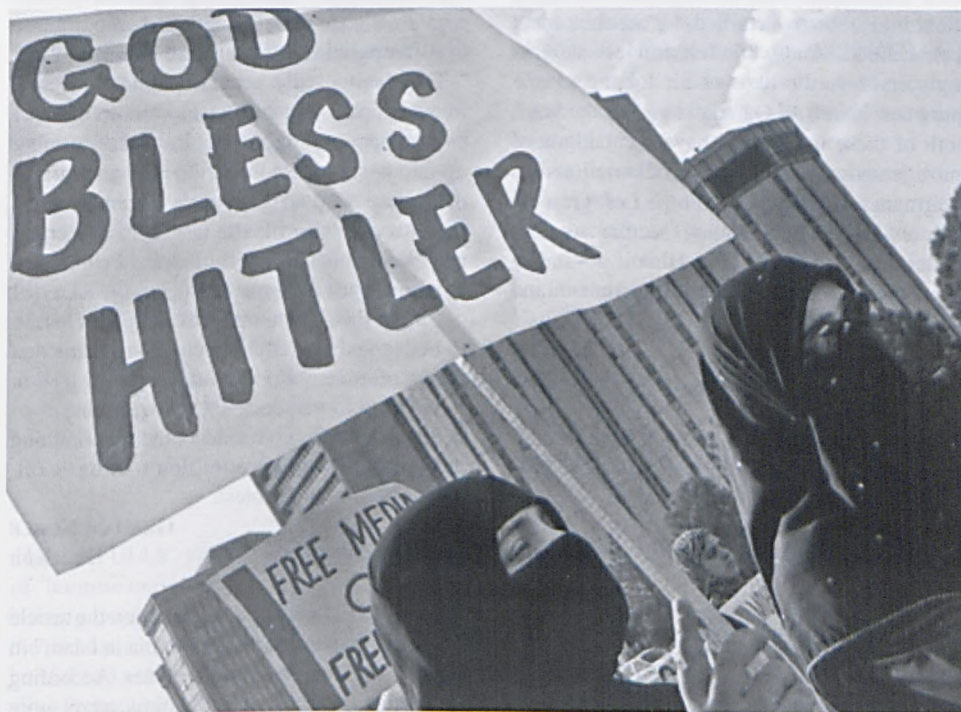
Newsnight reporter Imran Khan pointed out that, nine years earlier, *Newsnight* had highlighted fears over *Hizb Ut Tahrir*’s rising influence and their militant messages in the UK. The organisation was condemned as openly racist. The National Union of Students described it as “the single biggest extremist threat in the UK” and tried to ban it from campuses. After fading from view in the late 1990s, the group enjoyed a resurgence of popularity several years later.

Khan travelled to Denmark, where *Hizb Ut Tahrir* had attracted the attention of the police and the courts because of its anti-Semitic activities. In March and April 2002, it handed out leaflets in a square in Copenhagen, and at a mosque. The leaflet, which also appeared on the Danish groups internet site, made threats against Jews, using a quote from the Koran urging Muslims to “kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have been turned you out.” The leaflet also said, “The Jews are a people of slander...a treacherous people... they fabricate lies and twist words from their right context.” And the leaflet describes suicide bombings in Israel as “legitimate” acts of “martyrdom”.

In October 2002, Abdelatif was found guilty of distributing racist propaganda. He was given a 60-day suspended sentence.



One of the 12 “offensive” Danish cartoons. When the row first erupted, the *Freethinker* republished two of the Danish cartoons in the November, 2005 issue.



The fascism of Islam exposed: this placard was photographed at an anti-Danish rally in Pakistan. Photo: T Mughal/dpa

The court rejected Abdelatif's argument that he was merely quoting from the Koran, and that the leaflet was an act of free speech. The court also did not accept that the leaflet was, as he argued, aimed solely at the Israeli state and not Jews generally. In particular, the court found that in "linking the quotes from the Koran to the subsequent description of Jews as a people characterised negatively ... is an evident statement of a threat against Jews."

The Danish magistrate described *Hizb Ut Tahrir* as secretive, but the case did expose something of the way the group was organised. The Danish police established that the web site on which the offending material was published was being hosted in the UK. That wasn't relevant to their case so they didn't pursue it any further.

Last year, a spokesman for the British branch of *Hizb Ut Tahrir* argued that his group disavows the use of violence and that Blair's decision to ban it puts the him in the dubious company of despotic leaders in Asia.

"Hizb ut-Tahrir has a 50-year-long history of non-violent political struggle against the most evil dictators and tyrants in the Muslim world, the spokesman said."

Concern over increasing militancy among Danish Muslims was voiced last year by Queen Margrethe II of Denmark. In her official biography published last April, she called on the country "to show our opposition to Islam", regardless of the opprobrium such a stance might provokes abroad.

In the book *Margrethe*, written by journalist Annelise Bistrup, the queen is quoted as voic-

ing disapproval of "these people for whom religion is their entire life". Her comments, at the time, further undermined the image of Denmark as a liberal haven for those seeking a new life in northern Europe.

She said: "We are being challenged by Islam these years – globally as well as locally. It is a challenge we have to take seriously. We have let this issue float about for too long because we are tolerant and lazy."

"We have to show our opposition to Islam and we have to, at times, run the risk of having unflattering labels placed on us because there are some things for which we should display no tolerance."

"And when we are tolerant, we must know whether it is because of convenience or conviction."

She said she understood how disaffected young Muslims might find refuge in religion. This tendency should be fought by encouraging Muslims to learn Danish so they could integrate better, she said.

"We should not be content with living next to each other. We should rather live together."

More than 400,000 of Denmark's 5.4 million inhabitants are immigrants, but only about 150,000 are Muslims, amounting to 3 percent of the population.

However, that still makes them the second-largest religious group in Denmark behind the Lutheran-Evangelical Church, of which the queen is supreme governor and to which 85 percent of the population belong.

The government has implemented a series of

measures in recent years aimed at curbing immigration, which include making it harder for people to bring in foreign spouses or gain asylum in Denmark.

As in France, the issue of Islamic headgear for women has caused controversy.

Last January, Denmark's Supreme Court ruled that a supermarket chain had the right to fire a young Muslim woman for wearing an Islamic headscarf to work.

Dead Men's Shoes

In China's land, in days of old,
When girls were born, so I am told,
Some great divine mistake occurred –
Their feet were not as Man preferred.

"Deformity has taken place,
Genetic error of our race.
So cut and bind and crush and cramp,
And place the feet inside a clamp.

Tradition must be satisfied,
Ancestors said (before they died),
And if your child's ideas are new,
Hold fast their feet and turn the screw.

Ignore the anguish and the pain
The child must bear, again, again,
No matter what we put them through,
The foot must fit within the shoe.

We do not fear such ways, you see
Our women's feet are bondage free;
One cruel nonsense left behind –
But now the target is the mind.

And so across the world today
When we are born, I've heard them say,
Some great divine mistake occurs,
Our minds are not as God prefers.

"Deformity has taken place,
Genetic error of this race.
So cut and bind and crush and cramp,
And place the mind inside a clamp.

Their thoughts are new and fresh and free,
Not as we want their minds to be,
So let us use manipulation,
Force feed them with indoctrination.

Their own free thoughts we must confine
And force them into our design,
Beliefs prepared before their birth,
Cultures, ethics, sense of worth.

Ancient tribesmen, superstitions,
Vindictive gods and cruel traditions,
Angels, goblins, devils, hells –
Religion is what all this spells.

Make them Christian, Muslim, Jew,
What they must think, what they must do.
No matter what we put them through,
The foot must fit within the shoe.

– Bill Dawson

Free speech and Muslims

THE furore about the Danish cartoons of Mohammed, which I have not seen, is all over the news. And we have had some instant reaction from Jack Straw, who said that he thinks they are "disrespectful".

Mr Straw commended the British press for not publishing them. I wonder if Mr Straw thought that the placards threatening the "massacre" of those who published the cartoons were "disrespectful"?

Does he think that female genital mutilation, which is still widely practised on little girls, is "disrespectful"?

Is slitting the throats of live animals in Britain for religious or cultural reasons "disrespectful"?

Or was Mr Straw "disrespectful" to the British public in his judgement of his priorities and his indecent haste to appear on television?

DENIS WATKINS
Pembrokeshire

GRAHAM Noble completely misses the point when he calls on those he describes as "right-wing contributors" to the *Freethinker* to distinguish between "their dislike of religion" and their "dislike of immigrants". I do not believe any secular humanist is motivated by a dislike of immigrants. But left-wing, right-wing, or centrist, all of us have to face up to the fact that immigration policies have not only brought people here who benefit the economy and invigorate our social and cultural life, or who need sanctuary from persecution, but also significant numbers whom we could well do without.

It is intellectually dishonest of left-wingers, of Graham Noble's ilk, to pretend that any meaningful discussion of Islamic extremism in Britain can take place without examining immigration policy. The likes of Abu Hamza and other undesirables did not just fall from the sky; they arrived here via Dover, Southampton and Heathrow, as did many of the ruthless gangs behind organised crime in this country. The irony of Enoch Powell's appalling "rivers of blood" speech in 1968 was that it effectively led to the Left abandoning any sensible discussion of immigration in favour of the "default position" of an open-door policy. Hence left-wingers have nothing useful to say on this subject, or indeed, the Islamic fundamentalism that has taken root here, thanks, in part, to badly framed laws and lax border controls.

What is particularly galling to many of us is the way certain Muslim newcomers are demanding that the host community (and these days that includes people of all races and colours) not only reverses the enlightened social reforms of the last 40 years, such as the recognition of homosexual relationships and the emancipation of women, but that our hard-

won democratic and free-speech traditions should also be overturned to accommodate their beliefs! And while left-wingers increasingly embrace the likes of Sir Iqbal Sacranie and even Yusuf Al Qaradawi as "moderates", both of these individuals have a catalogue of outrageously reactionary proclamations to their name. Isn't it time that the Left grew up and realised that defending secular western values against encroaching Islamic militancy is *not* the same as defending imperialism and exploitation?

P T LACEY
London

I THINK freethinkers, above all, have to consider, then re-consider, an uncomfortable possibility: that if it is impossible to stop the spread of a political ideology which as a matter of mere orthodoxy is hostile to civil society, then it would be right for the government to stop people who believe such subversive notions getting into the country. (After all, we wouldn't have actively encouraged Nazis to settle here after the invasion of the Rhineland.)

Now, as we have signed the European Convention on Human Rights, and our political establishment has magnificently demonstrated it has bitten off more than the rest of us can chew, there is more reason for *Freethinker* readers to consider the real issue, and if that means that antique notions of being Left, Centre and Right, have to be jettisoned, so be it. People have fallen off donkeys before now. Not a problem, I would have thought for freethinking folk.

As things stand, were not another Muslim migrant to enter the UK, the reproductive rate of Muslims means that in some 20 years' time, Muslims will be in charge of the local political levers in places such as Sheffield, Bradford and Leicester.

So, those on the Left for whom "racism" is the only nightmare they are afflicted by, in a time not too far distant could be afflicted by a more terrifying daylight reality – having the affairs of the *dhimmis* managed by the faithful.

What chance then of the local library displaying the *Freethinker*? There would be no chance of GALHA material turning up in it, or of scenes of cowboy passion being shown at the local cinema. *And Some Like it Hot*?

K BELL
Wrexham.

SO, Muslims were outraged by a cartoon of Mohammed which suggested that their religion made them violent.

Big deal! We atheists are subjected to far worse, almost daily.

We are routinely portrayed by religious people as immoral, unprincipled, selfish brutes who have no inner life or higher feelings, who

care only about money and material wealth, who are unsafe to be around, and who deserve to suffer agonies in Hell for all eternity.

Even supposedly secular publications will impute appallingly sinister motives to those of us who oppose religion. But instead of forming up into hysterical mobs to threaten and intimidate those who so grievously defame us, we tend just to shrug off the insults in a tolerant, peaceable, atheistic kind of way. Foaming at the mouth just isn't our style.

I think this is a mistake. If there is a lesson to be learned from this ridiculous row, it's that taking offence is a powerful weapon.

We need to make use of that weapon.

So, next time you read or hear something derogatory about atheism, don't shrug it off. Take offence, and protest.

GRAHAM NOBLE
Fareham

I OBSERVED with total indignation the article "There is no basis for homophobia in Islam" in the current issue of the *Freethinker*. According to Professor Afshar, "If Muslims were more included it was far more likely that they would interact better with other communities." I find this rather a case of plain hypocrisy.

From my own experiences and observations it is the other way round. Muslims do not want to be part of the wider community. Indeed, they offer their religion as a reason to avoid social interaction with others. They are the ones who polarise themselves.

1 They do not go to restaurants because non-halal food is served.

2 They do not engage in community activities with other groups.

3 They hardly ever invite others to join in their celebrations/festivals.

4 They claim their religion forbids them consuming alcohol, yet they sell it to others in their restaurants and off-licences. Strange man Allah is. Do not drink, but sell it to the rest of us.

5 Let not your women speak to the infidels, but it is OK for your men to have the daughters of said infidels.

6 The head of the Bangladesh Caterers' Association said it needs 20,000 people a year from the Indian sub-continent to be given the right to settle here to work in Britain's 10,000 curry houses.

What would happen if all those who go out for a curry were to boycott those curry houses that are exclusively owned and staffed by Muslims? I cannot see their being patronised only by people of the faith. They would go bust.

Any reasonable person migrating to another country would make it his/her duty to integrate as swiftly as possible into that society. You will try to learn about the culture and customs and

make yourself part and parcel of your new country. Not Muslims. They make no attempt to speak the language or to appreciate its values. There is so much the host country can take and no more. I am all for integration; the sooner the better.

Incidentally, I am an immigrant. I do not drink, smoke or eat pork. I do go to pubs, restaurants, galleries, theatres and generally socialise with all sections of the society I live in. So much so I have been accused of not being a part of my ethnic group, because I openly condemn the wrongdoings of ethnic groups. I do not attempt to impose my cultural traditions on anyone. I believe in "live and let live".

EDDIE ROGERS
London

THANKFULLY, we have not seen hordes of homosexuals threatening murder or burning down embassies considering that the Koran and the Bible both say many hurtful and untrue things about homosexuality. Perhaps people of faith have much to learn from the moderation of the gay community.

JOHN HEIN
Editor, Scotsgay

National anthem

BARBARA Smoker is right that we need a new national anthem but her suggested words (Britannia's people we... Great Britain is our home) might not go down too well in Northern Ireland. It is part of the United Kingdom but not of Great Britain.

TESSA KENDALL
London

Barbara Smoker replies: Yet Northern Ireland accepts the Olympic Games identification GBR.

Green evangelists

SO the Christian Evangelists have finally found out what we atheists knew about 30-odd years ago – the problem of climate change. What took them so long? Faulty Intelligence again?

FABIAN ACKER
London

Editor's note: Mr Acker is referring to recent reports about the "greening" of American Evangelicals as a result of an initiative by the National Association of Evangelicals.

But the initiative has hit a brick wall. The NAE said it would now not take a stand on the issue because it was unable reach a consensus on global climate change with many of the US's key evangelical organisations. In a letter last month to NAE head Ted Haggard, more

than 20 evangelical leaders urged the NAE not to adopt "any official position" on global climate change because "Bible-believing evangelicals ... disagree about the cause, severity and solutions to the global warming issue."

The letter's signatories amounted to a Who's Who of politically-powerful evangelicals, including Charles W Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, and James C Dobson, chairman of Focus on the Family.

What Survives?

WHEN we die our corpses decompose somewhere where the natural processes can recycle our atoms and molecules for use by other living things ... not quite what others mean by life after death. The wrappings and coffin are not going to delay the decomposers for very long.

Cremation adds a large quantity of carbon dioxide to the existing surplus that already stands a good chance of making the environment unsuitable for humans, and a number of other animals, but if this happens it will be no more than a momentary shrug on the part of nature which will continue to encourage other plants and animals to carry on without human interference.

Without the self-admiring human to record our marvellous exploits we will all vanish, and within a million years, the blink of an evolutionary eye, there will be no evidence other than the chance fossil that humans ever existed, and the nearest living being capable of searching for fossils is unlikely to live close enough to do so.

What our fellow humans imagine happens to us was most entertaining. Thank you Michael for your article, *What Survives?* (*Freethinker*, February).

PETER ARNOLD
Channel

YOUR recent article *What Survives?* leads me to write to the *Freethinker* to inquire about death itself. Or more precisely, the disposal of the body after death.

Talking to my children about what they will do with mine when I die, the only definite thing I can say is that there must be absolutely no religious content in the disposal.

But, as to the present laws, I confess I am unclear. Could you or your readers enlighten me on the following:

1 The death certificate – who signs it and what further part does it play?

2 The preparation of the body either for burial or cremation – what has to be done for health reasons and by whom? Has someone to hold a certificate to carry out this work?

3 Do we have to go through funeral companies to be ripped off for extortionate amounts

to carry out this work?

4 Would it be possible for my relatives to cart my body in van, in a box, to the crematorium and see that it is simply pushed into the furnace?

5 What are the laws governing burial or cremation on private land?

6 Are there secular organisations that can help or advise, or organise for those who do not wish for the obscene presence of even the minutest religious particle at our disposal?

I have been sickened on more than one occasion when I have attended funerals of a brother and other close friends who had no time for religious stupidity, to see the event invaded by priests or their spokespersons in the guise of "invited friends".

I would appreciate an article or discussion on this subject in your publication.

R E PERRY
Coventry

Editor's note: Over to you, readers.

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Events & Contacts

Blackpool & Fylde Humanist Group: Information: John and Kath Wayland, 13 Elms Avenue, Lytham FY8 5PW. Tel: 01253 736397

Brighton & Hove Humanist Society: Information on 01273 227549/461404. www.stovold.v21hosting.co.uk/humanist.html. The Farm Tavern, Farm Road, Hove. Tuesday, March 7, 7.30pm. Norman Bacrac: *The Christian God is a Myth*.

Bristol Humanists: Information: Margaret Dearnaley on 0117 904 9490.

Bromley Humanists: Meetings on the second Tuesday of the month, 8 pm, at Friends Meeting House, Ravensbourne Road, Bromley. Information: 01959 574691. Website: www.slhg.adm.freeuk.com.

Central London Humanist Group: Contact Jemma Hooper, 75a Ridgmount Gardens, London WC1E 7AX. E-mail: rupert@clarity4words.co.uk. Tel: 02075804564.

Chiltern Humanists: Information: 01494 771851. Wendover Library, High Street, Wedover. Tuesday, March 14, 7.45pm. Annual General Meeting.

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

Cotswold Humanists: Information: Philip Howell, 2 Cleavelands Close, Cheltenham GL50 4PZ. Tel: 01242 528743.

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

Devon Humanists: Information: Roger McCallister, Tel: 01626 864046. E-mail: info@devonhumanists.org.uk. Website: www.devonhumanists.org.uk.

Ealing Humanists: Information: Secretary Alex Hill Tel: 0208 741 7016 or Charles Rudd 020 8904 6599.

East Cheshire and High Peak Secular Group: Information: Carl Pinel 01298 815575.

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

Essex Humanists: Programme available, Details: 01268 785295. Friends Meeting House, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford Road, Chelmsford. Sunday, February 12, 7.30pm. Annual General Meeting.

Fens and King's Lynn. New group being formed. Information: Edwin Salter on 01553 771917.

Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA): Information: 34 Spring Lane, Kenilworth CV8 2HB. Tel: 01926 858450.

Greater Manchester Humanist Group: Information: June Kamel 01925 824844. Monthly meetings (second Wednesday) Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

Hampstead Humanist Society: Information: NI Barnes, 10 Stevenson House, Boundary Road, London NW8 0HP.

Harrow Humanist Society: Information: 020 8863 2977. Monthly meetings, December – June (except January).

Havering & District Humanist Society: Information: Jean Condon 01708 473597.

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

Humanist Society of Scotland: Secretary: Ivan Middleton, 26 Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5QH. Tel: 0131 552 9046. Press and Information Officer: Robin Wood, 37 Inchmurrin Drive, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire. Tel: 01563 526710. Website: www.humanism-scotland.org.uk.

Humanist Society of Scotland – Dundee Group: Contact secretary Ron McLaren, Spiershill, St Andrews, Fife KY16 8NB. Tel: 01334 474551. E-mail: humanist@spiershill.fsworld.co.uk.

Glasgow Group: Information: Alan Henness. Tel: 07010 704776. E-mail: alan@humanism-scotland.org.uk.

Edinburgh Group: Information: 2 Saville Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 3AD. Tel 0131 667 8389.

Perth Group: Information: perth@humanism.scotland.org.uk

Humanist Society of West Yorkshire: Information: Robert Tee on 0113 2577009. Swarthmore, 3-7 Woodhouse Square, Leeds. Tuesday, March 14, 7.30pm. Mike David: *Threats to Our Freedom*.

Isle of Man Freethinkers. Information: Muriel Garland, 01624 664796. E-mail: murielgarland@clara.co.uk. Website: www.iomfreethinkers.co.uk

Isle of Wight Humanist Group. Information: David Broughton on 01983 755526 or e-mail davidb67@clara.co.uk

Leicester Secular Society: Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB. Tel: 0116 262 2250. Website: <http://homepages.stayfree.co.uk/Iss>. Public meeting: Sunday, 6.30pm.

Lewisham Humanist Group: Information: Denis Cobell: 020 8690 4645. Website: www.slhg.adm.freeuk.com. Friends Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, Catford. Thursday, March 30, 8pm. Colin Jones: *Humanist – or Still Hunter Gatherers?*

Mid-Wales Humanists: Information: Jane Hibbert on 01654 702883.

North East Humanists (Teesside Group): Information: C McEwan on 01642 817541.

North East Humanists (Tyneside Group): Information: the Secretary on 01434 632936.

North London Humanist Group: Monthly meetings. Information: Linda Wilkinson, 0208 882 0124.

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

Norwich Humanist Group: Information: Vincent G Chainey, Le Chene, 4 Mill Street, Bradenham, Thetford IP25 7PN. Tel: 01362 820982.

Reigate & District Humanist Group. Information: Roy Adderley on 01342 323882.

Sheffield Humanist Society: Information: 0114 2309754. Three Cranes Hotel, Queen Street, Sheffield. Wednesday, April 5, 8pm. Rob Murfin: *So Why Shouldn't They Teach Intelligent Design?*

South Hampshire Humanists: Information: 11 Glenwood Avenue, Southampton, SO16 3PY. Tel: 02380 769120.

South Place Ethical Society. Weekly talks/meetings/concerts Sundays 11am and 3pm at Conway Hall Library, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Tel: 0207242 8037/4. E-mail: library@ethicalsoc.org.uk. Monthly programmes on request.

Somerset: Details of South Somerset Humanists' meetings in Yeovil from Wendy Sturgess. Tel: 01458 274456.

Sutton Humanist Group: Information: 0208 773 0631. Website: www.slhg.adm.freeuk.com.

E-Mail: BrackenKemish@ukgateway.net.

The Thomas Paine Society. Information: 0115 986 0010. The 2006 Eric Paine Memorial Lecture by Dr JH Arnold: *The Politics of Medieval Unbelief*. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Saturday, March 4, 2pm.

Welsh Marches Humanist Group: Information: 01568 770282. Website: www.wmhumanists.co.uk. E-mail: rocheforts@tiscali.co.uk. Meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Ludlow, October to June.

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

Humani - the Humanist Association of Northern Ireland. Information: Brian McClinton, 25 Riverside Drive, Lisburn BT27 4HE. Tel: 028 9267 7264.

E-mail: brianmcclinton@btinternet.com

website: www.nirelandhumanists.net

Please send your listings and events notices to:
Listings, the *Freethinker*, PO Box 234, Brighton, BN1 4XD
Notices must be received by the 15th of the month preceding publication.