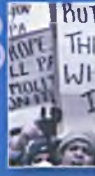




2 Top secularist:
Turkish MP Safak Pavey wins this year's Secularist of the Year Irwin Award



6 Shocking snub:
Honorary degree for Ayaan Hirsi Ali withdrawn after she is branded an 'Islamophobe'



8 Cartoon hysteria:
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the freethinker

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Tory push for a more religious Britain slammed by secularists

Despite poll after poll showing that Christianity in the UK is heading for extinction, top Tories are still insisting that religion not only needs to be vigorously promoted but should continue to enjoy a wide range of privileges. Last month, in what the British Humanist Association described as a “comical intervention on the subject”, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles MP insisted that Britain is a “Christian nation” and stated that “militant atheists” should “get over” the fact.

The BHA responded by pointing out that Pickles’ remarks were “simply untrue” and another example of the wilful misrepresentation at the highest levels of government of the demography of modern Britain.

Addressing the Conservative Spring Forum in London, Pickles called for atheists to stop imposing “politically correct intolerance on others”. He went on to claim that he had “stopped an attempt by militant atheists to ban councils having prayers at the start of meetings if they wish” (a reference to the government’s defence of allowing councils to make prayers compulsory for elected councillors).

NSS President Terry Sanderson immediately set the record straight: “He was referring, of course, to the National Secular Society’s 2012 High Court case that ruled that it is illegal for local councils to include prayers as part of their official agenda.

“After that decision, Mr Pickles rushed to bring forward by a few weeks the Localism Act and in doing so announced that councils could now keep prayers on their agenda if they want to.

“There is no mention in the Localism Act of council prayers, nor was there any in the parliamentary debates leading up to it. And the Act was given Royal Assent long before the High Court judgment

was issued. In that case, the High Court ruling stands and Mr Pickles’ contention that it doesn’t has never been tested in court.

“Mr Pickles seems to be taking the Alice in Wonderland approach to the law, as to paraphrase Humpty Dumpty ‘the law means what I want it to mean’. The NSS has told Mr Pickles repeatedly that



The ‘comical’ Eric Pickles

he is misrepresenting the facts of this case and yet he continues to do it. We never said that all prayers in Town Halls should be banned. We simply said that it shouldn’t be part of official business so that everyone, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jew, atheist or anyone else, could take part in good conscience and without intimidation. Many councils now have prayers before the meeting agenda begins, and we have no objection to that.

“Mr Pickles is entitled to be as enthusiastic an evangelical Christian as he wants to be, but we live in a democracy, not a theocracy. He cannot – as he has done – simply place his personal beliefs before the law.”

BHA Chief Executive Andrew Copson added:

“The Minister’s views are deeply misguided and he is simply incorrect – only a minority of people in Britain are practising Christians and over half of the population sees itself as non-religious according to repeated surveys. Although Christianity has undoubtedly had an influence on the cultural and social development of Britain, it is far from being the only influence. Many pre-Christian, non-Christian, and post-Christian forces have shaped our soci-

ety for the better and Christianity has often had ill effects. So, on a purely factual level Eric Pickles remarks are simply untrue.

“His comical misrepresentation of reality conceals a tragic public policy error. Any politician or government that tried to make
(Continued back page)

Presenting the *Freethinker* to a digital world

BARRY DUKE ON THE LAST PRINTED EDITION OF THE *FREETHINKER*

In the 2013 US comedy *The Internship*, two wristwatch salesman find themselves thrown on the scrapheap when their boss decides to shut up shop. The business is no longer viable because watches aren't needed. Now if people want to know the time, they look at their mobile phones. The same applies to the news. If people want to know what's going on in the world – from the latest situation in Syria to what's bubbling on Aunt Cynthia's cooker – they can use an Internet-enabled smart phone or iPad.

News is being relayed as it breaks, and individuals are increasingly using social networking sites like Facebook to convey information that is sometimes important enough for astute, watchful journalists to cotton onto, or just Cynthia's friends to know what Uncle Bert is having for supper.

The digital age has led to the biggest shake-up the communication industry has seen since the very first newspaper rolled off the presses. It was Johann Carolus' *Relation aller Fürnemmen und gedenckwürdigen Historien* (Account of all distinguished and memorable news) and was printed in Strasbourg in 1605. This I know because Wikipedia told me so, and I accessed that information in less than 20 seconds.

So, with reports of "all distinguished and memorable news" – as well as the goings-on in Cynthia Ogilvy's home – available to anyone connected to the Internet, it is hardly surprising that people no longer need encyclopaedias ... and more and more are eschewing newspapers and magazines.

Wristwatches, however, may hang in there

for quite some time, first because certain people will never get over their bling addictions, and second because the "smart" watch is now with us, and will no doubt get smarter as technology evolves. So more and more folk will have computers on their wrists, rather than in their handbags and pockets.

Three years ago, addressing a packed meeting of the Brighton and Hove Humanist Society (now the Brighton Secular Humanists) on the history of the *Freethinker*, I pointed out that during its then 130 years of unbroken publication the magazine had but just 15 editors, the longest serving being Chapman Cohen, who produced it from 1915 to 1951.

I joked that it was my ambition to equal or beat that record. But having only just notched up 13 years in the editor's chair, and being 64, this would mean that I would have to carry the beacon for another 28 years, which would take me to 92. (Cohen, incidentally, died in 1954, aged 86.)

Because of the way things were going in the print industry the *Freethinker*, I pointed out, would run out of subscribers before it ran out of money, and faced the stark choice of going the way of magazines like *Punch*, which ran for 151 years until its demise in 1992, or reinvent itself as an Internet only publication. (The once much-loved *Punch* was relaunched in 1996, but folded in 2002. It now has an achive on the Internet.)

Heads nodded sadly in agreement. But, I pointed out, at that stage we already had a strong online presence as a blog, which complemented the magazine, and served

to attract new subscribers – but not nearly enough to sustain it in the face of rapidly escalating production and postage costs.

I also pointed out that an analysis of visitors to the *Freethinker* blog indicated that a surprising number of its readers were in mainly Muslim countries, who would have subscribed to the magazine but were deterred by laws that made it a criminal offence to receive "seditious" or ungodly publications such as the *Freethinker*.

This was a strong indicator that the *Freethinker* still had a job to do, not so much in the UK, where George William Foote's initial battles had largely been fought and won, but in countries where secularism is still being strongly resisted, and people are being punished for championing opposition to religious influence in state affairs.

So, the board of G W Foote decided that its resources would best be harnessed to widen the magazine's international readership with a much more sophisticated presence on the Internet.

By doing so it would become part of a very encouraging trend. A report in the American *MIT Technology Review* (April 4, 2014) said that in 1990, about eight percent of the US population had no religious preference. By 2010, this percentage had more than doubled to 18 percent. "That's a difference of about 25 million people, all of whom have somehow lost their religion"

The overriding reason for this, according to research done by Allen Downey, a computer scientist at the Olin College of Engineering in Massachusetts, is the rise of the Internet. While other factors – such as a drop in religious upbringing and the increase in college-level education – have played a role in this dramatic religious decline, Downey is convinced that use of the Internet has been the main reason.

I cannot equal or beat Chapman Cohen's record as editor of a *printed* version of the magazine, but I sure as heck will have a stab at being around to see a thriving online *Freethinker* in 2039.

Finally, I'd like to express my gratitude to the many writers who have contributed to the *Freethinker* over decades. It is our plan to build a comprehensive online archive made up of the best of these features written by existing contributors as well as those who have sadly passed on. And, of course, we will be needing fresh material to keep the site topical at all times.

Safak Pavey is Secularist of the Year

TURKISH MP and human rights campaigner, Safak Pavey, has won this year's Secularist of the Year award. She was presented with the £5,000 Irwin Prize by NSS honorary associate and shadow Foreign Office Minister, Kerry McCarthy MP, at a lunch-time event hosted by the National Secular Society on March 29.

Pavey is a member of Turkey's main opposition party and sits for the Istanbul constituency. She is known for her international work in human rights, the promotion of the rights of women and minorities in Turkey, as well as humanitarian aid and peace-building.

She was also the first disabled woman elected to the Turkish parliament and, in 2012, was awarded a Woman of Courage Award by the White House for her efforts to raise awareness of the plight of those with disabilities in countries where resources are limited.

Safak has spoken out about the need for secularism in Turkey, a country where there are religious tests for civil servants and job applicants, no evolution on school syllabuses, segregation by gender in schools and universities, and 90,000 mosques being used as propaganda centres for the government.

Increasing numbers of Jews abandon France in the face of growing hatred

A DISTURBING protest took place on the streets of Paris in January this year, with thousands of marchers chanting, “Jew, France is not for you”. It was reported that police counted 17,000 protesters and 150 were arrested. Nineteen policemen suffered injuries, including one who was seriously wounded.

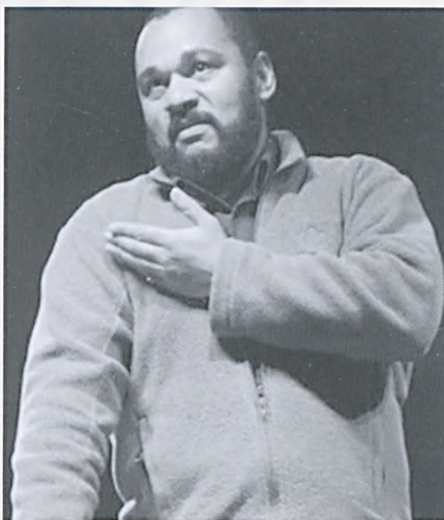
Security forces used tear gas to disperse youths who lobbed bottles, fireworks, iron bars and dustbins at police, AFP said. Besides Jews, the chanting also focused on homosexuals — “Gays out, dogs are welcome,” was one refrain reported by observers.

Writing in the *Huffington Post* on February 5, Diana Bletter, a visitor to France from Israel, observed: “The demonstration proves once again that anti-Semitism has reignited in France with a vengeance. France’s 1,500,000 Muslim community, rife with anti-Israel sentiment, stokes deeply-rooted French anti-Semitism, threatening a powerful conflagration.

“France is boiling with a repackaged anti-Semitism branding itself as hip, anti-authoritarian and playful. This is manifested by the ‘quenelle’ (which, in French, means a fish dumpling), created by French comedian Dieudonné M’bala M’bala who has called Judaism ‘a fraud’.

“People have been photographed doing the gesture — a shorthand version of the Nazi salute, in which one’s hand is on the shoulder while the other hand points stiffly down to the ground — in front of the gates of Auschwitz and next to Israeli soldiers.

“The French Government has banned



Hatemonger Dieudonné with his signature anti-Semitic ‘quenelle’ gesture

Dieudonné’s latest show, citing his incitement to hatred and racial discrimination, but his supporters defend his right to free speech (and free gestures). Dieudonné’s popularity is a disquieting phenomenon, and observers worry that the French might overlook other manifestations of anti-Semitism to avoid stoking more anti-French unrest among the Muslim community.”

A couple of days earlier, Dieudonné was banned from entering the UK. He had planned visit to London to support a Muslim footballer — the West Bromwich Albion striker, Nicolas Anelka, who faced a disciplinary hearing for carrying out a “quenelle” salute during a December match against West Ham.

The comedian, who was brought up as a Christian and has criminal convictions for inciting racial hatred, said that one of the



Nicolas Anelka

reasons Anelka was being made “a scapegoat” in Britain is because he is a black Muslim who drives a Ferrari.

Shortly after the Paris protest, four unidentified Arab men savagely beat a French Jew in a Paris Metro train. The attack happened as the train was traveling from Nogent Sur Marne to Gare de Lyon, according to the National Bureau for Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism, or BNVCA.

Last month the BBC reported that anti-Semitism in France has led to record numbers of French Jews leaving the country to start new lives in Israel. Last year 3,120 French Jews moved to Israel, according to the Israeli Immigration Ministry, a jump of 63 percent on the previous year. They even outnumbered US immigrants to Israel.

Though they make up only one percent of the French population, Jews are the subject of 40 percent of hate crimes. Figures released recently by the Jewish Community Protection Service (SPCJ), which logs anti-Jewish acts of aggression, show that Jews are far more likely than anyone else in France to suffer verbal abuse or harassment. That is at least an improvement on 2012, which saw a 58-percent rise in anti-Jewish acts. That year three Jewish schoolchildren were shot dead by the Islamist terrorist Mohamed Merah in Toulouse.

Lawyer Arno Klarsfeld was quoted on the *DW* website as saying: “It is obvious that if the incitement [of hatred] against Jews continues, the Jews will leave. Most Jews have already left the suburbs, because the climate isn’t very good for the Jews in the suburbs.

“Some — at least Arabs — are very much against the Jews. There’s violence at schools. Jews who wear the yarmulke in the suburbs will not last very long! When a teacher speaks about the *Shoah* [the Holocaust] in class, a certain number of pupils of Arab descent are not happy and make derogatory remarks. So in certain parts of France it is difficult to be Jew. Most of the Arabs are not anti-Semites, but a certain percentage is, and with shows like Dieudonné’s they have the tendency of becoming more and more so,” Klarsfeld said.

A survey published in November of Jews in eight EU countries by the European Agency of Fundamental Rights showed that 70 percent of French Jews worried about insults or harassment and 60 percent about physical aggression due to being Jewish. The European averages were 46 and 33 percent respectively.

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All correspondence to:
The Freethinker

Apt F, 31st Fl, Sol de Poniente II, C/
Presidente Adolfo Suarez 22, Benidorm 03502, Spain.

Email: barry@freethinker.co.uk
Tel: +34 603 823 243

Website: www.freethinker.co.uk
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Atheist Classifieds: Who we need, who we've got

By DALE DEBAKCSY



rewarding and I think important experience to be able to take these people and say, "No, here's how learning works on a purely neural level, and here's how we're going to use that knowledge to get you where you need to go."

Using a non-metaphysical outlook to give people a renewed sense of potential is one of the best things atheism has to offer, and we usually only offer it to people of a certain minimum social class just because our weapons have historically been so thoroughly bourgeois. That's something we need to change, and something that anybody with a couple spare hours a week can help us with.

Shopkeepers: Atheism is building up its base of local organizations and meet-up groups and all of that is entirely excellent, but hasn't it struck you how, for such a geeky, books-and-board-games crew, there are so few shops that act as friendly gathering places that can also serve as aggregation points for humanist events?

A place that stocks a good selection of interesting science, psychology, and philosophy books and magazines, and also perhaps a fair amount of those games and puzzles that we devour in groups by way of oblique social interaction. An informal rally point where good conversation can be had, a place for our burgeoning artists to display their works and our musicians to perform, and a place to sell coffee at an outrageous mark-up to a civilization that has been carefully trained to find it normal.

Ten years ago, such a venture would smack of fateful hubris, but there are numbers now to make it financially doable, and it is certainly something that we need by way of day-to-day community interaction.

Social Workers: An increasingly atheist/humanist population brings with it a radically different set of emotional issues in need of support. Right now, we have a bulging sack of people telling the world why they should

be atheists, but relatively few telling them how to live with the consequences of that decision. A new generation of social workers, therapists, and psychologists will need to bring not only the traditional tools of their trade, but an understanding of what lack of belief does to one's sense of societal integration and self.

"A psychologist can't help me, because they're too caught up in their metaphysics to hear and understand what I'm saying," is a sentence I've heard too often preventing people from getting help they need.

Lifestyle Bloggers: We're pretty good for blogs that jump on William Lane Craig's every logical slip, or that repost stories about terrible things happening in the world at the hands of organized religion. That's covered. But what is in somewhat precious supply are people just demonstrating the nuts and bolts of what a life without gods is like. What gives you satisfaction? How do you think about the relationships around you? What are your doubts and hopes?

A simple accounting, without using every other post attempting to prove how You Are Right, of the manifold decisions and discovered joys of life minus afterlife. Others would then be able to see how, 98 percent of the time, we're doing the same mundane stuff as everybody else, but that in the remaining two, some warm, personal, and lovely things tend to happen that grow naturally from a secular foundation, but have nothing to do with waging war on behalf of secularism. By being manifestly normal, you could do more for humanism than the most eloquent and clever members of our current pantheon.

Anything you can do to bring out the secret moments of warmth that we atheists experience regularly but never talk about out of fear of being thought superficial, or to help other humans understand themselves a little bit better, gives atheism as a body of ideas something slightly more societally substantial to rest upon than, "Our logic is The Best Logic." We need to keep arguing, by all means, but we need to stop evaluating the work of the rest of the atheist community based on how well it supports our arguers, however sexy they may be.

Our snarl and snap youth is behind us; it's time to start our less glorious but more community integrated adulthood, and to learn to enjoy the constructive pleasures and opportunities it has to offer.

Twenty-five years ago, there were basically two jobs open to the public atheist: you either became a professional arguer, or a person who facilitated professional arguing. It was our punk era; a brash, underground stirring that had a rushing sense of its own vitality and zero tolerance for flabby ideas or expression. We strutted around like *West Side Story* Jets, looking for a rumble, armed to the teeth with a glistening array of philosophical constructs and wicked argumentative gambits.

There was a subversive sexiness to that style of atheism that still allures after so many past decades and so much evolution within atheist circles. We try to recapture it every time we invite a big-name pastor to a debate or head into a crowd of protestors and throw down the gauntlet in challenge.

But you can't go back, unfortunately. What we did a quarter century ago (and, yes, I am infinitely depressed to report, 1989 was a quarter century ago) had a mystical allure that came from our position as underdogs. Things have a very different flavor to them now that secular humanism is such a dominant and established line of discourse.

As a movement, then, we've become top-heavy on arguers and ludicrously understaffed for every other job position. The shame of it is that there are atheists with precisely the skills we need right now, who are kept from making their own crucial contributions by the perception that, if you're not a thuggish debater, we don't require you. I modestly present, then, some Atheist Classifieds for the sorts of positions we need to be fostering to keep atheism from swallowing its own tail in the decades to come:

Education Volunteers: Especially in low income areas. You don't need to be an educational genius, you just need to be someone of patience and persistence. Some time ago, I started working with adults who, for one reason or another, weren't able to get their high school diploma, and who very nobly sacrifice time out of their three-minimum-wage-paying-jobs workweek to try and get an equivalent certification.

And the stories I hear are appalling with regard to how these people have been taught to think of themselves and their minds. Some think they can't learn because God made them a certain way. Others were told by teachers at a young age that they were wasting the public's money and time. It is a truly

Britain must bar preachers who promote witch-hunting

By **LEO IGWE**

NIGERIA'S notorious witch-hunter, 'Lady Apostle' Helen Ukpabio, brought her campaign to London last month. The theme of the event was "Season for Disconnection from All Spiritual Attack". Ukpabio enjoined all who were "under witchcraft attack, ancestral spirit attack, mermaid spirit attack" to come and be "spiritually disconnected". The programme was slated to take place at The Albany in Deptford.

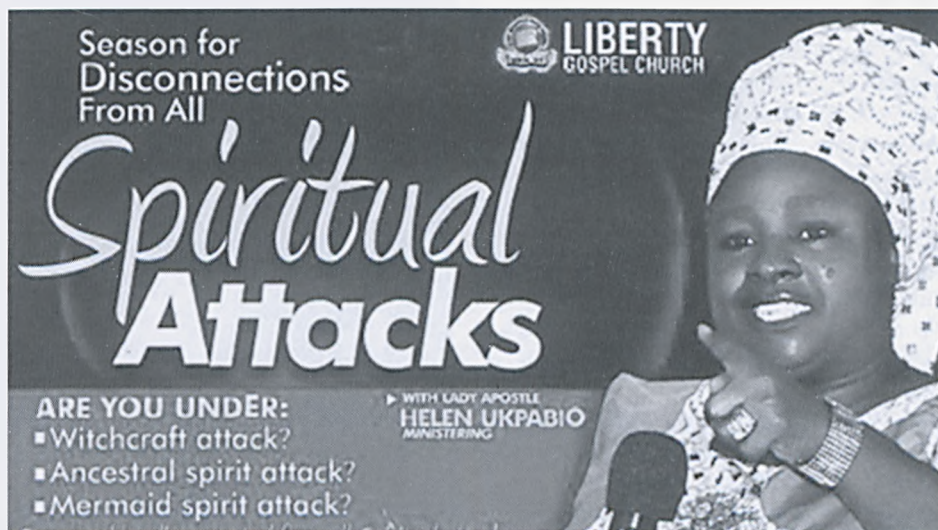
But those in charge of the venue had to cancel the booking made by Ukpabio's Liberty Gospel Church when they realised the true nature of meeting. They posted a short announcement cancelling the booking on their web site. It read "A room booking by the Liberty Gospel Church for Thursday 10 – Saturday 12 April at the Albany has been cancelled. We only cancel bookings in very exceptional circumstances. In this instance we were not given full information about the nature of the booking by the booker, which is at odds with our terms and conditions and ethical policies as an organisation. As soon as we became aware of the full details of the booking, it was cancelled and the booker was issued with a full refund."

Following the cancellation of the booking, the contacts of the Liberty Gospel Church in the UK moved the programme to another venue where Ukpabio "ministered" to a small number of people. Some concerned persons from the International Humanist and Ethical Union in the UK staged a small protest at the event.

We must commend the person(s) who helped draw the attention of the owners of Albany to the true nature of the programme. Authorities in the UK and other Western countries must be on alert.

African witch-hunting pastors and churches are targeting African diaspora communities. They are seeking to roll back the gains of enlightenment under the pretext of re-evangelising the West.

Helen Ukpabio is desperate to extend her witch-hunting ministry to Europe and America. She wants to establish international branches of her Liberty Gospel



Church to enhance its clout and credibility.

Ukpabio attempted organising a similar programme in the US in 2012, but an international campaign forced the US authorities to deny her an entry visa. Ukpabio and her collaborators in the UK must have waited until the last minute before announcing the event, to avoid a repeat of what happened in 2012.

It is not clear what Ukpabio stated as her purpose of visiting the UK before she was issued an entry visa by embassy officials in Nigeria.

UK authorities should look into this and ensure that the likes of Ukpabio who incite violence and hatred in the name of witchcraft are not allowed to enter the UK. They should not be allowed to bring their witch

scare campaign to the country.

Recently there has been a rising number of witchcraft related abuses in African communities in the UK. Some families have reportedly tortured to death children believed to be witches or wizards. Abuses related to witchcraft beliefs are often linked to the preaching and activities of witch mongering pastors like Helen Ukpabio.

The UK government has expressed commitment to stamping out these abuses. But the government needs to translate this commitment into action. Abuses related to witchcraft cannot stop if the authorities continue to allow African 'evangelical witchdoctors' into the UK to recharge the witchcraft narratives in black communities. Obviously witch hunters like Helen Ukpabio are not acting alone.

They have individuals in African diaspora communities who are facilitating these events – booking venues, printing and circulating posters, and mobilising for the event and serving as contact persons. UK authorities should monitor the activities such persons as part of the efforts to stamp out witchcraft related abuse in the country. They should not fold their arms and allow another Victoria Climbe or Kristy Bamu to happen.

Witch hunting in African communities must stop. Helen Ukpabio and her Liberty Gospel Church must be stopped.



Children in Nigeria protest against witchcraft accusations in 2009. (Photo: AFP/Getty Images)

'Liberal' US university takes fright over

OPHELIA BENSON is appalled that Brandeis all

Brandeis University in the US has a reputation as something of a beacon of liberal values. At the end of March it issued a press release naming five recipients of honorary degrees to be awarded at its commencement ceremony on May 18.

One of the five was Ayaan Hirsi Ali. A week later it issued another statement saying oops, it had changed its mind about Hirsi Ali. What's the problem? Not enough chairs? Not enough of the hats with tassels to go around?

Wouldn't you think they would have worked all that out before issuing the press release and notifying the recipients? Doesn't it seem a tad sloppy to promise the honorary degrees first and *then* realize that there wasn't enough chicken for the banquet and somebody would have to go?

Well it's not really about the supply of badges or party hats. No, it's about the fact that Hirsi Ali is a blunt and unapologetic critic of Islam, and there are people who organize to object to that sort of thing whenever they see it. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) did that; it issued an "Action Alert" urging people to join them in "in calling on Brandeis University not to pay tribute to notorious Islamophobe Ayaan Hirsi Ali with a honorary degree at its commencement on May 18".

The Action Alert quoted CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad as writing to Brandeis President Frederick Lawrence, "We believe offering such an award to a promoter of religious prejudice such as Ali is equivalent to promoting the work of white supremacists and anti-Semites." This calumny was included in the "Required text" portion of the message CAIR provided for readers to send on to Brandeis.

A petition was drawn up at Change.org which reads in part:

To the Administration of Brandeis University:

It has come as a shock to our community due to her extreme Islamophobic beliefs, that Ayaan Hirsi Ali would be receiving an Honorary Degree in Social Justice this year. The selection of Hirsi Ali to receive an honorary degree is a blatant and callous disregard by the administration of not only the Muslim students, but of any student who has experienced pure hate speech. It is a direct violation of Brandeis University's own moral code as well as the rights of Brandeis students.

While we are not belittling the severity of



Ayaan Hirsi Ali

the issues that she raises, she uses hate speech against Islam as a means to do this.

It still escapes me how and when it became Forbidden to dislike or hate a religion, or to talk about issues related to the hateful aspects of religion. I know it was Forbidden by god-loving outfits like the Inquisition, of course, but I am at a loss to know what makes it Forbidden at contemporary universities. Brandeis isn't Bob Jones University nor yet Al Azhar, so it's unclear what would make antipathy to a religion grounds for withdrawing an honorary degree a week after announcing its awarding.

But Brandeis apparently sees it differently, so it decided on mature consideration that it would indeed allow itself to look both incompetent and illiberal. It explained its reasons in the statement it issued saying "Oh wait, no honorary degree for Ayaan Hirsi Ali after all."

Following a discussion today between President Frederick Lawrence and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Ms. Hirsi Ali's name has been withdrawn as an honorary degree recipient at this year's commencement. She is a compelling public figure and advocate for women's rights, and we respect and appreciate her work to protect and defend the rights of women and girls throughout the world. That said, we cannot overlook certain of

her past statements that are inconsistent with Brandeis University's core values. For all concerned, we regret that we were not aware of these statements earlier.

According to Hirsi Ali's statement in response, that first sentence is untrue. There was no discussion; President Frederick Lawrence simply called her to tell her the decision had been made. According to me, it's also disgustingly evasive and cowardly. "Ms. Hirsi Ali's name has been withdrawn" – what it means is, Brandeis has withdrawn her name. It wasn't some strange thing that just happened, with no one causing it, it was a decision taken by people, and a shockingly bad decision at that. And then the explanation of the reasons, and the laughable claim that they didn't know she had made the statements that they suddenly found so inconsistent with Brandeis University's core values. It's a train-wreck of bad management and worse politics.

Hirsi Ali's own statement on the matter is forthright and fair.

I assumed that Brandeis intended to honor me for my work as a defender of the rights of women against abuses that are often religious in origin. For over a decade, I have spoken out against such practices as female genital mutilation, so-called "honor killings," and applications

t over invitation to Muslim apostate

s allowed itself to be bullied by Islamic zealots

of Sharia Law that justify such forms of domestic abuse as wife beating or child beating. Part of my work has been to question the role of Islam in legitimizing such abhorrent practices. So I was not surprised when my usual critics, notably the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), protested against my being honored in this way.

What did surprise me was the behavior of Brandeis. Having spent many months planning

for me to speak to its students at Commencement, the university yesterday announced that it could not "overlook certain of my past statements," which it had not previously been aware of. Yet my critics have long specialized in selective quotation – lines from interviews taken out of context – designed to misrepresent me and my work. It is scarcely credible that Brandeis did not know this when they initially offered me the degree.

"Scarcely credible" is putting it politely. Brandeis has to have known.

It chose Hirsi Ali for reasons, and those reasons are inseparable from the reactions against her. No, it's unpleasantly clear that Brandeis simply allowed itself to be bullied out of doing what it had decided to do. In doing so it set a horrendous precedent for anyone who wants to tell harsh truths about a religion.

Brandeis University's action results in Ali's planned acceptance speech getting international attention

REACTING to the announcement that Brandeis University had revoked its invitation to Ayaan Hirsi Ali to receive an honorary degree at its commencement ceremonies in May, *The Wall Street Journal* published this abridged version of the remarks she planned to deliver:

One year ago, the city and suburbs of Boston were still in mourning. Families who only weeks earlier had children and siblings to hug were left with only photographs and memories. Still others were hovering over bedsides, watching as young men, women, and children endured painful surgeries and permanent disfiguration. All because two brothers, radicalized by jihadist websites, decided to place homemade bombs in backpacks near the finish line of one of the most prominent events in American sports, the Boston Marathon.

All of you in the Class of 2014 will never forget that day and the days that followed. You will never forget when you heard the news, where you were, or what you were doing. And when you return here, 10, 15 or 25 years from now, you will be reminded of it. The bombs exploded just 10 miles from this campus.

I read an article recently that said many adults don't remember much from before the age of eight. That means some of your earliest childhood memories may well be of that September morning simply known as "9/11."

You deserve better memories than 9/11 and the Boston Marathon bombing. And you are not the only ones. In Syria, at least 120,000 people have been killed, not simply in battle, but in wholesale massacres, in a civil war that is increasingly waged across

a sectarian divide. Violence is escalating in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Libya, in Egypt. And far more than was the case when you were born, organized violence in the world today is disproportionately concentrated in the Muslim world.

Another striking feature of the countries I have just named, and of the Middle East generally, is that violence against women is also increasing. In Saudi Arabia, there has been a noticeable rise in the practice of female genital mutilation. In Egypt, 99 percent of women report being sexually harassed and up to 80 sexual assaults occur in a single day.

Especially troubling is the way the status of women as second-class citizens is being cemented in legislation. In Iraq, a law is being proposed that lowers to nine the legal age at which a girl can be forced into marriage. That same law would give a husband the right to deny his wife permission to leave the house.

Sadly, the list could go on. I hope I speak for many when I say that this is not the world that my generation meant to bequeath yours. When you were born, the West was jubilant, having defeated Soviet communism. An international coalition had forced Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. The next mission for American armed forces would be famine relief in my homeland of Somalia. There was no Department of Homeland Security, and few Americans talked about terrorism.

Two decades ago, not even the bleakest pessimist would have anticipated all that has gone wrong in the part of world where I grew up. After so many victories for feminism in the West, no one would have predicted that women's basic human rights would actually be reduced in so many countries as the 20th

century gave way to the 21st.

Today, however, I am going to predict a better future, because I believe that the pendulum has swung almost as far as it possibly can in the wrong direction.

When I see millions of women in Afghanistan defying threats from the Taliban and lining up to vote; when I see women in Saudi Arabia defying an absurd ban on female driving; and when I see Tunisian women celebrating the conviction of a group of policemen for a heinous gang rape, I feel more optimistic than I did a few years ago. The misnamed Arab Spring has been a revolution full of disappointments. But I believe it has created an opportunity for traditional forms of authority – including patriarchal authority – to be challenged, and even for the religious justifications for the oppression of women to be questioned.

Yet for that opportunity to be fulfilled, we in the West must provide the right kind of encouragement. Just as the city of Boston was once the cradle of a new ideal of liberty, we need to return to our roots by becoming once again a beacon of free thought and civility for the 21st century. When there is injustice, we need to speak out, not simply with condemnation, but with concrete actions.

One of the best places to do that is in our institutions of higher learning. We need to make our universities temples not of dogmatic orthodoxy, but of truly critical thinking, where all ideas are welcome and where civil debate is encouraged. I'm used to being shouted down on campuses, so I am grateful for the opportunity to address you today. I do not expect all of you to agree with me, but I

(Continued on back page)

Cartoons and conniptions

From the *Freethinker* to *Charlie Hebdo*, satirical imagery has proved a provocative antidote to religion

BARRY DUKE REPORTS

What made the *Freethinker* stand out in the late 19th century – and was most certainly a key factor in its prosecution for blasphemous libel – was its liberal use of illustrations at a time when these were rarely seen in British publications. Other papers did not start regularly using pictorial material until the founding of the *Daily Mail* in 1896, 15 years after George William Foote launched his journal.

The *Freethinker* began using cartoons early in 1882 with a series called “Comic Bible Sketches” after Foote saw similar items in a French periodical. In his first indictment the image “Divine Illumination” alone stood accused of three counts of blasphemy.

The 1882 Christmas number of the *Freethinker* used illustrations to their maximum effect when the series “New Life of Christ” was published. The cartoons published repeated real lines from the Bible and accompanied them with a humorous illustration often taking the words at their most literal.

It is pointed out in *Martyrdom of a Freethinker: Blasphemy, Secularism and the Trials of G W Foote* – a paper published by Leeds University – “of particular note is the cartoon ‘Moses Getting a Back View’ in which we see, emerging from the clouds, what appears to be God’s behind in patched trousers. An ambiguous protrusion from his rear – depending on how the reader perceives it – could be a loose bit of material or a classic example of early British toilet humour.

“Another depicts the Baby Jesus in a manger surrounded by the three wise men, interpreted as three donkeys.”

Although it is generally agreed by historians that the “blasphemous” cartoons were an enormous contributory factor in Foote’s infamous prosecution, some argue that other issues were also involved,



the most significant being the British government’s fear at the time of anything that smacked of anarchy, socialism and especially freethought, secularism and atheism, which was then enjoying a surge of popularity, helped by the formation of the National Secular Society.

According to *Martyrdom of a Freethinker*, “many of its most prominent members such as Foote and Charles Bradlaugh were not only atheists, a creed long associated with European revolutionary thought, but also avowed Republicans. It is not surprising therefore that the British government would be wary of their voices being heard.

“One suggestion, advanced both by contemporary observers and since by historians is that the trial of the *Freethinker* amounted to political censorship of the press. Foote deliberately targeted the working class, selling his *Freethinker* for the ‘people’s price’ of one penny.

“The atheism espoused on its pages had

long been linked to European radicalism in the political mindset of Britain. Certainly the government were not adverse to censoring radical publications; the *United Irishman* had been seized in 1882 over fears it would spark an Irish uprising.

“Evidence can be seen in the press coverage of the trial that suggests the public saw the actions of the government as the repression of press freedom. A typical example from *The Leeds Mercury* reported that the trial ‘is a social event of considerable importance. That there should be any interference with freedom of opinion in this country ... will be strongly contested by all true Liberals, whether in politics or theology’.

“During his trial, Foote also suggested that the prosecution was nothing more than press censorship. In his defence speech at the first trial, as recorded by the *Daily News*, Foote addressing the jury claimed ‘that they were the court of appeal on all questions affecting the liberty of the Press, or the right of free speech and free thought’ and that these prosecutions were only commenced against ‘men who were friendless and endeavoring to speak to the masses of the people, and for the purpose of keeping them in social and political subjection’.

Foote was convinced that his use of humour as a means to discredit religion was reason enough to provoke action against him. He lamented: “Why should one man be allowed to deny miracles, and another man be imprisoned for laughing at them? Must we regard long-faced scepticism as permissible heresy, and broad-faced scepticism as punishable blasphemy?”

Later, after he had been convicted and served his sentence, Foote explained at length in his fourpenny 1885 booklet, *Comic Bible Sketches*: “*La Bible Amusante* has had an extensive sale in France, and the infectious irreverence has extended itself

to England. Notwithstanding that Mr G R Sims, when he saw the first numbers of that abominable publication, piously turned up the whites of his eyes, and declared his opinion that no English Freethinker, however extreme, would think of reproducing or imitating them, there were found persons so utterly abandoned as not to scruple at this unparalleled profanity."

(The G R Sims Foote referred to was George Robert Sims (1847–1922) who was an English journalist, poet, dramatist, novelist bon vivant and satirist.)

Foote added: "Several of the French drawings were copied with more or less fidelity in the *Freethinker*, a scandalous print, as the Christians love to describe it, which has been prosecuted twice for Blasphemy, and whose editor, proprietor and publisher, have been punished respectively with twelve, nine and three months' imprisonment like common felons, all for the glory and honor of God, for the satisfaction of his dear Son, and for the vindication of the Holy Spirit."

Foote went on to explain: "A few [of the French cartoons] were copied pretty closely; some were elaborated and adapted to our national taste; while others furnished a central suggestion, which was treated in an independent manner. By-and-bye, as the insular diffidence wore off, and the minds of the *Freethinker* staff played freely on the subject, a new departure was taken; novel ideas were worked out, and Holy Writ was ransacked for fresh comicalities.

"Dullards prophesied a speedy exhaustion of Bible topics, but they did not know how inexhaustible it is in absurdities. Properly read, it is the most comical book in the world; and one might say of it, as Enobarbus says of Cleopatra, that Age cannot wither it, nor custom stale its infinite variety ...

"We honestly admit that our purpose is to discredit the Bible as the infallible word of God. Believing as we do, with Voltaire, that despotism can never be abolished without destroying the dogmas on which it rests, and that the Bible is the grand source and sanction of them all, we are profoundly anxious to expose its pretensions.

"The educated classes already see through them, and the upper classes credit them just as little, although they dare not openly profess a scepticism which would imperil their privileges. But the multitude are still left to the manipulation of priests,



8.—JEHOVAH'S DAY OF REST.
"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.—Exodus xxxi., 17.

credulous victims of the Black Army everywhere arrayed against freedom and progress. It is to liberate these from thralldom that we labor, sacrifice and suffer. Without being indifferent to what the world calls success, we acknowledge the sovereignty of loftier aims.

"Compared with the advancement of Freethought everything else is to us of trivial moment. It may interest, and perhaps surprise, some to learn that for the famous Christmas Number of the *Freethinker* which was successfully prosecuted, the editor received absolutely nothing for his work except twelve months' imprisonment, while the then registered proprietor, who suffered nine months of the same fate, actually shared with him a pecuniary loss of five pounds. We are really in deadly earnest, like all the greater soldiers of freedom who preceded us; and we employ our smaller resources of satire, as such giants as Lucian, Rabelais, Erasmus, Voltaire and Heine used theirs, for ends that reach far forward into the mighty future, and affect the welfare of unimagined generations of mankind.

"Ridicule is a most potent form of common-sense logic. What is the *reductio ad absurdum* but an appeal to admitted truths against plausible falsehoods? Reducing a thing to an absurdity is simply showing its inconsistency with what is common to both sides in a dispute; and it frequently means the exposure of a gross contradiction to the principles of sanity. Laughter, too, as Hobbes pointed out, has always an

element of pride or contempt; being invariably accompanied by a feeling of superiority to its object. Whoever laughs at an absurdity is above it. He looks down on it from a loftier altitude than argument can reach.

"The man who laughs is safe. He can never more be in danger, unless he suffers fatty degeneration of the heart or fatter degeneration of the head. Priestcraft nourishes hope in the scientific laboratory, and feels only faint misgivings in academic halls; but it pales and withers at the smile of scepticism, and hears in a low laugh the note of the trump of doom.

"Ridicule can never injure truth. What it hurts must be false. Laugh at the multiplication-table as much as you please, and twice two will still make four.

"Pictorial ridicule has the immense advantage of visualising absurdities. Lazy minds, or those accustomed to regard a subject with the reverence of prejudice, read

without realising. But the picture supplies the deficiency of their imagination, translates words into things, and enables them to see what had else been only a vague sound.

"Christians read the Bible without realising its wonders, allowing themselves to be cheated with words. Mr Herbert Spencer has remarked that the image of the Almighty hand launching worlds into space is very fine until you try to form a mental picture of it, when it is found to be utterly unrealisable. In the same way, the Creation Story is passable until you image the Lord making a clay man and blowing up his nose; or the story of Samson until you picture him slaying file after file of well-armed soldiers with the jaw-bone of a costermonger's pony.

"Let it be observed that these Comic Bible Sketches ridicule nothing but miracles. Mr Mathew Arnold has said that the Bible miracles are only fairy tales (very poor ones, by the way) and their reign is doomed. We only seek to hasten their deposition. Whatever the Bible contains of truth, goodness and beauty, we prize as well as its blindest devotees. But this valuable deposit of antiquity would be more useful if cleared of the rubbish of superstition. It is not the good, but the evil parts of the Bible, that are supported by its supernaturalism.

"A word in conclusion. The editor of the *Manchester Examiner*, writing over the

(Continued on p10)

Cartoons and conniptions

well-known signature of 'Verax', recently published a long article, censuring the policy of aggressive Freethought, and declaring that to laugh at the absurdities of the Bible was to insult the human race. We might as well, he said, laugh at our poor ancestors, the ancient Britons, for all their mistakes and follies ... What would 'Verax' say if an ancient Briton, dressed in a full suit of war-paint, were to walk through the Manchester streets, boasting himself the pink of fashion, and insulting peaceable citizens who refused to patronise his tailor? Would he not write a racy article on the absurd phenomenon, and ask why the police tolerated such a nuisance?"

And then came Islam ...

If Foote had satirised the Koran as he did the Bible, the outcome might have been far more dramatic than three high profile trials and prison sentences for the *Freethinker* team; demands most likely would have been made for their assassination and riots world-

wide would have taken place.

But Victorian England never experienced the calls for special treatment Islam makes on Britain today, nor did its ears ring with the screams for respect that this doltish, deadly religion now feels it should be accorded. So, understandably, the Koran never came into Foote's crosshairs, and it was not until 1925 that Britain became aware of the ultra-touchiness of Muslims when, on August 18, 1925 *The Star* (a now defunct London evening newspaper) printed a cartoon by David Low in which the captain of the English Cricket team, Jack Hobbs, was depicted as the towering statue in a gallery of the most important historical celebrities' and the one to whom the others looked up. Among these were Charlie Chaplin and "Mohamet".

Sir David Alexander Cecil Low (1891 – 1963) was a New Zealand political cartoonist and caricaturist who lived and worked in the UK for many years. He came to Lon-

don in 1919, where he made his career and earned fame for his Colonel Blimp depictions and his merciless satirising of the personalities and policies of German dictator Adolf Hitler, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, and other leaders of his time.

Colin Seymour-Ure and Jim Schoff's book *David Low* noted: "Harmless enough at home, the depiction of Mohammed meant that in India the cartoon 'convulsed many Muslims in speechless rage', as the Calcutta correspondent of the *Morning Post* put it. Meetings were held and resolutions of protest were passed."

Psychotic Muslims were again enraged in 1989, and this time the murderous nature of the religion was exposed to the world in a much more dramatic manner when Indian-born British author Salman Rushdie was sentenced to death for blasphemy by Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini. Rushdie's depiction of Mohammed as a businessman in his novel *The Satanic Verses* was regarded as "blasphemous" and an Iranian businessman offered a \$3 million reward to anyone carrying out the ayatollah's death sentence against Rushdie. Other Islamic scholars followed suit, declaring similar fatwas.

In 1989, Khomeini died, making the fatwa permanent to those who follow his teaching. In 1991, Hitoshi Igarashi, the book's Japanese translator, was murdered at the university where he taught in Tsukuba, Ibaraki, 60 kilometres north of Tokyo.

The book's Italian translator was beaten and stabbed in Milan. William Nygaard, the Norwegian publisher was shot in 1993. Thirty-seven people, who had come to listen to a speech by the translator and publisher (of some parts of the book) Aziz Nesin, a well-known satirist, perished when the hotel where they had gathered was torched in Sivas, Turkey.

The post-Khomeini Iranian government, while maintaining that the fatwa could not be reversed, promised only in 1998 to dissociate itself from it. Rushdie stayed in hiding under police protection for several years.

By drawing attention to themselves in this manner, Islamic zealots attracted attention from more and more satirists and cartoonists and gallons of ink flowed from artists' pens to highlight the violent nature of Islam. This in turn led to further insane behaviour and threats of violence.

In 2002, for example, Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist Doug Marlette produced a

THE STAR, TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 1925.

3



drawing that showed Mohammed driving a Ryder truck, with a nuclear rocket attached. The cartoon was briefly and inadvertently published on the website of the *Tallahassee Democrat* after being rejected for inclusion in the paper's print edition. Marlette received more than 4,500 e-mails from angry Muslims, some with threats of death and mutilation but he refused to apologise. Although not cartoon related, in the same year Islam's propensity for violent tetchiness was demonstrated in Nigeria. In November 2002 a newspaper article in *This Day* – published prior to the upcoming Miss World pageant – suggested Mohammed would have chosen one of the contestants as his bride. This sparked riots that eventually claimed over 200 lives.

In 2004, Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali created the 10-minute film *Submission*. The film is about violence against women in Islamic societies. It shows four abused women, wearing see-through dresses. Koranic verses allegedly unfavourable to women were painted on their bodies. After the movie was released, both van Gogh and Hirsi Ali received death threats. Van Gogh was stabbed and shot dead on November 2, 2004, in Amsterdam by a Muslim fanatic, Mohammed Bouyeri. A note he left impaled on Van Gogh's chest threatened Western governments, Jews and Hirsi Ali (who was then forced into hiding).

These, and dozens of other examples of Muslims throwing their toys out of their prams every time they felt offended led to the publication on September, 30, 2005, of 12 cartoons, mostly portraying Mohammed, by the *Jyllands-Posten* in Denmark. The newspaper claimed the cartoons were an attempt to contribute to the debate about criticism of Islam and self-censorship. Muslim groups in Denmark complained, and the issue eventually led to protests around the world, including violent demonstrations and riots in some Muslim countries. Around 200 people died in violent protests. Danish and other European diplomatic missions were attacked, as well as churches and Christians.

The cartoons were reprinted in newspapers around the world both in a sense of journalistic solidarity and as illustrations in what became a major news story – but significantly mainstream media in the UK made a collective and utterly craven decision not to reproduce any of them.

There were two notable exceptions. *The Liberal Magazine*, in its seventh issue in 2006 and with a circulation of around 25,000, republished one of the cartoons – despite editor Ben Ramm having been advised by police not to do so as it would inflame an already tense situation. At around the same time, thousands of copies of a Welsh student newspaper were pulped for carrying one

What Would Mohammed Drive?



of the cartoons. The editor of *Gair Rhydd*, based at Cardiff University, was suspended.

Muslim mobs, threatening murder and glorifying the July 7 terrorist attacks in the capital demonstrated in London after the 12 cartoons were republished in other parts of the world, including Spain, and police believed at the time that the decision by *The Liberal* to publish one of the original cartoons would increase tensions “significantly”.

Ramm, in an interview with the *Daily Mail*, said: “We have chosen the least offensive of the cartoons. We do not want to cause offence unnecessarily but in the end we decided it was about artistic freedom of expression.”

The *Freethinker*, of course, published a selection of the most “offensive” of these cartoons, but, being a subscription-only magazine with a far smaller circulation, the fact that it did so received no publicity.

The Liberal, which had a very short lifespan (it ran in print from 2004 to 2009 and online until 2012), did, of course, annoy a considerable number of British Muslims but was spared the fate of *Charlie Hebdo*. The offices of this French satirical magazine was firebombed and destroyed in 2011 by Islamists. The attacks were linked to its decision to rename a special edition *Charia Hebdo* (with the “prophet” Mohammed named editor-in-chief.)

Islamists had earlier initiated a criminal trial against the publication's then executive editor Philippe Val for reproducing the Danish cartoons. Val, on being acquitted, said: “If we no longer have the right to ridicule those who inflict terror on us, that's a problem.”

The publication now faces further court action, this time in relation to a cover page cartoon with the headline: “The Koran is shit – it doesn't stop bullets.”

The League of Judicial Defence of Muslims (LDJM) is attempting to bring the case before a criminal court in Alsace. The region, which was annexed by Germany in 1871 and 1940-45, still retains part of the old German code that includes the “crime” of blasphemy – which no longer exist in the rest of France.

But Alsace's blasphemy laws cover only Catholicism, three forms of Protestantism and Judaism, so it would appear that the LDJM has little chance of success.



Paul Tillich's Secrets

ROBERT DOLE PhD explains his fascination with the prominent German-American Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian who died in 1965

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was one of the three most famous Protestant theologians of the 20th century, the other two being Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr. After studying books by and about Tillich for the past 50 years, I believe that I have discovered three secrets that he did not want to be revealed during his lifetime, for fear that they might jeopardize his career in American universities. Here are those secrets:

1. That he was an inveterate adulterer throughout the 41 years of his second marriage, causing untold misery for his wife;

2. That he was a devout Marxist and thus an ally of the Communists;

3. That, during the First World War, he suffered from a psychosis upon which much of his theological thought was based. I shall examine each of these secrets now in turn.

His adultery is well documented in his widow's autobiography, *From Time to Time* (1977). It started on their wedding night, when he left his bride all alone and went to take part in an orgy with some of his friends. It never ceased after that. Hannah, his wife, asked for a divorce, but he refused. She says: "Paulus, after Rene's birth, became more estranged than ever from the family. Nevertheless, he did not want a divorce. When all his arguments and entreaties failed, he threw himself on the floor, his limbs flailing. He sent his friends to me, imploring me not to divorce him, saying that it would ruin his career" (p 190). Indeed, in the Puritan America of the 1950s, the idea that a theologian considered himself exempt from following the Seventh Commandment, which says "Thou shalt not commit adultery", would be enough to discredit him entirely in orthodox Christian circles.

Tillich was a dedicated Marxist but had to hide this fact during his career in American universities, which began when he left Germany in 1933 and continued until his death in 1965. He was the founder of the Ger-



Paul Tillich

man Religious Socialist Movement, whose fundamental idea was that "Jesus was the first socialist" (1930, reprinted 1971, p 40). The religious socialism that Tillich envisaged was not simply a matter of social programmes within the context of capitalism, but rather the total replacement of capitalism by socialism though a proletarian revolution inspired by both Marxist and Christian ideas. This made Tillich a fellow traveller of the Communists. He affirmed: "Religious socialism rejects the anti-revolutionary dogma of Lutheranism" (1930, reprinted 1971, p 53). He also claims: "Dictatorship appears to be the radical antithesis of democracy, but it is not. Dictatorship is based on democracy" (1930, reprinted 1971, p 110). The publication of his Marxist book *Die sozialistische Entscheidung* (*The Socialist Decision*) in Germany in 1933 led to his being fired by the Nazis from his professorship at the University of

Frankfurt, which resulted in his exile in America. He did not allow this book to be translated into English during the 22 years that he taught in American universities for fear that it would put an end to his career in American universities, just as it had in Germany.

When Tillich was a Protestant pastor for German troops in France in the First World War, he suffered from a psychosis. He was hospitalised from March 31st until April 7th 1918 at the German military hospital at Guise in France. His psychosis was diagnosed as "einen nervlichen Schwacheanfall" (Schübler, 1997, p 14), or "nervous asthenia" in English. Two years later he announced that his theology was one of the kairós. Kairós is a Greek word meaning "the appropriate moment.". In the Greek New Testament it means the appropriate moment for the advent of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:45, Mark 13:33 and Luke 21:36).

Instead of saying in German that he considered himself to be the Son of Man, Tillich said in Greek that it was the appropriate moment for the advent of the Son of Man, but it amounts to the same thing. The Son of Man is also called the Second Coming of Christ, the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed, etc. If Tillich had been less arcane, people would have realised that he was mentally ill. In all events, Tillich had a gigantic Messiah complex throughout his life. The Messiah is meant to humble the rich and exalt the poor, and that is precisely what Tillich's religious socialism intended to do. The Messiah also has the task of judging the living and the dead, and Tillich never tired of doing precisely that.

Tillich made one public confession of his history of psychosis and his messianic complex, but it was a posthumous one. In the Paul Tillich Park of New Harmony, Indiana, there is a small granite slab with this inscription: "Estranged and Re-United, The New Being, Paul Tillich."

"Estranged" means psychotic. Tillich continually referred to Jesus as being "The New



Robert Dole

Being” and here he made an explicit comparison between himself and Jesus. Tillich’s mind and soul lived in a realm that was unrelated to what most normal people consider reality.

My fascination with Tillich has a personal reason. In 1962, at the age of sixteen, my first lover and I were forced by the Phillips Exeter Academy to undergo psychiatric treatment in order to be cured of our homosexuality. Subsequent to this psychiatric torture, and probably as a consequence of it, my friend committed suicide and I became psychotic. In the summer of 1963 I had my first schizophrenic hallucination. It was religious in nature and would have been called a beatific vision or mystical ecstasy in the Middle Ages.

During my second semester at Harvard I saw an announcement saying that Tillich was coming to Harvard to give a sermon. In my psychotic delirium, I was certain that God was instructing me to write a report of my mystical vision and present it to Tillich. I thus wrote a 27 page typed essay entitled “The Phenomenological Proof of God,” which can be summarised as saying: We can know that God exists because I have seen the Kingdom of God. I took this essay to Tillich’s room at the Hotel Continental in Cambridge at seven o’clock in the morning on Sunday, March 28, 1965. He told me to wait for him at the reception. After about half an hour, he came down, sat next to me, gave me his blessing with an ecstatic smile and said: “Send it to me when you have finished it.”

That morning Tillich gave the last sermon of his life, and his final words were: “The Son of Man is in our presence. He will come as a beggar. The fate of the world depends on

how he matures.” In Hannah Tillich’s autobiography, she says: “One of Paulus’s marital jokes was to insist that I was his ‘second best.’ He called his first best his ‘cosmic reservation.’ A first best did not exist on earth, he said, but one must reserve a place for the great unknown One who might come, as the Messiah might come at any moment to the waiting Jews” (Hannah Tillich, 1974, p 104). I hereby claim to be Tillich’s “great unknown One.”

Two days later the Harvard police whisked me away to an insane asylum called McLean Hospital, where I discovered my friend from Exeter (three years after we met and nine years before his suicide). I was given the diagnosis of “acute and chronic schizophrenia” and was later told by a psychiatrist that he had never seen anyone so severely mentally ill as I had been. With a psychiatrist who thought that my sexual orientation was a mental illness and a theologian who thought that I was the Messiah, I believe that I had sufficient reasons for being psychotic.

In 1968 I graduated from Harvard and went into permanent exile, first in Europe and then in Québec. In September 1974 I took a Russian boat called the Alexander Pushkin from Montréal to Bremerhaven. I shared my cabin with an Egyptian Communist living in Moscow who greeted me with these words: “You have no choice about being Christ.” I was forced to realise that my suspicion that Tillich was an ally of the Communists was correct and that he had shared with them his hallucination about me being the Son of Man.

Ever since my mental illness, I have been intrigued about the relationship between

mystical ecstasy, psychosis and religious belief. Since my beatific vision was a schizophrenic hallucination, every similar experience in any age or any culture should have the same diagnosis. Certain theologians are aware of this problem. Albert Schweitzer, in *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, discusses the claims of certain 19th century psychiatrists who said that Jesus was a paranoid schizophrenic. In *The Prophets*, Abraham Heschel affirms: “The mind of the prophet, like the mind of a psychotic, seems to live in a realm different from the world which most of us inhabit” (Heschel, 1975, volume II, p 188). Evelyn Underhill, despite her great admiration for mystics, admits that some of their experiences “are morbid hallucinations: some even symptoms of insanity” (Underhill, 1990, p 269).

Even the Bible says that people who knew holy men considered them to be insane. In the case of Jesus, it is written: “They went to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself” (Mark 3:21). The same is said of Paul. Acts 26:24 says: “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad”.

I realise now that I was able to understand so much of Tillich’s abstruse theological ideas at the age of 18 simply because I had had mystical, psychotic experiences similar to his own. He never had the honesty to say that his theories about human estrangement were based on his own experience of psychosis. Yet he did have certain moments of lucidity, for example, when he said: “Am I a phony? I fear so” (Pauck, 1976, p 275).

Little did Tillich suspect that his “great unknown One” would turn out to be a New England Unitarian spy in his Prussian realm of Lutheran Marxist gibberish.

• **Robert Dole, who lives in Canada, graduated from Harvard in 1968, lived in Europe for eight years, taught English at the Universities of Metz (France), Bonn (Germany), and Lodz (Poland), then became professor of English at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, where he taught for 36 years before retiring last September. He speaks seven languages and has published three books: *Le Cauchemar américain*, *Comment réussir sa schizophrénie*, and *Mon Allemagne*.**

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How Christianity began – by mistake

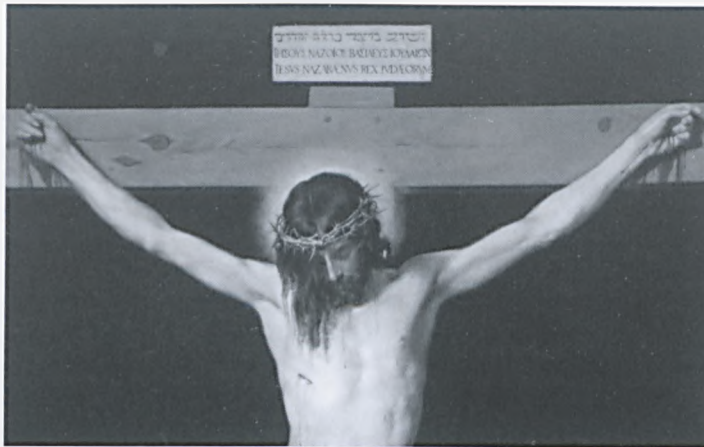
STEUART CAMPBELL claims Jesus' crucifixion was part of a failed plan to provide evidence for resurrection

The huge edifice of the Christian Church stands (or falls) on the life of Jesus, so its origin lies in the story of his life. But what can we know of that life and Jesus' own plan?

The problem of Jesus is basically historical, but with associated problems in ancient languages and religions. But these skills are useless without some insight into the mind of Jesus himself. Albert Schweitzer suggested that every life of Jesus remains a reconstruction on the basis of a more or less accurate insight into the nature of the dynamic self-consciousness of Jesus¹ and J Middleton Murry believed that Jesus can be known only through intuition.² Even historians need to make intuitive guesses about the past. Camille Jullian wrote that historians should not avoid making conjectures when necessary to connect the rare details that remain of the past, although they should carefully distinguish between such conjectures and the data to be handled.³ The explanation that follows is a conjecture.

To Christians, Jesus was (is?) the incarnation of God, sent to save the world from the consequences of their sins. To non-Christians, and even to many Christians, Jesus was a good but naive itinerant preacher who unaccountably fell foul of the authorities. To both groups of believers, Jesus' life is a mystery, for one a mystical superstition and to the other a hodgepodge of confusing vignettes.

However, by making some fundamental assumptions, one can construct a coherent and logical sequence of events that explain Jesus' life. These are, firstly, that, as Schweitzer insisted, Jesus can only be understood in his historical milieu, as an aspirant Messiah within the Jewish community in Judaea. Secondly, that Jesus was part of a movement with a plan that was connected with the Messianic aspiration and that this plan failed (Jesus did not get to rule Judea, let alone Israel). Thirdly, that the Gospels are partly historical and partly propaganda for the Early Church.



Contrary to claims, history and propaganda in the Gospels can mostly be distinguished. The reason for that is that what suited the Early Church did not agree with history or with what is known of Jewish customs. One blatant example is the claim for the divinity of Jesus, and hence the incarnation. In Judaism, only God is divine; the Messiah is a thoroughly human character: God's viceroy. Jesus himself never claimed divinity. The other, even more blatant, is the attempt to blame the Jews for Jesus' death when the evidence that he was tried and sentenced to death by the Romans is overwhelming (crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish punishment). It is clear that the evangelists tried to tell a story that was undermined throughout by evidence of a quite different story.

Shorn of propaganda, the scenario that emerges is that Jesus was a disciple, and/or a close relative, of John the Baptist and inherited from him the leadership of a small Gnostic sect (the Nazarenes) that had worked out, not only the details of the Kingdom of God, but how and when it was to appear. In particular the Nazarenes had plotted (from Scripture) the life of Messiah-ben-Joseph, the first of *two* Messiahs and one who had to suffer on behalf of his people. Jesus became convinced that he was this Messiah and that he would become the second Messiah, the ultimate ruler of Israel. This explains the record in John of his enigmatic promise to return as a new "Comforter".⁴

It is important to understand that Jesus' outlook was Pharisaic. Despite the gospel

accounts that appear to pit him against Pharisees, Jesus' belief in resurrection marked him as a Pharisee philosophically. The Jewish historian Josephus, himself a Pharisee, explained how this important and extensive sect believed that although fate determines everything, men have freedom to act for good or evil.⁵ Elsewhere he explained that "to act rightly, or otherwise, rests indeed, for the most part, with men, but in each action fate co-operates".⁶ Jesus also believed that he

could not call on divine intervention; the Jews had been forbidden to test God by performing miracles.⁷

This meant that Jesus could not rely on God to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven; he had to do it himself. He had to arrange events so that they fulfilled prophecy, even to the extent of arranging his own arrest, trial, execution and resurrection. Jesus arranged his whole life to fulfil what he saw as prophecy. Examples are his entry to Jerusalem riding an ass,⁸ overturning the tables of the money changers⁹ and equipping the disciples with swords.¹⁰ Even Judas' betrayal, which facilitated his arrest, was fulfilment of a prophecy.¹¹ While Christians believe that Jesus' actions fulfilled prophecy by accident as it were (ie he was unaware that he was doing so), in fact he arranged things so that prophecies were fulfilled as part of a plan.

Jesus facilitated his own arrest knowing that he would be crucified but confident that he had the means to be "resurrected" afterwards. This means was opium, administered during the crucifixion but tested earlier on his friend Lazarus.¹² He must have believed that this substance actually caused temporary death. In fact, as we now know, it can cause the *appearance* of death (coma), but it was evidently sufficient to convince a Roman centurion that Jesus was indeed dead. This permitted him to be removed from his cross after only a few hours and transferred to a nearby tomb (another part of the plan).

But why go through the torture of crucifixion at all? The purpose was to show evi-

dence of resurrection, so confounding the Sadducean rulers, who claimed that there was no resurrection. As a resurrected Messiah he would have the country behind him and the High Priests on the run. They could not have held onto power when there was "proof" of resurrection.

Evidently Jesus had intended that, after his "resurrection", he would gather an army in Galilee and march on Jerusalem to claim the throne of Israel as its Messiah. That would have thrown him into conflict with the might of Rome, but he thought his destiny more powerful than Caesar and that he would rule the Kingdom of Heaven. This kingdom was not in the sky; it was here on Earth.

But the plan failed. Mortally wounded on the cross by an unexpected *coup de grace*, his body had to be removed from the tomb prematurely in order to avoid embarrassment. That was why the tomb was found empty. A dead Messiah could not emerge triumphant. Joseph of Arimathea must have disposed of the body, which was never found.

So what was it that caused his disciples to start preaching that he was the Messiah and that the Kingdom was about to appear, a message that was later transformed by Paul into a belief that he was a universal saviour god?

There is one incident recorded in John's Gospel that appears to be the trigger, the event that started Christianity (it wasn't so-called at the time). Chapter 21 of that Gospel appears to be an afterthought (the Gospel proper ends at the end of chapter 20). It appears to have been added to deal with the problem that, contrary to the general expectation, John had died in Ephesus before the return of Jesus.

It records the very likely scenario that the disciples had returned to Galilee and had taken up their previous occupation as fishermen. They must have been disillusioned and depressed, not having been privy to his plan.

Then they see a figure by the shore who asks about their catch and suggests they try fishing on the other side of the boat. The resulting large catch causes John to claim that the figure is Jesus and he dives into the water to get to shore; the others follow and find a small fire with fish cooking. They are invited to bring their fish and join the mysterious figure.

However, it is evident that while disciples did not recognise this person as Jesus, none of them asks for his identity. They assumed that it was Jesus, but somehow changed.

After the disciples have eaten a meal with this stranger, he and Peter engage in a strange conversation during which the former says: "Feed my lambs", "Shep-

herd my little lambs", and "Feed my little sheep". The traditional interpretation of these words is that Jesus was speaking metaphorically, instructing Peter, in line with the commission of Matt. 16:18, to take care of the young Church as a shepherd takes care of his sheep.

However there is a simpler explanation. If the mysterious man was not Jesus then he cannot have been talking about the Church, which in any case Jesus did not intend to found. Even though Jesus is occasionally reported to have spoken of people as sheep, a common metaphor, a man talking about sheep un-metaphorically is much more likely to have been a shepherd. He might simply have been taking a break from tending sheep, whose welfare still concerned him. It appears that he had left the sheep a little way off in the hills around the lake and that he was looking for someone to help him care for them. He singled out Peter and asked him if he loved him more than the rest (did). Later, he instructed Peter to follow him, back to the sheep. That the question was thrice repeated, and the way Peter reacted only convinces us that here was no Jesus. As Peter pointed out, Jesus already knew the feelings of the disciples and would not have needed to ask such questions. The observation that old age brings incapacity suggests that the shepherd was elderly and wanted Peter's help because he realized that he would not be able to carry on with the work much longer. He was offering Peter the job, but wanted to be sure that Peter's heart was in it. Peter was just about to follow the stranger away to the flock, when he turned and noticed John beginning to follow. "What about him?" he asked the per-

son he thought was Jesus. "If I wish him to remain here until I come [back]¹³, what is that to you?" replied the shepherd. He intended to return to the fireside after he had shown Peter the sheep.

Thus was a new religion born: the disciples mistake an elderly shepherd for their master! Utterly convinced that he was alive, they returned to Jerusalem preaching his resurrection.

In a parallel universe where the disciples do not encounter the shepherd or any other figure mistaken for Jesus, he vanishes like the other Messianic claimants recorded by Josephus and Christianity never arises, replace perhaps by some other religion.

• **Steuart Campbell is the author of *The Rise and Fall of Jesus* (WPS, 2009).**

1. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede), 1954 [ET by W Montgomery of *Von Reimarus zu Wrede – Eine Geschichte der Leben – Jesu-Forschung* (1906) Tubingen], 3rd. ed, with a new introduction by the author (1950) [ET by J R Coates], London, A & C Black.
2. *The Life of Jesus*, 1926, London, Jonathan Cape (in USA, *Jesus – Man of Genius*).
3. Quoted by Maurice Goguel in his *The Life of Jesus*, 1933 [ET by Olive Wyon of *La vie de Jésus* (1932)], London, G Allen & Unwin.
4. John 14:26
5. *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:13.
6. *The Wars of the Jews*, 2:8:14.
7. Deut. 6:16, which refers to Moses producing water from a rock (see Exod. 17).
8. Zech. 9:9.
9. Zech. 14:21
10. Isa. 53:12.
11. Ps. 41:9.
12. John 11:1-46.
13. This is the origin of the belief that Jesus would return before John died.

Freethinker lament

THE TONE of your April front page, killing off the 133-year-old paper (as paper) was inappropriately up-beat. Necessary though this move may be, a good thing it aint. G W Foote is turning in his grave.

Today's *Freethinker* "visitors" on-line may well out-number old-fashioned subscribers, but how many of them read an article right through? As for keeping the current issue under one's pillow for retrieval in the insomniac hours, that will have gone completely by the board.

Personally, I have been a reader for some 60 years, and a contributor for 50. Twelve years ago I collated my *Freethinker* contributions into a 239-page book entitled *Freethoughts* (of which I still have a few copies for sale at £10 post-free). Its first item is dated 1966, its last 2002, while October 1997 saw my joint obituary article on Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, who died the same week.

Although this letter will be my FT swan-song, since my nonagenarian mind refuses to go digital, I am glad to say that a comparatively new journal, *Philosophy Now*, has accepted a lengthy atheistic article of mine, "Existence", for publication in its next issue.

Farewell, *Freethinker!*

BARBARA SMOKER
51 Farmfield Road
Bromley
Kent BR1 4NF

Forcing piety into politics



Posturing prigs Prime Minister David Cameron, left, and Communities Secretary Eric Pickles

Christianity and Christian beliefs the foundation of British values or a social morality would be building on seriously unstable foundations. All the evidence is that religion makes no difference in terms of a person's social and moral behaviour – the same percentage of religious as non-religious people do volunteer work, for example. People certainly don't want to see it have more influence in government – in a 2006 IpsosMori poll, 'religious groups and leaders' actually topped the list of domestic groups that people said had too much influence on government.

"His remarks are deeply concerning for anyone who values reason and evidence in public policy and fairness and secularism in our political life."

At Easter, Prime Minister David Cameron was heavily criticised when he declared that it was his mission "to expand the role of faith and faith organisations in this country". He said that this has been a "consistent theme" of his government and that "there's more [the government] can do to help make it easier for faith organisations". He spoke out in favour of more "evangelism" in the UK, and stressed the need for "more belief".

In recent years, the BHA pointed out, the government has made a number of attempts to "make it easier" for religious organisations, and has ignored calls from equalities and human rights groups for changes to the contracting out of public services to religious groups, who under current law are immune from Equality Act and Human Rights Act requirements even when carrying out services on behalf of the public.

The Prime Minister celebrated the "Free Schools" initiative for

"allowing Church schools to expand". Religious schools are unpopular with the public and the BHA has been campaigning steadily in opposition to Government policy.

"The Fair Admissions Campaign, in which the BHA plays a lead role, has also been putting pressure on the Department for Education to change its policy regarding 'faith' schools, and it has repeatedly turned up evidence that the expansion of the role of religion in our education system is disadvantaging local communities through discriminatory admissions policies."

Commenting on the Prime Minister's remarks, Copson stated: "The vast majority of British people – who are not believing practising Christians –

will deeply regret the comments of their Prime Minister. He is equally misguided in wanting to increase the role of religious organisations in our society. This divisive activity is unpopular and undemocratic and has negative consequences for the rights and freedoms of many in Britain.

In response to Cameron's comments on the persecution of Christians around the world, Copson said: "There is a consensus in modern Britain that everyone should have freedom of thought and belief and that persecution of anyone for their beliefs is wrong and should be stopped. It's right that our country should take a lead in speaking out for oppressed minorities wherever and whoever they are. What is regrettable is that our Prime Minister should try to exceptionalise Christians in this way – Jews, non-religious people, Muslims, Buddhists and others are equally at risk in a range of ways that deserve our urgent attention."

Nothing more surely leaves a British politician open to ridicule than an open confession of faith. It's akin to admitting weirdness – *Alex Massie, writing in the April issue of GQ magazine.*

Ayaan Hirsi Ali's speech in support of women

very much appreciate your willingness to listen. I stand before you as someone who is fighting for women's and girls' basic rights globally. And I stand before you as someone who is not afraid to ask difficult questions about the role of religion in that fight.

The connection between violence, particularly violence against women, and Islam is too clear to be ignored. We do no favors to students, faculty, nonbelievers and people of faith when we shut our eyes to this link, when we excuse rather than reflect.

So I ask: Is the concept of holy war compatible with our ideal of religious toleration? Is it blasphemy – punishable by death – to ques-

tion the applicability of certain seventh-century doctrines to our own era? Both Christianity and Judaism have had their eras of reform. I would argue that the time has come for a Muslim Reformation.

Is such an argument inadmissible? It surely should not be at a university that was founded in the wake of the Holocaust, at a time when many American universities still imposed quotas on Jews.

The motto of Brandeis University is "Truth even unto its innermost parts." That is my motto too. For it is only through truth, unsparing truth, that your generation can hope to do better than mine in the struggle for peace, freedom and equality of the sexes.