

**In this issue:**

- Church and State in Britain: Time to break the link?
- The continuing importance of Christianity even in a secular age.
- Thoughts on the referendum on the proposed new EU constitution.
- Humans as something above the beasts.
- The SIF on the move!

No. 37 - May 2004

## CONTEMPLATING 'THE BEYOND' AS WELL AS 'THE HERE AND NOW'

Readers will notice a religious theme to some of the articles and inclusions in this issue. This was not deliberately planned, but came about as a result of Peter Richard's submission and then a combination of my own dilettante interest in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and a continuing post-11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 awareness of the Christian (or even 'post-Christian') West and its enemies.

In any case, anyone looking at the world today can hardly fail to notice that religion still matters as a motivating force in politics. This is true even in the West where—to take just one example of a real-world issue—academic research has demonstrated a European-wide link between attitudes towards the EU and both general religiosity and confessional background.

Talking of which, we are fortunate indeed to have a timely and expert piece by Dr Helen Szamuely on what might be behind the Prime Minister's 'EU-turn' on having a referendum on the new EU constitution.



It gives me great pleasure to add my personal congratulations to SIF contributors Professor David Marsland and Dr Robert Lefever for their awards at *Liberty 2003*, the Libertarian Alliance and Libertarian International conference held in London in November 2003. Aside from these awards, the two days—and two evenings!—gave even this

pessimist a *little* heart about the state of contemporary libertarianism and libertarian-conservatism in Britain and the wider world today. Congratulations to Dr Chris Tame, Dr Tim Evans, and all the others for organising the event.

Similarly, a personal 'thank you' to SIF contributor David Carr and his colleagues at the *Samizdata* blogspot ([www.samizdata.net/blog](http://www.samizdata.net/blog)) for organising another excellent St George's Day celebration. Not only are these private gatherings enjoyable social occasions, but they are important in reclaiming the English flag from adherents of various 'fascist' or 'nazi' views that are wholly alien to England's real political traditions.

*Nigel Meek*

### WE'VE MOVED!

Will members and other readers please take note of the SIF's new postal address:

Society for Individual Freedom  
PO Box 744  
BROMLEY  
BR1 4WG

Our email addresses and telephone number remain the same.

### DISCLAIMER & PUBLISHING DETAILS

Views expressed in *The Individual* are not necessarily those of the Editor or the SIF and its members, but are presented as a contribution to debate.

Only policies or opinions that have been approved by the SIF Management Committee, and are noted as such, can be taken as having formal SIF approval. This also applies to editorial comments in this journal.

Edited by Nigel Meek and published by the Society for Individual Freedom. Contact details can be found on the back page.

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## ROYALTY, RELIGION, AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

Peter Richards

The worldwide communion of the Anglican Church is in crisis on the issue of homosexuality. This has been brought to a head by the ordination of a sexually active gay man, Gene Robinson, as Bishop of New Hampshire in the USA, on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2003.

As an atheist I ask myself, should I really care? It is nothing to do with me, is it? Actually I think it is, because I live in a state that has at its head a monarch who is also the head of the Church of England, which is of course part of the Anglican Church. Church and state are united.

Leaving aside for the moment that I can see no reason why an openly gay man could not make a perfectly good bishop, I have been thinking that it would be altogether better if the institution of the Church of England was disestablished so that any dispute within the Church would become a purely internal matter and therefore of no concern to me.

This brings me to the subject I wish to discuss, namely the disestablishment of the Church of England. This is followed by some thoughts on Prince Charles' idea of 'Defender of Faith' and finally to the question of if and how religion and royalty can be linked in a positive way.

Although Sir Ludovic Kennedy clearly states in the introduction to *All in the Mind* that his book does not embrace the subject of disestablishment, his comments provide a useful starting point, because they introduce topics I want to cover in this essay:

*"The first is whether, in view of the decline of Christian worship in this country, the Church of England should be disestablished, i.e. should the reigning monarch continue to hold titles bestowed on Henry VIII and his successors of Supreme Governor of the Church of England and Defender of the (Christian) Faith. Prince Charles is on record as saying that when he becomes king he would like to be thought of as Defender of all faiths—a friendly gesture to British Jews, Moslems and Hindus (although naturally he did not add 'and of none'). Many clergy as well as lay people think that the time for disestablishment has come, that the Church should be free to run its own show and appoint its own bishops, free from political interference. This apart, it seems to me that religious preferences or lack of*

*them today are (unlike yesterday) an essentially private matter. If the British head of state were a president rather than a monarch, it would plainly be absurd to stipulate that he or she should adhere to a particular faith or sect."*<sup>1</sup>

In November 2000, the BBC news reported that, "The number of people who say they are members of the state religion has dropped by 40% since 1983, according to a poll by the National Centre for Social Research (NCSR)", which confirms that the UK is 'losing' its religion.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, has expressed a wish for the Church of England to become disestablished.

Jim Thornton, writing on behalf of a UK website, [www.iConservatives.org.uk](http://www.iConservatives.org.uk), states that he and his colleagues agree with Rowan Williams on this issue:

*"We also support his apparent wish to disestablish the Church of England. It seems to us an anachronism for one church to have a special status in the government of the country, especially as only a small minority of the population remains members of it. We would not tolerate similar privileges for any other group. If the bishops remain in the House of Lords, people will argue for other religions being accorded the same status. Perhaps a careful balance of Protestant, Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, and Hindu not to mention Moonie and Scientologist second chamber members could be devised, but we doubt it. They would have to be balanced by some atheistic and agnostic representatives. Better by far to thank the bishops for their devoted service over the years, and send them on their way."*<sup>2</sup>

After reading this I was mindful of the 2001 National Census, in which 390,000 people in the UK stated Jedi as the answer to the religion question. This represents 0.7% of the population. Perhaps we should allow a Jedi knight to represent these people in the House of Lords. On second thoughts I think the iConservatives are right and that the 26 bishops should no longer be invited to sit in the second chamber.

I can imagine a situation in which a well-educated and philosophical monarch could come to hold

**"Perhaps a careful balance of Protestant, Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, and Hindu not to mention Moonie and Scientologist second chamber members could be devised, but we doubt it."**

atheistic views, and who would be strongly advised to conceal these views from the public, in order not to rock the constitutional boat. You would then have a situation in which the head of state of England could either be persuaded to lie to prevent a constitutional crisis, or would have to abdicate, as a matter of principle, due to his or her loss of faith. The fact that the constitution is framed in such a way seems to me to be ludicrous.

I do not deny that there is a powerful argument against disestablishment which put simply is 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. In other words, the Established Church is part of the evolved English Constitution, and to remove it could destabilise the whole. I happen to believe that the separation of Church and state would lead to a reformed Constitution, which would be more secure in the long term because its adaptation would be rationally justifiable. It is for this reason that I am in favour of the disestablishment of the Church of England.

It is true that the Church of England has made a valuable contribution to the history of our culture by providing a less oppressive alternative to Roman Catholicism, that the King James Bible of 1611, which is largely based on William Tyndale's earlier translation, is an important part of our literary heritage, and that Christian churches (like medieval castles) are complementary to the picturesque landscape of our nation, but I do not think these are reasons in themselves for resisting the split between Church and state.

The idea that Prince Charles should become 'Defender of Faith' is a separate issue and one that is rationally problematical.

As John Radford, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of East London, writing for *The Freethinker* put it:

*"One can hardly defend a faith without defending its practices." He goes on to give many examples of some the things HRH would have to defend, many of which are contradictory. Here is a sample: "He would have to insist on all men wearing beards and also allow them not to. He would have to forbid, but allow blood transfusions. He would have to believe (as in fact he does) that Jesus Christ was divine, and also condemn it as blasphemous, for there is no God but God, or Allah. And at the same time he must accept the multiple gods of Hinduism and the no god of Buddhism."*<sup>3</sup>

Another critic of this idea is Francis Bennion, a constitutional lawyer and author, who in a letter to Prince Charles dated 14<sup>th</sup> April 2002 lists a number of reasons why he believes not all relig-

ions are worthy of equal respect and therefore of defending. This extract gives a flavour of why he objects to the notion of multi-faithism.

*"There are religions that impose female circumcision. There are those that justify forcible arranged marriages. There are those that believe in sun worship, or kneel before the spirits of the trees. There are those founded by charismatic men wholly to channel financial, sexual or other benefits in their own direction. There are cults, and brain washing. Many so-called religions are fraudulent, and need to be combated not 'respected'. Many pose acute dangers to the body politic."*<sup>4</sup>

These arguments I believe are entirely valid.

As 'Defender of Faith' a future King Charles would also appear to be defending all verses of the Koran, which Muslims believe to be the word of Allah. This would include for example: "Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because Allah has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. Allah is high, supreme."<sup>5</sup>

Despite Prince Charles' good intentions, I do not believe the title of 'Defender of Faith' should be bestowed upon him, as this would put him in the impossible position of defending all manner of contradictory practices.

The question is, if Church and state are separated and Prince Charles is to be denied the right to describe himself as 'Defender of Faith', if and when he becomes king, is there any role in relation to religion that this future monarch could reasonably be offered?

I think there is and I would describe his title as 'Defender of Liberty of Conscience'. I am thinking here of the religious liberty that the political group known as the Levellers campaigned for in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Here is a brief statement of how their views of religious tolerance have been described: "During a period of bitter religious strife, the Levellers stressed religious freedom—the right of each person to worship (or not to worship) as he or she chose."<sup>6</sup>

This is how this objective of religious toleration was outlined in the final version of *An Agreement of the Free People of England* by Lieutenant Colonel John Lilburne, Master William Walwyn, Master Thomas Prince and Master Richard Overton, Prisoners in the Tower of London, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1649:

"... I would describe his title as 'Defender of Liberty of Conscience'."

*“That we do not impower or entrust our said representatives to continue in force, or to make any Lawes, Oaths, or Covenants, whereby to compell by penalties or otherwise any person to any thing in or about matters of faith, Religion or Gods worship or to restrain any person from the profession of his faith, or exercise of Religion according to his Conscience, nothing having caused more distractions, and heart burnings in all ages, than persecution and molestation for matters of Conscience in and about Religion:”*<sup>7</sup>

The prevention of religious persecution was clearly the primary intention of this clause of this most wise of documents, but I think it is important to recognise that there is an underlying principle here which simply stated is that the law should not intervene in matters of personal belief. The principle I believe is sound, which is why I think the Government’s Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill, introduced on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2002, was wrong-headed as it contained a clause which made hatred of groups because of their religious or non-religious beliefs illegal and punishable by imprisonment, even though the Bill did not define ‘hatred’ or ‘religious belief’. The subsequent controversy over this issue resulted in the relevant clause being dropped, but this was then followed by the introduction of the Religious Offences Bill proposed by Lord Avebury, which extends incitement to racial hatred to include religious hatred. In addition to the principle of non-intervention by the law in matters of personal belief, this also raises the issue of freedom of expression. We cannot hope to find truth without free and open discussion. Religion like politics is a matter of free choice, unlike race and gender, which are not. Many will want to criticise atheists for their beliefs, which I can accept, just so long as I can criticise Islam.

The ‘Liberty of Conscience’ I want the monarch to defend is the freedom of all to worship any god or gods or not, as they so choose, and the freedom of all to express their own religious or non-

religious views and the freedom to express criticism of the religious or non-religious views of others with whom they disagree. By declaring that the monarch is the ‘Defender of Liberty of Conscience’, religious freedom would become enshrined within the constitution, without the implication that all faiths or none are of equal value. This I think would be the best of all possible outcomes.

#### Notes

- (1) Ludovic Kennedy, *All in the Mind—A Farewell to God*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1999, p. xv.
- (2) Jim Thornton, [www.iConservatives.org.uk](http://www.iConservatives.org.uk).
- (3) John Radford, *The Freethinker*, Vol. 123, No. 7, July 2003, p. 10.
- (4) Francis Bennion, *The Blight of Blairism*, Lester publishing, Oxford, 2002, pp. 308-309.
- (5) *The Koran* 4:34
- (6) Carl Watner, *Come What, Come Will! Richard Overton, Libertarian Leveller*, published in *The Journal of Libertarian Studies: An Inter Disciplinary Review*, Vol. IV, No. 4, Fall 1986, p. 405, quoted in Barry Macleod-Cullinane’s *The Right to Revolution: Toleration, Liberty and the State in the Thought of John Locke and the Early Liberals*, Libertarian Heritage No. 11 Libertarian Alliance, London, 1994, p. 3.
- (7) A.L. Morton (Editor), *Freedom in Arms—A selection of Leveller writings*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1975, p. 271.



*Peter Richards is a Hampshire businessman and occasional writer. Besides being a subscriber and contributor to the SIF and the Libertarian Alliance, he is a life member of the Rationalist Press Association, and a member of the British Humanist Association, and the Freedom Association. He has also contributed to The Freethinker and Right Now!*

**“We cannot hope to find truth without free and open discussion.”**



A diverting pastime...

“My favourite spectator sport is watching people who should know better searching for something (and often claiming to find it) where it never could be.

Women claiming to find feminism in Islam is a good one.”

Julie Burchill, ‘Music to the ears’, *The Guardian*, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2003, [www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,5673,951868,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,5673,951868,00.html)



Women being ‘liberated’ from the decadent West...

## LIBERTARIAN ALLIANCE AWARDS TO SIF CONTRIBUTORS: THE SIF CONGRATULATES DR ROBERT LEFEVER AND PROFESSOR DAVID MARSLAND

### The Libertarian Alliance’s Awards

At the banquet of *Liberty 2003*, the joint Libertarian Alliance and Libertarian International conference held in London in November 2003, both of the main awards were received by individuals who have contributed to the pages of *The Individual* and/or given talks to the SIF. The following are excerpts from the original Libertarian Alliance press releases.

### ‘Liberty in Action’ Award

The Liberty in Action Award, granted in recognition to an individual whose actions have contributed to the struggle for freedom and individual rights, is being given to:

Dr Robert Lefever, Physician, Addiction Therapist, Author, Journalist and Broadcaster, and Advocate of Reason and Liberty.



LA Director Dr Chris R. Tame (l) & Dr Robert Lefever (r)

Says the Libertarian Alliance’s Director, Dr Chris R. Tame: “As a conscientious objector to the British ‘welfare’ state Robert Lefever has demonstrated the superiority of market-based medicine

in practice. Told by NHS bureaucrats that his innovative ideas were impossible to implement he proved them wrong—introducing the scientifically-based PROMIS system to Britain from America. As a physician he has manifested personally the superiority of benevolent market-based practice. As both a theorist and a therapist of addictive disorders he has enabled others to regain their personal autonomy and dignity. As a critic of the British National Health Service he has

demonstrated its economic contradictions, its moral corruption, its stifling of creativity and innovation, its disastrous consequences for its alleged beneficiaries—and the fact that “the difference between a Welfare State and a Totalitarian State is merely a matter of time.” As a

broadcaster and a writer of

books and articles he has provided a penetrating voice—inspired by the ethical individualism of philosopher Ayn Rand—in favour of personal responsibility, free markets, and individual liberty. It is his ongoing work, both in theory and prac-

“... both of the main awards were received by individuals who have contributed ... to the SIF.”

tice, that we seek to recognise in this Award.”

### ‘Liberty in Theory’ Award

The Liberty in Theory Award, granted in recognition for intellectual and scholarly contributions to the understanding and advocacy of economic freedom, individual rights and civil liberties, is being given to:

Professor David Marsland, Professor of Health Informatics at Brunel University and author of many scholarly books, monographs and articles, in recognition of his life-time contributions to the sociological study—and vindication—of the free and open society.



LA Public Affairs Director Dr Tim Evans (l) & Professor David Marsland (r)

Says Dr Chris R. Tame, the Libertarian Alliance’s Director: “Whilst the working and superiority of the free economy has constituted the foundation of most defences of the free society and individual liberty, its equally important sociological study and advocacy has been infrequent. A former socialist Professor David Marsland has provided a rare and valuable exception to this unhappy rule. In countless books, monographs and essays, and as a teacher, broadcaster and activist, he has provided a cogent critique of the unscientific biases

against freedom and free enterprise in mainstream sociology. Alongside that negative critique he has provided an equally penetrating positive analysis in such fields as the sociology of youth, education, the family, war and violence, welfare and medicine, and defence and foreign policy. Throughout this work the working (or sabotage via statism) and importance of individual responsibility, self-help, individual freedom and productive business enterprise, have been explained and vindicated. No mere ‘ivory tower’ theorist, Professor Marsland has engaged actively with the world of politics and had no little influence on some of the major politicians of our time. We hope that this Award stimulates further

recognition of a lifetime

achievement. And, of course, we note that his work and writing still continues, as we hope it will for many more years.”

### The Libertarian Alliance

The Libertarian Alliance is Britain’s most radical free market and civil liberties policy institute. It has published approximately 750 articles, pamphlets, and books in support of freedom and against statism in all its forms. These are freely available at [www.libertarian.co.uk](http://www.libertarian.co.uk).

**“Professor Marsland has engaged actively with the world of politics and had no little influence on some of the major politicians of our time.”**

A theologian presages Adam Smith...

“Use [the Good] is to perform one’s office and to do one’s work rightly, faithfully, sincerely, and justly. It is only known obscurely... what is really meant in the Word by the goods of charity, which are called ‘good works’, also ‘fruits’, and here uses. From the sense of the letter of the Word it is believed that they consist in giving to the poor, assisting the needy, doing good to widows and orphans, and like things. However, such uses are not meant in the Word by ‘fruits’, ‘works’ and goods of charity, but... performing one’s office, business, and work rightly, faithfully, sincerely, and justly. When this is done the... public good is consulted... When this is done every one, whether he be a priest, governor or officer, a merchant, or a labourer, is every day doing uses.”

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), *Divine Wisdom* (1763).

On Britain as a Christian country...

“Whether our secular leaders like it or not, Britain is a Christian country, because Christian belief has underpinned all the societal developments of which we are proud (education, charity, individual conscience) and some of which we are not proud (intolerance, bigotry, arrogance). It would be nice to get rid of the latter, but we cannot do this by pretending that Christianity never existed. It will be achieved only by learning more about it and how to express it in its best form so that everybody, not just those brought up as Christians, can have some understanding of what the whole thing is about.

It is a load of bilge to suggest that because Britain is now a multicultural society, it is only polite for Christianity to fade away. Equally, just because it is 2,000 years old, it is nonsense to suggest the Christian faith has somehow run out of steam and is, you’ve guessed it, ‘irrelevant to our modern lives’. Great faiths do not run out of steam. They are never irrelevant.

How old do all Christianity’s detractors think Hinduism is? Or Buddhism? They wouldn’t dare be dismissive of these religions for fear of being branded ‘insulting’. Well, as a Christian, I feel insulted. I have the greatest respect for other faiths. I just wish that our leaders had more respect for mine.”

Katie Grant, ‘Like it or not, this country is a Christian one’, *The Scotsman*, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2003, [www.thescotsman.co.uk/comment.cfm?id=1345632003](http://www.thescotsman.co.uk/comment.cfm?id=1345632003).

“...Christian belief has underpinned all the societal developments of which we are proud...”

A theologian on the necessity of freedom for true morality...

“Divine order [provides that] man should act in freedom according to reason, because to act in freedom according to reason is to act from himself. And yet these two faculties, freedom and reason, are not... [man’s own] but are the Lord’s in him. In so far as he is a man, they must not be taken away from him, because without them he cannot be reformed. Without them he cannot perform repentance, he cannot fight against evils, and afterwards bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.”

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), *Doctrine of Life* (1761-1763).

## WHO ARMED SADDAM?

Nigel Meek

### The Claim

Even amongst those 'left-liberals' who can bring themselves to admit that Saddam Hussein was not a very nice man—their difficulty with this concept coming from a combination of anti-Western multiculturalism and the admiration that they give to almost any tyrant that “stands up to the Americans”—their sneering get-out clause is “Well, the USA didn't think he was so bad when they were arming him back in the 1980s”.

Now, my hands are 'clean' in this respect. I have written previously in *The Individual* that (a) commerce has a moral dimension and as such (b) the arms trade is often a very dubious thing indeed.<sup>1</sup> But what about this specific assertion—that the USA armed Saddam—a belief that may be shared by many readers of this journal?

### The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

From SIPRI's website:

“In 1964, Prime Minister Tage Erlander of Sweden put forward the idea of establishing a peace research institute to commemorate Sweden's 150 years of unbroken peace. A Swedish Royal Commission chaired by Ambassador Alva Myrdal proposed in its 1966 report to establish an institute, later named the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI. The Institute's research should seek to contribute to “the understanding of the preconditions for a stable peace and for peaceful solutions of international conflicts” and the Commission recommended that research be concentrated on armaments, their limitation and reduction, and arms control. The Commission also recommended that SIPRI work be of “an applied research character directed towards practical-political questions [which] should be carried on in a constant interchange with research of a more theoretical kind.” SIPRI has built its reputation and standing on competence, professional skills, and the collection of hard data and precise facts, rendering accessible impartial information on weapon developments, arms transfers and production, military expenditure, as well as on arms limitations, reductions and disarmament. The task of the Institute is to conduct “scientific research on questions of conflict and co-operation of importance for international peace and security with the aim of contributing to an understanding of the conditions for peaceful solution of international conflicts and for a stable peace”.<sup>2</sup>

In short, SIPRI is far from being a coven of 'necons' of the sort that feature so prominently in the demonology of 'left-liberals'.

### The Evidence

For some people, SIPRI's analysis of arms sales to the former regime in Iraq will make for remarkable and uncomfortable reading.

Although the Ba'athist regime had already been in power for some time, Saddam Hussein became ruler of Iraq in 1979. The table accompanying this article gives the details of actual deliveries of major conventional weapons between 1979 and 1990—when Iraq invaded Kuwait and most trade ceased—in terms of millions of US\$ at constant 1990 prices.<sup>3</sup>

And where do the Americans come? Quite some way down the list, it turns out. Indeed, with about half of one percent of total arms sales to Iraq during this period, on a par with those bloodthirsty warmongers in... Denmark and Austria. The real villain is easily revealed: with just over half of all arms sales to Iraq between 1979 and 1990 it was the USSR—now in its new guise as a Russia currently ruled by the ex-KGB secret policeman Vladimir Putin and one of the main opponents of the US-led invasion of Iraq. The other 'communist' giant, China, provided a fair chunk of Iraq's weaponry and Soviet-dominated Poland and Czechoslovakia sold their share.

But look, who's that in second? Surely not that nation of “liberty, fraternity, and equality”?! No wonder the French were unhappy at the prospect of a US-led invasion. A few more years, and with the invasion of Kuwait relegated to a footnote in history, they were probably looking forward to “business as usual”.

### The Moral of This Tale...

... is that there are far too many people—and not just 'the usual suspects'—who are prepared to believe anything bad about the USA. As a libertarian, I disagree with a great deal of what the US government does both internally and externally—as I do with any government. But we live in an imperfect world, rather far from The New Jerusalem. If people have anger to spare about the world 'as is', then they may care to look rather harder at where they direct it.

“... there are far too many people... prepared to believe anything bad about the USA.”

## Notes

(1) Nigel Meek, 'A Libertarian Approach to Third World Debt and the Arms Trade', *The Individual*, February 2003, pp. 13-14.

(2) Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 'A Brief History of SIPRI', SIPRI website, <http://about.sipri.se/history>, November 2000.

(3) Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, arms transfers to Iraq 1973-1990, SIPRI website, [http://projects.sipri.se/armstrade/Trnd\\_Ind\\_IRQ\\_Imps\\_73-02.pdf](http://projects.sipri.se/armstrade/Trnd_Ind_IRQ_Imps_73-02.pdf), March 2003.



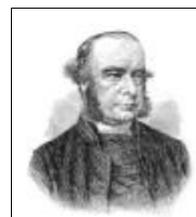
*Nigel Meek is the editorial director and membership director of the Libertarian Alliance and the Society for Individual Freedom.*

Imported Weapons to Iraq 1979-1990 in Millions US\$ at 1990 Prices															
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	Total	% of all sales	
USSR	824	1665	1286	1425	1453	2438	2114	2298	2372	851	1131	470	18327	51.38	
France	78	241	731	673	779	883	700	251	214	355	113	281	5299	14.86	
China				217	745	1065	1036	918	887	301	23		5192	14.56	
Czechoslovakia	270		226	258	213	264	264	90	90	90	45		1810	5.07	
Poland	14		148	179	15	18	223	275	275	275	145	73	1640	4.60	
Brazil		100	100	100	101	56	66	31	63	82	25		724	2.03	
Egypt		12	46	71	58		32	70	114	118	47		568	1.59	
Romania			65	161	161	137							524	1.47	
Denmark					226								226	0.63	
Libya					200								200	0.56	
USA					21	6	9	9	30	125			200	0.56	
South Africa							48	48	48	48			192	0.54	
Austria					190								190	0.53	
Switzerland	6	14	22	11	56				18	16	2	6	151	0.42	
Yugoslavia			60							2	17	8	87	0.24	
West Germany	11			11		13				18	18	13	84	0.24	
Italy				37		47							84	0.24	
UK				55				7	10	7			79	0.22	
Hungary			30										30	0.08	
Spain				13	13						3		29	0.08	
East Germany			25										25	0.07	
Canada										7			7	0.02	
Jordan							2						2	0.01	
<b>Year Totals</b>	<b>1203</b>	<b>2032</b>	<b>2739</b>	<b>3211</b>	<b>4231</b>	<b>4927</b>	<b>4494</b>	<b>3997</b>	<b>4121</b>	<b>2295</b>	<b>1569</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>35670</b>	<b>100</b>	

When the Anglican Church spoke up for sturdy British values...

Rather "England free than England compulsorily sober"

William Connor Magee (1821-1891), then Bishop of Peterborough and later Archbishop of York, in a speech in the House of Lords on the temperance issue. Note the adjective 'compulsorily'. The good prelate was not advocating drunkenness!



Bishop Magee

Cherie Blair, wife of the British Prime Minister, taking leave of her senses whilst toadying to the Saudis...

"Part of the reason [the image of Saudi Arabia is] appalling is that perception that you treat your women like they are not equals but some sort of 'other'... And I know that that is not in fact the reality..."

Cherie Blair, quoted in Marie Woolf, 'Saudi has "appalling image", Cherie tells ambassador', *The Independent*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2003, <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/story.jsp?story=473990>.

Oh, but Mrs Blair, the 'real reality' is...

"Women have the legal status of a car, where they are transferred from their fathers' custody to their husbands' or sons'. They are unable to buy a mobile phone, register in college, travel, and accept marriage proposal among other things, without male approval. Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world that prevents women from driving, studying law and engineering, directly selling or buying property, attending court (even when accused of murder), and showing their faces in public."

Testimony of Ali Al-Ahmed, Director of the Saudi Institute, before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, 'Human Rights in Saudi Arabia: The Role of Women', 4<sup>th</sup> June 2002, [www.house.gov/lantos/caucus/TestimonyAhmed060402.htm](http://www.house.gov/lantos/caucus/TestimonyAhmed060402.htm).

"Women have the legal status of a car..."

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“... an increasingly widespread belief that none of us is faced with an absolute choice...”

A cardinal on the irreconcilable nature of good and evil...

“... but I do believe there is an attempt on the part of our society, perhaps unconsciously, to ‘marry’ heaven and hell. This arises from an increasingly widespread belief that none of us is faced with an absolute choice, an either/or, but that somehow or other we can choose both evil and good, or that we can choose good without rejecting evil.”

“In all of our lives we have constantly to choose between right and wrong, good and evil, this road or that road—heaven or hell. As we get older we are bound to realise more and more clearly that we cannot have it both ways. The consequences of not making the clear moral choice are cumulative and deleterious, just as the consequences of making sound moral choices are cumulative and virtuous.”

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, ‘We need to be saved’, *The Spectator*, 13<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> December 2003, p. 20.



Westminster Cathedral



Cardinal O’Connor

Motes and Beams...

UK readers of *The Individual* will be aware of the fuss made earlier in the year over comments unfavourable to things Arabian made by the TV presenter and former Labour Party MP Robert Kilroy-Silk. It is perhaps a pity that Mr Kilroy-Silk did not work a little harder at distinguishing between ‘Arab’ as a racial category and ‘Arab’ as a political or cultural one. Nevertheless, readers may also have noted that one of Mr Kilroy-Silk’s chief persecutors was none other than our old friend, Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality. It will be recalled that Mr Phillips was the ‘star’ of the cover of the September 2003 issue of *The Individual* where we recorded his partial sympathy for the mass-murdering tyrant, Lenin...

## WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?

Richard Lines

It is fashionable to assert that we are ‘just’ animals like any other species. In his book *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (Granta, 2002) the philosopher John Gray states this thesis in stark form. We are, he says, “an exceptionally rapacious primate” and, from the point of view of other species, the disappearance of *homo sapiens*, or *homo rapiens* as he calls us, would not necessarily be an undesirable thing. The future is not ours to make and we are no more capable of mastering destiny than tigers, gorillas or whales. We are inviting an environmental disaster which could wipe us out as a species, just as the dinosaurs were wiped out sixty million years ago. Grey’s specific remedy is a limiting of the earth’s human population. “By spreading contraception we can try to ensure that human numbers decline in ways



Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)

that enhance our welfare rather than through our destructiveness.” Ironically, in this argument, by advocating an exercise in human rationality and freedom, he is undermining his own thesis that we are no different from other species. He may well be right to point out our arrogance and to dismiss some of the wilder claims by scientific humanists, but in saying that we are no different from other animals he makes a serious error.

Long ago [the 18<sup>th</sup> century scientist and theologian Emanuel] Swedenborg wrote of the ‘insanity’ of people of his own time who failed to recognise the differences between humans and animals. These differences are ‘internal’, not ‘external’, for humans (unlike animals) have a spiritual as well as a natural life:

*“The reason why most people do not know how to distinguish their own life from that of beasts is that the two externally are alike. Both are interested in and set their hearts solely on earthly, bodily, and worldly objects. Such people also believe that their life is similar to the life which beasts possess and that like these they are going to become nothing at all when they die. For what spiritual and celestial things may be they do not know because they are not interested in them. From this comes the insanity of our times of people comparing themselves to animals and not recognising any internal distinction.”* (*Arcana Coelestia*, part of No. 3646.)

Swedenborg wrote this more than a hundred years before Darwin published his *Origin of Species*, but he appears to have encountered plenty of materialistic philosophers of the John Gray variety. As a professed atheist, Gray cannot accept that humans are made in God’s image and he scorns those fellow-atheists who “hold to the central error of Christianity—that humans have a value and destiny denied other animals...” There is nothing new under the sun! There is something primitive, almost pre-human about our postmodernists who claim to be so up to date. In recognising only the biological (Swedenborg’s ‘external’) aspect of humankind they miss the blindingly obvious, the developed ‘self-consciousness’ of the human race (which, incidentally, makes science and philosophy possible) and ‘conscience’ (our moral compass), which set us far apart from animals, however much we may abuse our knowledge and power.

In a slightly later passage in *Arcana* (No. 4219) Swedenborg, using deceptively simple language, spells out to the reader why we humans are different from animals:

*“Let nobody suppose that anyone is man because he has a human face and human body, and has a brain and also organs and limbs. All of these he has in common with animals, and therefore these are things which die and become a corpse. But a person is man by virtue of being able to think and will as a human being, and so of his being able to receive things that are Divine, that is, which are the Lord’s. These things mark the human being off from beasts and wild animals; and in the next life too he becomes such a human being in the measure that by accepting those things during his lifetimes he had made them his own.”*

Note that Swedenborg, whose book on the brain anticipated scientific discoveries not demonstrated until the end of the nineteenth century or even later, does not consider that it is the brain that produces thought but is simply the instrument through which thought is transmitted.

In the later work *Divine Love and Wisdom*, the most philosophical of his inspired works, Swedenborg enlarges (at No. 240) on the human faculties of rationality and freedom:

“... a person is a man by virtue of being able to think and will as a human being...”

*"There are in man from the Lord two faculties by which he is distinguished from beasts. One faculty is the ability to understand what truth is and what good is. This faculty is called rationality, and is a faculty of his understanding. The other faculty is the ability to do what is true and good. This faculty is called freedom, and is a faculty of his will... Man is man by reason of these two faculties from the Lord, and has them from him continually, nor are they taken away, for if they were taken away, man's human would perish. In these two faculties, the Lord is with every man, with the good man as well as the evil. They are the Lord's dwelling place in the human race."*

These simple but beautiful words lift us from the material plane to the spiritual one. Swedenborg's thinking is always 'top down', never 'bottom up'. He starts with the axiom that all that we are and all that we have come ultimately from God, mediated through the spiritual world. Those who like John Gray deny the existence of God and the spiritual world and think only from nature have no conception of the spiritual. But those who acknowledge the spiritual dimension become capable of forming an enlarged vision of humankind's capabilities, despite the horrors we still manage to perpetrate. In Swedenborg's day it was still possible to speak in terms of the 'Great Chain of Being' in which humankind took its place in the hierarchy of creation. Scientists today have a hugely greater knowledge of the natural world than he did, but we seem to have lost something

**"... those who acknowledge the spiritual dimension become capable of forming an enlarged vision of humankind's capabilities..."**

vital in eliminating the spiritual from our thinking, so that it has come impoverished rather than enriched. Repelled by the aridity of so much modern thinking, we can for insight and inspiration go to Swedenborg and to the great poetry influenced directly or indirectly by his thought. In his great religious poem, *A Death in the Desert*, described by the nineteenth century New Churchman [i.e. the church inspired by Swedenborg's writings] James Spilling as "crammed full of Swedenborgianism from beginning to end", Robert Browning contrasted humans with animals in this concise and memorable way:

*"Lower than God who knows all and can all,  
Higher than beasts which know and can so far  
As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,  
Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;  
While man knows partly but conceives beside,  
Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact.  
And in this striving, this converting air  
Into a solid he may grasp and use,  
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,  
Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,  
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be."*



*This article first appeared in 'Things Heard and Seen, the newsletter of the Swedenborg Society, No. 12, Autumn 2003, pp. 33-35, and is reprinted by kind permission of Richard Lines, the author and secretary of the Society, and the editor Patrick Johnson. Naturally, no inferences about the political or religious beliefs of the members of either the Society for Individual Freedom or the Swedenborg Society should be made by its inclusion in The Individual.*



**The New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian) church  
in Bristol, England**

A theologian on man as something beyond the beasts...

"A man is not a man because of his having a human face and human body, but because of the wisdom of his understanding and the goodness of his will. As the quality of these ascends he becomes the more a man..."

"But so far as he has no wish to do good or understand truth, he can only counterfeit man in externals and play the ape."

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), *True Christian Religion* (1769-1771).

## AN ATHEIST LIBERTARIAN'S APPRECIATION OF CHRISTIANITY

**Nigel Meek**

### With a Humble and Contrite Heart...

Since I am an atheist and certainly no theologian, I approach this essay with apprehension. However, the more I consider things the more I have come to acknowledge and appreciate the Christian heritage—amongst other heritages—of this country and the wider Western world. Moreover, since we are living in a time and place where the airbrushing out of our Christian heritage gathers pace—partly because of anti-Western multiculturalism and partly because the mainstream Christian denominations seem to be embarrassed by their own professed beliefs—it seems important that we recall and give thanks for it.

Needless to say, great crimes have been committed in the name of Christianity—often against other Christians—as they have been by most religions at some time or the other, and I do not seek to minimise them. Nevertheless, we must point to at least two aspects of our Christian—actually, Judeo-Christian—heritage that, by accident or design, have helped to shape what we think of as ‘Western civilisation’ and what Winston Churchill aptly termed ‘Christian civilisation’.

### Fallibility, Open Enquiry, and Rational Revision

Much of the Bible is untrue. Not in the sense that an atheist must necessarily regard it as untrue, but in the sense that *anyone* must do so who is neither mad nor suffering from Orwellian Doublethink. To put it simply: the Bible contradicts itself about basic aspects of history and theology. And this is not restricted to some of the more obscure parts of the Old Testament: the Four Gospels sometimes disagree on the life and teachings of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

This has profound implications. The men who over time compiled what we now think of as the Bible—both Testaments of it—were true scholars wholly familiar with the texts.<sup>2</sup> Assuming that they were not mad, they must have been aware of these contradictions, leaving aside the many passages that even people of their time must have thought were rather odd. It may not have been their intention, but by having the moral courage to retain these discrepancies, they allowed the intellectual elasticity for later thinkers to question and deny the notion that the Bible was the infallible word of God—even if it was in some sense

divinely inspired. This allowed the rejection of those parts of the Bible that modern science or even changes in social attitudes made untenable—but *without in any way thereby renouncing Christianity itself*. For all that one needs to accept to be regarded as a ‘true Christian’ are those beliefs set out in the Nicene and/or Apostles’ Creeds, two texts that commit the believer to almost nothing about the natural or human worlds.<sup>3</sup> (Of course, to belong to a specific Christian denomination—e.g. Roman Catholic or Anglican—may well require other commitments.)

In short, the importance of this is that—probably unwittingly—it fostered the Western ‘scientific’ frame of mind of the acknowledgement of change, fallibility, and empiricism. By contrast, for ‘true Moslems’ the Koran is the literal word of God with no interpretation permitted;<sup>4</sup> to disbelieve in any of it is apostasy in principle requiring the death of the apostate.<sup>5</sup>

### Socio-Political Pluralism

In the chapter 22 verse 21 of his Gospel, Matthew quotes Christ uttering what may be one of the single most important sentences in the history of Western social and political thought. Asked a question about the payment of taxes, Christ replied “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” To amplify this requires an understanding not only of Christ’s immediate circumstances—a man so lacking in temporal power that the authorities were able to put him to death—but the history of Christianity’s beginnings. For Christianity, far from being an immediate and all-conquering success, spent the first three centuries of its existence as a persecuted sect until the conversion of Constantine in 312 AD. This is again in sharp contrast to Islam, where widespread sword-point conversion had already occurred in Mohammed’s lifetime.

Both Christ and the early Christians—and virtually all Christians subsequently—had to live with the knowledge that theirs was but one amongst many competing ideas vying for power both in the world and over the hearts of men. To be sure, when they later got the chance they would enthusiastically champion the One True Way of Christianity—or at least their sect’s interpretation of it. But like the fostering of “change, fallibility, and empiricism” noted above—although I suspect more consciously given that long-lasting and

“I have come to appreciate the Christian heritage... of this country and the wider Western world.”

widespread Christian theocracies have been the exception—the ‘worm’ of political and social pluralism was at the core of the Christian ‘apple’ from the very beginning. Historically, it could not have been otherwise.

Again, the contrast with Islam is striking. For, as noted above, not only does Islam not permit any meaningful criticism of the Koran, it also holds that the Koran serves as the infallible handbook for the righteous on earth, not just as a route-map to heaven. To speak of ‘Islamic law’ is meaningless. There is no law other than Islam as set out in the Koran, and hence the notion of ‘pluralist Islam’ is largely an oxymoron.<sup>6</sup>

### Let Us Not Lose Sight of Our Good Fortune

Those of us born into this time and place—the Western world from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards—are uniquely privileged. For despite everything, we live in unparalleled peace, freedom, and prosperity. There are many reasons for this, but one of the most important is the intellectual and cultural heritage bequeathed by two millennia of Christianity, particularly in its two major Western forms.

To disbelieve in God is one thing, but to reject Christianity *in toto* is to move some way towards rejecting worthwhile civilisation itself.<sup>7</sup> The West *is* the best. David Kelley put it well when he defined Modernity—i.e. the true-liberal West—as “the view that reason, not revelation, is the instrument of knowledge and arbiter of truth; that science, not religion, gives us the truth about nature; that the pursuit of happiness in this life, not suffering in preparation for the next, is the cardinal value; that reason can and should be used to increase human wellbeing through economic and technological progress; that the individual person is an end in himself with the capacity to direct his own life, not a slave or a child to be ruled by others; that individuals have equal rights to freedom of thought, speech, and action; that religious belief should be a private affair, tolerance a social virtue, and church and state kept separate; and that we should replace command economies with markets, warfare with trade, and rule by king or commissar with democracy.”<sup>8</sup>

If we praise our Christian heritage—including its secularised form—above other heritages, consciously abjuring the mendacious doctrine of ‘multiculturalism’, we must necessarily accord to those others an inferior status. And if they seek to attack us, or actually do attack us, we must not only react appropriately, but do so in the sure and certain knowledge of our superiority.

### Notes

(1) G.W. Foote & W.P. Ball (eds.), *The Bible Handbook: For Freethinkers and Enquiring Christians*,

11<sup>th</sup> ed., London, G.W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 1888/1961, pp. 9-39.

(2) John Romer, *Testament: The Bible and History*, London, Michael O’Mara Books Ltd.

(3) ‘Apostles’ Creed and Nicene Creed’, [www.catholicwomen.com/kc020.htm](http://www.catholicwomen.com/kc020.htm), last checked 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2004.

(4) Hugh Fitzgerald, ‘*Onward Muslim Soldiers: An Essay-Review*’, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2004, [www.afsi.org/OUTPOST/2004JAN/jan3.htm](http://www.afsi.org/OUTPOST/2004JAN/jan3.htm), last checked 8<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

(5) ‘Apostasy (Irtidād) in Islam: The act in which a Muslim abandons Islam’, [www.religioustolerance.org/isl\\_apos.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_apos.htm), last checked 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2004.

(6) Of course, it would be wrong to deny that there have been attempts at pluralism in the Islamic world—or, indeed, to deny that centuries ago the Islamic world was in some respects superior to Christendom in many fields—but these have usually been infrequent, short-lived, and half-hearted. They have anyway tended to be within the context of the Islamic world trying to rectify its backwardness by imitating what seemed to be working elsewhere. Unfortunately, it has been just as likely to copy Soviet communism or National Socialism as Western democracy. For more on this—and other issues merely outlined in this essay—see for example Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, London, Phoenix, 2002; and Sean Gabb, *The Challenge of Islam: Can We Face It?*, 1990/2004, [www.seangabb.co.uk/pamphlet/islam.htm](http://www.seangabb.co.uk/pamphlet/islam.htm), last checked 16<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

(7) In a similar manner, whilst I oppose Britain’s membership of the EU, I find it difficult not to concur with Pope John-Paul II’s identification of the EU as in part “a family of nations founded on a common Christian tradition”. See Anon., Referendum on the European Union in Poland: a round up just a few days before the election, *The Robert Schuman Institute’s European Elections Monitor*, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2003, [www.robert-schuman.org/anglais/oe/pologne/referendum/default2.htm](http://www.robert-schuman.org/anglais/oe/pologne/referendum/default2.htm), last checked 21<sup>st</sup> September 2003.

(8) David Kelley, ‘The war against modernity’, *Spiked Online*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2002, [www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000006D9B1.htm](http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/00000006D9B1.htm), last checked 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2004.



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“... in the sure and certain knowledge of our superiority.”

For more information about 'the Religion of Peace'...

*Jihad Watch* at <http://jihadwatch.org>

*Daniel Pipes* at [www.danielpipes.org](http://www.danielpipes.org)

*The Middle East Media Research Institute* at [www.memri.org](http://www.memri.org)

*Little Green Footballs* at [www.littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog](http://www.littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog)

No individual should be judged by the colour of their skin or the cultural background of their parents. But the mainstream media in the West—in a suicidal act of cultural abasement—is persistently sanitising or just ignoring the realities of the sayings and doings of many religious, political, cultural, and military leaders of the Islamic world. At the same time, it finds every excuse to magnify or even invent the failings of the UK, the USA, Israel, and the wider Western world. The four websites listed above provide something of a corrective.

## The EU Constitution: Has the Prime Minister Run Out of Choices?

**Dr Helen Szamuely**

“... the days when he appeared to be able to walk on water are long gone.”

The British media could not resist the pun. “Blair does an EU-turn” screamed the headlines. It brought back memories of Margaret Thatcher (sometime supposed mentor of Blair) saying to her opponents “You turn if you want to. The lady is not for turning.” That, of course, was linked to a half-forgotten play of the forties, “The lady is not for burning”. Such are the links in political memory.

What is Blair doing? For months he insisted that a referendum was out of the question. It is not, we were told, democratic or part of the British political tradition (except when it appeared to be convenient to the New Labour project). The main problem with a referendum is that, faced with one, relatively simple question, the people may not vote as expected and, recently, referendums to do with the “European project” have not gone well from the integrationist elite’s point of view.

Blair’s distaste for the idea was clear when he made the statement in Parliament. Much to everyone’s amusement he could not bring himself to use the word referendum but described it in every possible other way. In theory, at least, he could still turn round and explain that this was not what he meant by “consulting the people”. Unfortunately, the days when he appeared to be able to walk on water are long gone.

What made him give in? There were rumours of cabinet rebellion, ministers insisting that Britain must have a referendum. The fact that those rumours and Blair’s proposed statement were leaked to the media may well have tipped his hand—the biter bit, given the way he and his staff have manipulated the media in the past. But, in fact, Blair had been signalling that “EU-turn” for some weeks. There was even speculation that he might outflank his opponents by having an in-or-out referendum on the EU. The likelihood is that the electoral commission will not let him do that, but,

undoubtedly, that will be the thrust of the “yes” campaign on the constitution.

It is unlikely to have been popular opinion that influenced Blair. While he wants to be liked and admired, he has never seen giving in to popular opinion as part of that, calculating correctly that no popular opinion is going to last for very long. If he can appear to be sensitive, thoughtful but decisive (whether he is any of those things or not) he can ride any storm. Or so it seemed for a long time. But his luck changed some time ago and he may be running out of political options.

It is certainly true that the proposed EU constitution has raised more interest than European matters do normally. The media, even the BBC, have woken up to the fact that something important and potentially very nasty is about to hit this country. People are paying attention. It is also true that the Blair government has become extremely unpopular. It is perceived as incompetent with a strong dash of sleaze in it – the fatal perception that destroyed Major and the Conservative Party in 1997.

This June there will be elections for the European Parliament and some local ones. While the turnout is expected to sink to an unprecedented low in both, Labour is unlikely to do well in either. In this Britain will conform to the pattern clearly visible throughout western Europe: governments are unpopular, the electorate is frustrated and the political leaders’ credibility is practically non-existent. The likelihood is that the June Summit, which is supposed to agree the constitution will be attended by political leaders, most of whom had been badly wounded in the European Parliamentary elections just a week or so previously. This is a particular problem for Blair, who is not especially popular with many of his colleagues, in that he has always been able to point to his enormous majority in the House of Commons in Parliament. The fact that this majority is not based on a true electoral popularity is irrelevant – nobody else comes anywhere near him. Serious losses in the European elections will hit him hard.

Then there is the next general election. Best guess is that it will be in the spring of 2005 and none of the domestic problems—high taxation; bloated and inefficient public sector; appalling health, education, transport; disintegrating law and order; immigration that the government has no control over; a perception that the government and its minions could not tell the truth even if they tried—will either disappear or improve. The last thing Blair needs on top of that is the festering problem of an EU constitution, which, his opponents will point out, he is trying to force on the British people without even asking their opinion. Traditionally, the Labour Party has tried to hide the whole European issue during political campaigns. The one time it did come to the fore

was in 1983 as part of Michael Foot’s disastrous Labour manifesto (known as the longest suicide note in history) and many still remember the shattering defeat of that year. It was not their threat to withdraw from the EEC that did it but Blair and his cohorts have tried to get away from the whole package. In 1997, after 18 years in opposition, the Labour Party had convinced itself that “Europe” was a peculiarly Conservative problem. They, in particular, their supposedly glamorous leader, will be able to deal with it. Alas, the doomsayers were proved right. Blair’s government has not dealt with the problem any better than its predecessors. So the time has come to sweep it under the carpet again. And what better way of doing it than by promising a referendum. By this Blair hopes to ensure that he will not have to fight a general election campaign on the European issue.

The trouble is that it is hard to see what exactly he will be able to fight the campaign on. He has no strong points left. He has failed to reform the public services and cannot really ask for another term to do what he has not managed to do in the last two. (Though almost certainly he will.) The fight against terrorism has been compromised by the lies the government told quite unnecessarily and, even more so, by its refusal to fight terrorism nearer home. A Prime Minister who rushes off from the memorial service to the victims of the Madrid bombing to shake hands with the man who is responsible for the Lockerbie bombing and the death of hundreds in Northern Ireland will not be seen as a knight in shining armour.

There is some indication that he is going to turn the vote for an EU constitution into a moral issue but it is unlikely to work. The moral argument for the EU is tarnished and to say that we owe this to the East European countries begs several questions. The Nice Treaty was allegedly essential for enlargement; why should the constitution be that as well? Those who understand enlargement are unlikely to agree that what the post-Communist countries need is a rigid, detailed, 300-odd pages long constitution; those who do not are either not interested or, worse, fear a huge influx of migrants.

However, there is one thing Blair can do and that is wrong-foot the other side. The earliest the constitution can be agreed on is at the June Summit in Dublin and even that is not a done deal. It is being argued that by calling a referendum Blair has strengthened his hand in negotiating concessions with his partners. The problem is that it is not clear what those concessions are likely to be. The famous “red lines” have long been forgotten by everyone and fighting a referendum on detailed analysis of the constitution would not be particularly astute if the “no” campaign can present a coherent bigger picture. Poland and Spain, the two countries that have made difficulties in

“... there is one thing that Blair can do and that is wrong-foot the other side.”

December have half-indicated that they are willing to take a softer line but the Spanish Foreign Minister has said that Spain will emerge from these negotiations with a better deal than the one they secured in Nice. That means some very hard bargaining. (It is worth noting that, no matter what various Spanish governments may say about the global situation, their behaviour within the EU does not change. They will support integration but hold up all negotiations to get themselves the best deal possible. How long other member states will allow this, remains to be seen.)

If all the reefs are avoided successfully and the constitution is agreed on in June, it has to be negotiated through Parliament, which will not be easy. But there will be no referendum until that process is completed. If Blair is very lucky, one of the other countries will vote the constitution out during that time and he may be able to abandon the idea with a relieved sigh. But if he is not let off the hook, the parliamentary process will take the best part of next year and run into the pre-election fever. If it is completed in time, the referendum will have to be called after the election, whose results, at present, cannot be forecast. But, at least, Blair can hope to remove Europe from the electoral campaign. In fact, given the growing fear of European integration, he is not likely to succeed in that. The Conservatives, who are opposing the constitution will, presumably, make as much political hay as possible.

Blair's greatest strength is the big split in the "no" campaign between those who merely oppose whatever happens to be on the agenda—euro, constitution, change in the voting arrangements—but refuse to look at the whole vast question of Britain's membership and, indeed, the EU's existence, and those who think that the problem is insoluble, the system unreformable and the sooner we abandon it and start again, the better. At times of crisis, such as a referendum, the two sides come together but the tensions remain, and, undoubtedly, the "yes" side and the government will work hard to exacerbate them.

The Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, has already said that a no vote will not mean a resignation issue for the Prime Minister. Strictly speaking that is true: other no votes in referendums on EU related subjects have not usually resulted in resignations. In Blair's case there will be a difference because of his deeply personal style of leadership. Every issue becomes a moral one; every issue is a vote of confidence in him. Whether he can survive a rejection of something that is so crucial to his political world view remains to be seen. Then again, he might not want to. There have been many rumours about an imminent resignation. The assumption is that Gordon Brown will be the successor and, given certain problems between those two, it is not impossible that Blair may wish to hand over a poisoned chalice. In fact, the La-

bour Party will have to elect a leader and that is not a foregone conclusion at all.

For the "yes" side the referendum will not be crucial but very important. If they lose, the constitution will die, though probably only temporarily. That may, in fact happen, if one of the other countries votes no. This will not destroy the



**Dr Helen Szamuely**  
(via *These Tides*)

European project and the push for integration will carry on as it has done for decades: through a slow, accumulative process. On the other hand, much of the project depends on a lack of opposition to it, if not necessarily active support. In the last ten years or so there has been a gradually growing perception that the EU is not popular with the people in

Europe, who have gone along with it without realising its implications and not really seeing any alternative. The infamous democratic deficit will become even greater with a no vote in any member state, and particularly in Britain. There is something to the theory that European integration has to keep moving to stay upright: every time it wobbles, its ability to reach the final destination becomes more doubtful.

The "no" side cannot afford to lose the referendum but even if it wins, it will have gained little. We shall all be exactly where we are now. It was summed up best by one eurosceptic writer, who said that if we lose the referendum we have lost the war, if we win, we have won a battle. The fight against the euro was described as the sceptics' Maginot line—the EU's tanks of greater integration and more regulation simply rolled round the end of it. The concentration on the constitution will have the same effect and there will be a great need not to lose sight of the bigger picture. Perhaps the best thing some eurosceptics can do is to emulate Stalin in 1943 at the meeting of the Big Three in Teheran. While Churchill and Roosevelt concentrated on the war, Stalin started to produce plans for the post-war division of Europe. The "no" side, to be truly effective, will have to start producing workable plans for the post-EU Europe.

Either way, another prop has been knocked out from under the post-1945 settlement. And, either way, European politics is likely to be interesting in the next few years.



*Dr Helen Szamuely is a well-known writer and researcher on political affairs. This article was also submitted to Euobserver (<http://euobs.com>).*

**"There is something in the theory that European integration has to keep moving to stay upright..."**

Supporting freedom means supporting Israel...

Professor David Marsland—see pp. 5-6 of this issue—had the following letter printed in *The Times* on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2004...

'Israeli policy and peace prospects'

Sir, The Foreign Secretary has alleged that Israeli action against the leader of Hamas is illegal and counter-productive... I believe he is wrong on both counts. Wherever arms are taken up against a democratic state that state has not only a right but an absolute and positive duty to defend its people by armed force. It cannot be illegal by any rational criterion for Israel to inhibit suicidal murder by stopping those preparing or planning such acts by whatever means. Citizens of the free world should rejoice in the elimination of the leadership of Hamas. As to the usefulness of Israeli policy, this will depend on the consistency and ruthlessness with which it is pursued. Genuine supporters of freedom should urge the Israeli Government to maintain optimal consistency and maximum ruthlessness.

Yours sincerely,

David Marsland



Watched by Dr Tim Evans, Professor Marsland delivers his paper at the 2003 Libertarian Alliance conference.

For further information...

For readers wanting more information on the connection between Christianity and liberty, a good place to start is the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty—named after the English historian Lord John Acton (1834-1902)—at [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org).

As with many religious thinkers, the political implications of the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) are open to interpretation and it would be wrong to make any claims about the political views of his modern-day admirers. Readers wanting more information about him might like to start with the London-based Swedenborg Society at [www.swedenborg.org.uk](http://www.swedenborg.org.uk), or just enter his name into a search engine.

And for those not religiously inclined, one can always start with the National Secular Society at [www.secularism.org.uk](http://www.secularism.org.uk) and the British Humanist Association at [www.humanism.org.uk](http://www.humanism.org.uk)!

## Society for Individual Freedom

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*The SIF's Aim:  
To Promote Responsible Individual Freedom*

### The SIF believes...

- ✓ That the individual, rather than the State, is the primary source of morality and authority.
- ✓ That private citizens should have the freedom to act as they wish provided their actions do not harm others, and that the law should exist principally to guarantee such individual liberty and not to act as a paternalistic guardian; in the primacy of freely negotiated contract; and in Parliament as the supreme law-making body in the United Kingdom.
- ✓ That an efficient free-market economy benefits all, and that the State's economic function should mainly be limited to the prevention of violence and fraud and similar obstacles to honest competition and co-operation.
- ✓ That taxes in the United Kingdom are far too high and erode individual responsibility and enterprise; and that in a truly free society citizens, with the benefit of higher post-tax earnings, would be free to decide upon their own priorities, with usually temporary government assistance concentrated upon cases of unavoidable hardship.
- ✓ That justice shall be administered by courts that are not subject to political pressure; and that government decisions have no validity unless founded on clear legal authority.
- ✓ That to preserve the liberties of private individuals we need more independent-minded Members of Parliament, a stronger Second Chamber, and more effective parliamentary control over the executive.
- ✓ That there is too much influence on government from pressure groups that call for legislation of an unnecessary and restrictive nature, thus not only adding to the material burdens on individuals and corporate bodies but reducing one's capacity to learn personal responsibility, self-reliance, and voluntary co-operation.

### SIF Activities

The SIF organises public meetings featuring speakers of note; holds occasional luncheons at the Houses of Parliament; publishes this journal to which contributions are always welcome; and has its own website. The SIF also has two associated campaigns: *Tell-It* that seeks to make information on outcomes of drugs and medical treatments more widely known and available to doctors and patients alike, and *Choice in Personal Safety* (CIPS) that opposes seatbelt compulsion.

### Joining the SIF

If you broadly share our objectives and wish to support our work, then please write to us at the address on this page, enclosing a cheque for £15 (minimum) made payable to the Society for Individual Freedom.

## Could You Write for *The Individual*?

We are always looking for contributions to *The Individual* corresponding with some aspect of the aims and beliefs of the SIF. These can range from referenced essays of an academic nature to personal opinions, experiences, and insights.

The subject might be almost anything that you can think of. It can be something of your own or in response to another's contribution in *The Individual* or elsewhere.

Length can range from a few hundred words to several thousand. Submissions should preferably be in electronic format, although this may not always be essential.

If you have never written for publication before, then don't worry. We are happy to give

advice and will never publish anything without the author's final approval.

As well as being published in hardcopy form, *The Individual* will also be uploaded onto the SIF's website.

We also welcome letters in response to articles printed in *The Individual* or other aspects of the SIF's activities.

If you think that you might be interested, then please contact us using the details on this page.

The Editor of *The Individual* and the Management Committee of the SIF reserve the right not to use any submission.