

I am not suggesting that to be the general usage, but it did make me think.

Personally, I would prefer that these men question their purpose in wanting to deny these women wearing what is after all just an exaggerated form of modest clothing not dissimilar to Victorian times when women wore veiled hats, long skirts etc very similar to present day nuns. Surely there must be something of more import to turn your attention. Perhaps it curiosity of what lurks beneath the burqa that fuels this debate!

Maggie Atkins
Northampton

LIBERTARIANISM

I SUGGEST that Diesel Balaam and Terry Liddle (*Points of View*, April) remember the words of the great humanist Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say but will defend to the death your right to say it"; and the great atheist Ayn Rand, high priestess of capitalism and opponent of both anti-discrimination laws and racism: "the lowest form of collectivism."

Her hero in *The Fountainhead*, Howard Roark recognised his duties towards his fellow citizens "to respect their rights and take no part in a slave society".

Libertarians, for Diesel's information, do not approve of slavery. To me, apartheid was socialist and there is no justification for anti-gay laws. I also believe that people should be free to put up "No Whites" and "no straights" signs.

The law should not discriminate but has no more right telling people who they can have as employees, customers or tenants than it would have telling them who they could have as lovers – I speak as a victim of discrimination.

I do – for my former friend Terry Liddle's information – know what it's like to be abused. I have never got over being bullied at school and have been harassed by jobs, libelled on the Internet, and had people trying to incite violence against me with vicious lies. There are indeed parts of my private life which, although perfectly legal, I would not want to see in the tabloids.

I do not want to close Britain's borders but favour far more restrictive immigration laws. We had a lot more room in Paine's day. Lax immigration laws have led to the importing to Britain of people who not only disagree with but would happily destroy our liberal and secular values.

People should not be hounded from their jobs solely for their political views – including Communists and their equivalents on the right. Were any National Front campaigns to have left-wing teachers sacked successful? I wouldn't use the word "worried" about opposition to BNP members

having jobs in the civil service – "paranoid" would be more accurate. Is there any evidence of their having actually used information to people's detriment?

People should be penalised for what they have done, not for what they might do. Someone's private life is none of their colleagues' or bosses' business.

Oh, and people who sell soft drugs like cannabis to people who want to buy them are not "cynical criminals" but providers of a service.

Mark Taha
London

I UNDERSTAND why Mark Taha is miffed by "the patronising Diesel Balaam" (*Points of View*, March. I am still trying to live down his patronising reference to me as "perfectly sweet" (*Points of View*, July 2010). He appears to have no respect for a person's reputation.

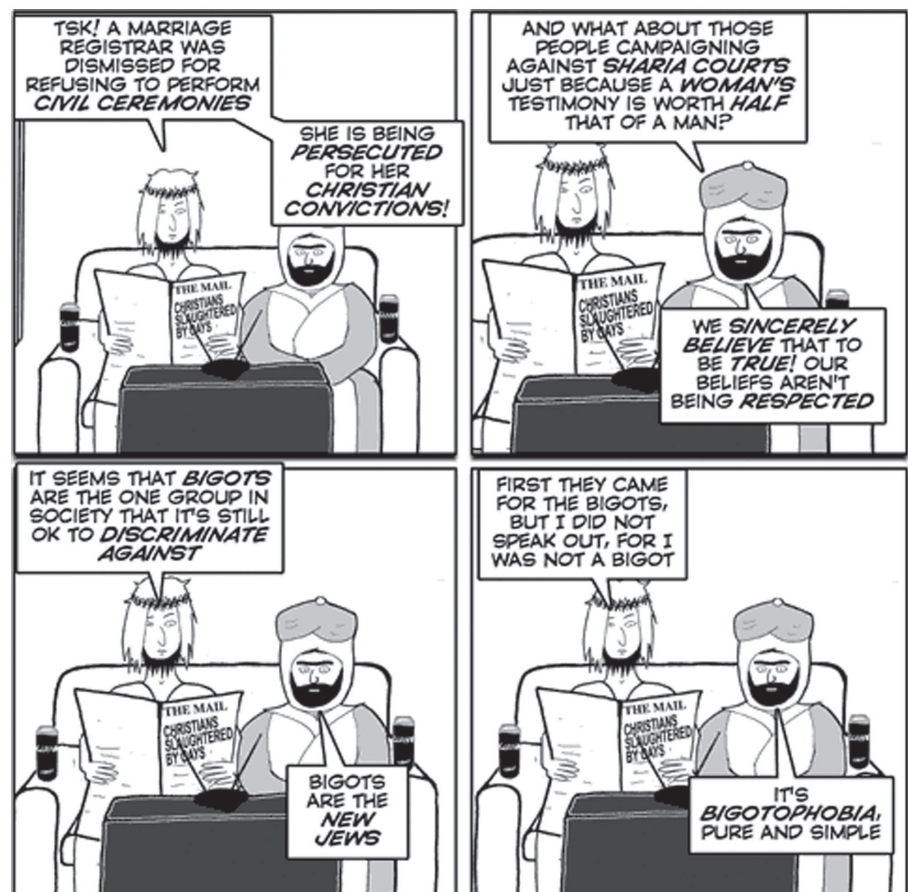
Mr Taha enquires if your correspondent's name is really Diesel Balaam. Probably not. It is highly unlikely that his dear and doting parents inflicted such an embarrassment on their little cherub.

Bill McIlroy
Hove

MONKEY GOD?

GENESIS (1.26) says: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Science says: Humanity has ninety-nine



per cent of genes in common with chimpanzees.

This would seem to make a monkey out of "God". Can this be true?!

W K Harper
Stoke-on-Trent

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

RICHARD White, author of "an exposé of the dubious scientific methods used to demonise the use of tobacco", is one of several new contributors to the *Freethinker*. Would David Hockney be another?

Alan Gore
Middlesex

INTERNET V RELIGION

IT APPEARS to me that nowadays no religious leader can make a pronouncement without his or her words being instantly and publicly seized upon by rationalists, and vigorously challenged.

What makes this possible, of course, is the Internet, which I suggest has strong parallels with the discovery of Penicillin.

Antibiotics saw off many forms of dangerous bacteria, and I believe that the Internet will eventually do the same with regard to poisonous belief systems.

Adam McBain
Sussex

Jesus & Mo