

I was startled recently to hear of a development in the art of burying the dead. In California, apparently, a firm is offering a special tombstone which incorporates a tape recorder. By pressing a button a passerby can hear a number of pre-recorded messages from the deceased.

What a fantastic idea! **THE TALKING TOMBSTONE** program. Would you like to hear it? Would you like to hear it in general, or in particular persons? Why you could take it a sort of permanent family ... and about my dear nephew who will be coming to join my business by his gross selfishness and stupidity, I would would like to record for ever that I consider him a selfish-minded fellow ... etc.' to my wife who kept telling me that my illness was imagination - you now know I was right'. Why a visit to the cemetery could be a new form of Saturday afternoon entertainment. Family groups could wander about listening to the more famous statements. Anonymous, postcard or letter-writing efforts may attract large audiences. Doubtless video machines will be added and we will be able to hear the passersby of this new art-form.

P.F. JENSEN

Well it's funny, and its humorous, its machine; but its also pathetic, isn't it? These talking tombstones are only the most recent of a whole series of attempts to assure ourselves of some sort of immortality, some permanence in a world of decay and death. Fixing bodies in the tape of eventual resurrection is another. So too is the attempt to contact the dead through spiritualism. We feel as though we should live for ever, but we fear that we do not.

All this frantic activity in the face of death is a symptom of the disease of western man. He says 'without God and without hope in the Christian Faith' **THE CHRISTIAN FAITH** hope - they belong together. When you abandon God you

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What a fantastic proposal! What sort of message would you prepare? Would you talk about yourself? Would you talk to the world in general, or to particular persons? Why you could make it a sort of permanent insult ... 'and about my dear nephew who did all he could to ruin my business by his gross inefficiency and stupidity, I would like it recorded for ever that I consider him a muddle-headed buffoon ... etc.', 'to my wife who kept telling me that my illness was imagination - you now know I was right'. Why a visit to the cemetery could be a new form of Saturday afternoon entertainment. Family groups could wander about listening in to the more famous statements. Humorous, poetical or heart-warming efforts may attract large audiences. Doubtless video machines will be added and we will be able to see as well as hear the purveyors of this new art-form.

Well it's bizzare, and its humorous, its macabre; but its also pathetic, isn't it? These talking tombstones are only the most recent of a whole series of attempts to assure ourselves of some sort of immortality, some permanence in a world of decay and death. Freezing bodies in the hope of eventual resuscitation is another. So too is the attempt to contact the dead through spiritualism. We feel as though we should live for ever, but we fear that we do not.

All this frantic activity in the face of death is a symptom of the disease of western man. We are 'without God and without hope in the world', to quote the Bible. God and hope - they belong together. When you abandon God you

welcome hopelessness; when you decide that heaven is empty and that man is the highest being in the world, you have opened the door to a very great sadness.

It is especially sad because it is untrue and unnecessary. We kill God in our minds for one special reason: because we want to be gods. We want to be masters and lords of our own existence. In the prime of our lives this may even be impressive. It is easy to laugh at God when the world itself seems full of promise and the cold grave is as far off as Jupiter or Saturn. But what gods we are! The old Greek gods took hundreds of years to die - but we last just about 70 or so; and no-one worships us, except our own selves. In truth, we are 'without God and without hope'.

Jesus Christ had no 'talking tombstone' - he made no feeble protest at death! He conquered death - the first of a new humanity. The lives of his servants are filled with joy, for in Him we have our God and our hope.

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