

AN OPEN LETTER TO LEO ABSE, MP

Dear Mr Abse,

You appear to be deeply upset about the 12-year-old girl who was given an abortion and then put on the contraceptive Pill. Indeed, a great many people have been deeply moved by the plight of the girl, her parents and others concerned in this unhappy case. Fortunately, most of them have tempered compassion with realism and, unlike Roman Catholics and their allies, have not used the affair as a pretext for an attack on the Abortion Act and the concept of sex education. But to the best of my knowledge, you are the only public figure who has, when discussing the question, made unfair and unwarranted insinuations about other countries, particularly India. In the course of an interview with John London, of the *London Evening News*, you are reported to have said: "You haven't got to be a Catholic to think you shouldn't give a girl the Pill at 12. We may be going into Europe, but we aren't going into Asia".

Denigration of India

Earlier you were reported to have said that things must not be done in this manner here whatever might be done in India, or words to that effect. Now this is rather odd! The denigration of India has usually come from Right-wing publicists, and one hardly expects a Labour MP who has championed liberal causes to indulge in such unfounded criticism.

After all, the pros and cons of the 12-year-old girl's case could be calmly discussed without comments which are likely to bring India into disrepute. And this at a time when India is facing the tremendous Problems caused by the arrival of millions of refugees from East Bengal. She is facing these problems with patience, courage and generosity for which the rest of the world has expressed understanding, and admiration. But it seems that you are so obsessed with the question of abortion and with the specific case referred to that all this has been forgotten.

You have implied that something awful is being done in India which ought not to be done in Britain. One feels entitled to ask you to be more specific. Do you think that girls in India are put on the Pill at 12? Are you suggesting that legal abortions are being carried out on girls of this age? Are you saying that the age of consent is 12? What precisely do you find so disturbing about India?

Yours sincerely,

G. N. DEODHEKAR.

THE COMMON MARKET

Mrs Ethel Venton, president of the National Secular Society, said she was dismayed by the Government's acceptance of the Common Market's terms on British entry. She said: "These terms will bring little joy to many of Britain's traditional suppliers of cheap food, do little to solve Britain's already grave unemployment problem or to cement our cultural and historical ties with friends and allies across the seas at a time when multi-racial understanding and intercontinental co-operation are more important than ever.

"What the agreed terms will almost certainly do is to secure for the British people massive and inflationary rises in the cost of living, more bankruptcies of small businesses with dominance by giant bureaucracies and corporations, serious difficulties for voluntary organisations, greater scope for Vatican influence and the undermining of political democracy and civil liberties".

Mrs Venton said in a Press release that the Government has agreed entry on terms for which it has not been given a mandate by the British people who are overwhelmingly opposed to Britain's joining the Common Market.

THE POPE'S DAMP SQUIB

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

Pope Paul VI issued an Apostolic Letter on the eightieth anniversary of the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. According to this Apostolic Letter, *Rerum Novarum* "denounced in a forceful and imperative manner the scandal of the conditions of the workers in the nascent industrial society". By that time, of course, the industrial society was no longer "nascent", but well advanced; and the worst abuses of the industrial revolution had long ago been corrected. If it is indeed the case that the Vatican takes 80 years or so getting round to condemning social evils, then all one can say is: "Thank God for secularisation". For in a document of some length all the Pope can find to say on the world's most pressing problem is that the "fatalism" created by population growth "sometimes leads to Malthusian solutions inculcated by active propaganda for contraception and abortion". I look forward to the encyclical of 2051 which will denounce in a forceful and imperative manner the scandal of uncontrolled population.

Apart from such eccentricities, this document is a mild and unexceptionable survey of current social problems, ranging all the way from so-called technological unemployment to the challenge posed by "revolutionary ideology". At times, the papal analysis sounds curiously old-fashioned; thus, criticism of the over-centralisation of modern society represents the "renewal of liberal ideology" which "erroneously" affirms the autonomy of the individual. The Pope, in rejecting also the "atheistic materialism" of Marxism, is thus left floundering in a kind of political no-man's-land which, in its opposition to both Left and Right, seems a poor soil in which to root his major theme of the role of Christians in politics.

Christian Involvement in Politics

In reading this Apostolic Letter, I was struck time and again by the incongruity of the whole exercise. Following a piece of coherent, if unoriginal, social analysis, there would be tacked on an irrelevant call to heed the message of the gospel. In fairness, it must of course be admitted that if men were to subscribe to the Sermon on the Mount the world would doubtless be a happier place. And it is naturally to be expected that the Pope would play on this for all he was worth. Yet the outcome is that the Christian earnestly seeking advice from the leading figure in world Christianity on how he should conduct himself in politics is left stranded. For all democratic political parties would endorse the ethical values underlying the Pope's remarks on political activity: compassion for the poor and underprivileged, opposition to racial discrimination, protection of individual liberty, and so on. At a time when the human race faces the real possibility of extinction, it is amazing that the Pope has nothing concrete to say.

Or perhaps not. For what this Apostolic Letter attests is the futility of Christian involvement in politics, if such involvement is to be specifically *Christian* rather than a by-product of the Christian's social conscience. This is not just a question of the reluctance of the institutional Church to align itself politically, compared to the whole-hearted and sincere commitment to reform of a great many individual Christians. It is rather to do with the notion of a distinctively Christian contribution to the political debate, a contribution which stems from Christian dogma and

eschatology as opposed to Christian ethics, which although they have something to be said for them are also second-hand.

Liberal Protestantism has long espoused the idea that the Church has to be committed to social reform. It is only to be expected, therefore, that the Catholic Church would eventually follow suit, albeit tardily amidst a general creaking of joints. For some Protestants, indeed, the Gospels are to be understood as commanding the individual Christian to seek his salvation in the world, and this notion leads to the "faith without religion" of Bonhoeffer and the former Bishop of Woolwich. In the Catholic Church, too, the emphasis is now much less on the formal trappings of religion, such as weekly mass observance, and more on the acting-out of the Christian faith in everyday life. Yet I suspect that the attempt of liberal Christians, in the Catholic Church or outside it, to give the faith a new look by stressing the "radicalism" of the Gospels and the need to re-interpret the Christian message in the context of social reform, is doomed ultimately to failure, if the objective is taken to be the conversion of the non-religious masses. For either the liberals will succeed in their attempt, in which case it becomes quite unclear why one needs God if Christianity is just window-dressing for social reform. Or they will fail in their attempt, in which case traditional Christianity will continue to decline on the grounds of its increasing irrelevance.

Changing Attitude

Humanists will rightly emphasise the harm done by religious obscuratism on too many social problems to the cause of progress. From this viewpoint, it is welcome that the attitudes of the Catholic Church are slowly changing for the better, and the current attempts at dialogue between the Church and the Communists, and other Left-wingers, are a hopeful portent for the future of Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain and the South American republics. But from the Church's viewpoint, it might be as well to emphasise that Christianity has no need to be radical, or progressive, or committed, or trendy, or anything else; what it does need to do is to proclaim the Christian message. For the question of God remains one of the most important and challenging problems facing the individual; and his answer is logically prior to, and determines, his whole attitude to the world and its affairs, whether this is consciously acknowledged or not.

MEMORIAL EDITION

WHY I AM NOT
A CHRISTIAN

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Preface DAVID TRIBE

Introduction Professor ANTONY FLEW

PRICE 15p (plus 3p postage)

G. W. FOOTE & Co.

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

JEW, TURKS INFIDELS AND HERETICS

STEPHEN WYNBURN

Boasting comes naturally to me and when I suddenly realise that I have been the cynosure of the Church of England over the centuries, I feel I must inform the world of my unique status. I am a tiny bit of history, but I enshrine within myself a whole world of wickedness. So I am now out to prove that I am the one and only person who enfolds within himself, is the focal point of, those four fearful attributes detailed in a quotation from the Book of Common Prayer. I am, I maintain, the only person who can prove he is the fourfold embodiment of the total phrase "Jews, Turks, Infidels and Heretics". And my vain-glorious boast is that the Church of England has been praying for me not as one member of four sinful groups but as the one and only individual referred to in the third collect for Good Friday. This is intoned in the Church of England service just before or on Easter Sunday. The prayer is: "Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels and Heretics, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of they Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to they flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd".

Well, it hits me in the solar plexus to realise that I combine in my person the quartet of vice and wickedness whose pre-eminence demanded specific naming by the Church of England. Usually the wicked are left undefined, because they are unnamable and must be discovered and controverted or converted by those good people who recognise in them the evil doctrine or evil deeds that are deplored. This collect, however, leaves no doubt about what attitude a member of the Church of England must have when he meets any one of these four categories, any one of these four hell-hounds—and my mind boggles when I think what the Church of England may do to me when I prove, as I hope to do now, that I am the representative or embodiment of every one of their four greatest enemies.

Converted to Christianity

Religion and nationalism, or racialism or tribalism were, in the past, a matter of life or death, and thus it is a distant, barely audible, echo of things hidden in oblivion when you stand up in the Church of England once a year and re-enact history. It was probably Gideon in the Book of Judges who first gave the idea of standing. Gideon had to choose a small number of specially alert skirmishers from 10,000 followers, and he did this by watching how they lapped up the water from the streams they came to. Only a few were conscious that the Midianites might dart forth at any time and they therefore drank while still looking round for signs of the enemy. These 300 enemy-conscious Hebrews were chosen for their stance when drinking and this stance is in a form that persisted among those who used the Book of Common Prayer I remember hearing as a boy. So if by chance you still say that collect in church on Good Friday your historical sense may be stimulated to be ready to face a horde of fanatical Turks armed with scimitars and yataghans ready to convert the world to Mohammedanism. So keep your head up, remember Gideon, and be ready to dash out if I happen to be passing by, flaunting in my person the incarnation of all the four satanic evils against which you are praying.

But I have still to prove that I am in very deed the embodiment of Christendom's quartet of enemies. Well, my father, a Jew, was born at Drevikov not far from Prague in 1859, and his first memory was of being dandled on the knee of an invading soldier. This was during the

war of 1866 when he was seven years old. Anyhow, he grew up in Bohemia went to Germany, got converted to Christianity and was persuaded to help spread the gospel of Christ throughout the world. It was arranged he should go to England and take Holy Orders. For this he went to the Divinity School of Trinity College, Dublin, and was finally ordained into the Church of Ireland about 1896. After four years as a curate in Dublin and the East End of London, his missionary society sent him to Constantinople, the capital of Turkey, to promote Christianity among the Spanish Jews.

No Place for Infidels

At the beginning of this century there was a large colony of Spanish Jews in Constantinople and they were mostly congregated on the right side of the Gold Horn as you go up the two or three miles of its length. My father's mission school and chapel were at Haskuy about a mile or so up from the bridge at Galata: Galata Bridge then joined the Europeanised quarter at Pera with the purely Turkish quarter to Stamboul. It was spelt S-t-a-m-b-o-u-l then, and was definitely not the best part of the city as it was almost exclusively Turkish. It had to be visited as it contained the mosque of St. Sophia which reminded us, of course, of the tragic fall of Constantinople in 1452.

Our house was up the Gold Horn in a neighbourhood that was chiefly Turkish though there was a sizable minority of Greeks and Armenians around us. The servants who came in to do the cooking, washing and other chores were chiefly Greek. Though the Turks owned the country and ran it for the benefit of their rulers, the feudal element persisted among their own people so that the business and commerce had largely slipped into the hands of the Armenians, Greeks and Jews who had absorbed the commercial ideas and attitudes that had come in from other European countries. The Turks could still be called a feudal society in which the chief virtues were: to be Turkish, to obey the Allah-appointed Sultan, to worship Allah and to fight to the death against the infidels as their ancestors had done in capturing Constantinople and founding the Turkish Empire.

The suburban mosque was near enough for us to hear regularly and easily the muezzin intoning from the minaret his call to worship: "Allah il Allah, Mohamet rasoul Allah". But we never met any Turks in the way that we met Greeks, Armenians, and Spanish Jews who are all European and had therefore a cultural background that was not so totally different and alien as that of the Turks. We were infidels to the Turks, and only the military strength Great Powers, Britain, France and Germany kept them from interfering with the Europeans who happened to be living there.

As my father and mother and the five of us children had a pleasant house on one of the suburban streets leading down to the beautiful Golden Horn, life was a pleasant affair. As a small boy I rather enjoyed the odd references to the latent threats in a society that was riddled with paradoxes. The Turks, the vast majority of the population, were in most social and financial respects under-privileged. They were hewers of wood and drawers of water under an autocratic oligarchy based on the aristocracy of arms and empire. The superiority of the Turks depended on their military prowess that Edward Gibbon has described as such length in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

(Continued on page 215)

FREETHINKER

editor: WILLIAM McILROY

103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1

Telephone: 01-407 1251

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

The *Freethinker* can be ordered through any newsagent, or obtained by postal subscription from G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd. at the following rates: 12 months, £2.55; 6 months, £1.30; 3 months, 65p; USA and Canada: 12 months, \$5.25; 6 months, \$2.75; 3 months, \$1.40.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *Freethinker* is obtainable at the following addresses. London: Collets, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N1; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), E1; Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, N1; Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC2; Freethinker office, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. Glasgow: Clyde Books, 292 High Street.

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

EVENTS

Humanist Holidays. Summer Centre in the Lake District is now full. Youth Camp being planned for 24 July until 1 August in Salop. Details: Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone 642 8796).

The Progressive League, Halden House, Dunchideock, Exeter, 7-14 August, Summer Conference. Details from Ernest Seeley, c/o Progressive League, Albion Cottage, Fortis Green, London, N2.

Rationalist Press Association. Annual Conference at St Peter's College, Oxford, Friday, 3 September—Sunday, 5 September. Subject: "Rationalism—an Answer to the Problems of the 1970s"; speakers: D. J. Stewart, Colin Campbell, Christopher Evans, Leslie Sklair. Fees: Resident, £8. Student members of the RPA, £5; Non-resident, lectures and meals, £4.50; lectures and coffee, £1. Return coach fare London-Oxford, £1.50. Applications and payment to the General Secretary, Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, London, N1 8EW. Telephone 226 7251.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 4 July, 11 a.m. Peter Cadogan: "The Sovereignty of Good".

THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

By DAVID TRIBE

Foreword: MARGARET KNIGHT

20p (plus 3p postage)

G. W. FOOTE & Co.

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

NEWS

THE LADY DOTH PROTEST . . .

Lady Birdwood, handmaiden of the Lord and zealous defender of purity in these dark days, has sent a letter to her devoted followers declaring that the "avalanche of pornography and obscenity" of the last year cannot be regarded as an accidental phenomenon. But, she adds hopefully, there are indications of concern by people "who are not prepared to stand silently by while the nation founders in immorality and filth as did the Roman Empire". Lady Birdwood is most heartened by signs that Britain's youth is repudiating adult licentiousness, "and the middle-aged who insist on being pornographically 'with-it' are in danger of alienating themselves from a generation growing up which is not attracted to the present all-out assault on virtues and values, and perpetual emphasis on natural and unnatural sex".

The legend of youthful licentiousness in Britain has been assiduously fostered by people of Lady Birdwood's views and generation. Long hair, colourful clothes, opposition to mindless discipline and indifference to religion, have all been cited as evidence of moral degeneracy in the young. They are nothing of the kind. Whilst not kowtowing to the cult of youth which is so fashionable, I would claim that young people in Britain today are probably more tolerant, concerned about social problems and responsible in their sexual relationships, than at any time in history.

Lady Birdwood also detects a growing reluctance to pay for porn. She paints a quite harrowing picture of the salesman for whom "the pornographic path is becoming very thorny", and for those who "trudge up and down it trying to offload their putrid, unwanted wares upon an increasingly articulate and rebellious British public. To deprive these purveyors of pornography of the financial fruits of their unsavoury labours is to ensure that the tide of filth recedes, we need only turn away and withhold our money". And that is exactly what most people do.

However I can't help feeling that Lady Birdwood is hardly the person to be dispensing this sound advice. I assure readers that I haven't the faintest idea what books are on her bedside table, but even if Lady Birdwood buys nothing more lurid and expensive than the works of Patience Strong and Beverley Nicholls, it is quite certain that her visits to the cinema and theatre are rather more enterprising. She saw *Oh! Calcutta!* when it opened in London, a play in which two of the characters are a woman and her canine lover, and four performances of *Council of Love*. (She is also reported to have visited a sex super-market to which, presumably, there was no charge for admission, so that it was only necessary to resist any temptation to sample its wares in order to avoid spending money.)

It also appears that Lady Birdwood is an enthusiastic cinemagoer. In addition to the letter she has distributed synopses and comments on a number of what she describes as "sex-obsessed and sadistic films". They are *The Daughter* (nude sex, lesbianism, violence, four-letter words), *Anybody's* (lesbianism, sadism, murder, adultery), *Secrets of Sex* (full frontal nudity, castration, blackmail) and *Hetero Sexual* (voyeurism, drug-taking, sadism). The titles, plus the cost of cinema seats these days, would put most people off these films. But not the dauntless Lady Birdwood!

AND NOTES

Lady Birdwood is disturbed by what she describes as "certain anomalies" in the system of film censorship "which require urgent scrutiny". If a film is rejected by the British Board of Film Censors it can be submitted by the renters to local Watch Committees who may allow it to be shown in their area. Lady Birdwood's heart bleeds for members of such committees for whom "this involves long hours of highly unpleasant viewing". This touching concern for the feelings of councillors and officers of the local fire brigade who serve on these committees does Lady Birdwood credit. But they must know in advance that the film may be rather lurid, and if they declined to attend it is doubtful if they would have to face any serious consequences. But, like the majority of the British people, they take the films, books, magazines and stage shows in their stride.

MALTA

The Labour Party's victory following the recent parliamentary elections in Malta is yet another indication of the Roman Catholic Church's declining influence even in its most traditional strongholds. Archbishop Gonzi, now 86, has for many years conducted an unremitting campaign against the Labour Party and particularly its leader, Dom Mintoff. Ten years ago the Party was condemned from Church pulpits for its affiliation to the Socialist International and the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity organisation. Many priests refused absolution to Labour supporters, members of the National Executive were interdicted, and it was a mortal sin to read, sell or distribute Labour publications. Priests urged "good" Catholics to break up Labour meetings, whilst Church bells were rung to drown the voices of Labour speakers. One Jesuit Father and a group of stooges assiduously turned up with religious statues and other rubbish at places where Labour Party meetings had been held, and "disinfected" the area.

Today the Roman Catholic Church in Malta has more to worry about than the activities of the Labour Party. The Church is shaken by internal squabbles, with the Archbishop fighting the reformers and doing his best to stem the tide of "modernism". An American efficiency firm was called in to investigate the management of the Church's finances, but the operation was halted by Rome. Now "the isle is full of noises" as the accusations and counter-accusations are hurled by the clergy and laity.

KNOCKING THE PHILISTINES

A few years ago it was quite a common occurrence for a Roman Catholic priest to enter a bookshop and ask the manager not to display or sell some book which was not acceptable to Holy Mother Church. Managers often complied out of misplaced respect for these clerical parasites, but if the request was refused it was sometimes reinforced with the threat of a boycott of the shop by the local faithful. The ardour of the British Romanists has been somewhat dampened in recent times, but pressure is still put on booksellers to withdraw certain publications. This usually takes the form of a visit by the police.

Fortunately an increasing number of booksellers are standing up to this kind of intimidation and censorship. One of these is Better Books, Charing Cross Road, London, which has been so successful that another bookshop is being opened north of the border at 11 Forrest Road, Edinburgh. John Calder, publisher and secretary of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society, is behind the new venture. Mr Calder told the Press that the Edinburgh bookshop would have books in stock which could not be obtained in other Scottish bookshops.

He said: "With existing bookshops, they are visited by the police who voice disapproval about certain publications. The booksellers then withdraw the books. We are not going to be bullied by philistine pressures on any particular book the authorities feel is undesirable. We will decide for ourselves by reading the book and not from what somebody tells us". Mr Calder added that he was determined that "censorship by consent" which applied in other establishments would not operate at Better Books, Edinburgh.

LORD BOYD ORR

Lord Boyd Orr, first director of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation who died last week aged 90, was the son of intensely religious parents. They belonged to a fundamentalist Scottish Protestants sect, but John Boyd Orr's views were seriously modified when he encountered the Darwinian theory at Glasgow University. In later life he adopted a much stronger freethinking stand than obituaries in the national Press suggested. Five years ago Lord Boyd Orr wrote that the National Secular Society was to be congratulated on its centenary and "its long fight for freedom of thought and speech which has won important civil liberties. Its work must be continued because although much has been accomplished more work is needed to free the minds of people who have been indoctrinated with irrational beliefs and prejudices which prevent unbiased judgement and a liberal outlook".

FREETHINKER FUND

We are grateful to the following readers who sent donations during May. D. Baker, £1.45; I. Barr, £1; D. Behr, 50p; A. Bradley, 70p; J. Benjamin, 89p; J. G. Burdon, 25p; F. Collin, £1; Mrs Coverdale, £2; S. Clowes, 76p; Collection, £3.71; Mrs M. Dootson, £1; F. Hamm, 16p; R. R. Henry, 55p; A. E. Henry, 25p; T. Myles Hill, 70p; Miss M. S. Johnson, 20p; J. Kent, 50p; Mrs K. J. Maitland, 75p; E. McGue, £1.50; J. McPhail, £1; S. McPhee, 50p; M. Page, £1; P. J. McCormick, 20p; A. Pulham, 45p; Mrs. W. Roux, 45p; Dr E. F. Richard, £2; Mr and Mrs Shannon, 60p; F. G. Shaw, £1.30; M. D. Silas, £1; P. R. Smith, £2.45; J. Sutherland, 28p; T. Thompson, £1.35; T. Wallace, £5. Already acknowledged: £53.32; total to date, £88.77.

PUBLICATION DATE: 20 JULY

**DAVID TRIBE'S
PRESIDENT
CHARLES
BRADLAUGH, MP**
ELEK BOOKS, £4.00

BOOKS

INTELLIGENCE, PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION

by Brian Simon. Lawrence and Wishart, £3.00.

Some very poor children in rural Kentucky were once subjected to an intelligence test at their school by a visiting psychologist. "If your mother gave you 30 cents", he asked a child, "and you spent 12 cents on candy, how much would you have left?" The child answered: "My mother never gives me 30 cents to spend; and if she did, I wouldn't spend it on candy".

This true story appears in books about schooling in order to warn teachers of the dangers lurking in intelligence tests which are culturally loaded. The child found arithmetic hard because he was wholly unaccustomed to having money to spend. Faith in intelligence testing has declined so much that even the Department of Education, in a survey recently published, showed belated signs of joining the sceptics.

Probably no man in England has done more than Professor Brian Simon to discredit the whole idea of mental measurement. From his chair of education at Leicester University, he has for years undertaken or sponsored research designed to expose the inequalities and the fallacies that still impair the work done in our schools. In this penetrating and fertile book, he has collected some of his best essays. These may be new to most readers because they first appeared in British communist journals rarely found in ordinary libraries. Simon writes from an avowedly Marxist standpoint. If this deters teachers or others in search of the truth, they will miss something of the utmost value. Perhaps by now Simon's reputation for intellectual integrity is sufficient to overcome the prejudice commonly nursed against radicals like him.

To my mind, the best essay is that on intelligence in relation to race as well as class. Simon analyses with care the notorious long article by Professor Arthur Jensen of California. From his evidence Jensen contended that genetic factors are strongly involved in the average difference in intelligence shown by tests applied to black and white in the United States.

The article was political dynamite. While negroes and their allies were outraged by the suggestion of biological inferiority, reactionaries far beyond the southern states welcomed the "evidence" that their misgivings about racial equality could find a scientific basis. When Jensen visited Britain last year, his views were supported by men like Professor H. J. Eysenck and others. Political prejudice ensures a welcome for any revelation about black inferiority. Conservatives who resist change and dislike equality always prefer explanations that rely on nature rather than nurture. But until we equalise the conditions of mental as well as physical development for all races and classes, no one is entitled to draw inferences from genetics calculated to obstruct the movement towards equal opportunities.

The articles Simon has written over the years on the theme of equality in education reflect the course of the long struggle which is by no means concluded yet. "Up to now", he writes, "the educational system has been run on the principle 'to him that hath shall be given', so that those with greater advantages at home are likely also to be favoured in school with better conditions, a higher staffing ratio and other amenities pertaining to grammar and independent schools. The operation of this principle has been modified by gradually opening the doors of the grammar school more widely to the working-class child. This is not

FREETHINKER

an altogether disinterested gesture (as sociologists tell us) since a degree of social mobility is an essential safety valve in a class society. But to place in context the upward mobility of a small percentage is to recognise that it has been at the expense of the majority of working-class children, or the great majority of the nation's children".

In his closing pages, Simon points to the need to follow up comprehensive schools with the demand for comprehensive universities to replace the lop-sided binary system which perpetuates privilege in higher education.

JULIUS LEWIN

UNIVERSITY REBEL: THE LIFE OF WILLIAM FREND, 1757-1841 by Frida Knight. Gollancz, £3.00.

It is very easy, to judge the past, especially that of our own country, too exclusively from the records of its top people—the Establishment and the "successful"—to the exclusion of those who, if not mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, never gained the accolade of respectability and esteem because they were too original and far-sighted in their own time. The prophet, or even the independent thinker, is rarely accorded honour or recognition in his own lifetime; and yet, it is often ideas and principles of such people which have been the really creative factors in the development of English history.

This was particularly so during that era of suppressed and concealed ferment of ideas which occurred in England, as the eighteenth century ended, and the nineteenth began. There were many noteworthy reformers, whose records and thoughts often more deserve our present consideration than the operations of Pitt, Lord Eldon or Lord Liverpool. One of them has a special interest for me, because he was educated at Christ's College and Jesus College, at Cambridge, and the neighbouring village of Madingley. William Frend (1757-1841) had a fairly conventional upbringing for those times; and academically, too, he was clearly brilliant. He followed the customary trend by taking Anglican orders, between 1780 and 1783, but four years later, he deviated by becoming a Unitarian. Thereafter, he worked with Joseph Priestley (1783-1804), and he was "banished from the University" for publishing a tract in 1793, in which he advocated less doctrinal rigidity and greater charity towards republicans and other advanced thinkers. It was not a creditable episode, as far as Cambridge was concerned: Frend migrated to London, where he worked at teaching and writing, until his mathematical abilities were able to find fulfilment when he became actuary of the Rock Life Assurance Company. But he also influenced Malthus with the latter's famous *Essay on Population*, published his *Principles of Algebra* and advocated original and progressive financial ideas.

"Disinterested benevolence and chivalrous assertion of his opinions were the leading traits in his character", states the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The article there, by W. P. Courtney, has hitherto been our best source for his biography. Frida Knight, however, has unearthed, and used very effectively, a mass of papers, by or relating to William Frend, which she has carefully correlated with a wide range of other sources, familiar and obscure. The result is a distinguished and thorough book, which makes an important contribution to our understanding not only of William Frend himself, but also of many of his contemporaries such as Coleridge, Lamb, Crabb Robinson,

REVIEWS

Henry Brougham and Lady Byron. It is no "tract for the times", but a work which is likely to remain standard for its subject, for many years to come. It is certainly readable, lucid and entertaining, despite its solid basis of study and hard work.

"This considerable man" is the publisher's description of William Frend. It is an attractive refusal to stretch the truth, even to sell a book. Certainly, this is a biography which deserves close and appreciative reading, especially from those who may not be naturally or immediately in sympathy with its theme. The *University Rebel* of the title may not appeal to everyone, but it is manifestly unfair: only a small and largely unproductive part of William Frend's life was spent at Cambridge, and his "rebellion" need never have involved anything other than the laudable processes of honest inquiry and original thinking. Even if his theological writings are of small significance today, it is still useful to notice many of his secular ideas, such as his suggestions for a graduated income tax and a uniform postal charge. In relation to such things, I am tempted to regard "rebellion" as too strong a word; and certainly, as one whose relevance ceased, long before Frend's death.

ERIC GLASGOW

PAMPHLET

CRAIGIE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Campaign for Academic Freedom and Democracy, 15p.

CAFD conducted an enquiry into the "sacking" of David Carter, a lecturer at Craigie College in Ayr. As well as an account of the events leading up to the crisis, it provides a critical commentary on the actions of those involved.

From the evidence given, it seems that Miss Rennie, the principal, refused to renew Mr Carter's contract because she didn't like him. His professional competence was not in doubt. To make a bad situation worse, the governors, under their chairman, the Rev. W. P. Howat, failed (or refused) to discuss the matter. In spite of strong representations from the staff, they simply rubber-stamped the principal's action. CAFD concludes that the governors were apparently unfit for their tasks. An independent court of enquiry into the case is recommended.

What was it the principal didn't like about Mr Carter? His political outlook? His views on religion? The colour of his hair? This document is important as an example of many cases where academics—and others—have been suspended, sacked, threatened or otherwise misused without adequate cause or explanation. Secret and slanderous reports, irrational judgments, prejudice and arrogance are common phenomena amongst the power-seekers of the educational scene who believe they alone are entitled to express opinions. Thus, a few years ago, teachers who advocated comprehensive reorganisation were sometimes referred to as "subversives", while those who opposed them claimed to remain neutral and non-political by supporting the 11-plus system of selection. A sex education film showing the naked human body is furiously attacked by those who believe that the human body and its common sexual activities are obscene, and that their "neutral" opinion is the only one that should be heard.

Similarly, since 1944 it has been legally compulsory for every State school to worship God and give religious instruction to the pupils. This counts as the neutral view.

If a teacher expresses an atheist opinion alongside this massive Christian indoctrination, he is likely to be labelled a trouble-maker and a Communist, and to be suspended or even blacklisted throughout the profession. This is a good pamphlet; but a court of enquiry into one case is not the end of the story. It is unlikely that the unpleasant activities of people in authority will be stopped except by the democratisation of the educational system. Copies of the pamphlet are obtainable from CAFD, 152 Camden High Street, London, NW1.

MAURICE HILL

JEWS, TURKS, INFIDELS AND HERETICS

(Continued from page 211)

Hatred of infidels and heretics, of Christians and non-Mohammedans, was not so far below the surface.

Sixty years ago I knew that if a Christian Cross was ever scratched or painted on our front door this would be a signal for a Moslem to earn divine praise by beheading us. My partially Jewish origins were veiled under the Christian missionary theology and hymnology practised in the church hall run by my father. We sang hymns in Spanish on Sundays and even an ignorant Turk could interpret "Es Yeshua el Mashia el Bendicho Salvador" as being non-Mohammedan and therefore heretical. So I could have been massacred as a Jew, as a Christian, as an infidel and as a heretic. And who am I to deny that the reasoning behind this threat has a faint but parallelecho in the Church of England prayer book.

Still an Infidel

It is sublime or infernal irony to think that now in the Belfast of the 1970s, in my house only half a mile away from Ian Paisley's huge Martyrs' Memorial Church, I might be massacred quite by mistake if I ventured at the wrong time into a part of the city that boasts the wrong metaphysics. Indeed I have had a nasty religious remark chalked on the fence in front of my house. The wording and style of the remark left no doubt that the author was a true-blue Protestant who objected to me on anti-Catholic grounds. I suppose I could call this nasty little incident vastly ironic because my professional study of logic has made me cut metaphysics out of my life.

Another incident, not infrequent in a period of civil disturbance, happened to me nine months ago. One evening I was walking home along the peaceful and respectable Ormeau Road, when a bottle was thrown at my head from an empty house. No one other than myself was on that part of the pavement so that all the thrower of the bottle could see of me was my posh hat and smart overcoat. To the bottle thrower I was obviously an elderly gentleman or semi-gentleman—I have no landed estate—so, in a way, I should have welcomed the missile as a symbol of protest against the poverty which, to me, is the real and virulent evil that always takes on the cloak of religion or nationalism. The bottle that crashed into splinters behind my back must have come from someone nurtured in the grinding and crushing poverty that makes people hit out in despair. Nationalism is a form of racial prejudice but religion and racialism and nationalism are, I believe, becoming of ever lessening importance. Poverty is the greatest world problem but it hides its bestial features behind the fictions and metaphysics that disguise it best.

It is not crime, or handicap even, to be a Jew, Turk, Infidel or Heretic, but it is the quintessential crime to allow poverty or unemployment to flourish. So, in this province, until we have 40,000 new jobs for 36,000 unemployed, I shall keep my head bowed in penitence and admit my criminal tendencies: "Mon dieu, je suis un affreux bourgeois". (My God, I am a terrible bourgeois.)

LETTERS

History of the Movement

For some time I have felt that there is a real need to assist students of the fascinating history of the rationalist movement, and that there should be some sort of body to act as a medium of information and exchange of ideas for those interested in humanist history. As regards publishing original work, organs such as the *Bulletin* of the Thomas Paine Society, *Humanist* and *Freethinker* have done, and do, excellent work, but often lack the space for full-length papers, and may encourage authors to write only eulogies—of which let us have plenty, but there is a need for precise, dispassionate historical analysis as well.

What I would hope to see is a society of enthusiasts on rationalist history, drawn from all wings of that movement—and none, keeping one another (and the movement) informed of their interests; organising occasional seminars and talks; and acting as a helpful watchdog over the valuable historical material kept in the crowded offices of the national organisations, and which their overworked staff have no time to curate. If enough funds should be forthcoming, a journal might be produced, although even a bulletin would be a useful step in the right direction, to begin with.

If the idea appeals to any *Freethinker* readers they may contact me, adding any good ideas they may have. If there seems to be sufficient support for the project I will try to convene a meeting in London.

NIGEL SINNOTT,

5 Kew Gardens Road, Kew, Richmond, Surrey.

Priorities

D. Carver's letter (*Freethinker*, 19 June) would seem to leave humanists with two impracticable alternatives: that they should either avoid expressing value judgments, or avoid "question-begging terms" when expressing value judgments. In either case, Mr Carver is surely expecting too much—even of so practical and temperate a humanist as David Tribe. (If the use of the term "highest" in a moral context was a lapse, it was at least a seemingly uncharacteristic one.) Perhaps D. Carver is not wholly lapse-free when writing of "a much needed objective basis for a moral theory for humanists and free thinkers" (my question-begging italics).

Arthur Francis is not alone in feeling that humanists don't always get priorities right. But surely, the basis for the very importance of such "solid issues" as Mr Francis mentions can only come from the moral response to such issues. It is moral indignation that motivates the rational step of actually "doing something about the situation". Although it may be a "question-begging" view that many of the old nursery stories "have morals far superior to the Christian story", it is surely a view that is importantly *not* "out of this age".

CHARLES BYASS.

Knowledge of God

In his article *Can Science Disprove God?* (*Freethinker*, 5 June) Philip Hinchliff writes: "If no counter-examples were found, showing that God did not after all love his creatures, the truth of the assertion would be demonstrated". Since when has the inability to find Manx cats demonstrated that all cats have tails? The process of induction cannot prove anything to be true.

He also grants logical status to the proposition "God exists", whereas I would say it has no such status. It is strange to read of anyone using such propositions more than 2,000 years after Aristotle—who founded this type of logic (the syllogism)—said existence cannot be predicated of anything. Surely this should encourage enquiry into the meaning of "existence". It would be pertinent to ask if some great stellar nebula "exists" 2,000 million light years away. If stars can be "born", may one not "exist" 50,000 light years away, of which we know and can know nothing? Are we to "grant existence" to such entities?—grant existence to what, one might well ask.

What we "know" about the universe is what we experience in relation to the universe, experienced and interpreted. So-called knowledge of God is subjective experience—not universal experience. It should hardly surprise the god-believers that someone who has not had the experience refuses to say that he has had—except an agnostic of course. An agnostic is one who doesn't know whether he has had an experience or not, and who thinks "it exists" means "it is there" or "may be there".

The interpretation of the universe may be totally wrong of course—whatever "wrong" might mean in this context—but it is, if not the truth, at least a universally accepted mis-statement. Religion is a subjective illusion or delusion. It cannot be accepted because we do not "know" what the adherents are talking about.

KENNETH UNSWORTH.

LOST SYMPHONY

WINIFRED ROUX

On a recent visit to the Cape Peninsula, I observed beach apartheid in action, with many good beaches monopolised by Europeans and a few not-so-good reserved for Coloureds. Of these latter, one small beach at Kalk Bay, was densely crowded while others not to be reached by bus or train were featureless, sad and usually deserted. In addition to this display of white selfishness I saw the beginning of the end of the rich traditional life of District Six, and the suppression of the colourful street processions which have been a feature of Cape Town New Year fun since 1863.

I also heard a good deal of argument about the planned new opera house. In this, our oldest city, home of Whites and Coloureds for centuries, one section only has formed its own opera company, the Eoan Group. Yet it is this section, the Coloured, that is to be barred from the Nico Malan Opera House, an exclusion which is a mockery of the facts. It is no wonder that there was anger and resentment in Cape Town where inter-racial harmony has been achieved more nearly than anywhere else in South Africa. And it is not surprising that Coloured children in the Cape recently registered a protest by ignoring performers who went to their school to entertain them.

In this forced separation of cultural groups which now disturbs traditional mingling one can discern some impoverishment of our society. We reject a mingled richness of experience for an isolated mechanical sameness, a cultural flatness which means a loss to all. One writer early in the twentieth century thought of society as an "orchestra with each ethnic group a natural instrument, the harmony of all making the symphony of civilisation". These words were written of the USA but now their message has a dying echo in South Africa where we are rejecting this symphony of civilisation for the separate discordances of diverse ethnic groups.

From our leaders we hear much oratory and noble talk of our destiny, "God-given, from on high" (phrases which I suppose have meaning for some people) and of the values of the past, but in practice it seems that our way of fulfilling our dubious destiny is to erase our past as thoroughly as possible. In place of the mingled variousness that might be ours we seem to desire a mechanical uniformity. In pursuit of this aim we do not shrink even from breaking the promises made by past leaders, as when we eject the Indians of Krugersdorp from the lands which Paul Kruger gave them "in perpetuity". Clearly the dead hand of the past ought not to over-rule needs of the present, yet we might, even if only for our own advantage, refrain from destruction of all traditional patterns.

The exclusiveness of the Nico Malan Opera House is a not unfitting symbol of our rejection of the opportunity that once was ours to maintain and enhance the symphony of civilisation in Africa.