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HUMANISTS DENOUNCE ARCHBISHOP'S "CALL TO THE NATION"

The Archbishop of Canterbury's "call to the nation" last month will surely be judged the non-event of 1975. Dr Coggan (reported annual salary, £9,420, plus extras) advised the people of Britain to "stop making money the priority," and he went on to urge greater sacrifice, restraint and discipline. Full press, radio and television facilities were put at Dr Coggan's disposal, thus ensuring the widest possible circulation of his message. No doubt there will be some response in religious circles to the Archbishop's request that groups of people all over Britain will discuss the questions he has raised. But the impact of his statement on the man, and woman, on the Clapham omnibus has been completely indiscernible. Dr Coggan's statement was remarkable for its triteness and lack of originality. It illustrates the low level to which the Church of England has fallen when its leader makes an important statement, the text of which reads as though it has been lifted from the columns of a parish magazine.

Leading figures in the humanist movement made their views on Dr Coggan's call known to *The Freethinker*. Harry Stopes-Roe, chairman of the British Humanist Association, said that although we should always appreciate a sincere attempt to do good, sometimes an ill-judged action makes matters worse.

Dr Stopes-Roe continued: "One of our fundamental troubles is the miasmatic sense that 'serious questions' are too big for us to think about; another is our pathetic desire to find agreement without doing the necessary work to understand our differences. These are major factors in our condition of failed-concern. There is much 'goodness' about, but it is blind and uncoordinated. The Archbishop compounds our troubles.

"Can we, as a community, face what may emerge from a consideration of the society we want, and of the kind of people we must be to make it come about? Certainly it is true that everyone has a view of the world, and that a life that has no con-

cern or purpose is not worth living. But to say this is not to say that we all seek 'a faith to live by.'

"Some people can find consolation in 'faith,' but the very word is coming to be recognised as a mark of inadequate thought. The view of the world that is emerging can find no source which can validate our beliefs other than our own diligent inquiry, and no source of purpose or concern other than ourselves. If we 'put God first', our society will remain an undirected and aimless rabble which pursues inadequate goals in the areas that matter; and which clears its conscience by illiberal actions against those who reject the idea of God-given faith.

The Futility of Faith

"What kind of society do we want? An Open Society, where Christians are not able to prosecute humanist doctors who ease the dying of humanist patients; where Christians are not able to destroy attempts to educate our children in an objective, fair and balanced way concerning ultimate questions; where the media encourages responsible thinking in many articles and programmes, rather than a privileged 'God spot'; and where our society is mobilised by a view of the world which sees rewarding human relations as their goal, rather than money.

"What kind of people must we be? The Archbishop bemuses us with talk of 'faith' and 'God first'. We must face the actual evils which lie within our society, and endeavour to overcome them by developing our own humanity."

Barbara Smoker, president of the National Secular Society, said in a press release that the Archbishop of Canterbury's call, "is what we have come to expect from Church prelates ever since Christianity became the established religion under the Roman Emperor, Constantine. They have always visited the sins of the ruling class and its institu-

(Continued overleaf)

"Call to the Nation"

tions upon the people, exhorting us all to ever greater efforts and sacrifices for the sake of the rich and powerful.

"As Thomas Paine said 200 years ago, all Churches are 'human institutions set up to terrify and enslave mankind and monopolise power and profit.'

"Had the Archbishop forsaken his establishment role in favour of the earlier Christian message, he might have addressed himself to the financiers, condemning their usury as the primary cause of inflation; he might have addressed himself to the capitalists, crying 'Beware of False Profits!'; he might have addressed himself to the commercial advertisers, praying, 'Lead us Not Into Temptation'; above all, he might have addressed himself to the politicians, with the warning, 'You Cannot Serve the Public Good and Mammon.'"

"Media Hog"

Nicolas Walter, managing editor of the Rationalist Press Association, described Dr Coggan's statement as impertinent, irrelevant, infantile and intolerable. He said it was impertinent "because it is absurd for the leader of the established Church which is patronised by the state to pretend to offer any kind of solution to a crisis largely caused by the establishment and the state. The Archbishop of Canterbury is appointed by the government, and is as much involved in our present situation as any of the other scribes and pharisees who are always telling us what we should and should not do.

"Irrelevant—because it is absurd to propose yet more vague discussions among 'groups of men and women, of all denominations and of none' and yet more empty prayers to imaginary deities, which will contribute nothing to our problems except to obscure the real issues and confuse people's minds.

"Infantile—because it is absurd to use images like a country 'drifting' without 'anchors,' with an 'enemy' who is 'at the gates,' or 'like children in a classroom when the teacher is not there,' which assume that we are in a ship, an army, a school, and need a captain, a general, a headmaster to give us orders. This simplistic and paranoid approach to difficult and complicated problems ignores the fact that people who behave like children get treated like children—those who complain about King Log deserve King Stork.

"Intolerable—because it is absurd for one of the biggest media hogs in the country to complain about 'extremists' getting publicity, and for a prelate earning more than the vast majority of the population and living in comfort and security to ask other people to make sacrifices. Let him set the example.

"What Dr Coggan calls a 'drift towards chaos' is in fact the growth of freedom which both church

and state have obstructed as long and as hard as they can. His invocation of God and Jesus Christ is a relapse into the kind of primitive superstition which most people grew out of years ago and which makes it impossible to take him seriously. What is needed is not more religion, sacrifice and discipline, but some reason, honesty and common sense."

We Don't Need Christianity

The Archbishop of Canterbury's repeated declaration, "Your Country Needs You," will be best remembered as the slogan that appeared on First World War recruiting posters. The message of those posters, backed up by exhortations of the clergy, encouraged thousands to embark on a one-way trip to battlefields of Europe where millions fought to the death with other soldiers who were equally convinced that God was on their side. Those who survived returned to unemployment, slum housing and exploitation. Their country did not need them.

Dr Coggan's latest call to arms is unlikely to make much impression. For although man learns slowly, he learns. And one of the lessons of history is that whatever this country needs, it does not need the superstition, intolerance and social divisiveness of Christianity.

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INDIAN VISITOR

Professor A. B. Shah, president of the Indian Secular Society, visited Britain recently and met representatives of the British Humanist Association, National Secular Society and Rationalist Press Association at BHA headquarters in London. H. J. Blackham introduced Professor Shah who spoke of the problems which the secularist movement had to contend with in India. These included deep sectarian divisions in the population, superstition and the suppression of women.

Professor Shah stressed the value of international contacts, and appealed for moral and practical support by Westerners for the Indian secular movement.

"The Libel Case That Never Was"

Last January an article entitled "Squalid Attack on 1967 Act" appeared on the front page of *The Freethinker*. It concerned a book, *Babies for Burning*, by Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish, which purported to chronicle the adventures of these "pristine . . . young journalists" (as they were lyrically referred to by Leo Abse, MP, in his *Spectator* review) in the wicked world of the private abortion clinics.

For a time *Babies for Burning* rivalled Uri Geller in demonstrating just how easy it is to confuse the public and the media. The book was extensively promoted and quoted by Catholic-front organisations campaigning to wreck the 1967 Abortion Act; and James White, MP, who introduced the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, admitted that it was the main source of his knowledge. Fleet Street, always gullible, accepted Litchfield's and Kentish's story, while the religious press elevated *Babies for Burning* to the level of holy writ.

A few journals, including *The Freethinker*, questioned the book's accuracy, and their criticism has been completely justified. The *Sunday Times* newspaper investigated Litchfield's and Kentish's claims, and in a sensational article published on 30 March last, *Babies for Burning* was exposed as a collection of horror stories and fantasies. It was revealed that Michael Litchfield's claim to have won a Pulitzer Prize for journalism could not be substantiated, and David Steel, MP, later described Litchfield as "a man who was careless about the truth." Serpentine Press, which published *Babies for Burning*, was put into the hands of a receiver.

Demand for Apology and Compensation

At the beginning of March, Messrs Field Fisher & Martineau, a London firm of solicitors acting for Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish, wrote to *The Freethinker* claiming that their clients had been libelled in our January issue. They demanded an apology and retraction, together with compensation and indemnification in respect of costs. The matter was put into the hand of legal advisers acting for *The Freethinker* editor; Jean Anderson, author; G. W. Foote & Company, publishers and David Neil & Company, printers. Field Fisher & Martineau were informed that any claim their clients decided to pursue would be strongly defended.

We were involved in a great deal of correspondence, and much time was expended on interviews and discussions. It is now nearly eight months since we last wrote to Litchfield's and Kentish's solicitors, and as they have not replied it is assumed that their clients have decided not to take the matter further. Our solicitors have submitted their account

for £632, and even after the insured proportion has been recovered the unfulfilled threat will cost *The Freethinker* over £200.

There is a growing recognition that the libel laws of this country are confused. It is intolerable that an action can be threatened irresponsibly by a person who has no apparent intention of proceeding, but can nevertheless put others to considerable trouble and expense. The existence of *The Freethinker* is not threatened by the cost of "the libel case that never was," but it would be a crippling blow to many small journals.

A *Freethinker* Defence Appeal has been launched, and we are confident that all who value free expression will respond generously. The Appeal has been sponsored by Maureen Colquhoun, MP, Lord Houghton, Renee Short, MP, Barbara Smoker, David Tribe and Nicolas Walter. David Tribe, a former *Freethinker* editor who now lives in Australia, was the first subscriber with a donation of £10, and a donation of £25 has been received from Madeleine Simms. The Appeal will remain open until 31 January, and a full list of subscribers will be published in due course.

● Donations marked "Freethinker" Defence Appeal should be sent to the Editor, 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

HERETIC CARDS

for Christmas

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The "Scottish Protestant View," a fundamentalist publication which is edited by Pastor Jack Glass of Glasgow's Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, has been banned from Saughton Prison, Edinburgh. The prison governor imposed the ban which has been endorsed by the Secretary of State for Scotland. A spokesman at the Scottish office said that it was a matter for the prison governor's decision alone. Material published in the journal was considered to be too inflammatory. A copy had been requested by a prisoner serving a twelve-year sentence for possession of explosives which, it was alleged, were to be shipped to Ulster.

So the Cambridge Rapist is safely locked away again, to everyone's relief and will quite soon be forgotten. Or will he? Rape is in the news just now—the subject of one of those tidal waves of emotion that all too easily lead to ill-judged legislation which reformers then have to slog away for decades to improve or remove. In this article the secretary of the Sexual Law Reform Society questions the assumption that the availability of pornography has a significant effect on violent sexual crime.

The rapist who terrorised a townful of women for months on end proved to be an almost classic textbook case of the maladjusted delinquent child who progressed from being brought before the courts as being in need of care and protection at the age of ten, through the institutional sausage machine of supervision orders, approved schools, borstals and prisons to Broadmoor. A man, you would have thought, that any prudent policeman would keep a wary eye on. But what did he blame for his compulsion to rape? Pornography. Mr Justice Melford Stevenson (by no means a way-out progressive, even by the standards of the English Bench) obviously regarded this defence as a pretty feeble red herring.

Enter, nevertheless, the Chief Constable of Cambridge, Mr Frederick Drayton Porter, and ululating in the wings—you guessed it—Mrs Mary Whitehouse. "This case," said Mr Drayton Porter, "has proved the real danger of pornography which is being commercialised and allowed to go unchecked on the alleged grounds that censorship interferes with the liberty of the individual. Let those who think that, reflect on the victims of these crimes and ask themselves would they express these views if the victims were their own relatives or friends." His statement, shrilled Mrs Whitehouse, should impress even "the trendy clerics and permissive experts who are prepared to go into the witness box and defend even the most extreme perversions." She is writing yet again to the Home Secretary, Mr Jenkins, demanding immediate legislation to increase control over pornography. From a psychiatric point of view, said "a leading consultant psychiatrist," the Chief Constable's statement was "nonsense." Another psychiatrist suggested that pornography often had a therapeutic effect: "If we could be condemned for our fantasies then most of us would be in prison." (All preceding quotations are from the *Guardian*, 4 October.)

Raymond Johnson, director of the Nationwide Festival of Light, has said in a letter to the Home Secretary: "It is now time for the government to undertake a responsible and wide-ranging view of

the seriously inadequate controls over harmful publications of all types." Jack Ashley, MP (Labour, Stoke-on-Trent), is asking Parliament (which seems singularly ill-adapted to discuss rationally anything to do with sex) to make nonsense of the judicial doctrine about reasonable belief.

Being neither a psychiatrist, a trendy cleric, nor a permissive expert, but just a mere citizen who is concerned about liberty, I am perturbed by all this hoo-haa, even though it comes from such predictable quarters. Mrs Whitehouse, no doubt, is explicable in any serious discussion of the boundaries of free speech. It will not be her fault if she isn't presiding over the Ministry of Truth well before 1984, dictating our daily Newspeak slogan. But the Drayton Porters of this world are another matter. Faced with the stress of policing a society which is now in the advanced stages of what J. B. Priestley presciently observed to me some years ago is a collective nervous breakdown, they are falling back more and more on simplistic explanations which blame crime and unrest on easy scapegoats such as pot, pop and porn.

Attack on Personal Freedom

Even if one concedes half a grain of truth in at least some instances (and the Cambridge Rapist is probably not one of them) such "analysis" is ludicrously superficial and, if it is allowed to gain ground, it could all too easily be used as an excuse for filching away yet more of those dwindling personal freedoms which the Tories at Blackpool have recently been waxing so plaintive about.

Obviously it is idle to pretend that people aren't affected at all by erotic pornography. Of course they are—just as they are affected by reading Shakespeare, the Bible, their daily newspaper or watching television. (So far I agree with ex-President Nixon—who himself has provided some of the most corrupt television performances in recent times.) The question that matters, though, is not whether pornography may possibly stimulate a handful of psychopaths to commit violent rape or even murder: the socially important question is, what effect does pornography have on the vast majority of those who enjoy it? And as pornography is—on the evidence of its most vociferous opponents—in very big demand indeed nowadays, the answer would appear to be "astonishingly little."

In his judicious appendix to the otherwise somewhat hysterical Longford Report (1972), Maurice Yaffe, a clinical psychologist, surveyed the then extant research into the effects of pornography and found that, while most people are aroused by explicitly sexual material, and there is some correla-

(Continued on page 174)

Should Sikhs be exempted from the law, which came into operation in 1973, compelling motor-cyclists to wear crash-helmets? Does this law really deprive Sikhs of freedom to practice their religion? Agitation for exemption has been organised by the Turban Action Committee whose chairman, Baldev Singh Chahal, refuses to wear a helmet while driving, and was sent to prison for non-payment of fines. The present writer examines the issues involved, and outlines some problems which may result if the authorities succumb to this pressure group.

For those who like simple solutions, people who settle in Britain should discard everything associated with their previous domicile, and there the matter ends. Such an intransigent position will not be adopted by anyone who gives the question some serious thought. A settler, whether Indian or Polish, does not suddenly abandon his language, music, food, religion and customs. Most reasonable people would therefore look for gradual integration, rather than hasty assimilation.

The Turban Action Committee, on the other hand, have not done themselves any good by basing their campaign against crash-helmets on religious grounds. However, it is necessary that their claim is closely and dispassionately examined both by the host community and the Sikhs themselves.

The word "Sikh" means disciple. The early Sikhs were disciples of a preacher, Nanak (1469-1533 AD), who endeavoured to combine in his teachings the tolerance and compassion of Hinduism with the comparatively equalitarian ideas of Islam. His teachings were pacific and tolerant in mood (most of the religions which have arisen in India have been generally non-dogmatic). It was the persecution of the Sikh gurus by the later Moguls that resulted in the organisation of the Sikhs into a militant order by Guru Govind Singh, the tenth and last Sikh guru, around 1680.

Guru Govind Singh called upon his followers to wear the five Ks: Kesk (unshorn hair), Kanga (comb), Kadaa (iron bangle), Kachh (short under-pants) and Kirpan (dagger). It will be noted that there is no injunction to wear the turban. However, it is obligatory to wear the Kirpan and it is to the Sikhs' credit that they have shown flexibility in their religious practice, and have not pressed for exemption from the law forbidding the carrying of weapons in this country. They could have appealed to the host community for flexibility and understanding of the Sikh's reluctance to give up the turban even in the interests of his own safety. Indeed where head-gear is only a part of a uniform, as in the case of a traffic warden or a bus conductor, the authorities

have shown—and I hope will continue to show—enough understanding and imagination to accept the Sikh in a turban.

Having started on the wrong basis, the TAC supporters have gone on to make all kinds of assertions to reinforce their case. They claim that their religion demands that a Sikh should never go around without his turban. But anyone who has knowledge of India knows that Sikhs are not ashamed of their long hair, and millions of television viewers have seen Sikh athletes without turbans participating in the Olympic tournaments. It is also asserted that a Sikh may not wear on his head any object—least of all metallic—other than a turban. In fact, authoritative books mention that the early Sikh militants wore their long hair around steel rings which served as a small helmet. The wearing of a turban is, in my view, only a customary and traditional practice, and not a religious duty.

If a crash-helmet were designed to fit over the turban the only objection could be that it might crumple the turban slightly. Alternatively, if a Sikh motor-cyclist carried his turban in a bag it would only be a matter of a few minutes for him to tie it on when he arrived at his destination. No reasonable person would object to such minor inconveniences caused by a lawful requirement which may possibly save him from serious injury or death.

In persisting in their agitation and making allegations of persecution, the TAC are not helping the Sikhs who live in this country, the Sikh religion, other immigrant groups or the host community. They are simply playing into the hands of those extremists who seek to utilise every opportunity to denigrate the immigrant communities and further alienate British opinion against them.

It is claimed by the Sikh pressure group that their counterparts in the United States have persuaded the American Government to make an exemption in favour of Sikhs. But it is important for Sikhs in Britain to remember that the United States is a newly settled country which has been polyglot and multi-racial from its very inception. But the British people are in a different position, and writing as an immigrant I assert that it is improper and imprudent for an immigrant group to pressurise them into agreeing to something on the ground that it is acceptable to the Americans.

Any concession that may be extracted from the British Government by the Turban Action Committee may well be an illusory gain. It would encourage power-seekers in other religious groups to put forward similar claims. Sikhs, with their history and experience of the Indian sub-Continent, should be the last people to open the floodgates of religious fanaticism.

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) regarded the Jesus of history as a man who acted under the influence of gross delusions. Schweitzer was, however, anxious not to surrender Jesus' religious importance.

It is now a hundred years since Albert Schweitzer was born and ten since his death. His fame as a theologian rests primarily on his research into the life of Jesus. He found that Jesus was a man who believed that he would be transformed into a supernatural personage who would then come down from the clouds, bring the world to a catastrophic end and inaugurate the kingdom of God with a universal judgment of the living and the dead. When these expectations that the tribulation of the last days was at hand were disappointed, he arbitrarily decided that God had singled him out to suffer this tribulation alone, and that it therefore behoved him to undergo crucifixion, after which the kingdom would come. Again his hopes remained unfulfilled, for his death was not followed by the end of the world.

It is hardly surprising that—I quote *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*—such a “view of our Lord's Person aroused much opposition, not only among conservative theologians.” Schweitzer did however try to make his views more acceptable by cloaking them in vague and mystical language which obscures their unorthodoxy. He does not say that Jesus was deluded, but rather that his behaviour rested on “considerations lying outside history” on “dogmatic eschatological considerations.” Eschatology means theories about the end of the world, how it will come about and what circumstances will attend it. That Jesus was determined by eschatological considerations must mean that he was actuated by a belief in the coming of the kingdom or by the conviction that he was the Messiah who would inaugurate the kingdom. But instead of putting the matter thus plainly, Schweitzer says: “Eschatology is simply ‘dogmatic history’—history as moulded by theological beliefs—which breaks in upon the natural course of history and abrogates it.” He means simply that Jesus' behaviour was determined by his religious ideas.

But the behaviour of every man is determined by his own beliefs as much as, or more than, by the “natural course” of events. Of the real events of his time no man can have anything but a very imperfect notion collected by reports or by inference from his own restricted experience. And it must be on the basis of his own inadequate notion that he acts. If, in addition to the inevitable limitations thus

imposed, he suffers from positive delusions, then his behaviour will be even less adapted to the real conditions in which he is living, and in such cases we cannot hope to explain or predict his behaviour unless we know what his delusions are. Schweitzer writes so as to suggest that Jesus' theological beliefs are an objective force, outside history, whereas other people's ideas belong to the natural course of history. He says, apropos of Jesus' identification of John the Baptist with Elijah: “We see here, too, how, in the thought of Jesus, Messianic doctrine forces its way into history and simply abolishes the historic aspects of events” (p.373). The casual reader is not likely to interpret this as meaning that Jesus was under a delusion; rather will he suppose that there is some supernatural, metaphysical, “eschatological” aspect of the events which is just as real, or perhaps more real than the historical aspect.

Gospel Discrepancies

Instead, then, of saying plainly that he regards Jesus as a deluded fanatic, Schweitzer writes of “the largeness, the startling originality, the self-contradictoriness and the terrible irony” in his thought (p.208). He even makes a virtue of the inconsistencies and incredibilities of the gospel portrait of Jesus by claiming that he is a supreme personality whom we really cannot expect to understand. Thus he holds that the “chaotic confusion” of the gospel narratives “ought to have suggested the thought that the events had been thrown into this confusion by the volcanic force of an incalculable personality, not by some kind of carelessness or freak of the tradition” (p.349).

Now the discrepancies in the gospels are no doubt due to a number of causes—the purpose and intelligence of the authors or editors, the disparate sources from which they drew their material, the interests of those who preserved and copied the manuscripts, and so on. But it seems unhelpful to say that everything can be accounted for by supposing that the subject of the story was an incalculable personality. By this method any myth could be taken as plausible history. The whole manner of argument savours more of evangelical pulpit oratory than of scientific discussion.

The second edition of Schweitzer's book includes a discussion (omitted in the English translation quoted above) of contemporaries who denied that Jesus ever existed. Schweitzer's overconfidence is typified by his inclusion of English works (e.g. J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*) in this review, even though he knew no English. Robertson

(Continued on back page)

The First World War, in which such terrible loss of life took place, is remembered on Armistice Day in November. The debate about the origins of that war was featured in a recent article by Philip Hinchliff. Mr Low now challenges some of the conclusions of that article.

Since 1972 Philip Hinchliff has been advancing erroneous ideas about Germany, culminating in his article "The Great War" (*The Freethinker*, August) in which he wrote: "... if the great war had a cause, the cause was Germany." In my view the cause of the First World War, and all modern international wars, was national sovereignty. By national sovereignty I mean a situation in which the world is divided into different independent nations, each maintaining its own armed forces and practising power politics to stop other nations from pushing it around. So if this article seems to be pro-German, it is simply because I want to show that national sovereignty, not Germany, was the villain in 1914.

Mr Hinchliff asserted that "the Great War was an attempt to place Germany squarely among the ranks of the great world powers." In fact Germany had been from the 1870s the leading military state in Europe and one of the three main industrial states in the world. If Germany had wanted to assert herself militarily, why did she not strike in 1905 when Russia was knocked out by her war with Japan, or in 1908 when British generals informed their government that Germany had military superiority over this country.

National sovereignty was operating in 1914 and it expressed itself in alliances which divided Europe. France was allied to Russia, and Germany to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Each nation considered an attack on its ally as an attack on itself. The murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand convinced the German government that its ally, Austria, really was in danger from Slav nationalists. If Austria fell, Germany feared that she would fall next, and therefore she backed Austria against Serbia. But Serbia was allied to Russia, so Germany had to fight against Russia and France. (A similar situation arose in 1956 when Britain, France and Israel attacked Egypt, Russia's ally in the Middle East.)

It was not only Germans who wanted war in 1914. Frenchmen like Foch wanted revenge for the defeat in 1870; in Russia, Isvolvski wanted to grab Constantinople. And in Britain there is evidence that the Admiralty wanted to confront the German Navy.

Mr Hinchliff believes that in 1918 "... the myth was born of 'the stab in the back' which attributed Germany's defeat not to her generals but to Jew-dominated politicians; and the seed was sown for the rise of Hitler ... " The seeds of Hitlerism were certainly sown around 1918. But it was the Treaty of Versailles, which inflicted humiliation on Germany and then split Europe up into a number of nations, which was responsible for that disaster. It made the Germans want revenge, and made it difficult to stop them getting it.

Germany the Scapagoat

As Mr Hinchliff says, the 1914 war "was to some extent a release from difficult, if not insoluble, social and national problems." For instance, Britain was on the verge of civil war over Ulster. So if the British government wanted to get people's minds off Ulster, his claim that if the First World War had a cause, the cause was Germany, is not quite accurate.

The idea that Germany is the sole cause of war has led to all kinds of folly, danger and suffering. During the Second World War it was assumed that we had only to smash Germany and everything would be lovely. No real thought was given to the problem of how to conduct world affairs when hostilities ceased; consequently there was the Cold War which nearly became another hot war.

The cause of German militarism is her geographical position. She is in the middle of Europe. This has meant that for centuries she was liable to be attacked, and therefore had to have an army. This is also the reason why she had to develop democracy. There are those who believe that German militarism results from sheer wickedness. I suggest that the idea of people of any nation being essentially wicked is contrary to humanism.

World Government

It should be remembered that since 1945 there have been wars in Korea, the Middle East and Vietnam. Germany cannot be blamed for any of them. Indeed the government of Willi Brandt made at least as great a contribution to international peace as any government since the Second World War.

We should be endeavouring to achieve the unity of mankind through world government, but some people who profess to be enlightened and humanitarian have done plenty to prevent it.

In the past 13 years, the number of churchgoers in Paris has fallen by 47 per cent. A count taken in March in all the churches and chapels resulted in the figure of 191,420, compared with 346,261 in a similar count in 1962.

CARDINAL'S ERRORS

When Cardinal Heenan preached at the Red Mass at Westminster Cathedral to mark the opening of the Michaelmas law term he made the most of the opportunity to express his reactionary and obscurantist views on social questions.

He warned the congregation (which included twelve judges, twelve QCs and a large number of barristers and solicitors) that humanists were determined to make euthanasia legal, and opined: "After all, if you have no belief in life after death, no belief in God, there is no particular reason why you should believe in the sanctity of life. And we have examples in abundance now of how life is held more and more cheaply." He illustrated this last point by instancing the capture of hostages, hijacking of planes and other acts of violence.

Cardinal Heenan spoke of his exchange of letters with the Prime Minister in which he had expressed fears that the "euthanasia lobby" would be successful in due course. Mr Wilson had replied: "The policy of euthanasia would be wholly abhorrent, and there is absolutely no question of this government or, I believe, any government, ever giving it support." He had also informed the Prime Minister about his anxiety to protect Roman Catholics in the medical profession who had conscientious objections to abortion.

The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster expounded his views from a most advantageous position. He was preaching in his own Cathedral to a congregation consisting largely of Catholic members of the legal profession. It was unlikely that anyone present felt inclined to question the veracity of the Archbishop's statements, and it would have been virtually impossible to have done so, as His Eminence could not be cross-examined.

In other circumstances it could have been pointed out that humanists are pressing for the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia, which would be restricted to individual predetermination for one's own self in clearly defined circumstances. Cardinal Heenan is welcome to any comfort a Catholic prelate can extract from the Prime Minister's assurances on this matter. No government is likely to sponsor a Bill on voluntary euthanasia, because of its emotive content and for fear of the religious pressure groups. It is a matter which will be left to the judgment of Members in an open vote.

Cardinal Heenan is quite wrong when he says that we have come to accept kidnapping, hijacking and acts of violence. Rather than being accepted, such acts are deplored and condemned by the great majority of people. And it is not only Christians who deplore acts of violence—any more than it is only non-Christians who perpetrate them. For several years Northern Ireland has been the most violent part of the British Isles. It is also an area where both Roman Catholics and Protestants are

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noted for religious fanaticism. Cardinal Heenan's remarks about violence have a hollow ring, coming as they do from a leader of the Church which was responsible for the Crusades, the Inquisition and the murder of an incalculable number of "heretics," Jews and unbelievers down the centuries.

The most eloquent comment on Cardinal Heenan's plea to the Prime Minister aimed at safeguarding career prospects of Roman Catholic doctors was that of Dr J. H. Grant, who gave evidence to the Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill on behalf of the Scottish Home and Health Department. Pointing out that the abortion rate was much lower in the heavily Roman Catholic area of Glasgow than in the rest of Scotland, and so from that region a thousand women each year had to travel to England in search of legal and safe abortions they were unable to obtain at home, he remarked: "It is mostly a question of conscience or otherwise of the individuals concerned."

While Roman Catholic doctors in Glasgow are busy exercising their consciences, women are driven to desperate measures to avoid back-street abortions. What had Cardinal Heenan to say about their predicament? Nothing at all. After all, they should not be having abortions in the first place, so naturally they must expect to suffer and not obstruct the careers of their elders and betters.

GEORGE DAVIS ON STAGE

Freethinker readers will be pleased to hear of a building in London's East End that is now being used to far greater social effect than it ever was previously. The Half-Moon Theatre, Aldgate, which was a synagogue originally, has staged a number of extremely interesting shows since its conversion three years ago, and the current production is a splendid example of what theatre should be.

George Davis is Innocent, OK opens with the alleged framing of George Davis for armed robbery, and ends with the alleged desecration of the cricket pitch at Headingley, Leeds. The outburst of hysterical indignation that the violation of a sacred bit of dirt by George Davis' allies caused, is revealed in contrast to the almost complete indifference of the media and the public towards the 20-year sentence imposed on Davis, and the vindictive refusal of bail to his friends.

AND NOTES

The intensity of feeling shown by the players for their subject is most impressive. One feels that they are not so much acting out a part as demonstrating total commitment to a cause. This is more than just a play, and should not be missed by anyone who enjoys good theatre and is concerned with social justice.

Shane Connaughton is to be congratulated on a script that transforms what could be a dull, boring legal argument into a vivid, fast moving drama, liberally interwoven with lively songs and music by Dave Stoll (who also provides the piano accompaniment). There are outstanding scenes showing police methods of interrogation (not in the rule book, but well known as the path to promotion in the CID). There is an hilariously funny episode in Buckingham Palace with the Royal Family's tranquility disturbed by Pete Chappell—an outstanding performance by Alan Ford—crashing his van into the palace grounds.

The final scene of the production, which is most ably directed by Pam Brighton, centres on the Headingley incident, and the reading of a sympathetic letter to Mrs Davis by the Australian team captain.

The Half-Moon Theatre is in Alie Street, and the nearest Underground stations are Aldgate and Aldgate East. Performances are at 7.30 p.m., Tuesday until Saturday, and the current production runs until 22 November.

CLASSROOM RELIGION

The 1944 Education Act requires that all county schools shall provide a course of "Religious Instruction" according to an "Agreed Syllabus" which "shall not include any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denomination." It lays down regulations for the formulation of a syllabus, and requires also the holding of worship "not distinctive of any particular religious denomination."

If this does not sound much like what happens in schools nowadays, it is not surprising, the religious provisions of the 1944 Act are more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Over the past 30 years the Act has been progressively ignored as educationists have talked of the "open" treatment of religion, and religious leaders have

found the indoctrinational or confessional approach counterproductive.

A survey of candidates' views during the last General Election showed that there was a great deal of support for a change in the present law to take account of the multi-credal nature of present day society. Further support for radical change has been given by the publication in August of a report by the government-backed National Foundation for Educational Research.

The latest contribution to the discussion comes from the British Humanist Association whose new booklet, *Objective, Fair and Balanced: a New Law for Religion in Education* was introduced at a press conference in the House of Commons on 23 October. The whole approach of this publication, which deals specifically with county schools, is based on educational validity rather than the authoritarian and indoctrinational approach of the present law.

The BHA argues that there should be no compulsion to teach religion at all, but that if any teaching in this area is done all the various "stances for living" should be treated in a fair, balanced and objective manner.

● "Objective, Fair and Balanced" is obtainable from G. W. Foote & Company, price 40p plus 11p postage.

Freethinker Fund

There was an encouraging response to the appeal for donations during September and October. Our warm appreciation is expressed to the following contributors: C. N. Airey, 50p; H. A. Alexander, £1.25; Anonymous, 34p; R. Bailey, 50p; D. Batten, £1.44; A. Bayne, £1; W. Beninson, 44p; S. Berry, 50p; A. Bishop, 58p; J. Boyd, £1; R. Brownlee, £4.25; J. G. Burden, 50p; G. Burness, £1; C. Byass, £1; R. Cadmore, £7.63; D. M. Carter, 50p; R. J. Condon, £3.50; J. Cullen, 50p; H. Eckersley, £3.44; R. Forrest, £1.40; A. Foster, £2; Mrs E. M. Graham, £1.50; W. H. Green, 50p; D. Harper, £4.22; V. Harvey, £3.50; A. Hawkesworth, £2; E. Henderson, £2.50; A. Henry, 22p; E. C. Hughes, £1.30; E. J. Hughes, £5; J. R. Hutton, £1.50; S. D. Kuebart, 50p; B. A. Lamb, £1; N. Litten, 50p; F. Lonsdale, £4; Miss E. Mannin, £5; P. S. Neilson, £1.84; H. A. Newman, £2.25; C. G. Newton, £1; Miss A. M. Parry, 50p; C. H. Powell, £5; D. Redhead, 42p; J. F. Robin, 50p; A. Schopenhaur, 30p; P. Sloan, 50p; W. Southgate, £1; H. W. Sweetman, £1. Total (until 20 October): £80.82.

The following is taken from a newspaper's list of church notices: "Paisley Abbey . . . Morning Service . . . (This will be Mr Webster's Final Service as Student Assistant.) Anthem—O Clap your Hands."

BOOKS

JESUS: THE MAN WHO LIVES by Malcolm Muggeridge. Collins £8.

"Tell me the old, old story" is an apt commentary on Malcolm Muggeridge's latest book, and one with which he would heartily concur. For in retelling the Gospel narrative he makes no concessions to the immense corpus of biblical scholarship. On the contrary, he mocks all such efforts without giving any indication that he knows much about them. He directs the shafts of his wit on fairly easy targets like Renan's *Viè de Jésus* which he calls the first draft of *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

The coming of Christ into the world, he assures us, is "the most stupendous event in human history." There have been plenty of great teachers and mystics but none have claimed to be God. No reader would realise, from Muggeridge's bland dismissal of the labours of theologians to prove that Jesus made this claim, that it was ever in question.

He admits that to a twentieth-century mind the notion of a virgin birth is preposterous, but may we not take comfort in the fact that men of great intellect have believed it? Again and again Muggeridge reverts to Pascal: "The key to this seeming disparity between Pascal the scientist, scrupulously observing facts and weighing their relevance, and Pascal the Christian, bowing his head, bending his knees, humbling his proud mind before the Virgin Mother of Jesus, lies in one word 'Faith': what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews called the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Throughout the book the same technique of dispelling difficulties is employed. The difficulties are frankly stated, but instead of suggesting a solution Muggeridge deftly changes the subject. Thus the fact is acknowledged that the genealogical table purporting to establish the descent of Jesus from King David through Joseph is incompatible with Mary's virginity. Instead of offering some kind of explanation Muggeridge switches to his familiar diatribes about modern scientific credulity: "To believe today in a miraculous happening like the Virgin Birth is to appear a kind of imbecile, whereas to disbelieve in an unproven and unprovable scientific proposition like the Theory of Evolution, and still more to question some quasi-scientific shibboleth like the Population Explosion is to stand condemned as an obscurantist, and enemy of progress and enlightenment."

The condemnation is abundantly justified. It would be tedious to enumerate all the examples of these evasive tactics. I am not accusing him of deliberate dishonesty. His mind is so completely made up that he is too impatient to bother about objections. And as this is a book that is more likely

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to assure believers than help inquirers the confident dogmatism is appropriate.

One gets rather tired of the Aunt Sallys with which everyone who has heard Muggeridge on television must be all too familiar—permissive sex, the belief in progress, scientism, liberal theology. The progressive do-gooders he despises at least tried to improve man's lot on earth. Muggeridge glories in the fact that Jesus did not try. He was tempted to do so by the Devil: "He could have instituted welfare states *in excelsis*, with all human requirements, from birth pills to cremation, made available gratis to one and all; set in train arrangements whereby happiness was not just pursued, but caught and captured, for the pursuer to have and hold until death did them part; triumphantly installed the proletariat of the world in power on best Marxist lines, and seen to it that the government duly withered away, leaving mankind to live happily ever after."

C. S. Lewis—unless my memory is at fault—argued that we had a clear choice. Either Jesus was mad or he was God. This is an outrageous *non sequitur*. There are so many contradictory strands in the Gospels that you can build a number of different profiles. As Schweitzer said, 2,000 years after his time he is an enigma to us. Not least baffling are the eschatological texts, the confident prediction that the end of the world would come in the lifetime of some of the disciples. This did not happen. Needless to say Muggeridge glides over the failure. It really won't do to offer a pragmatic explanation: "I cannot see how the Church could possibly have survived through all the decadence, disorder and wickedness of the last centuries of the Roman Empire if there had not been this built-in expectation of a Second Coming and the end of history."

Tertullian's defiant "I believe because it is impossible" is quoted with approval. This is intellectual masochism, a type of Kierkegaard's "crucifixion of the intellect." Muggeridge is clearly influenced by Kierkegaard, and like the Danish founder of existentialism, he remains outside the Church. For all his fascination with the Catholic Church and adulation of Mother Teresa he remains obstinately a Protestant Fundamentalist. He admits this in a very revealing comment on the Communion service: "Happy, indeed, are the guests at this feast, but I, alas, have never been among them, nor most probably ever will be. Sadly, I have to admit that its sublime symbolism has always eluded me."

REVIEWS

Malcolm Muggeridge has written a book about Jesus which sheds no fresh light on his subject but plenty of light on himself. That is why it holds the interest, despite the boring doomwatch asides which we have heard before *ad nauseam*.

HECTOR HAWTON

LET THERE BE LOVE by Gunnel Enby. Elek/Pemberton, £2.25.

Gunnel Enby is a young Swedish woman who has been paralysed since she contracted polio at the age of 16, but she has succeeded in getting married, having a child, working as a journalist, and writing this book. It is very short, badly written, badly produced, and highly priced, but well worth reading. The subtitle is *Sex and the Handicapped*, and Mrs Enby argues that physically handicapped people have as much need for and right to sexual activity as anyone else. Although she describes the Swedish situation, the British situation isn't much different, and her argument is particularly strong because she knows from bitter experience exactly what she is talking about.

She insists that disabled people are just the same as other people, apart from their actual disablement, and she attacks the common assumption that they either don't have sexual feelings or shouldn't have sexual outlets. She insists that disablement is enough of a burden without being reinforced by further deprivation, and she attacks the Christian doctrine that such suffering has a positive function. She tears to shreds such revolting clichés as "To be handicapped enhances the soul" and "The room with the wheelchair can become the first step towards paradise", and she gives deserved contempt to parsons preaching sermons on such equally revolting texts as "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children" and "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." She shows yet again that religion does not really help disease but is itself part of disease.

She describes the many cases she has seen or heard of handicapped men and women trying to express their lust and love in the difficult circumstances of hospital life, and she asks why the circumstances need to be so difficult. She shows that there are powerful physical and mental factors which actually make handicapped people particu-

larly dependent on sex; idleness, uselessness, loneliness, helplessness all tend to stimulate sexual desire, and sexual activity is the best relief from such feelings—indeed sex can even be the most effective form of rehabilitation.

But sexual behaviour among handicapped people isn't just negatively ignored by the authorities; it is positively discouraged. She describes how private masturbation is regarded by staff as wicked and is frequently punished, even by violent means, although it is generally the only possible outlet ("If your arms are reasonably moveable, you masturbate until your soul smarts"), and she describes how any kind of mutual sex is also carefully prevented and severely punished. She not only acknowledges but emphasises the mechanical difficulties involved, pointing out the need for "more relaxed and abandoned attitudes", for "more experiment with positions", for the use of manual and oral stimulation, for the employment of electric vibrators, and even in extreme cases for the help of third parties. But she insists that, despite such problems, "sex is still fun for the disabled—it is a source of joy and happiness in an otherwise dreary and monotonous existence."

She also acknowledges the administrative difficulties involved, but she insists that there is no reason why handicapped people in institutions shouldn't have reasonable privacy for sexual as for any other personal activity. She suggests that it would be easy enough to provide a room which could be rented and locked for any private purposes. She describes the way some members of staff do everything to stop sexual encounters, whereas others do everything to help—an awkward situation which would be unnecessary if sensible arrangements were made. She dislikes the idea of "sexual samaritans"—whether they would operate as social workers or commercial prostitutes—but in the light of her own arguments it seems a practical solution for those who want it, if the samaritans can be found.

Let There Be Love is a very personal book, but it is a pity that it isn't much more personal. Mrs Enby doesn't use her own experiences in a very effective way, and in the end a straight autobiography might have been more impressive. On the other hand, it is a pity that she doesn't generalise her argument. The physically handicapped are by no means the only people in the situation she describes and condemns. What about the mentally handicapped, what about other mental patients, and indeed what about all hospital patients? Sex is after all one of the best things about recovering from an illness, as many convalescents will remember, and one of the best ways to increase both self-respect and mutual respect. What about the inmates of so many of the other institutions which pervade our society—prisoners, schoolchildren, old people, and so on? And what about some open discussion of that even more taboo subject—sex between staff and

inmates, nurses and patients, teachers and pupils, old and young? The old idea that sex is bad is still strong, but the new idea that sex is good is getting stronger; the newest idea is that it is good for everyone who wants it. It is one of the least harmful and most pleasant of all human activities. Let there be love, indeed!

JEAN RAISON

EUROPE'S INNER DEMONS, by Norman Cohn.
Chatto/Heinemann/Sussex University, £4.50.

To a very large extent both witchcraft and the Devil are discoveries of the Christians. The widely believed prototype of Satan, the Egyptian god Set, slayer of Osiris and opponent of Horus, though viewed unfavourably at times, was never looked upon by the Egyptians as the fount of all evil. Indeed, some later Pharaohs of the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties took Set as their throne-name (e.g. Sety I, who fought both Palestinians and Hittites). To the Jews, their tribal deity Yahweh, whilst in opposition to other gods, was considered so powerful and omnipresent that any forces of darkness were comparatively harmless and insignificant. Some demons are mentioned in the Old Testament but nowhere is Satan looked upon as the great adversary of the Almighty; where his name is invoked, it is rather as God's junior assistant.

This viewpoint has to be considered in any evaluation or analysis of the current preoccupation with satanism and witchcraft. Such widespread interest is yet another symptomatic feature associated with the threatened collapse of the establishment, economically, politically and significantly, in this connection, religiously. Alongside the flourishing of weird and esoteric cults we should expect and indeed do find the resurgence of older, half-forgotten beliefs.

This book is therefore a timely and informative addition to the torrent of volumes on witchcraft and allied subjects that have poured forth from the world's presses in recent years. The author clearly shows how the concept of a personal Devil developed as part of the natural evolution of religion. The pet god of the Hebrews gradually became Lord of the Universe and creator of both good and evil, util as Professor Cohn says: "... it was felt as an incongruity that God should be directly responsible for evil. At this point the threatening, hurtful functions of God detach themselves from the rest and are personified as Satan."

It is this concept that is developed to its full by Christianity. The early Church made the discovery of Hell, and to populate it consigned thereto the "wicked" non-believers—those who preferred the old gods. Within a comparatively short period there arose an incessant theological warfare waged by

Satan and his legions against Christendom with one important psychologically new feature. This is the belief in the pact between humans and the Devil to destroy the Church, an explanation necessary as a wealthy and successful institution brought the millennium no nearer, and worsened the state of the peasantry. These followers of Satan were firstly the adherents of the ousted religions, but later all drop-outs from the new faith were considered as signatories to the devilish pact. Thus the mythos of witchcraft was built up.

This being so, I find some difficulty in accepting Professor Cohn's main contention that the great witch-hunts of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries were merely an outburst of mass hysteria and that no witch cult ever existed. His arguments are extremely plausible, as for example, when he asks "... why such groups, after passing unnoticed for the best part of a thousand years, should have attracted ever increasing attention in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?" (p.104). But is this necessarily true? Some centuries are almost a complete blank historically. They were not called the "Dark Ages" for nothing. Again, there is a long continuous record of heresies, strange sects, alleged dabblers in magical practices (including some popes), to say nothing of insurrections and peasant risings against authority symbolised by the Church. Who is to say that among all these activities there were not some elements of pre-Christian religious beliefs still being practiced? It is a remarkable fact that there were far more witches to be found just where one would expect to find old customs and ideas lingering, in country districts rather than in the towns. Lacking a highly centralised and efficient system of government, the local feudal rulers were often ignorant of, or closed their eyes to, unorthodox behaviour of all kinds, so long as society ticked over and life proceeded with the minimum of difficulties or outright rebellion.

Whilst it is true that writers like Margaret Murray and others have tried to prove too much in their researches into the existence of a witch cult, the fact remains there are certain features that Professor Cohn does not succeed in disposing of satisfactorily. To cite one example; the twelfth century Godifgu (popularly known as Lady Godiva), certainly took part in what seems suspiciously like a pagan ritual, portraying a fertility goddess in procession through the streets of Coventry. This may have been (doubtfully) to save the peasants from taxation, but does not explain similar events at Banbury Cross. If this is not indicative of a widespread cult-ritual, there is yet a similar legend connected with St Briavels, deep in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire.

One of the universal associations with witches is the cat. It is nowhere explained how ignorant peasants in an age of almost complete illiteracy could all independently connect the animal companion

of many pagan goddesses with the local witch, unless there was some lingering continuity of belief. No, the author does not appear to have proved his case that no corporate body of witchcraft ever existed. It may even have been a cover for that most dangerous of all heresies—political activity in a primitive form.

The chapter dealing with the persecution of the Knights Templar is a brilliant piece of objective writing. (But surely not Knights Templars as the author describes them; they were knights of the "Temple of Solomon," not temples.) Here the politico-mercenary machinations of Church and State against a possible rival are clearly portrayed in all their brutal horror. My thanks, Professor Cohn, for your vindication of the Knights Templar against the accusations, including that of being a homosexual brotherhood. This is a charge which even some atheist writers have accepted, solely on the "evidence" of Christian torturers. They remain one of the least understood facets of medieval society. Perhaps their real "crime" was in introducing to Christendom some of the rational and scientific ideas of Arabic civilisation, thus paving the way for the reawakening of learning and critical thinking in Europe.

The great witch-hunts remain as a terrifying example of the behaviour of a society unsure of itself, afraid of opposition, unable to satisfy the simple needs of a large section of its population and mentally inhibited by superstition. Perhaps, in this excellent and controversial book there is a lesson for today?

JAMES M. ALEXANDER

EXHIBITION

THE WORLD OF FRANKLIN AND JEFFERSON. The British Museum, London, until 16 November.

Next year marks the 200th anniversary of one of the most momentous events in modern history, the American Revolution, together with the publication of the equally significant political document, the Declaration of Independence. Although the war between England and the 13 insurgent American colonies actually commenced the previous year, these two historical events assumed their final and definitive shape in 1776.

These political Siamese twins are currently being commemorated at a British Museum exhibition. I have spent a good deal of time at *The World of Franklin and Jefferson* and at the earlier *American War of Independence* (which dealt largely with the military aspect) and have learnt much through doing so. Whatever one's viewpoint of contemporary politics, the personalities and events described are undoubtedly of international interest and importance. In particular, political and religious radicals will find much of absorbing interest in these illus-

trations of what was probably the most radical political and secular revolution in human history yet known until the eighteenth century. Certainly, its unilateral Declaration of Independence represents perhaps the most advanced political document ever penned by the leaders of a revolution.

Ideally, the two exhibitions should have been seen simultaneously, but as the majority of *Freethinker* readers are presumably far less interested in "deeds that won an Empire" (or in this case lost it) they will find *The World of Franklin and Jefferson* very rewarding. This magnificent exhibition is appropriately named after the two men who were probably the most brilliant and versatile culture heroes of the many-sided American Revolution.

On the time-honoured principle "Peace hath her victories not less renowned than war," no two individuals could have been more fittingly selected as the central figures of this exhibition. Franklin, who invented the lightning conductor "that protects our Churches from the stroke of Heaven," was described by a contemporary as "the man who snatched the lightning from the skies and the sceptre from the tyrants." Jefferson was the major author of the American Declaration of Independence, and it was he who penned the immortal affirmation of mankind's "... self-evident and inalienable right to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." We can add relevantly that both these men were not just political rebels, but also ideological revolutionaries, deists, abolitionists, republicans and democrats.

However, in this splendid exhibition, these two stars are flanked by a veritable galaxy of participants in the events which led up to, and eventually included, the American Revolution. English radicals will probably single out Thomas Paine, citizen of Thetford, in Norfolk, and international revolutionary. He was a pioneer of the American Revolution, and his pamphlets *The Crisis* and *Common Sense* exercised a profound influence on events. Paine is described as "The First Theorist of International Revolution," and his portrait is accompanied by several apt quotations. One of these, "There is something very absurd in supposing a Continent to be perpetually ruled by an island," could hardly have been appreciated by George III and Lord North.

Edmund Burke, Paine's later antagonist, is also included. Burke was a good friend to reform in America and in France, but he was no supporter of revolution. As Burke accurately replied to Paine in their controversy over the French Revolution, he "had changed his front but not his ground." Some of Paine's more ardent admirers have not perhaps quite realised that Burke was a consistent but intelligent conservative, who believed in and supported reform, but only as a viable alternative to revolution, which he strongly opposed. He was not the last of his kind.

LETTER

Another international revolutionary briefly mentioned—though he had no direct connection with the American Revolution—is Toussaint L'Ouverture, the famous leader of the Negro slaves of Haiti ("the black Spartacus," as I have described him elsewhere). Some historians of Negro emancipation regard him as a "black Washington."

This is an American-sponsored exhibition and appropriately the majority of those portrayed are Americans who played their varied roles in the Revolution. To list them all here would be wearisome, so I will mention only John Hancock, the first man to sign the Declaration of Independence. He did so in a large, bold hand, "so that George III will not need to put on his spectacles to read it".

Some years ago, while crossing by ferry from Ostend to Dover, I got into conversation with an American businessman who had just returned from China, and was deeply impressed by the Maoist regime. He observed as we parted: "I am not pro-Communist, but Karl Marx certainly started something." I am not pro-capitalist, but, as this exhibition proves up to the hilt, the same can certainly be said of George Washington.

F. A. RIDLEY

Pornography and Rape

tion between a high degree of exposure to such material and a high frequency of sexual activity, there was no conclusive evidence from the various research studies which had been carried out on sexual offenders that the availability of pornography was related to the incidence of violent sexual crime in any statistically significant manner. And the authoritative US Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (1970) states that: "On the basis of the available data . . . it is not possible to conclude that erotic material is a significant cause of sex crime."

The burden of proof, in a democracy, must always lie upon those who wish to restrict freedom of behaviour, and still more that of thought and of taste. John Stuart Mill said that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant." If we agree, then the allegation that pornography causes direct harm to others than those who chose to use it for their own gratification must be conclusively proved. It has not been, and I doubt if it ever will be. That, however, will unfortunately not deter the dedicated crusaders against "moral pollution."

The price of liberty remains eternal vigilance, and it is high time that those who are ready to stand up in defence of free speech become as vociferous as their opponents who are increasingly numerous in all quarters.

Paul Von Blum's article "A Critical Note on Christian Art" ("The Freethinker," October), raises a very interesting topic, namely, to what extent does the merit or value of artistic expression depend upon the truth or factuality of its subject matter?

This is a question on which I would like to take issue with Von Blum. He says that the primary purpose of artistic expression is the communication of thoughts, ideas, sentiments and feelings. And I think that it is here that his reasoning goes wrong. Art is supreme in conveying sentiments and feelings, but cannot compete with verbal language in conveying thoughts and ideas. Sentiments and feelings are emotional and instinctive, and are not arrived at by rational processes. They are the true field for artists, poets and musicians; while thoughts and ideas are the field of the scholar, the scientist, the philosopher, the writer in prose. Can you imagine the thoughts and ideas of Newton, Marx, Darwin or Bertrand Russell being presented to the public as works of art?

Works of visual art, unless they are purely abstract as music is, must have an element of rational thinking or observation in them. But surely there is nothing "startling" (as Von Blum thinks) in being able to consider these two aspects quite separately?

In his article, Paul Von Blum does not refer to the fact that much of Christian art in the forms of painting, sculpture, architecture and church music, was commissioned work, paid for by the very wealthy Christian Church of the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and was used not only for its artistic value but also as a means of propagating or reinforcing Christian doctrine at a time when most of the population was illiterate. Hence the "story-telling" aspect of much of it, since the Church, as patron, was able to influence the artist in his composition. This is no denial that some very great artists found inspiration in this demand. One has only to mention, among many, Giotto, Duccio, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael. To a lesser extent other religions have inspired or employed artists to produce great work such as Greek sculpture and buildings, Egyptian carvings, Buddhist temples, Islamic mosques. But the artists could, and did, produce secular, non-religious work as well.

The point I wish to make is that an artist may find inspiration in almost any subject whether he believes in it literally or not. And we, as spectators or listeners, may enjoy and admire the work he produces whether or not we believe in his subject. We do not have to believe in the goddess Athena to admire the Parthenon; in Osiris to admire early Egyptian art; in Christ to admire St Peter's Cathedral or the Pieta; in the Inferno to admit Dante's greatness as a poet; or in Teutonic mythology to be overwhelmed by Wagner's art in "The Ring."

A. A. H. DOUGLAS

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was able to reply (in the second edition of his book) that the summary of his book given by Schweitzer was "impossible to anyone who has read it." In this section of his work Schweitzer does, however, make some unexpected concessions. He notes that all our information about Jesus comes from Christian sources, for the sparse pagan and Jewish notices of him are clearly dependent on Christian tradition. For instance, Tacitus' reference (*circa* AD 120) to the crucifixion under Pilate at best establishes that the Church of the early second century believed in that event.²

Schweitzer even declares that Christianity must reckon with the possibility that it will have to surrender the historicity of Jesus altogether, and must have—in readiness for such a contingency—"a metaphysic, that is a fundamental philosophy of the nature and significance of being that is completely independent of historical fact and of knowledge imparted by tradition, and which must be created anew every moment in every religious person" (p.512). He adds that if the gospel Jesus did exist, then it must be admitted that he displays some traits which may be found morally and religiously offensive—e.g. his ethical teaching is impaired by its constant appeal to the prospect of heavenly rewards as incentives for good behaviour, by Jewish particularism and by assumptions concerning predestination (p.516; cf. pp. 595-6). However, he notes earlier in his book that "the apologists, as we learn from the history of the Lives of Jesus, can get the better of any historical result whatever" (Eng. trans. cit., p.233). This is as true of his own performance as of those he criticizes.

¹ *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 3rd edn., Eng. trans. 1954, pp.349, 351, 357.

² *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu Forschung*, 2nd edn., 1913, pp.453, 512.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Brunswick House, Brunswick Square, Hove. 7 November, 5.30 p.m. Nicolas Walter: "Humanism and the Media."

Leeds and District Humanist Group. Room D 302, Leeds Polytechnic, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds. Wednesday, 3 December, 7.45 p.m. A Meeting.

Leicester Secular Society. The Secular Hall, 75 Humbarstone Gate, Leicester. Sunday meetings at 6.30 p.m. 16 November, Nicholas Fogg: "The Case Against Abortion." 23 November, F. M. Taylor: "Geological Aspects of the Origins of Life." 30 November, Christopher Brunel: "Social History from Token Coinage." 7 December, R. W. Morrell: "The Face of Roman Britain."

Lewisham Humanist Group. Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, Catford, London SE6. Thursday, 27 November, 8 p.m. Tony Milne: "Sociology of Religion."

London Secular Group (outdoor meetings). Thursdays, 12.30-2 p.m. at Tower Hill; Sundays, 3-7 p.m. at Marble Arch. ("The Freethinker" and other literature on sale.)

Merseyside Humanist Group. Lecture Room, 16 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. Meetings held on the third Wednesday of the Month, 7.45 p.m.

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group. University Adult Centre, 14 Shakespear Street, Nottingham. Friday 14 November, 7.30 p.m. Barbara Smoker: "The Opiate of the People."

South Place Ethical Society. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday meetings at 11 a.m. 16 November, Richard Clements: "Glimpses of the Corridors of Power." 23 November, Robert Waller: "The Divorce from Nature." 30 November, Peter Cadogan: "Dietrich Bonhoeffer—Christian Against Christianity." Tuesday evening discussions at 7 p.m. Theme for November: "The Arts and Social Responsibility."

Waltham Forest Humanist Group. Wood Street Library, Forest Road, London E17. Tuesday 25 November, 8 p.m. Linnea Timson: "Angles on the New Media."

Worthing Humanist Group. Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday, 30 November, 5.30 p.m. Nicolas Walter: "Humanism and Politics."

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