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'BRING BACK CHILDREN'S RADIO'

THE ENDEAVOUR to save British broadcasting from slipping further downhill was consolidated at a meeting held by the 76 Group, whose name derives from the year when both the BBC and ITA charters are due for renewal, at the House of Commons last week. MPs from all parties, radio and television staff, and members of the Campaign for Better Broadcasting were present to hear Mr Hugh Jenkins, MP, the Chairman of the Labour Party Communications group, announce that the group would be seeing the prime minister for a second discussion of the suggestion that a Royal Commission on Broadcasting should be set up as soon as possible.

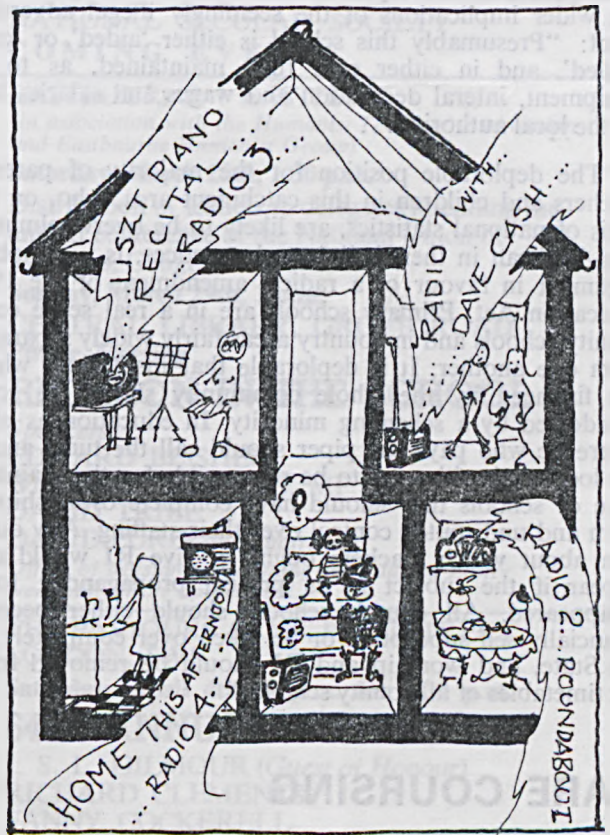
Mr Humphrey Burton, former head of music and arts at London Weekend Television, spoke on behalf of the 76 Group and outlined the points which he thought should be studied by a Royal Commission. These included the need for a federal structure in commercial television; the size of the BBC, which Mr Burton said was "much too large"; the possibility of separating the administration of radio and television; and the possibilities for worker control and various technical innovations.

The furore over broadcasting, which is only just beginning to resolve into concrete realities, has arisen largely over the BBC's avowed policy of keeping their audiences happy rather than seeking to stimulate or enlighten them. As their prime example of this policy, its opponents have cited the killing of the Third programme and with it the experimental approach which was one of the Third's chief characteristics. The reductions in the time allotted to sophisticated talk programmes and choral evensong have been major rallying points, the emphasis being on the BBC management's comparative disregard of minority groups.

It is odd therefore, that nothing has been heard of the BBC's policy with regard to Children's Radio. That, as far as can be made out, the time allotted for children's programmes is not to be cut down in the new schedules, is no cause for the complacency shown towards this question by would-be reformers, for the simple reason that children's radio is already virtually non-existent. The channelling of listener's tastes into the four distinct categories outlined in the BBC's policy statement, *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, does not hold out much hope for an increase in the abysmal amount of attention which the radio planners currently give to children.

A *Bring Back Children's Radio Campaign* has been launched under the auspices of The Federation of Children's Book Groups by Roger Collinson,¹ a teacher from Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex. In his 'manifesto' he writes: "anyone concerned in the education of children knows the importance of listening. A major objective of the teacher being to get his pupils to listen and to respond to words, it is disheartening for him to know that the BBC offers the children nothing worth listening to when they get home". He suggests that radio and television controllers "should prepare their programmes in close and imaginative collaboration", since although "there are some things which television can do supremely well, there are others in

which radio cannot be bettered—straight forward story telling is an obvious example". He admits the probability that "radio will not claim the massive audiences that television does. But there are still families without television (and who don't want television); there are children in hospital, and there are children who are blind. If it were only for the sake of groups such as these the BBC would be justified in expending time, talent and money on worthwhile programmes".



His campaign calls on the BBC to appoint a Director of Children's Broadcasting, and to "ensure that regular radio time is devoted to children each day, including weekends, for programmes of story telling, poetry, and plays". This would seem an excellent objective in itself, and also another prime example of the BBC's high-handed treatment of minorities.

Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

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

'CHURCH' SCHOOLS

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S Church of England primary school at Wiggington, Hertfordshire, has advertised for teachers who are Anglicans. This may appear quite natural in view of the establishment's name. However, since it is illegal for religious tests to be imposed on teacher appointees or applicants, the name of this school, and of the many others whose names have similar connotations, are clearly anomalous. Religious tests may be imposed on teachers applying for jobs as Religious Instruction specialists, and the managers of the school might claim that all of their teachers have to take RI. However to try to coerce teachers into taking RI is again illegal and is a more serious offence than the application of sectarian tests.

David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society, has issued a press release in which he points out the wider implications of the seemingly illegal advertisement: "Presumably this school is either 'aided' or 'controlled', and in either case fully maintained, as to its equipment, internal decoration and wages and salaries bill, by the local authority . . .

"The deplorable position for the majority of parents, teachers and children in this catchment area, who, on the basis of national statistics, are likely to be overwhelmingly non-Anglican in their beliefs and practices, is yet another argument in favour of a radical amendment of the 1944 Education Act. Primary schools are in a real sense community schools and in country areas fairly widely separated from one another. It is deplorable that institutions which are financed by the whole community should be commandeered by a scheming minority. In education as elsewhere he who pays the piper should call the tune, and if the local authorities are to be responsible for the maintenance of schools they should have complete ownership of them and undisputed control over their staffing. Any question about which teachers ought to give RI would disappear if the subject in its present propagandist form disappeared. All church schools should either become financially self-supporting or be taken over completely by the State, and worship and RI should be removed from the timetables of all county schools."

HARE COURSING

THOSE WHO MAINTAIN that it is a waste of time to write to one's MP may have had their view changed last week, when Mr Peart, the leader of the House of Commons, announced that the government will introduce a bill to ban live hare coursing. This decision is reported to have been brought about by pressure put on the government by MPs, who in turn were activated by pressure from their constituents. The government's bill, which is to be

introduced by Mr Callaghan, the Home Secretary, will be on the lines of Mr Arnold Shaw's private member's bill, which has not yet come up for a second reading. It will not however, include that part of Mr Shaw's bill which sought to ban deer hunting. This, it has been reported, might be dealt with in the next parliament if Labour is returned to power.

The government's decision represents a major triumph for all those active in the struggle to ban these nauseating activities, which have hitherto been termed 'sports'. Credit is due primarily to the League against Cruel Sports and to Mr Eric Heffer, Labour MP for Walton, whose campaigns inside parliament have constituted a major contribution towards the proposed Act, which will be the first new law on blood sports since 1835.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, 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 6d stamp to Kit Moutat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Humanitas Stamps: Help 5 Humanist charities. Buy stamps from/ or send them to Mrs A. C. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, RM7 8QX, Essex. British and African speciality. Send for list. Humanist Holidays. Details from the Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (Tel.: 01-642 8796).

COMING EVENTS

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. Cronan and McRae.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

INDOOR

Cardiff Humanist Group: Glamorgan County Council Staff Club, Westgate Street, Cardiff: Wednesday, April 1, 7.45 p.m.: "How Permissive Are the Young?" Dr Hana Backer, LMSSA (Medical Officer, FPA Youth Advisory Centre, Cardiff).

Portsmouth Humanist Society: 99 Victoria Road, Southsea: Saturday, March 28, 8 p.m.: "The Civilised Society", Howard Rye.

SECULAR EDUCATION APPEAL

Sponsors:

**Dr Cyril Bibby, Edward Blishen, Brigid Brophy,
Professor F. A. E. Crew, Dr Francis Crick,
Michael Duane, H. Lionel Elvin,
Professor H. J. Eysenck, Professor A. G. N. Flew,
Dr Christopher Hill, Brian Jackson,
Margaret Knight, Dr Edmund Leach,
Professor Hyman Levy, A. S. Neill, Bertrand Russell,
Professor P. Sargant Florence,
Professor K. W. Wedderburn, Baroness Wootton**

All donations will be acknowledged
NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS

GONZALO QUIOGUE

ALTHOUGH NATURE gave the same degree of inborn intelligence to all ethnic groups called "races", a nation in a hot climate like the Philippines lags behind in industrial and scientific developments. On the other hand, nations in the cool, temperate zones are more active physically and mentally. Hence the United States, England, Russia, Japan, Germany and France lead the world in the sciences and industries. From time to time the Philippines imports experts from these countries to solve its problems of better living.

The fastest-growing industry the Philippines has ever had is the production of babies. Every year 1,330,000 babies are added to our population of 38,000,000. What can we do when it was "God's command to 'go forth and multiply' "? What can faithful Christians do when the Pope says, "Don't use any artificial means of birth control"? The so-called God's command and Pope's command are giving us hell!

Every year tens of thousands of college and high school graduates are added to our great army of jobless men and women. When a man and a woman are alone and idle they think of love and love-making. And soon a baby is conceived.

In all cities and towns in the Philippines the dishabilitated are fast growing in number: the unemployed, the squatters, the side-walk vendors and the criminals who say, "God helps those who help themselves!"

The student demonstrations seem to be chasing political ghosts in Manila. They cry, "Down with imperialism, fascism and feudalism!" But where are these "isms"? They say they are after a "new democracy", variously called "true democracy" or "better democracy". Although the traditional enemy of democracy is communism, they never shout, "Down with communism!" They say: "So many people have suffered long enough. The government must be changed!" Whenever there is a demonstration, store owners cover their display window glasses with plywood, for the students throw stones at these. The demonstrators are being infiltrated by looters and Red elements. The "dems" vow a love for democracy, bu the mark of their demonstrations is violence! What they say and what they do are like "religious mysteries" so-called. They are part of the exploding population! However, viewing it from another angle, we may ask: "Are professional agitators using the students to make trouble for everybody, destroy properties, and influence the masses to change the government?"

Filipino legislators have weaknesses that can be corrected through democratic processes. The Reds, however, do not think so. Naturally. They want a Red government. Filipino politicians are great orators in convincing the people that they should be elected. And when they are elected as lawmakers, what happens? Most of them do not attend sessions. They forget their work, but not their pay-days! They don't call themselves lazy and shameless, but clever. They should be paid only by the number of sessions they attend. They never make a move for this because that would end their unholy happiness. When students find out that they the lawmakers, behave like truant pupils, they demonstrate on streets, plazas, at the Legislative Building and at Malacañang Palace. But when the students themselves become lawmakers, will they behave in like manner? To say that they will is to play the prophet. Let us see. In the meantime, we have to control our fast growing population. But how, when we are a God-fearing and a

Pope-revering people? Religious thoughts freeze our progress as a nation. We rely on the following tricky, swindling balonies, good only for prehistoric ancients:

"I shall not want. The Good Lord is my Shepherd."

"Blessed are the poor. They shall inherit the earth."

"It will be easier for a camel to enter the needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

" 'Tis more blessed to give than to receive."

The preceding religious thoughts have raked in for the Christian churches in the United States alone, \$72,500,000,000 in untaxed properties; probably \$300 to \$400 billion in the whole world. (See *Church, Wealth and Business Income* by Dr Martin A. Larson, Ph.D.)

The law of nature is that it is much easier to increase the population than to increase its food, clothing, shelter and jobs. Can the fast increase of our population be slowed down by prayers? The more we pray the more babies are born; for we have a strong religious faith; we rely on "God" to feed the babies. The priests and ministers who are trying to lift us to heaven are unwittingly taking us to hell!

The demonstrating students know that they will be jobless for many years after graduation. Who can enjoy such a prospect when one is young and itching to get married? When . . . !

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY COMING EVENTS

EASTBOURNE : EASTER

(in association with the Humanist Teachers' Association and Eastbourne Humanist Group)

Saturday, March 28th, 1.30 p.m.

Distribution of leaflets to delegates attending the annual conference of the National Union of Teachers, Congress Theatre.

Sunday, March 29th, 3 p.m.

CENTRAL LIBRARY, GROVE ROAD
Public Meeting

RELIGION IN THE SCHOOL

Speakers:

EDWARD BLISHEN

WILLIAM HAMLING, MP

DAVID TRIBE

DAVID PURDON, *Chairman*

Offers of assistance (including cars) during Easter weekend will be appreciated.

THE PAVIOURS ARMS, PAGE STREET,
LONDON, SW1

Saturday, April 4th, 6 p.m. for 6.30 p.m.

64th ANNUAL DINNER

J. S. L. GILMOUR (*Guest of Honour*)

RICHARD CLEMENTS

FANNY COCKERELL

NIGEL SINNOTT

DAVID TRIBE (*Chairman*)

Evening Dress Optional—Vegetarians Catered for
Tickets **28/6** each from the NSS

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
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A HOUSE DIVIDED

NIGEL H. SINNOTT

ONE OF THE curious facts of history, especially since the Second World War, is how (to the presumptive embarrassment of Fundamentalists) "houses divided" (several nation states and famous families) have managed not only to stand up, but often do so with considerable success. For this reason I have chosen the above title for an article on the structure of the Humanist/Rationalist¹ movement in Britain. Before going any further I must apologise firstly for excluding the Irish movement from this essay, for reasons of simplicity (Ireland is a "special case"); and secondly for the long list of footnotes, which I have appended separately to avoid too many digressions in the main text.

Many newcomers to this movement are at first bewildered by the mystical trinity of abbreviations—BHA, NSS and RPA into which it is divided at the national level. He or she eventually finds out that these are the names of the main national organisations, the British Humanist Association,² National Secular Society³ and Rationalist Press Association Ltd.⁴ Later on, the newcomer will come across another London-based body of quasi-national importance, South Place Ethical Society,⁵ known as SPES or "South Place" (or sometimes "Conway Hall"). Having worked out what all the abbreviations stand for, one can sympathise with the new member for asking, "Why so many organisations for the same thing? Why on earth don't they all unite or something?"

I must confess that, in my own case, I was never much bothered by this phenomenon of division when I first joined the movement (around 1963), perhaps because I have a sense of history and suspected that the various organisations had arisen as a result of different circumstances in the past; but the fact still remains that many new members do wonder why there is not now just one national Humanist society, and not only newcomers: in the last few years a number of leading Humanists have advocated a unified movement at the national level. For this reason, in particular, I venture into print in order to represent the opposing case; I contend that the present arrangement serves the cause of Rationalism as a whole (at least potentially) far better than a single monolithic structure.

To begin with, unity is not practicable for legal reasons as the law now stands. A few years ago the RPA had to break off its *affaire du coeur* with the old Ethical Union as the RPA had become an educational charity (which precluded it from political campaigning) and a court ruled that the Ethical Union's aims and objects were not charitable in law. The two bodies had jointly "floated" the British Humanist Association (as the word "Humanism" had suddenly come into vogue in the late 1950's) with a view to eventual merger if the "trial marriage" had worked out. When the RPA was forced to retire from the BHA the Ethical Union changed its name to British Humanist Association and decided, quite rightly in my view, to remain non-charitable in order to campaign for law reforms. The National Secular Society has always been a non-charitable reform society, and therefore it, too, could not merge with the RPA.⁶

Secondly, a single Humanist national organisation simply would not work out: It would tend to be unstable, and once its leading members started quarrelling—as being human they would do—there would always be the temptation for a dissatisfied faction to secede and set up a society

of its own; "back to square one" again! Humanism is essentially a compromise term for a wide spectrum of ideas, including Freethought, Rationalism, Secularism,⁷ Ethicism (even Deism perhaps); it is not a monolithic, detailed ideology and for this reason people of different temperaments and outlook have their own interpretation of what Humanism means to them. The three national bodies, together with South Place, at present cater for nearly all tastes within the "spectrum", and for those of us whose philosophy is more elastic membership is available in all four bodies, if we can afford it.

The existence of several national bodies provides an additional safeguard for the movement at large; it ensures that, in the event of one of the organisations "going off the rails" and making a fool of itself in the eyes of the general public, the movement as a whole can (at least partially) be redeemed by the other bodies publicly dissenting from the actions of the first. This argument also holds good if one of the societies falls into the hands of incompetent officers or a lazy committee. Another advantage lies in the field of political campaigning and law reform, where sometimes two voices raised in unison sound more impressive than one, as in the case of Abortion Law reform, supported by both the BHA and NSS.⁸

Excluding for the moment South Place and RPA, it is still feasible to suggest that BHA and NSS, both non-charitable, politically minded bodies should merge. In fact this has already been suggested (by the BHA) and turned down (by the NSS Executive Committee). Whilst a measure of co-operation between these two organisations is essential, for instance in running the Humanist Parliamentary Group, I would submit that there are a number of obstacles—some trivial, others more important—to their complete union.

The obvious problem is that of name: the NSS is by far the oldest⁹ of the two organisations and has a great pride in its history and would be reluctant to abandon its title. The BHA, on the other hand, would be anxious to keep the word "Humanist" in the name of a combined body and could advance the claim of having the larger membership for this.¹⁰

Before dealing with the other problems I think it is necessary to examine them in the light of a number of rumours (and veiled personality disputes) that have crept in over the years. For an ideology traditionally devoted to "debunking" myths the Humanist movement has acquired a surprising number of its own, and I would like, if I can, to try to "lay" a few of them.

The first myth I would like to mention is one that I used to hear about five years ago from vociferous, but ill-informed, members of certain NSS branches. It was to the effect that the societies outside the NSS orbit were full of half-hearted agnostic quislings who did not have the courage to stand up and be counted or practice militancy. If anyone still believes this I would remind them that in the past (before the BHA existed) South Place, and particularly its leaders, never failed to speak up when it came to "the crunch", e.g. Bradlaugh's Parliamentary struggle; G. W. Foote's imprisonment; discrimination against Annie Besant; slavery and the Corn Laws; not to mention RI in schools!¹¹ It is easy to poke fun at parodies of baptism, such as the SPES "Naming Ceremony of Welcome",¹² but it should not be forgotten that under the influence of Annie

Besant in the 1870's the NSS held similar "naming ceremonies" until Bradlaugh put a stop to them; and if the singing of Ethical Hymns (now discontinued) sounds ludicrous to the twentieth century Freethinker, the Secular Songs that once filled the Hall of Science would be just as excruciating!¹³ South Place is still, of course, famous for its Sunday concerts.

The other myth is characteristic of new, often BHA-oriented members of, particularly, local Humanist groups; I have also heard it from people who should know better: the story is put around that the NSS is a pack of bigoted atheistical "Paisleyites" dedicated solely to attacking organised religions "bishop baiting", or *episcopophagy*,¹⁴ to use Sir Freddy Ayer's colourful term. The simple fact is, of course, that the NSS has campaigned ever since its inception, on a whole host of issues, particularly birth control, Irish and Indian home rule, woman suffrage, reform of the Sunday Observance laws, freedom of the press and against dictatorship.¹⁵ Anyone who actually reads some of the old NSS religious debates will find them fairly free of what the average Humanist understands by bigotry, and whilst I cannot say that I have never encountered bigotry in the NSS I have come across far more outside in the form of Secularist-baiting.¹⁶ I very much hope that since the NSS has wound up its branches and encouraged their members to join local Humanist groups the old animosities will die down; this seems to be the case as about 75 per cent¹⁷ of the active local groups are now affiliated to the NSS as well as the BHA.

Another obstacle to NSS/BHA unification is a recent change in policy being undertaken by the BHA. The latter has decided to concentrate its policies and activity upon the advocacy of the concept known as The Open Society, and at the same time to play down as far as possible former disagreements with the churches—the "sour old tunes" of "old-fashioned Rationalists". Let me say quite clearly that I am entirely in favour of the Open Society¹⁸ concept as an improvement upon the present situation or the Dutch "confessional" system, but I question the burying of the "old tunes". I am no prophet of the future, and for all I know the BHA may acquire a booming membership by attracting people to its ranks who have in the past been put off by its former attitude to religion. On the other hand, by making its more or less sole aim the "Open Society" the BHA may well find itself to a very large extent duplicating the aims and policies of the National Council for Civil Liberties, so splitting the "market" for both bodies, and itself breathing very thin air as far as members go. We must wait and see.

In any event, if the BHA does go ahead with its change of policy the NSS will be left "holding the baby" as far as anti-ecclesiastical campaigning is concerned. There is, of course, a possibility that the Society could as a result of this become obsessively anti-clerical, but from my knowledge of the officers and general membership I feel pretty certain that the NSS will continue to carry out a balanced programme of activities without going to either extreme. Christianity may be dying, but its political and financial power in this country is still a force to be reckoned with; and I feel that those of us who believe that religion is an illusion have a moral and emotional duty to say so, if only in homage to the millions who have suffered, directly or indirectly, because a lie was foisted upon Europe two thousand years ago.

Speaking for myself, I am a shameless "old fashioned Rationalist". I believe it was Marx who said that "nothing makes sense apart from its history", and I think this cer-

tainly holds true of Rationalism (of which Marx had rather a dim view). I do not propose that we should live entirely in the past, dwelling endlessly upon the "dear dead days beyond recall", but the past, if good, can serve as an inspiration to future action, and never did any movement have less cause to be ashamed of its heritage. To us has been passed the mantle (or iconoclast's hammer!) of Paine, Carlyle, Conway and Mill; Bradlaugh, Garibaldi, Robertson, and Ferrer; McCabe, Bruno, Bertrand Russell and many others—let us wear it with pride! To me the "old tunes" are the Rationalist's *Marseillaise*, but let us offer the hand of co-operation and friendship (so long as it is reciprocated) to those who find them "sour", even if we pity them their tone-deafness!

...—How sour sweet music is
"When time is broke and no proportion kept!
"So it is in the music of men's lives!"¹⁹

¹ I use the terms "Humanist" and "Rationalist" more or less as synonyms here. Like Bertrand Russell, I regret the latter's passing out of fashion.

² BHA, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8.

³ NSS, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

⁴ RPA, 88 Islington High Street, London, N1.

⁵ SPES, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

⁶ The RPA now provides a book service for its members, many of them overseas; it also holds annual conferences and is the wealthiest of the national bodies.

⁷ I use the term Secularism here as it is applied to the NSS; it should be distinguished from so-called Neo-secularism, the ephemeral brainchild of W. S. Ross (1844-1906-... "Saladin"), a "respectable" agnostic with a grudge against Bradlaugh, the NSS, and contraception. This may explain why NSS members tend to speak of themselves as "Freethinkers" rather than "Secularists".

⁸ Very few members of either body opposed abortion law reform; exceptions were Baroness Wootton and Leo Abse MP (who resigned from the BHA over this issue). Many of the active reformers were also Humanists.

⁹ Founded 1866, by Charles Bradlaugh.

¹⁰ The Executive Committee has shown a virginal modesty about revealing the NSS membership figures; however, I am reasonably certain that the BHA has the larger membership.

¹¹ see Ratcliffe, S. K. 1955. *The Story of South Place*. London; or any biography of Moncreu Conway or William J. Fox.

¹² Harry Knight (former SPES General Secretary) tells me that this practice is now virtually redundant.

¹³ For some people even South Place was not ritualistic enough at one time; Stanton Coit left it to form his own "Ethical Church", now no longer in existence.

¹⁴ Literally, "bishop-cating". Ayer has rarely missed a public opportunity of embarrassing the NSS.

¹⁵ see Tribe, D. H. 1967. *100 Years of Freethought*. London.

¹⁶ The persistence over the years, and in the face of all evidence, of anti-NSS prejudice is quite remarkable. Soon after joining a local group a few years ago I attended a social evening at which it was mentioned that I was an NSS Committee member; a young lady sitting next to me was quite horrified that someone so apparently normal could be even vaguely associated with "that lot". Last year the lady in question joined the NSS! FREETHINKER readers will remember David Tribe's recent review of *Essex Forum* No. 1 in which he claimed that the editorial had slighted the NSS. The editor replied to the effect that his remarks were directed only to certain individuals in local Essex groups who were "putting off" potential new members. The editorial was so worded as to be capable of this interpretation, but it seems extraordinary to me to commence a "prestige" magazine of this type by "washing one's dirty linen in public"—hardly a good advertising technique!

¹⁷ *vide* William McIlroy, General Secretary, NSS.

¹⁸ The term "Open Society" is recent (1945, see Popper, K. R. [4th ed. 1962] *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 vols. London) but the ideas it embodies go back at least to the Chartists and Victorian radicals, including the Freethinkers.

¹⁹ Shakespeare, W. *King Richard II*, Act 5.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

THOMAS W. HOGAN

A FACTOR which would assist us in our task of unravelling New Testament origins must surely be the destruction of Jerusalem and its repercussions on the Christian Church. Such a topic has received scant interest. It is particularly noteworthy, therefore, when a distinguished New Testament scholar Professor S. G. F. Brandon clears the ground. A book worthy of the perusal of Freethinkers is *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*. The work emanates from a Christian publishing house the S.P.C.K.; and, on the whole, the subject is treated with surprising candour.

For the historical material of the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 AD which led to the national disaster we are indebted to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. There seems little doubt that the event was at one time well documented. Portions of *The Histories* of Tacitus, and other works once known to exist, have disappeared leaving Josephus as the only surviving witness. It is particularly fortunate that the Jewish historian was *persona grata* with the Christians for thus he escaped the universal deluge; without his works scrutinised, of course with some care, we should have lost a piece of the puzzle. The Arc of Titus in Rome and a few coins struck for the event and the works of Josephus are the only visible remnants of the tragic war of the Jews against Rome. And yet, according to Professor Brandon, Christianity was kindled by the firebrands of Jewish nationalism.

The mainspring of Jewish nationalism was, of course, their unhappy history. The Jews were convinced that they were God's chosen people. *The Psalms of Solomon* decreed that a Messiah from the seed of David would exalt them over the entire world. The Messiah expected was to be a Warrior King for as Professor Brandon points out: "The concept of a Suffering Messiah . . . was not current in contemporary Jewish apocalyptic thought". In 4 BC, the 750th year from the foundation of Rome, the death of Herod occurred. Herod had ruled for thirty-three years under the protection of Roman mercenaries. And after ten years of misrule Archelaus son of Herod was deposed and Judaea was incorporated into the Roman Empire under the control of a Procurator. Any vestige of Jewish independence was thus erased and the Jews were now subject to a pagan god-emperor. For sixty years the flames of revolt were fanned fiercer by bands of outlaws proclaiming each likely newcomer as a Messiah who would free them from Roman suzerainty.

That a political element existed in the original Christian movement is attested to by the narratives of the New Testament. In Luke's Acts Peter describes Jesus as "a man approved of God". The disciples ask the risen Jesus: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It is clear from these two sentences that after the resurrection the disciples of Jesus regarded his mission as being purely political. It would appear, also, that these texts point to a primitive tradition which was supplanted by a more spiritual view of Jesus which colours the remainder of the Christian documents. How then, we might ask, did this change come about?

The theory which is advanced by Professor Brandon suggests that two factors unified and transformed nascent Christianity. Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles; and the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the troops of General Titus. Let us briefly examine both of these factors in turn.

That a conflict between Paul and the Apostolic Body in Jerusalem divided infant Christianity into two camps has long been recognised. Paul speaks of "spurious brethren" and of "a different Gospel". This suggests that within twenty-five years of the crucifixion two rival parties quarrelled over the nature and mission of Jesus. Paul, of course, had never known Jesus in the physical sense; he was, so to speak, a junior member of the association, and as the Mother Church of Jerusalem had known Jesus and not he, the final word in a dispute must rest with them. Paul, it may be assumed, wished to remove from the faith any involvement of Jesus with Jewish nationalism, retaining only the resurrection experiences for propagating Christianity, the child of Judaism, as a world religion. This quarrel, according to Professor Brandon, is recorded in the letters of Paul. The real nature of the dispute is obscured by other Christian writings, i.e. The Acts.

Paul's arrest as a violator of Jewish religious customs served the purposes of the orthodox party who wished to integrate Jesus as a child of Judaism. He was, so to speak, the property of Jewish political aspirations. And yet a short time later Christianity is reborn to conform to Paul's unorthodox views. How did this change come about?

Professor Brandon suggests that a signal victory for Paul and his followers occurred when Jerusalem fell to the troops of Titus. After a five-month siege the city was taken by storm. Thousands of Jews were sent captive to adorn the triumph of Titus. Josephus gives an astronomical number of Jewish losses. A Jewish source tragically comments how the nations of the world manured their fields with the blood of Israel. The High Priesthood and the Sanhedrin were abolished and the Jewish State dissolved.

But the supreme crisis of the Jewish State was a triumph for Paul and his followers. The Apostolic Body in Jerusalem had suffered almost complete extinction. Here was the opportunity for Paul's followers to revive Paul's discredited ideas, to present an account of Jesus which wasn't shackled to a renegade Messiah of Jewish independence. They preached Paul's doctrine of universal salvation. The carnage of Jerusalem was soil for the Christian notion of redemptive blood.

The last word rests with Professor Brandon: "Thus we may conclude that, after the Resurrection experiences, the next most crucial event in the life of the Christian Church was the overthrow of the Jewish nation, which was dramatically epitomised in the destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem in AD 70".

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TARGETS OF PREJUDICE

FAYE AINSCOW

WHILE LEGISLATION is evolving towards the goal of equal rights for women in the legal, civil and social spheres, there still remains a less well-defined hurdle to overcome—the prejudicial attitudes of a significant number of men and some women, towards women.

These attitudes can be blatant or subtle, but either way they are a slap in the face of female dignity. An enlightened society tends to condemn racial, religious or ethnic slurs. Yet for some reason few get upset if equally insulting remarks are hurled at women. Such demeaning terms as 'dumb blonde' or 'the little woman' have become everyday sayings raising almost no objection.

If, instead, the sayings were changed to 'dumb Irishman' or 'the little Coloured' there would be an outcry against such offensive and patronising verbiage.

Pubs and restaurants with signs in rooms saying No Women Allowed go unnoticed. But if the sign said No Jews Allowed letters of protest would pour in. Pub landlords who ban females from parts of their establishments sometimes say that their place has a tough atmosphere where a woman couldn't defend herself like a man.

This argument is rather weak. If some character gets drunk and starts annoying or pawing a woman who wants to be left alone then he's the one who should never have been allowed in, not her.

A racist who's had one too many might feel like slugging the black sitting next to him. Does that mean that no blacks should be allowed in to avoid fights?

Society has developed certain sex stereotypes that need realistic re-examination. One cliché assumption is that the well-adjusted male should try to get ahead or be aggressive. If a female seems aggressive then it's often assumed that she's frustrated, is compensating for some lack or she'll be labelled 'pushy'.

The fact that it's only natural for any human being with

intelligence and ambition to strive towards greater heights is often ignored. What does lead to frustration is the attempt of some to squash such ambition as unbecoming. In this respect women are sometimes their own worst enemies.

The wife who proudly describes herself as 'an extension of her husband' may get a pat on the back from conservative elements who feel that women should be seen, not heard. But to the active, modern women who participate wholly in the main stream of life this woman would seem attached to her husband by an umbilical cord through which she is fed the image of the world as viewed by her spouse.

In a way she's a shadow person living through another human being and cutting herself off from first hand experiences.

People tend to be influenced by what's expected of them. Women are no exception. A brief glance at the job listings of almost any newspaper reveals that men are expected to fill managerial and executive positions as opposed to the secretarial job offers aimed at women.

Margot Hentoff, a New York journalist, described a typical incident that underscores this kind of thinking. When she took her little daughter to visit the doctor he noticed how interested the child seemed in medical instruments. "Oh, do you want to be a nurse when you grow up?" he asked. Mrs Hentoff, keenly sensitive on the question of women's rights, fumed inside. She felt like asking the good doctor—"Is that what you wanted to be?"

Many of today's women are getting tired of this attitude. They're no longer content with being designated the role of helpmate to the male. True partnership in social and work relationships implies equal opportunity for each to develop according to individual capacity. One person shouldn't be expected to hold a subservient position to another simply because the reins of power have traditionally been given to men.

The greater part of the book is given over to Silverman's parliamentary activity, and one comes to appreciate his debating skill and his detailed knowledge of parliamentary procedure, for both of which he was renowned and feared. There is much in this section for the student of politics. The intricate workings of our parliamentary system are revealed by the behaviour of this man, who stretched them to the limit and who was twice expelled from the Labour party in parliament. The book contains many extracts from Silverman's own writings on political theory. His views of current affairs through the years are recorded in his regular articles in the *Nelson Gazette*, and provide his biographer with much original material. His bitter arguments with Churchill, the Tories, the opponents of his various bills introduced to abolish capital punishment and not least the Labour leaders, Attlee, Morrison, Gaitskell and Wilson, are well-documented.

The success of this book lies perhaps in its stern correction of the popular impression of politicians as insincere men, eternally compromising with their ideals. Most politicians have, and do, conform to this impression, Silverman didn't. He stood by his beliefs to the repeated exasperation of the career politicians. But above all he managed to combine this adherence to personal principle, with a deep faithfulness to his party. Hughes recalls a breackneck drive from Bristol with Silverman at the wheel refusing to stop in case they should miss the division at the Commons and bring down the government. There can be little doubt that British government could do with more men of Sydney Silverman's calibre. Imagine a country governed by a group of men, to all of whom the following could apply: 'It was said of him by a veteran Parliamentary reporter: "If everybody is against you—your wife, your family, your employers, your lawyer, your police—go to Sydney Silverman. Convince him you have right on your side and he will never rest until you are vindicated".'

Book Review

JEROME GREENE

Sydney Silverman, Rebel in Parliament: Emrys Hughes, MP (Charles Skilton, 35s).

THIS is a very readable biography of the late Sydney Silverman, MP, the man famous for his consistent, and ultimately successful struggle to abolish capital punishment. This book reveals the innumerable other activities that the redoubtable Silverman got up to—both in and out of parliament. Written by the late Emrys Hughes, MP, shortly before his recent death, the book traces Silverman's origins and takes us through to his death in February 1968 at the age of 72. Hughes, for many years Silverman's colleague and friend, is well qualified to write the book. He cuts the story to its bare essentials with little of the traditional laudatory anecdotal. He tells of Silverman's upbringing in Liverpool, largely with the help of people who knew him as a child; of his university career which left him with two degrees, one in Modern History, Philosophy and Economics, the other in Law; of the interruptions to his university career, caused by the First World War, two years of which he spent in gaol as a conscientious objector, and a spell in Helsinki as a lecturer in English Literature; of his days as a lawyer, when he found fame as a man prepared to go to any lengths to defend a man he considered innocent; of his time in Local Government and his friendship with John and Bessie Braddock; of his first unsuccessful election campaign as candidate in the Liverpool Exchange division; and of his subsequent success in Nelson and Colne, where the local Labour Party almost begged him to represent them and whom he served until his death, thirty three years later.

Film Review

BOB CREW

Easy Rider.

IF YOU WANT TO SEE, what seemed to me to be a long-winded film, about the unutterable boredom, shallowness and impotence of life in the United States of America; if you want to know how desperately and perilously difficult it is to be an individual in most parts of that country; if you want to be reminded of and, frustrated, terrified and mystified by, the sick psychopathology of the southern states; if you want to experience the apparent helplessness and speechlessness of young long-haired people confronted with a pathetic situation; if you want to see freedom debased with a shrug of the shoulders, a yawn and without so much as a faint protest; if, broadly speaking, you want to see what is wrong with the United States today, then go and see *Easy Rider*, a protest film that shrugs its shoulders rather than protesting too powerfully and which is, for the most part, destitute of dialogue or hope.

In the same tradition as *Alice's Restaurant* but not, for my money, as good as that film—by reason of its flimsy dialogue/characterisation and inept long-windedness which, I am sure, is perfectly deliberate—*Easy Rider* is an important film which probably just about makes the grade by virtue of its important sociological significance.

LETTERS

IT IS MY OPINION that S. E. Parker's remarks (February 21) in criticism of G. L. Simons are grossly unfair. In his excellent article "When Should We Debate?" Mr Simons set out to establish as a general principle that in certain cases debate rather than immediate action was immoral, a view with which I am in total agreement. The beaten child and the dying pensioner were given as examples of such cases. I do not see how S. E. Parker's accusations—that Mr Simons was using the old trick of "invoking an emergency situation . . . and trying to extrapolate from . . . that situation a general rule for all situations"—can possibly be justified. Surely G. L. Simons' article made it quite clear that the principle was to be applied *only* in these emergency situations?

Mr Simons gives as his reason for objecting to debate on such topics as racialism the fact that he disapproves of them, as Mr Parker correctly points out. But this is merely acting in the way that every man who tries to act morally acts, as Mr Simons own brilliantly lucid articles on Subjectivism have demonstrated. Ultimately no code of morality can be defended by reason; if we are honest we must admit that the sole reason why any of us judge an action immoral is because we personally disapprove of it. To accuse Mr Simons of being a totalitarian because he is not vain enough to consider his morality as universal and absolute is laughable.

As regards S. E. Parker's final point, I am sure that Mr Simons as well as myself would not even attempt to convince him that he was wrong in not abhorring a situation where "the rich can spend more on their dogs than the poor can spend on their children"; if it was possible to put that situation right by action now *before* debate, I would consider any dissenters' views as irrelevant. Would Mr Parker have stopped to argue with the Nazis at the doors of the gas chambers if he'd had the chance to break them down?

MICHAEL GRAY.

Joseph McCabe and J. M. Robertson

THE LETTER from Judex (February 21) literally throws me back into the past. I knew and met frequently Cohen for over twenty years and also Herbert Cutner, F. J. Gould, Royston Pike and others were well-known to me.

I well recollect the throwing out of Joseph McCabe came as a bombshell to members of the RPA and readers of the then *Literary Guide*.

McCabe was widely appreciated at the time. His *Twelve Years in a Monastery* was something of a best-seller. He was a writer of distinction on evolution and a friend and translator of the German biologist Haeckel. It was indeed very curious and obscure. I think Judex has something here.

Mr Royston Pike as a young man newly demobbed from World War I was appointed Secretary to the RPA. He was suddenly thrown out of his position—no reason being given.

Chapman Cohen thought very poorly of the Watts hierarchy at the time. Many of us then thought of the RPA as a mutual admiration society.

One point in relation to Robertson may perhaps be mentioned. In my lifetime I have read everything Robertson wrote with the exception of those awful works on Shakespearean exegesis. I heard Robertson speak several times and he was quite without a sense of humour. His books were a struggle to read, about as interesting as *Das Kapital* and almost as unreadable.

Cohen once said with regard to Robertson and the involvement on Shakespeare that the plays had been written by another man of the same name. Robertson did not respond.

Robertson, poor chap, was overcome by conscientiousness, a dour Scotsman and a bore almost without limit. I do trust he eventually got to Heaven because I feel certain that he and God would have a very long argument.

ROBERT F. TURNEY.

Religious Broadcasting

HOW I AGREE with your editorial of February 28, in which you pointed out that while Christians were offended with the 'Seven Veils', atheists are offended every day by the promotion of religion on television and radio.

There was a particularly nauseating piece of anti-Humanist propaganda in the mis-named programme "Lighten our Darkness", on Radio 4 at 10.55 p.m. on a recent Saturday. In this, the Rev R. T. Brooks proceeded to rebuke Humanism, *unopposed* by a Humanist, by imitating one and trying to account for man and nature, etc., without mentioning the word "God". Predictably, his efforts got progressively more cumbersome and futile, mentioning how easier his self-set task would be if he could mention "that word". Eventually, of course, he gave up, amid a deafening chorus of praises to the almighty.

Those in high places, however, are still prepared (in public!) to deny that the BBC is partial. In the November 27 issue of the *Radio Times*, the Editor, answering accusations that the *Radio Times* is impartial on reactionary views, said "Radio Times has no views of its own. *Radio and television* are windows on the world. They'd be dulled windows if, every week, they looked out on exactly the same scene". So I wrote to the editor pointing out the absurdity of these comments when applied to religion. His reply seemed an excellent example of reasoning round in a circle, and please note that my letter to him just contained evidence of the BBC's partiality, and said nothing of the rights and wrongs of its policy. His reply read, "In reply to a reader's letter, which you quote (I didn't, but never mind!) I did not say that the BBC had no views of its own. I note your own views on the BBC's attitude to religion, with which many people, I am sure, would conscientiously disagree".

MICHAEL HUGHES.

Race and religious festivals

I AM afraid that I am unable to agree with the press release issued by David Tribe on the subject of race and religious festivals (FREETHINKER, March 7).

The freedom to practice one's own religion (or lack of religion) is surely a fundamental civil liberty. It is a human right which should be respected by both employers and employees. In the case of the Christian religion the majority of employees do not need to ask for time off from work for prayer as Christian festivals are normally public holidays. Therefore it is only right that adherents of non-Christian religions should have their religious festivals respected. To do otherwise will only alienate immigrants from the host community and cause an even further deterioration in race relations in this country.

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