

THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLBOOK PUBLISHER GUILTY

'An Absolutely Sickening Decision'—NCCL Secretary

The police and Scotland Yard's pin-up girl, Mary Whitehouse, won the first skirmish in the battle of *The Little Red Schoolbook* last week when its publisher, Richard Handyside, was found guilty at Lambeth Magistrates' Court of possessing obscene material. After the trial Mr Handyside said it was a political prosecution from the day the police started raiding his warehouse. As he has published works by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara this claim is probably justified. The Defence of Literature and the Arts Society and the National Council for Civil Liberties immediately launched a campaign to finance an appeal against the magistrate's ruling. Grace Berger, chairman of the NCCL, said *The Little Red Schoolbook* offended the sensibilities and order of things in the minds of adults. It suggested that children should question and probe and try to change society. That kind of advice set off a howl of protest from elderly reactionaries. The DLAS and NCCL said in a joint statement: "The judgment is an attack on freedom of expression and a victory for those who seek to impose their bigoted views on the rest of the community".

The Trial

David Tribe writes:

Richard Handyside's comment at the end of the *Little Red Schoolbook* trial last week, "I'm truly amazed by the decision but not really surprised", was echoed by many in court. Anyone who has read this frank, informative and rather endearing little book in the context of the "permissive society" we hear so much about must be shocked that it should be found depraving and corrupting to secondary school children in 1971; but anyone who sat (or stood) in court for the two and a half day hearing should not have been surprised by the verdict. By upholding the prosecution's application to consider the 23-page section on "Sex" and not the whole 208 pages, even though John Mortimer pointed out that *Last Exit to Brooklyn* and the *School Kids OZ* consisted of separate short stories and articles, the magistrate severely hampered the defence in invoking section 4 of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, and his questions and observations throughout made it clear to those with experience of such courts which way his mind was turning. Indeed it is well nigh certain that he had already made up his mind on reading the book and the hearing was largely superfluous. As he said to Mortimer during his final address, "It's easy to put out of one's mind one's own childhood and background when sitting on the bench in a judicial capacity; it's not so easy when one may have children of one's own of that age range, with whom one is living four and a half months of the year in circumstances of intimacy". In other words, this is not the sort of book my children's prep school headmaster would be likely to recommend and I should do nothing to encourage its circulation.

The occasion had for freethinkers a familiar and—if it were not so disastrous for a struggling young publisher and his fourth title—almost convivial atmosphere. Apart from John Mortimer QC, senior counsel for the Defence, there were a number of radicals in and at the trial. One of the principal defence witnesses was the humanist psychologist, Dr James Hemming, who was advised to take the oath and

mumbled "I swear by Almighty Od". Then came Caspar Brook, director of the Family Planning Association, Dr Anthony Ryle, director of the University of Sussex Health Service, who asked to affirm (at which the magistrate promptly intervened, "You have no religious belief, very well, you may affirm"); this assumption was presumably correct, but a little later the Rev Paul Oesstreicher, vicar of the Ascension, Blackheath, and director of training in the diocese of Southwark, asked to affirm on the grounds that the oath was contrary to his religious belief) and Mrs Elaine Dunford, a headmistress and one of the sponsors of the Campaign for Moral Education. Among humanists in court throughout the proceedings were Barbara Smoker and Edwina Palmer of South Place Ethical Society, and Grace Berger, chairman of the National Council for Civil Liberties. During an intermission at the Old Bailey, her son, one of the contributors to the *School Kids OZ* and a Prosecution witness there, and Richard Neville, one of the editors and defendants, came along to express solidarity with Richard Handyside.

Mary Whitehouse and MRA Friend

Tony Smythe, general secretary of the NCCL, was in court to hear the verdict and pronounce it as "an absolutely sickening decision". There was a hasty huddle in a neighbouring pub and it was decided to consult other NCCL officers and launch an immediate appeal so that a book "so reasonable and so useful" may be defended in every way still open. With £50 in fines, £110 in Prosecution costs, solicitor and client costs, Mortimer's fees (not covered by legal aid, which extended only to his junior), destruction of the 1,201 copies seized (unless an appeal succeeds) and complete disruption of his business for months, Handyside estimated the case had already cost him £5,000.

On the other side the Prosecution seemed to be dominated not by Michael Corkery, QC, but by Mrs Mary Whitehouse. Impassive in her familiar pink and navy-blue hat

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PAUL VERSUS THE JEWS: THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

AD 70 is one of the most significant dates in the history of Christianity, and therefore of the world. In that year, Titus, the son of the Roman emperor Vespasian, successfully laid siege to Jerusalem and brought to an end the bloody war which had begun in 66 with the refusal of the Jews to offer sacrifice to Rome in the Jewish Temple. Four years of savage fighting culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem. The Temple, one of the most famous buildings of the ancient world, was burnt to the ground. Jewish suffering had been enormous: Josephus, in his *Jewish War*, estimates Jewish casualties at over a million, and whilst this figure is almost certainly exaggerated there were few Jews who escaped the brutal Roman legionaries in Jerusalem in August 70. Nor was this all, as following customary Roman practice Titus crucified Jewish prisoners of war in their thousands to set the seal on the Roman triumph.

The relevance of these events to Christian origins is that there was, at that time, a flourishing Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem. Following the death of Jesus around AD 30, Christian communities had been established not only in Palestine, but on Greek and Roman soil as well, mainly as a result of the vigorous missionary activity of Paul. But of all the daughter churches of the apostles, that at Jerusalem was unquestionably the most powerful and influential. The Jerusalem Church undertook to spread the gospel of Jesus mainly in Palestine, but there is some evidence that Peter—who until he was replaced by James, the brother of Jesus, as head of the Jerusalem Church, was the leading apostle—went to Alexandria and founded a Jewish Christian community there. The new religion centred, however, on the Jerusalem Church, which was regarded as the fount of the tradition about Jesus and to which other churches had to give financial support.

Conflict in the Church

The 40 years or so between the death of Jesus and the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 were marked by intense, and sometimes bitter, conflict in the infant Christian church revolving around the nature of Jesus and his role. What gave this dispute especial significance was that Christianity, like Judaism itself in this period, was nothing if not a proselytising religion. Disagreement about Jesus was not, so to speak, an armchair quarrel; for the Jews in first-century Palestine were in ferment, daily expecting their Messiah and continually giving their religious fervour a political twist in revolt against Roman rule. As the Messiah would appear only when the Jews had proved their righteousness by their "zeal for the Law", a messianic sect such as Christianity had to convert its fellow Jews to "repent, and believe in the gospel". Where the details of doctrine were vital, there could not be room for unorthodoxy.

Now what distinguished Jewish Christians from other Jews was, of course, their belief that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God to redeem Israel. As the Jewish tradition did not accept a "crucified Messiah", the Jewish Christians naturally found the crucifixion of Jesus a serious barrier to the spread of their faith. Palestine at this time saw the meteoric rise, and subsequent fall, of many mes-

sianic aspirants whose execution by the Romans crushed their embryonic movements. Jesus appears to have attracted to his cause many more than the usual handful of followers that messianic pretenders gathered round them, if we are to take as historic the gospel accounts of his triumphant messianic entry into Jerusalem, at which he was hailed by the multitudes, and his "cleansing of the Temple", which could not possibly have been the colourless affair depicted by the gospels but must have involved something close to armed insurrection against the Temple establishment. Why, then, following Jesus' subsequent execution by the Romans for sedition, did his movement not die with him as so many others had done? For defeat and death automatically cancelled the messianic claims of the aspirant, and destroyed the faith of his followers.

The answer, of course, lies in the resurrection experiences of the disciples, which convinced them that their Lord was alive and would shortly return to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. The explanation of these experiences must remain, I think, beyond us; but what is important is that they enabled the disciples of Jesus to counteract Jewish scepticism by affirming that Jesus, as the Messiah, would return in glory and express the wrath of God against heathen Rome. It was, meanwhile, the task of the Jewish Christians to spread the gospel, or Good News, of Jesus to the unbelieving Jews, in accordance with customary Jewish belief that the Chosen People of God would be the vehicle of the coming Kingdom.

Herald of the Kingdom

Two thousand years later, we are so steeped in traditional Christian doctrine about the role of Jesus as universal saviour that it is easy to forget that this doctrine derives from Paul, not from those who had known Jesus. For the original Jewish Christians addressed their message to their fellow Jews, not to the gentiles as did Paul. Traces of this Jewish orientation of the Christian message have survived the editing of the gospel narratives, in what may well be a genuine saying of Jesus: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). In Matthew 10:5, Jesus instructs his disciples to bring the tidings of the coming Kingdom of God neither to the gentiles nor the Samaritans, but only to Jews. Indeed, as Jesus apparently regarded himself as at least the herald of the Kingdom, and quite possibly as the Messiah, it is difficult to see how his teaching could conceivably be directed at non-Jews, for whom it would lack all meaning.

Since the documents of the Jewish Christian community at Jerusalem perished in the Roman holocaust in AD 70, we do not know what they thought of Jesus direct from their own sources, and are reduced to inferences from the Pauline epistles and the Acts of the Apostles. But these inferences, hesitant though they must naturally be, do allow us to reach certain conclusions. The Jewish Christians were, for example, regular worshippers at the Temple, kept the Jewish festivals, and were zealous in the observance of the Jewish Law, the Torah. This conclusion has some important doctrinal implications; it means that the Jerusalem Christians, by their continuing to participate in the sacrifices offered to Yahweh in the Temple, believed in

the efficacy of the Deuteronomic sacrificial code, under which an animal such as a lamb would be offered to God for the sins of Israel. In other words, for this original Jewish Christian group Jesus' death did not have the redemptive significance which was attached to it by Paul, and by the entire Christian church since Paul. Nor did these Jewish Christians regard Jesus as a quasi-divine being, as did Paul, since Judaism is rigorously monotheistic and would regard any such suggestion as blasphemous.

What, then, was the precise nature of the quarrel between Paul and the original apostles of Jesus? For quarrel there certainly was; the Epistles attest Paul's agitation that certain other Christians were preaching "another Jesus" and "another gospel", and it is clear that these other Christians were the leaders of the Jerusalem Church, who through their emissaries vigorously propagated their own version of the gospel and seriously questioned Paul's authority among his own converts. Acts 15 : 1 is particularly significant: at Antioch, Paul's gospel is radically challenged by Christians from Judaea who come to teach the gentile converts that "except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, yet cannot be saved", that is, participate in the messianic salvation. At first, Peter had eaten at table with Paul and his gentile converts, but withdraws from table-fellowship when rebuked by emissaries of James, the head of the Jerusalem Church. Paul violently expostulates with Peter, but does not question the right of James to give an authoritative ruling on the need of Jewish Christians to observe the Jewish dietary regulations. The result is a complete break between Paul and the church at Antioch.

The essence of Paul's case is that he saw the death of Jesus as a kind of universal sacrifice, atoning for the sins of mankind in general, which removed from the faithful the need to obey the Torah. This, of course, is what has come down to us as orthodox Christian doctrine: "Christ died for our sins". Such a notion does away with the unique position of the Jews in the sight of God, and it was small wonder that Paul's doctrines were widely regarded as heretical. He was eventually summoned to Jerusalem to prove to the Christian community there his orthodoxy, and whilst in Jerusalem was attacked by a Jewish mob; nor was the dispute between Paul and the Jerusalem Christians ever satisfactorily resolved. Important for our purposes, however, is that the counter-attack of the Jerusalem Christians was highly successful: for following his visit to Jerusalem, Paul disappears from history, and his gentile converts, bereft of leadership, fall away in strength. Doubtless they would have succumbed entirely to the Jewish version of the gospel, were it not for the Jewish war of AD 66-70.

The Universal Saviour

For it was this war which, among other things, obliterated the Jerusalem Church as an effective ruling body. What evidence has come down to us suggests strongly that the Jerusalem Christians were of like mind to the Zealots, the Jewish nationalists who instigated the disastrous war of 66, sharing with them their conception of Israel as a theocracy and their antagonism to the oppressive rule of Rome. The Jerusalem Christians would surely have played their part in the desperate struggle to save Jerusalem from the avenging Romans, no doubt looking to the last for the majestic return of Jesus to save them in their hours of need. However than may be, the fact remains that Christianity underwent a dramatic change following the momentous

events of AD 70. The Pauline concept of the universal saviour revived. The remnants of Pauline Christianity kept alive the faith—only the focus and nature of the faith had changed. It was now that the concept of the "pacific Christ" slowly emerged; the devastating experience of the Jews had taught Christianity that Roman power was too strong to be opposed. Roman suspicion of the new faith was attested beyond doubt by the cruel persecutions launched by Nero, and by the official outlawing of the sect. Following AD 70, as the need was felt to make a written record of what Jesus had said and taught, the gospel compilers unconsciously began to tone down the more political (and the exclusively Jewish) aspects of Jesus' teaching, now felt to be dangerous.

The founder of Christianity was not so much Jesus, but Paul. What is now clear, however, is that a strong supporting role was played by Vespasian and Titus when they launched the Roman drive to reconquer Judaea after 66, which culminated in the destruction of the Jerusalem Church in AD 70 and gave a fresh impetus to Pauline Christianity, without which Jesus' movement would have remained but another Jewish sect.

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NEW DIRECTOR

Ben Whitaker, the former Labour MP for Hampstead who was a junior Minister in the last Government, has been appointed the new director of the Minority Rights Group, the London-based international research and information institute which investigates and reports on minority problems throughout the world. Mr Whitaker, who was appointed deputy director last September, is the author of several books including *The Police*, and he edited *A Radical Future*.

Since it began operations at the end of 1969 the Minority Rights Group has produced four research reports —on the discrimination against the various religions in the Soviet Union; on Catholic-Protestant tensions in both parts of Ireland; on the Burakumin outcastes in Japan; and on the Asian minorities in East and Central Africa. The present situation in the little-reported civil wars of the southern Sudan and Eritrea in north Ethiopia, and their international implications, are the subject of the Group's latest double report.

Details of the MRG and its publications may be obtained from 30 Craven Street, London, WC2.

FREETHINKER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

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

EVENTS

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

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

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 11 July, 11 a.m. David Tribe: "The Challenge Before Humanism".

MEMORIAL EDITION

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BERTRAND RUSSELL

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Introduction Professor ANTONY FLEW

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NEWS

FAMILY PLANNING PROGRES IN BRITAIN

The 39th report of the Family Planning Association, which was published last week, refers to the serious interest now being taken in family planning by the Government and public authorities. This is the result of growing understanding that contraceptive services play a key part in preventing human misery and waste of public money. New concern about the effect of population growth on the quality of life in this country and the appalling statistics of abortions, illegitimacies, unplanned pregnancies and shotgun marriages have driven home the urgent need to extend provision of responsible family planning.

Caspar Brook, director of the FPA, writes that more people than ever before got birth control help from the Association, more doctors and nurses were trained in contraceptive techniques, and more local and hospital authorities became involved in family planning through the National Family Planning Agency. Mr Brook adds that in 1970 came the realisation "that it will not be many years before the public authorities assume responsibility for the provision of birth control services".

Evidence of the importance of family planning came from a report of the sub-committee of the Standing Maternity and Midwifery Advisory Committee of the Central Health Services Council. It recommended that family planning should be an integral part of the maternity service. Obstetricians, general practitioners and midwives should be conversant with modern techniques, and should take the opportunity afforded by ante-natal visits to discuss, as early as possible, future family intentions with their patients. The increasing number of births taking place in hospital suggests that this could be in future a focal point for the family planning service, and advice would, in selected cases, include the offer of sterilisation.

During the past 12 months the relationship between unlimited population growth, conservation and environmental pollution, has received wide public attention. The dangers have been pointed out repeatedly by eminent scientists and politicians including Lord Zuckerman, former Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government, Lord Snow, scientist and author, and Richard Crossman, former Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr Brook refers to other organisations which have expressed their public support for family planning and the work of the FPA. These include the Women's Group of Public Welfare, the Standing Conference of Women's Organisations, National Council of Labour Women, National Council for Civil Liberties, the Young Conservatives, the Progressive League and the British Humanist Association. The National Secular Society's contribution to European Conservation Year, which took the form of a large public meeting to discuss *A Free and Comprehensive Family Planning Service for Britain*, is also recorded. The report concludes: "The task ahead is to ensure that the integration of the Association's clinics in the National Health Service is brought about without undue delay and

AND NOTES

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without loss of standards of patient care achieved by the private family planners over half a century".

The growing recognition of the urgent need to regulate the size of families, the enhanced status of organisations like the Family Planning Association, and the progress of the domiciliary services, are particularly gratifying to free-thinkers. Many of the pioneers of freethought also helped to lay the foundations of the birth control movement. It is a far cry from the first essays by William Godwin and Thomas Malthus on population, and family planners of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have had to fight a running battle with religious obscurantists, medical diaphanous and political opportunists. Time and again the need for organisations like the National Secular Society (which has never been afraid to tread on ecclesiastical corns when necessary) has been demonstrated.

The Roman Catholic Church remains the most formidable—but by no means the only—opponent of effective family planning. The Pope's stooges in national and international affairs are still able to successfully sabotage the work of those who are trying to promote schemes for population control. Local Romanists have tried to prevent the setting up of FPA clinics in hospitals and displaying their publications in libraries. No doubt some of the them would still protest (as they did a few years ago) against a radio appeal for the FPA, or the display of its posters on London Underground. Last November Cardinal Villot sent a letter to Papal representatives all over the world in which he outlined plans for a diplomatic drive by the Vatican against United Nations programmes which include birth control.

Although contraception is acceptable to and practised by the vast majority of British people there is still much scope for mischief by Roman Catholics and moral rearming Protestants. The targets in the 1970s will be sex education, abortion and lesser known forms of birth control like sterilisation. We greatly hope that organisations concerned with these specific matters will dig their heels in and tell the meddlers and prudes where to get off. Family planners have always worked for the improvement of the quality of life. So it is not surprising that their staunchest allies have been those who believe that "this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge and human effort should be directed wholly towards its improvement".

Organised Christianity—particularly the Roman Catholic Church—will not relinquish its grip and privileges without a fierce struggle. Secularists and humanists can play an important role in the future battles if they use their resources wisely, and speak out clearly against mischievous social policies—wherever they emanate from. In the past the National Secular Society has often fought a lone battle whilst others have preferred to play at churches and chapels. The danger facing the movement now is that important sections of it may become bogged down in endless discussions with religionists. At best, this will produce reams of waffle; at worst it will commit the movement, in the public mind, to wrong policies. The movement cannot afford to expend time, effort and money on these futile exercises.

she sat throughout in the body of the court "by invitation"—she declined to tell me whose—not giving evidence and declining to comment, save to say that she had initiated the prosecution and the Defence evidence was "expected", till the end, as if she were there in some judicial capacity. Indeed early in the trial Mortimer suggested this was so. When he asked Detective Chief Inspector Clifford Turvey of the Obscene Publications Department of New Scotland Yard whether his department was under pressure from public figures like Mrs Whitehouse (magistrate: "Whitehorse or Whitehouse?"), there was a remarkably long pause before the officer said there had been a lot of talk but no direct pressure. Another familiar figure was one of the Prosecution witnesses, Dr Ernest Claxton, an MRA stalwart who was formerly the principal assistant secretary of the British Medical Association, chairman of its committee that produced *Veneral Disease and Young People* (1964), which declared prayer more effective than penicillin in the treatment of these disorders, and first vice-chairman of the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association. He had the further distinction of innocently creating the loudest laughter in court when he declared, "I don't think you can have points of view about right and wrong", though Corkery earned comparable distinction when he suggested to Hemming that kissing might escalate to petting, petting to intercourse, and intercourse to sexual perversions. (Mortimer earned intended laughter with "I pass over the next section. Nobody objects to impotence as far as I can gather.) For good measure the Prosecution witnesses included Vivian Berger's headmaster and a prep school headmaster who didn't actually mention cold showers but seemed likely at any moment to recommend them—or Jesus—against the lusts of the flesh.

"Paper Tigers"

Throughout one felt that some of the Prosecution witnesses were rather more concerned about sex in itself than they were willing to admit and some of the Defence witnesses less bothered by promiscuity and uncritical of the age of consent than they deemed wise to state. Indeed everyone seemed to agree that a homosexual phase in adolescence was normal, that "moderate" masturbation did no real harm, and that all children should get sex education including information at some stage about contraception and venerical disease. This was a considerable advance over attitudes prevailing just a few years ago. But it was not enough to save Richard Handyside and the book. For the magistrate agreed with the Prosecution that the section on "Sex" might encourage a significant number of children to experiment. Perhaps, though the other parts of the book were not officially considered, he also resented the general statement that "all grown-ups are paper tigers".

PUBLICATION DATE: 27 JULY

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BOOKS

LIFE OF ROBERT OWEN, by Himself.

With a new Introduction by John Butt. Charles Knight, £3.

Robert Owen was born in Newtown, Montgomery, just 200 years ago, and the anniversary is now being widely celebrated by devotees of that tradition of labour history which claims Owen as a founding-father. But amid the rallies and the speeches, it is useful to turn aside from the myths and to look again at the man himself. There is no better starting-point for this than Owen's own account of his formative years, and John Butt has provided an edition admirable for the purpose.

The Autobiography has two drawbacks. Firstly, it was originally published in 1857, only a year before Owen's death, and so, although parts of it were written earlier in his life, it is mainly the work of an old man and shows us Owen as he would have liked us to see him. Secondly, the narrative ends in about 1820 when Owen was only just becoming a working-class leader; we reach the end when we are only half-way through his fascinating and lengthy life. On the credit side, though, we can add that the Autobiography is probably the most readable thing that Owen wrote, and it gives a palatable introduction to the sort of man he was and the ways in which he thought.

The story is a dramatic one, and tells how a relatively poor Welsh boy made his way, by diligence and application, in the drapery and cotton manufacturing business to become one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the early years of the industrial revolution. There is an almost fairy-tale like quality about the plot, for once the young man has established himself as manager of the New Lanark cotton mills in only his thirtieth year, he does not ruthlessly oppress the workers, but instead he sets about effecting a social transformation which the present century would still find remarkably modern. He can do this because he has realised the key to all human affairs—that a man's character is formed for and not by him. Reason has unfolded the mysteries of the universe, and dark superstition and irrational sectarian prejudices can be put to flight. So New Lanark became a model industrial community, with good housing and cheap, unadulterated food, and care and concern for the very young and the very old. To contemporaries it was a demonstration of what could be achieved by "philanthropy at five per cent"; to posterity it has been a vision of a social commonwealth.

Dr Butt carefully and ably shatters these illusions, and gives the layman a brief guide through recent research work towards a re-assessment of Owen and his achievements. New Lanark is brought under fresh scrutiny. How much of Owen's welfare effort was unique? How good a businessman was he? What Owen attempted was, in fact, very little different from what other factory masters were attempting in other cotton communities; indeed, even at New Lanark, David Dale had done a great deal before Owen became his son-in-law and successor in 1800. The welfare programme should not be taken at face value. Owen's real achievement, Dr Butt concludes, was in the art of scientific management. He did what was necessary to obtain maximum productivity at minimal cost. Individual wages were not high at New Lanark, but cheap food and housing kept down the cost of living while nursery schooling for babies released mothers from the home to augment the total family income. The most penetrating part of the introduction is concerned with Owen's ability as a financier. In later life he proved himself to be singularly de-

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ficient in financial sense, and yet he always appealed back to what he had achieved at New Lanark. Dr Butt shows just how flimsy that success was. The mills were not outstandingly profitable for that golden age of early industrial capitalism, and Owen was in debt both to his father-in-law's estate and to his relation by marriage, Campbell of Jura. He was saved from bankruptcy in 1813 only by the personal sureties of his wife's sisters, the Misses Dale. All that can be said of Owen as a financier is that he had an extraordinary ability in raising capital through his personal relationships and partnership promotions, and his shrewd use of the take-over bid. Hardly the most savoury reputation for a father of modern socialism!

It is the task of the historian to dispel mythology, for an erroneous view of the past can give an inaccurate view of the present. Yet even after Dr Butt's introductory essay, he would be the first to admit that some of the magic remains. New Lanark was something more than just another factory community and Owen was more than one more capitalist. His educational and social ideals were refreshingly humane and, to us, are strikingly relevant to our present situation. The myth embodies a germ of reality; for Owen was a social idealist and so long as the world remains civilised it will continue to prize the memory of such men. The *Life of Robert Owen, by Himself* is still worth reading and admiring.

EDWARD ROYLE

A HISTORY OF MODERN IRELAND

by Edward Norman. Allen Lane The Penguin Press, £2.95.

This book covers the period from the Union (1801) to the present day, but, for reasons which I shall explain later, I intend to deal with it in two parts: 1801-1890 and 1891-1970. One preliminary criticism of the book is that there are no illustrations or maps which would be an important aid to the average reader. There is an index, but this is quite inadequate; for instance, Charles Bradlaugh, Colonel Thomas J. Kelly and Feargus O'Connor are all mentioned at least twice in the text, but neither has an entry in the index. Another drawback is the lack of illustrations. They were probably omitted on grounds of cost, but would have enhanced such a book. Plates for a modern Irish history are also easy to assemble, e.g. from contemporary copies of the *Illustrated London News*.

I have always felt that the test of any history of nineteenth century Ireland is its ability to deal with the currently unfashionable figure of Daniel O'Connell in a new light. Here Dr Norman succeeds admirably, giving O'Connell a fairer hearing than he is at present accustomed to, and being witty at the same time. Readers of this journal will be amused by "O'Connell's shocked disapproval of (Feargus) O'Connor's habit of sharpening his razor on the calf-leather binding of his bible". The author's discussion of the sad fate of the non-denominational National Schools is not without relevance to the present day religious education controversy in Britain.

One of the characteristics of this part of the book is the author's gentle, but waspish irreverence for all the sacred cows of this period of Irish history. Dr Norman is, by the way, a Church of England clergyman. He makes a good comment on the Famine relief measures of the 1840s: "It is . . . difficult to imagine how a government and a public opinion soaked in *laissez-faire* economics could have

REVIEWS

stretched its principles further than it did". His treatment of the Fenians of the 1860s follows a similar vein: "The Irish people have a genius for failing to see the ecclesiastical implications of their political logic". Also, "Stephens was capable of stirring the hearts of men by his oratory—what Irishman in the nineteenth century was not?" Of the Home Rule party in the 1870s Dr Norman says, "those who did attend parliament voted according to their own judgement, which is no thing for a parliamentarian to do". His treatment of Parnell is similarly amusing, original, and pretty fair; believe it or not, Parnell had, of all things, an aversion to the colour green! Just occasionally, the author's sense of fun is the cause of ambiguity: "Peel's conversion" could either mean conversion to the Catholic faith, or conversion to the idea of Catholic emancipation.

After 1900, one detects a marked change in the author's approach and mood; the humour remains, but it becomes cynical and rather one-sided. "The Gaelic League and the Athletic Association described a society based squarely upon the principles of racial discrimination" is at best a half-truth as regards the GAA which has practised a sort of athletic-political (but not racial) discrimination against soccer fans and members of the British forces. The charge against the Gaelic League is best answered in the idiom of that language as a *si-scéal* (fairy story)! One really should not condemn a whole movement by the isolated extremist, racist or otherwise, or else one would come to rather harsh judgments upon, for instance, the humanist movement or, I might add, the Church of England. Elsewhere, Dr Norman seeks to dismiss the Gaelic revival à la G. B. Shaw, as a pre-Raphaelite hangover, which in many ways it was, but overlooks the point that that movement is today no longer looking exclusively to the past, or to rural society, for its salvation.

Dr Norman's treatment of the 1916 leaders and their followers is, on the whole, harsh and dismissive. Now I agree that there is some case for countering the plethora of popular, republican accounts of this period, seen through the veil of intervening time with green-tinted spectacles, but, nevertheless, I detect a lack of balance in this author's account of "terrorism" and "atrocities". He could have mentioned the other versions of various incidents from time to time, if only to dispose of them. Dr Norman mentions that Tom Barry's Volunteers killed 18 auxiliary police at Macroom, and "mutilated their bodies with axes"; but there is no mention of the other story, that the auxiliaries feigned surrender, and then opened fire again! The author's treatment of the Royal Irish Constabulary Specials (the Black and Tans) would have astounded even the sympathetic author of *The Black and Tans*, Richard Bennett, who is dismissed as he (Bennett) "reproduces a lot of old legends". Dr Norman may have written this part of the book either to infuriate the traditional mind of Irish nationalism, or to bring students of this period down to earth. He has produced a provocative case, but hardly good modern history. His comments on the 1922 Civil War, however, deserve careful consideration.

This book has its faults, but its originality of style and approach make it a useful source to dip into for amusing and unusual information on this period. The author's conclusion, that modern Ireland is still "indelibly English in its institutions . . . a slightly old-fashioned England . . ." will be no easy task, if ever, to refute.

NIGEL SINNOTT

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HAS THE CHURCH LOST ITS NERVE?

CYRIL MARCUS

I recently listened to the radio programme, *Lighten our Darkness*, and was warned: "If you believe in Jesus Christ, you will be saved, if you do not you will be condemned". Still a threat, to be sure, but oh! such a mild one. In the good old days, if you did not believe, you would be roasted in hell, and even 25 years ago an evangelist who used to call regularly at my place of business (I am an atheist but the name is Jewish) in an effort to convert me to Christianity, said that if I did not believe I should suffer eternal hellfire. Then, after he had spent some weeks spent in trying to persuade me, I retorted: "So you are threatening me; please go away, and don't come here again".

It is a fairly common belief in Britain, even among the more educated, that most of the world is Christian. In actual fact less than a third of the population of the world belongs to the Christian Church, so that according to our radio preacher, over two-thirds of the people of the world are condemned.

Originally Christianity was but a small sect. That the religion grew until more than one quarter of the world's population embraced it is a fact not to be treated lightly, but it is no guarantee that Christianity is true. At one time more than half of the inhabitants of Germany believed that Nazism would save Germany, that Hitler's Reich would last for more than a thousand years. They were demonstrably wrong. Here I do not want to make an invidious comparison, but it is one that immediately springs to mind.

Methods of Conversion

Christianity spread for a multiplicity of reasons. The promise of a better world to come played an important part in converting many, especially among the poor and the oppressed. Threats like eternal punishment were used to good effect on the ignorant. Drastic methods of conversion in the early stages were the rule rather than the exception, for it is quite a common feature for a person who has a conviction—be it political national or religious—to want to convert others to his belief, and religious beliefs seem to engender more deep feelings than any other.

Spain, which converted not too happily to Christianity about the fourth century AD, fell a ready prey to the Muslim faith in the early eighth century, because there were many Spaniards whose adherence to Christianity was merely formal, and the Muslims were extremely tolerant of Christians. With the decline of Arab power in the tenth century, Christianity became re-established in Spain. The employment of missionaries to help the spread of Christianity was early adopted. We read of their use in England in the seventh century, and the first Jesuit missionaries arrived in South America in the sixteenth century.

As the splitting up of the Christian Church into many sects took place, and with the increasing conquests of overseas countries, so missionaries of many denominations went out in search of converts, sometimes reconverting those who had adopted another sect, often with confusing results, but frequently there was agreement in the areas chosen. For example, certain islands in Polynesia were shared out between Seventh Day Adventists, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, etc.

The methods used by the missionaries in their zeal to obtain converts were not always of the highest moral order. Indeed some of the persuasions used were strongly resented, especially in India where Lord Minto, who was Governor General of the East India Company, felt constrained to write to the chairman of the Company enclosing a missionary tract and protesting about "the miserable stuff addressed to the Hindus without proof or argument of any kind, the pages are filled with hellfire, and more hellfire, and still hotter fire, denounced against a whole race of men for believing in the religion which they were taught by their fathers and mothers".

As the years have gone by, due largely I think to the increasing scepticism of a more enlightened society, the threats to the unbeliever have diminished. Hellfire is not even mentioned. One is merely condemned. Could it be that the Church has lost its nerve?

LETTER

With widespread and rapid communications it must be evident to most people that many of the great disasters in the world today are mainly caused by the conflict of ideas. One way to reduce this conflict would be to prohibit the deliberate indoctrination of children with any dogmatic basic ideology (whether religious, political, mystical, or of some other kind).

I suggest that moral behaviour should be taught by living in a loving and considerate community, with a minimum of rules to protect its members from injury, and that the basic ideology of every individual should be allowed to develop gradually as his maturity, experience and knowledge grows. A future happier and more co-operative world would seem to me to require less dependence on unprovable—often antagonistic and sometimes fanatical faith, and more reliance on scientific ideas and knowledge.

G. F. WESTCOTT.

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OBITUARY

We regret to announce the death of Bert Barnett, a member of the National Secular Society and former chairman of Merseyside Humanist Group. He was a firm and outspoken advocate of freethought, and was well known in the Liverpool area through his public speaking and contributions to the correspondence columns of the Press.

Bert Barnett was a teacher, and never concealed his opposition to the statutory privileges enjoyed by Christianity in the nation's schools. He formed what was probably the first humanist group in a comprehensive school. Although Mr Barnett had expressed a wish to be cremated, we understand that he was buried with a clergyman.