

# The FREETHINKER

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## THE CRUMBLING FAÇADE OF CHURCH PRIVILEGE

The results of two recent meetings of the Churches of Scotland and England give grounds for cautious and qualified hope that the log-jam of ecclesiastical privilege in these countries is on the point of breaking up. For decades this movement has criticised sectarian schools for being divisive and anti-social, but its warnings were either dismissed as extremist or else fell on wilfully deaf ears. On 29 May, however, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland voted (by 109 to 95) in favour of ending separate denominational schools (mainly Catholic) in Scotland. The Rev. Archibald Minto, convenor of the Kirk's Education Committee, further admitted that the arguments in favour of this decision had been "greatly enforced" by what he described as "the sorrowful and tragic events in Ulster." It gives some relief to know that the message has at last sunk in, though little comfort if this means that it must always take outbreaks of violence, death and tragedy before the organised churches see sense.

### Bishop Huddleston advocates Disestablishment

The second item of "good news" is the decision by the London Diocesan Synod of the Church of England on 13 June last calling for "Disestablishment of the Church of England with all deliberate speed." The proposal came, in fact, from the Rt. Rev. Trevor Huddleston (Bishop of Stepney), and will probably be debated at the next General Synod of the Anglican Church. If all goes well Disestablishment, an aspiration of English secularists for generations, may be realised within the next decade.

And now, as they say, for the bad news. Before humanists and freethinkers start preening themselves with fanciful visions of the bishops being tipped out of the House of Lords, and moss growing on the doors of derelict church schools, they would do well to bear in mind the sobering fact that whilst the churches may concede over matters such as Establishment and sectarian schools, it would, on the other, be naïve to suppose that they are going to renounce all their other privileges and advantages—particularly in the fields of real-estate, financial assets, and tax concessions, upon which their long-term continuation largely depends.

### Church tax exemption and endowment

If anyone has any doubts about this point, the facts of the case have been underlined by strenuous efforts made by several churches in recent weeks to secure exemption from Value Added Tax. If levied, the tax would probably raise £800,000 per annum from the Church of England and some £300,000 a year from its Roman Catholic counterpart. If the present bid succeeds the various denominations will receive tax exemption to the tune of some £1½ million a year, a sum which will, needless to add, have to be made up in increased taxation upon the general public.

Similarly, any future bill before Parliament dealing with the Disestablishment of the Church of England should, in the interests of both justice and consistency, deal with the

disendowment of that institution at the same time. It is not suggested that all church buildings or funds obtained through voluntary donations should be sequestrated, but equally we should not lose sight of the fact that, during the history of its Establishment, the Church of England has amassed considerable wealth through direct State hand-outs and church rates and tithes compulsorily levied. Upon Disestablishment a just and due proportion of these assets should be returned to the community at large.

### Anomalies of charitable status

The recently published report of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales serves as a reminder of yet another legal anomaly that works in favour of church privilege. Organised cults, by virtue of being theistic or "religious," are able to obtain charity status, and thus tax relief for their efforts to influence society both socially and politically. Non-religious charities, however, are precluded by the present charity legislation from political activity. Law reform societies, into which category many humanist organisations fall, are thus precluded from the financial advantages of charity status. Present charity legislation is evidently unjust, and is not working too well, as the Commissioners seem to agree. They speak of a number of so-called charities "that are making appeals to the public without any prospect of their ever being satisfactorily administered."

One possible answer to this situation would be for new legislation restricting charity status and full tax relief to *bona fide* non-profit-making organisations in the fields of social welfare, education and research. And, if deemed necessary, there could be a separate legal pigeon-hole, carrying limited tax concessions, for bodies such as law reform societies, humanist organisations, political parties and the churches. This might serve the interests of both justice and freedom of expression on the one hand, and ease the burden upon the public purse on the other.

## THE FREETHINKER

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

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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, WC1; Freethinker Bookshop, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. **Glasgow:** Clyde Books, 292 High Street. **Manchester:** Grass Roots Bookshop, 271 Upper Brook Street, 13. **Brighton:** Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road, (near Brighton Station).

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.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

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

Humanist Holidays. Details of future activities from Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone: 01-642 8796.

Rationalist Press Association. Conference on "Rationalism and Humanism in the New Europe," Churchill College, Cambridge, 11-13 August. British and Continental speakers. Coach from and back to London. Details from R.P.A., 88 Islington High Street, London N1 8EW (Telephone: 01-226 7251). Bookings close 28 July.

## EVENTS

Ashurstwood Abbey Secular Humanism Centre (founded by Jean Straker), between East Grinstead and Forest Row, Sussex. Telephone: Forest Row 2589. Meeting every Sunday, 3 p.m.

Havering Humanist Society, 72 Heath Park Road, Romford. Saturday, 24 June, 7.30 p.m.: Midsummer Party c/o Bill and Evie Brown.

Independent Adoption Society, Postgraduate Centre, Royal Northern Hospital, Holloway Road, London N7. Saturday, 24 June, 2.45 p.m.: annual general meeting, followed by "Open Forum."

London Young Humanists. Sunday, 25 June: ramble to Epping. Contact Robert Goodsman, 01-267 0357 (evenings).

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 25 June, 11 a.m.: H. J. Blackham, "Our Drug-Dependent Culture"; 3 p.m.: Tim Rice, "Religion, Life-Styles and the Young."

# NEWS

**"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilisation, it expects what never was and never will be."**

—Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826).

## N.S.S. CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

Members of the National Secular Society, at the Annual General Meeting in Brighton on 11 June, passed a number of motions, ranging from euthanasia to public house opening hours; from religion in schools to blood sports.

The A.G.M. condemned the segregation of school-children on religious lines and declared "that such division has contributed significantly to the sectarian strife which is prevalent in Northern Ireland, Glasgow and Liverpool," and called for the ending of State subsidies for denominational schools. Another resolution reaffirmed "the Society's demand for the removal of religious instruction and acts of worship from County school syllabuses."

On the subject of abortion the N.S.S., whilst welcoming the Government's efforts to curb abuses in the private sphere of the abortion services, was nevertheless concerned "at the high proportion of women who, requiring legal abortions, are kept waiting for N.H.S. beds or are forced to pay the high price of a private termination." The resolution called upon the Department of Health "to increase radically the number of N.H.S. beds for abortion patients, and abortion out-patient facilities for the use of the vacuum aspiration technique, if necessary by the establishment of specialist N.H.S. abortion clinics; and to ensure that in all areas there are N.H.S. gynaecologists and obstetricians willing to perform abortions."

## Church privilege condemned

Another motion called for an end to "the privileges enjoyed by the churches in hospitals, old people's homes, and other institutions which serve the community." Such privileges were "unwarranted in a pluralistic society, and can lead to invasions of privacy such as open services in hospital wards, unwanted visits by chaplains and freelance preachers, and virtually obligatory attendance at religious services in homes and other institutions." A further resolution called for "an end to the special status, including payment by the State, of chaplains in all public institutions."

The following motion was passed on the subject of ecology and pollution:

Without necessarily accepting as "gospel" every single danger signal to which ecologists have recently directed public attention, this Annual General Meeting views the overall picture with considerable alarm, and urges that everything possible be done to reduce the plunder and pollution of the earth and reverse the present disastrous tendencies. Among the chief of these is failure to stabilise populations; and therefore, as far as this country is concerned, we call upon H.M. Government to make implementation of the Family Planning Act mandatory on local authorities, to provide vasectomy free on the N.H.S. for any man, of whatever age, who has already fathered two children, or has special reasons for avoiding doing so, and to make N.H.S. abortion far more freely available, using modern techniques during the first few weeks of pregnancy. Although we are more concerned with future action than apportioning blame, we point out that the population problem would never have reached the present proportions had the birth control movement, of which the founder of this Society was one of the outstanding pioneers, not been vigorously opposed by the churches.

Also carried was a motion welcoming the passing of the Sunday Theatres (No. 2) Bill, and calling for the abolition

# AND NOTES

of the remaining "irrational and unjustified" Sunday Observance laws. A further motion called upon the Government "to introduce legislation to extend the opening hours of public houses, and to end the restrictions on the sale of alcoholic drinks in restaurants."

The Meeting also called for the age of consent for homosexual acts in private "to be reduced to parity with that for heterosexual behaviour."

The following motions were passed on euthanasia and blood sports:

This Annual General Meeting, having regard to the Society's Immediate Practical Objects, supports the efforts being made to legalise voluntary euthanasia on the lines advocated by the Voluntary Euthanasia Society.

This Annual General Meeting deplores the failure of Conservative and Labour governments to support Private Members' bills to abolish blood sports, and demands that these cruel activities be banned.

There was also a luncheon held at the Brighton Belle Hotel at which Barbara Smoker presided. G. N. Deodhekar, on behalf of the N.S.S., proposed a toast to the Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, whose Press Officer, George Vale, responded.

The A.G.M. elected D. Campbell, R. J. Condon, C. Morey, Mrs. M. McIlroy, N. H. Sinnott, Mrs. L. Vanduren and E. Willoughby to the N.S.S. Executive Committee, and G. N. Deodhekar was re-elected Hon. Treasurer. As reported last week, Barbara Smoker was elected President, and S. D. Kuebart and W. Shannon as Vice-Presidents.

## NEW ACQUISITION FOR HUMANIST HOUSING

The Humanist Housing Association has purchased Pennington Manor in Southborough, which adjoins Tunbridge Wells, Kent. According to Lindsay Burnet, the H.H.A.'s Housing Manager, the newly-acquired property, which has breath-taking views, will be used for the building of a home in which full care will be given to supplement the service offered to elderly people by the Association's flat schemes.

The H.H.A.\* is arranging a group visit by coach to Pennington Manor on 10 September. The party will visit Pembury, also near Tunbridge Wells, where conversion work is starting on Sun Hill Place and the building of flats in the grounds.

\* Rose Bush Court, 35-37 Parkhill Road, London, NW3 2EY.

## RATIONALISM IN INDIA

We are pleased to see that the Indian Rationalist Association's monthly journal, *Freethought* (formerly *Free Thought*), has been elevated from a duplicated to a printed format, published in Madras.

Freethought literature in India seems to be in a very healthy state, judging from a number of magazines received at the *Freethinker* Office, for example: *The Modern Rationalist* (Madras), *The Secularist* (Bombay), *The Atheist* (Vijayawada), and *The Radical Humanist* (New Delhi). We will be pleased to put readers in touch with the publishers of these journals if they wish to obtain copies of them.

## GOD AND MAMMON

"Even though it looked impossible, I planted my \$5.00 'Firstfruits' in God's Pact of Plenty outreaches and wrote on my prayer slip: 'That God will provide us a better car.' He granted a miracle and gave us a new Ford. I know this is because we honored Him with our 'Firstfruits' for soulwinning."

—Testimonial in the May issue of *Faith Digest* (literary begging bowl of the Osborn [missionary] Foundation Ltd.).

Ah well! Perhaps the old song was wrong, and you can, in fact, go to heaven in an old Ford car—or at least in a new one.

## CHURCHWOMEN'S LIB.

A proposal to ordain women priests was narrowly defeated recently at the General Synod of the Anglican Church of New Zealand. Meanwhile a workshop of women Episcopalians in New York has also called for the ordination of women. According to the *Church Times* they rejected the usual arguments about this violating "Episcopal tradition," compromising co-operation with the Catholic Church, or posing "an economic threat in a crowded profession." We suspect, however, that the last objection will provide these good ladies with the most stubborn opposition.

## FIFTY YEARS AGO

The *Western Morning News*, Plymouth (June 8) contains a leading article which urges vehemently that "something should be done to protect the nation" from the Socialist Sunday Schools. In these schools "teaching of the most blasphemous kind . . . is openly inculcated." . . . The whole campaign now being organised against them shows how Atheism and "blasphemy" are dreaded in certain quarters . . . The churches, or some of them, are quite prepared to declare for some form of Christian Socialism, always emphasising, of course, that what matters supremely is the spirit that is brought to bear on social problems. This must accord with the Christian ideal, and the present demand for the suppression of the Socialist Sunday Schools is further proof, if any were needed, of what that ideal stands for in regard to Freethought and fair play to opponents. —From *The Freethinker*, 25 June 1922.

## OBITUARY

### Walter Parry

We regret to announce the death, after a long illness borne with great fortitude, of Walter Cecil Parry. He was 54.

Miss Alice M. Parry (his sister) and Mrs. Marion Clowes (Secretary of Merseyside Humanist Group) inform us that Mr. Parry had been an active freethought propagandist from the age of 18 onwards. At one time he was Secretary of the former Merseyside Branch of the National Secular Society (as was his father before him), and took an active part in indoor and outdoor meetings for as long as his health permitted. He was also a foundation member of the Merseyside Humanist Group whose meetings he attended with great difficulty almost to the last. He was a very keen reader and supporter of *The Freethinker*.

His body was cremated at Anfield Crematorium on 31 May, where a secular funeral ceremony was conducted by Mr. and Mrs. S. Clowes before a gathering of relatives and friends.

We salute the passing of a stalwart campaigner, and offer our sympathy to Miss Parry, the Merseyside Humanist Group, and to Mr. Parry's other relatives and friends.

# BIRTH CONTROL CAMPAIGN'S FIRST A.G.M.

## Lady Birk on Unwanted Pregnancy and the Rôle of Women

Equal pay and equality of opportunity are not facets of internecine sex warfare but the means of giving women more strings to their occupational bows and getting them off the child-bearing "wagon," said Lady Birk (Chairman of the Health Education Council), who addressed the first Annual General Meeting of the Birth Control Campaign\* on 5 June last. "Anti-discrimination measures," she said, "should not be seen as a fight for women's rights but as a benefit for the whole community."

Lady Birk was speaking on the subject of "Unplanned Pregnancy." Although thousands of words had been uttered on this topic, and reports galore had been tumbling out, was it not time that the verbal genuflections stopped and the action began? She continued:

"We know that unwanted pregnancies reach around 300,000 a year. How many *unplanned* ones there are we do not know. We know there are birth control facilities varying from the fully adequate in some areas (far too few) to the inadequate and practically non-existent (far too many).

"We know we have a population problem, families submerged in poverty, deprivation, delinquency and human unhappiness. The cost of our failure in financial, social and emotional terms is colossal; yet press a government to make contraception a fully fledged, readily available part of the National Health Service and the four-letter *c-o-s-t* pops out, and vociferous in the background is a minority moan of 'Sex on the State.'

"We know that thousands and thousands of youngsters emerge into adulthood sexually illiterate, yet suggest that

any real education worthy of the name must include in its curriculum frank information not only about the human body but the emotions and the strength of the sexual drive, knowledge not only of contraceptive techniques but understanding of the irresponsibility of casually creating another human being, and many will still shoot you down.

### Old and unhealthy myths

"Dispelling the old unhealthy myths which lead girls—and many women—to bear unwanted babies or have abortions is not laying down a route to promiscuity, since those who 'get caught' usually do so through ignorance or an inability to accept their own sexuality—which means in their minds that spontaneity is all, and to be prepared is calculated and therefore wicked. These are the girls paradoxically termed 'permissive,' while those who are confidently knowledgeable and less guilt-ridden find their way successfully through the sexual by-ways.

"If," Lady Birk concluded, "we really mean to tackle the problem of unplanned pregnancy with all its wretched individual and environmental results, then we have to face up more honestly and urgently than we have ever done before to women's rôle; and this cannot be done in isolation. Man's rôle is intertwined with hers since his responsibility is as great—in fact greater.

"As long as the wife-mother rôle is the be-all and end-all of women's lives, with work as an economic or interesting fringe benefit, then women will *want* to have more children both to prove their value as people and to be needed. Unless male and female motivations change, the exhortations of ecologists, statisticians and family planners will fall on deaf ears."

\* 233 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9AE.

# HUMAN EVOLUTION: SOME FACTS

GONZALO QUIOGUE\*

"There are no transitional stages from the ape to man, nor are the ape's supposed evolutionary ancestors evident in the fossil record."

—So wrote J. M. Cueto in a recent article entitled, "Evolution, the Greatest Hoax."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, however, Dr. F. Clark Howell, in his book *Early Man*,<sup>2</sup> shows that early *Homo sapiens* (who appeared between 280,000 and 180,000 years ago) was preceded by *Homo erectus* between 800,000 and 400,000 years ago. The latter was an ape-man or hominid with the facial features of an ape. In turn, *Homo erectus* was preceded by both *Paranthropus* and the Advanced *Australopithecus* around 1,700,000 and 900,000 years ago; these were apes that looked like human beings in stature and gait. These creatures in turn were preceded by Early *Australopithecus*, well-known today among physical anthropologists as a human-like ape which stood erect. Before this creature came both *Oreopithecus* and *Ramapithecus* about 14 million years ago; the latter two species were preceded by primitive apes called *Proconsul* and *Dryopithecus* between 15 and 20 million years ago, and which in turn had evolved from a more primitive ape called *Pliopithecus* about 23 million years ago. These primitive apes were the evolutionary ancestors of modern apes and men, and as early as 25 million years ago, roamed Africa, Asia, Indonesia and Europe.

The primitive apes that did not leave the trees of the

forests remained apes up to modern times. On the other hand, those that ventured out on to the grassy plains gradually evolved into modern man. Standing frequently on the ground with their hind legs (so as always to be on the alert for enemies and to hunt for prey) they gradually developed a permanent, upright position. Constant alertness for enemies and the need to catch prey also resulted in the development of their brains and the enlarging of their skulls. Those primitive apes that continued living in the trees hardly did any thinking. They simply fed on fruits and were safe from their enemies amid the foliage.

The precursors of the primitive apes were the Old World Monkeys, whose ancestors were the tarsiers and lemurs, themselves descended from tree shrews. Thus the fundamentalists' dearly loved belief in Adam and Eve has had to give way to the facts of human evolution, and the findings of those secular scientists who are not swayed by the emotionalism of religion.

### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> *Philippines Free Press*, 29 April 1972.

<sup>2</sup> For further reading I recommend *Stages of Human Evolution*, by C. Loring Brace; *The Human Revolution*, and *Man: His First Million Years*, both by Dr. Ashley Montagu; *The Adventure of Man*, by Arthur S. George; and *Human Beginnings*, by Olivia Vlahos.

\* Gonzalo Quiogue is Vice-President of the Humanist Association of the Philippines (Ed.).

# THE LETTERS OF JUNIUS

ERIC GLASGOW

If ever the political climate of our own times should seem to become too heated or astringent, it is easy to redress the balance, and perhaps to recover one's confidence in the course of history, by remembering the political tirades of England in the eighteenth century, and especially the celebrated "Letters of Junius," which were published in the *Public Advertiser*, between 1769 and 1772. These constituted a threat to the political establishment of England, especially the Ministry of the Duke of Grafton (1766-1770), which must rival that of any of the "mass-media" of 1972. It was of another kind than that of John Wilkes: nevertheless, its effectiveness was not diminished by the use of the pen and the press, rather than vocal or popular means, in exposing the shortcoming of government, and in overthrowing the idols with their feet of clay.

The "Letters of Junius" have become even more sinister, perhaps, because of the mystery which continues to surround their authorship. Even today, one can never be quite sure of the identity of "Junius," although evidently he "wrote as a member of the inner ring of the political and fashionable world."<sup>1</sup> At any rate, there can be no doubt about the extent of his venom and vitriolic brilliance, which expended itself, spectacularly and corrosively, upon the Duke of Grafton, Sir William Blackstone, Lord Mansfield, Lord North, and even the King himself. Burke said that the "Letters of Junius" were more abrasive even than the *North Briton* of John Wilkes, although he also believed that "Junius" had a more balanced and informed political judgement than Wilkes.

At their best, the "Letters of Junius" rose to a prose of some eloquence and distinction; and their message, too—of honesty, truth, and sincerity in public life—was important then, nor should it be lightly discarded, even today, two centuries later. If "Junius" presented the inherent corruptions of politics, and the basic weakness of all men when exposed to the pressures and the temptations of power, one cannot reject his insistence on realism, nor deny the essence of his thesis, which was the venality of all politicians—their dubious policies and serpentine devices. Of course, it is not an optimistic or gracious doctrine: nevertheless, it did strip away the concealing shams; the layers of hypocrisy and pretence, from the public life of England, and so it made the gap between government and governed smaller, and less perilous. These are lessons which are to be heeded and respected even today. They pointed towards democracy, as that was to come in the nineteenth century: at least "Junius" wanted triennial Parliaments, and he supported the popular side in the disputed Middlesex election, despite his defence of "rotten boroughs." In practice, too, "Junius" contributed to Grafton's fall from power, on 10 February 1770.

## Surprisingly democratic and modern

The "Letters of Junius" must keep, even in 1972, an interest and a significance which are much more than merely antiquarian. Most of their political assumptions, indeed, are surprisingly democratic and modern—such as the popular responsibilities of public officials, and the dangers of uncontrolled and uncountable power. They were not detached or academic in their outlook, obviously—they would not have been effective if they had not shown their large measure of prejudice and passion. On the other hand, they did persuade a large section of English opinion that "the price of liberty was eternal vigilance," and that

the rule of Grafton and his colleagues needed to be viewed always with scepticism and reserve. They were the natural and literary corollary to the shorter and more transient cry of "Wilkes and Liberty."

The question of the authorship of the "Letters of Junius" must still form one of the most fascinating of the puzzles of English history. It cannot, even now, be settled: one of the most up-to-date authorities<sup>2</sup> does not discount the possibility of Lord Shelbourne as the clue to the enigma of the identity of "Junius." But the more usual and traditional choice is, of course, that of the notorious Sir Philip Francis (1740-1818), who was then a clerk in the War Office, with ideas (and knowledge) much above his station. Sir Leslie Stephen has conveniently summarised<sup>3</sup> the reasons for the choice of Francis as the author of the "Letters of Junius," and also explains that the last of the "Letters of Junius" was published on 21 January 1772. Macaulay ("Essay on Warren Hastings") "had a firm belief" that Francis was the author; although Sir William Anson (Introduction to the *Autobiography of Grafton*) suggested instead, chiefly for reasons of accessibility to inner political knowledge, Earl Temple (1711-1779), the supporter of Wilkes. Another suspect as the wielder of the poisoned pen of "Junius," has been Charles Lloyd (1735-1773), private secretary (from 1763) to George Grenville. The field is an open one, therefore, in the determination of the authorship of the "Letters of Junius," although one wonders how many of the candidates would still covet that dubious honour if they had now the power to repudiate it.

## Power of public opinion

However, perhaps it does not much matter now who wrote the celebrated and scurrilous tracts: what is more important, two hundred years later, is the abiding nature of the "Letters of Junius" as vivid and authentic evidence of the emergence of the factor of public opinion, and even of the press and literature, as being effective and committed in appraising the structure of government in eighteenth-century England. However aristocratic and exclusive England might seem to be at that time, the democratic undercurrents were strong, persistent, and frequently dominant: there was no popular suffrage, but public opinion could exercise its pressures upon those in the Establishment; and its effects, whenever it was mobilised and roused, were demonstrated, within the Georgian Age, alike by the agitation of John Wilkes and the printed venom of the "Letters of Junius."

For us, living long after the merely vocal protests have subsided, the fossilised wrath of the "Letters of Junius" may well possess the greater claim to remembrance. Even apart from their political implications, the "Letters of Junius" still exude a fascination which is quite their own, as one of the most obvious examples in English history of human bitterness and gall, collected and preserved, two centuries after their inception, as a result of the uncritical hospitality and durability of those printed pages.

## NOTES

- 1 WATSON, J. S. 1960. *The Reign of George III, 1760-1815*. Oxford: p. 145.
- 2 STEINBERG, S. H. 1970. *Dictionary of British History*. London (2nd ed.): p. 191.
- 3 STEPHEN, Leslie. 1889. *Dictionary of National Biography* 20: pp. 171-180.

## BOOKS

## THE REVOLUTION AND THE CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN

by Pierre Broué and Emile Témime (translated from the French by Tony White). Faber & Faber, £6.

The events which took place in Spain between February 1936 and March 1939 were a tidemark in Left-wing thought, and the beginning of a new era in military strategy. As far as the Left was concerned, the initial triumphs of the mass of people over the privileged few ended in a complete *débâcle*. The final failure was outlined by George Orwell in his *Homage to Catalonia*. On the military side, the destruction of Guernica, religious capital of the Basques, in April 1937 by German aircraft was the first incident of a type later made notorious at Coventry and Dresden, where numerous defenceless inhabitants and their property were mercilessly destroyed through mass bombing.

The revolution proceeded from the election in February 1936; in May Azana became President of a Republic uniting various left and centre groups, Azana remained President of the "legally elected government" until its final overthrow by Franco's nationalist forces in 1939. Thus General Franco is still, to this day, ruler of Spain by virtue of military conquest of an elected regime. The uprising in July 1936 which started the revolution was symbolised by Barcelona, which was the Spain of Workers' Councils and Committees. The slow decline of the revolution (and compromise with organised governmental procedure) would have been faster without Russian assistance to the Republicans in their resistance against the Nationalist forces, which were in turn greatly indebted to Fascist forces from Italy and Germany. The International Brigades, of which so much has been said and written, probably never exceeded 30,000—5,000 of whom were English and American.

This book provides a lucid and vivid account of the factors preceding the revolution and emphasises the part played by the Roman Catholic Church. The Church in Spain was, and still is, hand in glove with the oppressor of the people; the uprising led to burning and sacking of churches, and arrest and execution of priests. In Catalonia especially churches were attacked and sacred objects defiled. Many monks and nuns were murdered. There was a rare case of an ex-monk and ex-nun marrying and joining the revolutionary forces, but there was little sympathy in most cases for the church and her friends. Many churches were closed to worshippers, and in view of her record, it was hardly surprising so much violence was directed at the Church. The Archbishop of Toledo, Cardinal Segura had an annual income of 600,000 pesetas, and "thought a bath was the invention of heathens"! At the conclusion of the civil war the Bishops, in justifying what they thought was persecution of a communist uprising asserted: "God has permitted our country to be a testing ground for the ideas and systems that aspire to conquer the world."

The failure of the revolution came about not so much as a result of disunity, but because unity involved considerable compromises on socialist and anarchist principles. The post-revolutionary government united on one stand: the defence of Spain against Fascism. The anarchists were wary at first: "the masses would feel disappointed if we

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contrived to have a share in institutions with a bourgeois type structure," though later they co-operated, as the authors of this book describe. "Anarchist officers and policemen now acted and talked more like officers and policemen than Anarchists . . . Anarchist ministers became true ministers." They worked together under communist guidance. "We cannot pursue revolution if we do not win the war first." The names of socialist heroes attached to brigades and regiments of the Republican forces were substituted with numbers. The 1937 Negrin government became extremely repressive. Offences included propagating news prejudicial to the conduct of war operations. Any newspaper that failed to conform was suspended, no genuine opposition to the Republic could declare itself openly. Criticism became synonymous with treason.

The fact that one socialist leader in Republican Spain believed the revolution could only be achieved through violence meant that others accepted this and the war became a way of life. As early as 1936 the Italian libertarian Bertoni wrote: "The war in Spain, bereft of any new faith, of any idea of social change, and of any revolutionary grandeur . . . remains a terrible question of life or death but is no longer a war in affirmation of a new régime and a new humanity." On this question of war and social change how little separated the Republicans and the Nationalists!

Nationalist Spain, these authors claim, is a totalitarian state but not a Fascist one: "There was no question of any 'social' achievements here, such as existed in Italy and Germany." The aristocracy, the Church and the old landowners remained. The workers' lot was as bad as ever after the final overthrow of the Republican forces by Franco and the Nationalists. The military manoeuvres, the fall of Madrid and Barcelona, which led to this are described in detail in the latter half of this long work. Suffice to say here that the Nationalist forces, assisted by Mussolini and Hitler, fought many hard battles in the three years, but despite numerous setbacks, Franco emerged at the end a victorious dictator "appointed by God to save Spain from anarchy, atheism and revolution." So he believed, and so he remains.

DENIS COBELL

## THE GROUNDWORK OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

by N. H. G. Robinson. Collins, £3.15.

A few years ago physics and astronomy shared with ethics the distinction of being the academic disciplines in most of an intellectual mess. While a few devotees continue to draw mythological conclusions from quantum mechanics, on the whole today ethics stands alone in this confusion. In early chapters of his admirably lucid *The Groundwork of Christian Ethics*, N. H. G. Robinson outlines the main areas of anxiety: the "naturalistic fallacy", the "logical" peculiarities of logical positivism (which has probably been abandoned by all its erstwhile apostles, though the late Bertrand Russell is the only philosopher I can think of who has admitted this in so many words), and the moral abdication of meta-ethics. When therefore,

# REVIEWS

for theological reasons, certain modern versions of Christian ethics deny the possibility of natural morality, in the context of the modern debate this may not seem so extraordinary or damaging an attitude.

Professor Robinson proceeds to show that, in its own right, Christian ethics is in like disarray, to some extent paralleling that in general ethics. Instead of a naturalistic fallacy it has a "supernaturalistic fallacy": man does what God commands without considering whether or not it is "right." Then there is what I suggest calling "illogical positivism" based on divine unreason. And finally we have a linguistic debate over the precise meanings of autonomy and heteronomy, creation and redemption, justification by faith and justification by grace, nature and revelation. Strictly speaking, he tells us, Christian ethics is not situation ethics (which is too *ad hoc*), moral theology (which is too legalistic) or scriptural morality (which is too confined in time and place). These antitheses he sees as Christian ones, irrespective of what might be urged by secular philosophers. Quite rightly situation ethics, which was very fashionable in the sixties, is increasingly under attack from Christians and non-Christians alike, for in its more rhapsodic moments it can hardly claim to be ethics at all but simply biblical or "humanist" moralising or sentimentalising over this or that moral problem in an utterly random and arbitrary way.

Having declined to equate Christian ethics and moral theology, the author has effectively routed Romanists from the field and indeed he specifically states that "it was on Protestant soil, we may say, that Christian ethics arose as a distinguishable and systematic discipline." But, he adds, "it was also on Protestant soil that it was given a degree of independence of theology," with different schools concentrating on Scripture, on philosophical or natural ethics, on the putative teaching and example of Jesus of Nazareth, and on Christian "ideas" instead of "revelation". In practice this has meant that Catholics regard ethics as obedience to a teaching church, while many Protestants have been forced into the position of conceding that it is possible to be a Christian without Christ, or at any rate without believing in him. (This will of course prove very valuable if it is ever agreed that Jesus of Nazareth never existed.) In the twentieth century the Protestant debate has centred on the autonomy-heteronomy controversy and the writings of the four Bs, with Rudolf Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, inspired by Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Albrecht Ritschl, Soeren Kierkegaard and the existentialists opting for individual insight (autonomy); while Emil Brunner and Karl Barth call for absolute submission to the will and activities of a holy God (heteronomy). The former view has proved more congenial to the media, as the promotion of the popularising *Honest to God* by that other Robinson, John, demonstrates.

Not surprisingly N. H. G. Robinson is desirous of reconciling these conflicting views. It seems to me he is quite right in asserting that Christian ethics is meaningless without Christian domatics, of which it must be considered a part. But his attempts at reconciling "a mythological 'beyond'" with "a no less mythological moment of encounter" are convincing only on the basis of certain Pauline texts. The rigour with which he analyses other

people's views, Christian and non-Christian, dissolves into verbalising when he becomes "positive":

Accordingly the idea of autonomy is right, but it is the autonomy of the *creature*, a secondary and derivative autonomy which combines the valid elements of both sheer heteronomy and pure autonomy, it is the autonomy of one whose nature it is to stand by grace in the presence of God his Creator.

Whether Christian ethics comes from God's creation or God's revelation, whether or not these are once-for-all or evolutionary, and what is their significance for mankind, are meaningless propositions in the absence of proving philosophically or historically that either occurred.

DAVID TRIBE

**TELL THE WORLD** by Arthur Blessitt. Lakeland, 30p.

This "manual for Jesus people" is written by an American evangelist whose speciality is converting young people. He has recently turned his attention to Britain, and in this little book he provides a do-it-yourself guide to "witnessing to our faith and winning others for Christ."

After seeing Blessitt in action in London recently, one observer gave this description of the scene: "With the timely backing of a group, the persuasive tones of supporting speakers before him, and his own very powerful appeal lasting well over an hour, he successfully reduced scores of young people to a sorry sobbing mass sprawling at his feet in supposed honour of our Lord" (letter to the *Times Educational Supplement*, 5 May 1972).

This suggests that we need to take Blessitt rather more seriously than a casual reading of his book might suggest. He is obviously a skilful evangelist who, for all his apparent unconventionality, knows the value of traditional techniques and is prepared to adopt them.

Although Blessitt's methods and approach, as revealed in this book, appear so ludicrous as to be harmless, it is obvious that he is a man of considerable appeal and that he is out to persuade young people to ally themselves not with progress but with the forces of reaction. It is no coincidence that Blessitt's book is edited and introduced by Peter Hill, Joint Secretary of the Nationwide Festival of Light.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

A second edition has now been published of **Population, Resources, Environment** by Paul H. Ehrlich & Anne H. Ehrlich (San Francisco & Bristol: W. H. Freeman, £4.30 cloth, £2.60 paper). The first edition was reviewed in *The Freethinker* of 6 February 1971 by Alastair Service.

We have also received **True Resurrection** by H. A. Williams (Mitchell Beazley, £1.50), **David Frost** by Willi Frischauer (Michael Joseph, £2.20), **Devoted Ones and other women of the Bible** by J. Rowena Batten (Lakeland, 40p), **Proceedings of the Conference on Inter-library Communications and Information Networks** edited by Joseph Becker (Chicago: American Library Association, \$15), **Sex and the Unborn Child** by Roman Rechnitz Limner (New York: Julian Press, \$6.95), **Our Rationalist Heritage; an anthology for freethinkers** edited by Walter Hoops (St. Louis: Rationalist Association Inc.) and **The Agitator** edited by Donald L. Rice (Chicago: American Library Association, \$3.95).

# LETTERS

## "The Hostage"

Brendan Behan owed his success and popularity to his humanism and this outstanding quality has inexplicably escaped David Tribe (*Freethinker* reviews, 17 June). *The Hostage* is a humanist statement about chauvinism and presents the only tenable view of the situation in any oppressed community.

We object strongly to Mr. Tribe's tone. He seems surprised that Brendan Behan should have understood the roots of the situation that kept him in prison for eight years.

We do not know the biography to which David Tribe refers, but Theatre Workshop could have given him the facts. We commissioned *The Hostage* (which was written in English) to illustrate what was happening in Cyprus at the time—Brendan said that as he knew nothing about Cyprus he would write about Ireland and it would be "an almost true story."

Mr. Tribes writes, "Unless Joan Littlewood completely rewrote the text I find little in it redolent of O'Casey or Synge." Could he explain this? Does he mean that if Joan Littlewood had done so then he *can* find it redolent? Should it be redolent of O'Casey or Synge, and if so, of which?

The play is marvellously funny and relevant (as is all Joan Littlewood's work), and we believe that you will respond with pleasure to the man who wrote: "I respect kindness to human beings first of all. I have a total irreverence for anything connected with society except that which makes the roads safer, the beer stronger, the food cheaper, and old men and old women warmer in the winter and happier in the summer."

Incidentally, the "brassy madam" whom Mr. Tribe liked is called Meg Dillon and is played by Eileen Kennally; not the other way round.

CAROL MURPHY,

*Community Relations*, Theatre Workshop (Theatre Royal).

## Marx, Hegel and the Dialectic

I enjoyed Trevor Morgan's knockabout letter (10 June), though as always one has to dig deep in his convoluted prose to unearth the points of substance.

1. You cannot say that religion *is* dualism, just as you cannot say that Marx's theory *is* materialism. This is just logical nonsense.

2. Mr. Morgan seems to think it is absurd for me to claim that it is impossible to prove that the Marxist dialectic can ever bring about the communist revolution. His reasons are that proof of any event or process is difficult to obtain anyway, and that the dialectic is an ongoing process whose termination lies in the (unknown) future. I do not dispute all this, but Mr. Morgan has missed all the points at issue in my article. To clear up his confusion:

Marx's theory of social change he held to be scientific, and it was elaborated in opposition to what Marx called the "utopianism" of the early French socialists. The correct analysis of social forces would show that class society was doomed, and would be replaced by communist society. Behind all this lies the Hegelian dialectic, which assumes that history is a record of continual struggle and advance. But whereas for Hegel the dialectic was a movement of ideas and culminated in the Absolute Idea, for Marx and his followers the dialectical struggle was embodied in the clash of social forces. Marx simply rigged the dialectic to ensure that the proletariat would win. We can now see, however, that Marxist theory is built on an unwarranted metaphysics, that there is no ground whatever for Marxist optimism about the glorious communist future, and that Marxist predictions about the inevitable outcome of the dialectical struggle were simply wrong.

3. I do not, of course, make any claims for originality in my article, since Marxism and religion have often been compared before. What I hoped to do was show some of the similarities between the two, in particular those which derived from what I argued was the essentially religious nature of the Marxist ideology. The very virulence of Mr. Morgan's letter, and the relative absence of detailed criticism of my argument, show that I seem to have got very near the bone.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF.

## Capital Punishment

Society has always used both the carrot and the stick. The methods used and their effectiveness differ with every individual; but there is no doubt that, generally, both are necessary. They are bound up with human evolution. We are attracted to pleasure and we avoid pain. When we touch the fire, Nature does not say: "There, there, come to Mummy;" we are burned, and the deterrent is effective.

This is the stick. Sensible people, noticing that fire burns things up, do not need to experiment with their hands. When we discover peaceful ways to happiness, or when we encourage these courses, this is the carrot.

There is little doubt that if, in human society, punishment followed crime as automatically as pain follows contact with fire, deliberate crime would practically disappear. But even today, well over 50 per cent of crimes go undetected; and our young ruffians just take a chance; the prizes are big. The use of the motor car get-away is responsible for much of the increase in robbery, since it substantially reduces the risk to the robber. Our sympathies are naturally aroused when the stick is used to deter criminals; but no man will make a surgeon if he cannot bear the sight of blood; and when we judge, we are assuming the rôle of surgeons on the body politic.

Some people are without the usual supply of altruism; they murder deliberately, in cold blood, for gain. I think that the best course is to kill these people. We are no more brutalised by this decision than the surgeon is brutalised by cutting the human body. Our system of justice makes every allowance for mitigating circumstances, and it is foolish to condemn the system because a few mistakes are made, any more than we condemn hospitals because mistakes in treatment sometimes occur there. The only alternative to capital punishment is lifelong imprisonment, which is less effective as a deterrent, more revolting, and extremely expensive. Whatever treatment we apply must be a deterrent to the normal man. And we should spend more money on detection. I suggest really substantial rewards for information, so that the best minds bend themselves to this problem.

HENRY MEULEN.

## The Quality of British Justice

May I—in this age of protest—register a mild protest of my own at being linked with Henry Meulen by J. H. Morten's letter of 10 June?

As a good atheist I would never use the word "divine." In the context it is presumably used in the sense of "perfect." There is of course no such thing as perfection; only varying degrees of efficiency.

On the whole I would say that British justice is probably the best and fairest in the world today; and if I were being tried for a serious crime I would rather be tried by a British court than any other.

It is human to err and of course miscarriages of justice do occur. But the important point is that in most cases where there is any doubt the benefit of the doubt is almost always in the prisoner's favour—rarely the reverse. The climate of public opinion today is such that obvious unfairness in the administration of the law would not be tolerated; and as long as we possess freedom of speech and the press—the very fundamentals of a free society—there is little possibility of the law being abused.

How would Mr. Morten like to fall into the hands of the police in a totalitarian country such as Russia? Does he think he would obtain true justice there—or even be allowed to defend himself properly? In Russia today thousands of men are arrested and imprisoned for so-called crimes which are not even considered illegal in the democracies of the West. If they are lucky enough to have a trial at all it is a mere mockery of real justice.

To condemn British justice out of hand just because it is not always perfect is absurd. By the same illogical reasoning anything whatever could be condemned.

Anyway, the whole point of my letter was not the perfection of justice but the absurdity of suggesting capital punishment should be retained for soldiers but abolished for civilians.

CLAUD WATSON.

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