

# THE FREETHINKER

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## WORKING MOTHERS' CHARTER

Mothers in Action, the pressure group set up in 1967 to further the interests of unsupported mothers (regardless of race, religion or nationality) has just launched a *Working Mothers' Charter*, aimed at easing the difficulties experienced by working women with young children. The Charter calls for many reforms, including protection against dismissal during pregnancy, paid maternity leave, the provision of day nurseries and out-of-school play facilities, and leave from work during children's illnesses. Barbara Ford, co-ordinator of the group which produced the document, commented: "Great Britain lags behind every Common Market, Scandinavian and East European country in its legal and social provisions for working mothers. It is scandalous that women can be dismissed when they are pregnant and that there is so little provided in the way of day nursery places and out-of-school play centres. We want these facilities available to every working mother and this can only be done by government intervention. We have tried campaigning about this before but were always told that it was up to the individual local authorities to decide how to spend this money. We say it is up to the government to make more money available to local authorities, so that a better service can be provided. A country that can afford to build Concorde can surely afford to give its children somewhere to play in safety."

### Fathers too

The introduction to the Charter points out that everyone is agreed that women, even today, are by no means given equal opportunities with men to develop their talents or pursue their education or a satisfying career. "The only feasible reason for women being treated in this way is that they are able to give birth." However, those who drafted the document are also aware of the fact that some of its provisions may equally apply to fathers, "particularly to those with sole responsibility for children or whose wives are on shift work." It is not intended to exclude fathers from the scope of the Charter, and, "where appropriate, the word 'father' can be substituted for 'mother'."

The Charter points out that the final weeks of pregnancy are of critical importance to the health of both the mother and her baby. Therefore, "it is essential that during this time she should have a break from her normal employment and be as free from worry as possible." She should be allowed a minimum of twelve weeks' leave on full pay, "after which time she should, subject to her doctor's permission, be able to resume her normal employment. Her post should be held open for her whilst she is on maternity leave, or longer if she is then medically unfit to return at once."

### Sick leave and hours of work

A similar problem that young mothers have to face is that of taking time off work to nurse sick children. The Charter recommends that "provision should be made for working mothers to have an annual leave entitlement of two weeks to deal with their child if he becomes ill . . . Unpaid leave should be allowed for any period of illness

in excess of this period and during this time mothers should be able to claim sickness benefit."

Mothers in Action also point out the difficulties that working mothers have because of the usual hours of work. Clinics selling vitamins and special baby foods are normally open during specified hours on weekdays. "It would therefore be of great benefit to such mothers if clinics and local authority social services departments were to open one evening a week." The same problem is faced with day nurseries. In some London boroughs the hours are 8 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., but "the opening time is too late for a woman starting work in a factory . . . and the closing time too early for the office worker . . . A more flexible arrangement, involving two shifts of nursery workers, is obviously indicated." It is worth mentioning here that in some types of occupation there is no reason why very small babies should not be taken by their mothers with them to work. In a few countries this is encouraged and some large concerns provide rooms where working mothers can take a rest or breastfeed their babies. Since the Charter already advocates proper rest-room facilities for pregnant women, this development might also be considered.

In publishing their Charter Mothers in Action hope to gain support from other women's organisations and from trades unions with women members. The object is to obtain adequate legal protection and supportive social services for all working mothers. "If all working mothers resigned their jobs," said Barbara Ford, "the economy would come to a standstill, so why make it so difficult for us to work? We regard the swift implementation of our Charter as a matter of the utmost urgency."

Copies of the *Working Mothers' Charter* are available (price 15p each) from Mothers in Action, Munro House, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

## THE 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, 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 Street, London, SE1 1NL. Telephone: 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL.

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 Mephram, 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.

Humanist Housing Association, Rose Bush Court, 35-41 Parkhill Road, London NW3. Saturday, 15 July, 3 p.m.: formal opening of Rose Bush Court extension, followed by Annual Garden Party.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 9 July, 11 a.m.: W. H. Liddell, "Renaissance Humanism in England."

# NEWS

### LINES FROM "QUEEN MAB"

How bold the flight of Passion's wandering wing,  
How swift the step of Reason's firmer tread,  
How calm and sweet the victories of life,  
How terrorless the triumph of the grave!  
How powerless were the mightiest monarch's arm,  
Vain his loud threat, and impotent his frown!  
How ludicrous the priest's dogmatic roar!  
The weight of his exterminating curse  
How light! and his affected charity,  
To suit the pressure of the changing times,  
What palpable deceit! —but for thy aid,  
Religion! but for thee, prolific fiend,  
Who peopled earth with demons, Hell with men,  
And Heaven with slaves!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (d. 8 July 1822).

### FIFTY YEARS AGO

"Christian and mediaevally aristocratic England can forgive anything but the two 'crimes' of which Shelley was guilty. He was an Atheist and a Republican. He believed neither in an autocrat in the skies nor in his pale copy on earth. He stood for the reasonable equality of men, and the free play of reason in the criticism of established authority."

Chapman Cohen in *The Freethinker*, 9 July 1922.

### NEW PAMPHLET

To coincide nicely with the 150th anniversary of the tragic death of Shelley, Len and Eva Ebury have republished Shelley's essays "On a Future State," "Future Reward and Punishment," and "Life." These, together with William Pitt's "Letter on Superstition" and an extract from G. W. Foote's "Shelley's Atheism" have been produced as a pamphlet under the title *Life, Death and Immortality*. Copies may be obtained (price 10p plus 2½p postage) from G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL.

### RECENT REPORTS

"A Challenge to Lord Widgery's Report on 'Bloody Sunday'" is the subtitle given to *Justice Denied*, published by the National Council for Civil Liberties in association with the International League for the Rights of Man. The author is Professor Samuel Dash, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the District of Columbia's Defender Service, an American jurist of international repute. His report "raises some very grave and disturbing questions about the conduct of the Army . . . , about the responsibility of political leaders and . . . about the inadequacy of the Widgery Tribunal's findings."

*Justice Denied* may be obtained (price 35p plus 5p postage) from N.C.C.L., 152 Camden High Street, London NW1 ONN.

The Minority Rights Group have recently published their tenth report, in this case on *The Chinese in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia*. The overseas Chinese have been described as the "political weathercocks of south-east Asia," and whenever governments or mobs feel threatened or frustrated, the local Chinese community tends to serve as a scapegoat. Anti-Chinese riots have occurred in several countries in recent years, and, according to the M.R.G.

# AND NOTES

these "may happen again in any of these countries any time."

*The Chinese in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia* is obtainable (price 45p plus 6p postage) from the Minority Rights Group, 36 Craven Street, London WC2.

The Brook Advisory Centres' Annual Report for 1971, published on 28 June, illustrates (besides a romantic photograph on the cover) the very urgent need for further help and education in contraception for adolescents and young adults. In 1971 illegitimate pregnancies to girls under 20 rose again to 41,879; and 3,996 of these involved girls under 16. In the same year, of all the Centres' new clients 41 per cent were under twenty years of age (12 per cent were twenty), and 13 per cent had already been pregnant. Ten Local Authorities are now using the Brook Centres as agents for free contraceptive advice for the young. One hopeful trend is that more men are sharing the costs of their partners' birth control supplies.

## GIFT FOR HUMANIST HOUSING

The Committee of the Humanist Housing Association have asked us to convey their thanks to an anonymous donor who has made a generous gift to the Association of £50,000. The H.H.A. will use the money to step up its development programme.

The Humanist Housing Association is also arranging a visit to view their recently acquired sites in Kent at Pennington Manor (near Tunbridge Wells) and Sun Hill Place, Pembury, on Sunday, 10 September next. Please bring a packed lunch. The coach will cost 60p return.\*

\* All inquiries, bookings and payment should be made to Mora Burnet, 12 Kemplay Road, London NW3. (Telephone: 01-435 8946)

## WORLD ATHEIST CONGRESS

Mrs. Madalyn Murray O'Hair has kindly agreed to preside at the "World Atheist Meet," organised by Gora (editor of *The Atheist*) in India during the last week in December of this year.

The "Meet," to be held at Gora's Atheistic Centre at Patamata, will deal with a wide range of subjects, including the implications of atheism, the atheistic way of life, and co-ordination between rationalism, humanism, free thought and atheism.

Participation is open, subject to a fee to cover cost of accommodation, food, and congress arrangements.\*

\* Inquiries should be addressed to: Gora, Atheistic Centre, Patamata, Vijayawada-6, Andhra Pradesh, India.

## GALILEAN GAMBOLS

Mr. Paul Nicholas, who has been chosen to play the lead rôle in the London production of *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, is quoted by the *Evening Standard* (22 June) as saying, "I'm just like most other people. I really don't know. I don't go to church. I went to Sunday school until I was seven but only because I wanted to ring the bell."

H'mm! But give the religious press time. It does not take the gift of prophecy to predict that sooner or later we are going to read how Mr. Nicholas "found" his "Saviour" whilst playing Jesus! We hope that this forecast will be wrong, but we very much doubt it.

## THE RIGHT SCHOOLS

Despite glib assurances to the contrary, we cannot help observing that snobbery, élitism and petty privilege are alive and well in this "enlightened" and "permissive" age. Recent press reports suggest an upsurge in private education, not least in those bastions of "brutality, buggery and the birch," the (so-called) public schools. We obtain a little grim satisfaction in noting that, despite their "liberal" posturings in recent years, the standard product of their Christian "character training" is as nauseating as ever: on 25 June last the chaps from Eton College joined forces with the jolly old National Front to pelt an Anti-Internment League march with eggs, tomatoes and stink bombs. Etonians pelted Shelley in the "good old days," of course!

## BEARDIES' LIB.

*The Guardian* (24 June) has reported the case of a 15-year-old schoolboy who has been suspended from a Shrewsbury secondary school for the monstrous crime of refusing to shave his beard. Good for him! (Why the hell should he not let his beard grow?)

Meanwhile, we hear reports of overcrowded classes, teachers leaving the profession, and serious increase in gratuitous pupil violence. When, oh when, are our educationalists going to start getting their priorities right?

## CHURCH INTO LIBRARY

According to the *Church Times* (16 June) All Saints' Church, an early eighteenth century building on the corner of Oxford's High Street and the Turl, has been declared redundant and will be converted, at a cost of some £160,000, into a library for Lincoln College.

## WRITING ON THE CHURCH WALL

"While Catholics worry about the cost of building new churches the Anglican Church is faced with the growing problem of what to do with those that have become redundant."

—*The Catholic Herald* (23 June 1972).

## PRIVILEGED CHRISTIAN MINORITY

According to the controversial Archbishop Helder Camara of Brazil Christianity today is the religion of a privileged minority of less than ten per cent of the world's population, but which enjoys more than eighty per cent of its resources. Whilst visiting London, the Archbishop was reported by the *Daily Telegraph* as saying that whilst Christianity's achievements could not be denied, he was ashamed when he saw denominations investing in firms involved in the arms industry. He obviously would not last long in Northern Ireland!

"The Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of women's emancipation."

—Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902).

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS BEHIND

... Miss Olive Logan, an advocate of the female suffrage movement in America, is preparing a protest against "the free love principle, which it is the aim of certain men and women to engraft upon the woman's movement," under the title of "Get Thee Behind Me, Satan."

—From *The National Reformer*, 7 July 1872.

# SOME IRISH FREETHINKERS<sup>1</sup>

NIGEL H. SINNOTT

Ireland is generally thought of as an intensely religious and orthodox country by most people. By many it is regarded as the most Catholic nation in Europe, whilst others describe it as "the last bastion of paganism" on that continent. Nevertheless, the country shows, despite the prevailing religious polarity, its small population and its disturbed history, a fascinating, and almost entirely neglected, heterodox strand.

In applying the terms "Irish" and "Freethinker" to this article I have found it necessary to take a leaf out of the book of the Society of Jesus when it comes to borderline cases. When does an expatriate Irishman cease to be Irish? And how far does a man have to deviate from the contemporary religious ideas of his day to qualify for the title of freethinker? In the latter case I have, when in doubt, simply followed Joseph McCabe's *Rationalist Encyclopaedia* and Joseph Mazzini Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of all ages and nations* (1889).

## A Mediaeval Martyr

The first freethinker I should like to mention is the earliest, and perhaps the most fascinating: ADAM DUFF O'TOOLE, born c. 1304 in Co. Wicklow, and burnt at the stake in Dublin around Easter, 1327, for denying the Christian Trinity, describing its scriptures as fables, and calling the Virgin Mary a "woman of dissolute life" as the historian Raphael Holinshead politely put it. There may have been political overtones in O'Toole's trial and execution as the O'Tooles were a constant thorn in the flesh of the Dublin government of the time, but one can only conjecture. Nearly all accounts of O'Toole's life are unhistorical on the one hand, or, on the other, can be traced to a single MS. source in the Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin. Adam Duff O'Toole certainly merits further specialist study.<sup>2</sup>

The seventeenth century produced a number of remarkable Irish freethinkers. They mostly belong to the "Orange" strand of Irish freethought, understandable when one realises that France, whose absolute monarchy was backed up by the Catholic hierarchy in that country, was most feared by libertarians in Europe at that time.

During this period one might mention BERNARD CONNOR (1666-1698), born of Catholic stock in Co. Kerry, who became court physician to John Sobieski, King of Poland. Connor was accused of atheism after the publication of his *Evangelium Medici* (1697) which attempted a natural explanation of Christian miracles. Like many Irish freethinkers after him, he ended his days in London.

## Irish Whig Sceptics

Then there was the Rt. Hon. ROBERT, FIRST VISCOUNT MOLESWORTH (1656-1725), supporter of William of Orange, M.P. for Dublin and Swords, member of the Privy Council, envoy to Denmark, deist, and friend of Toland and Shaftesbury. Dean Swift dedicated the fifth of the Drapier's Letters to him.

Perhaps the most outstanding Irish freethinker of the seventeenth century was JOHN TOLAND (1670-1722), "*Eoghan na Leabhar*" [John of the Books], whom I have dealt with in detail in an earlier article.<sup>3</sup> Toland was born in Co. Donegal, whose clerical inhabitants in the last century still remembered him as "this miserable reviler of the religion of his country."<sup>4</sup> Toland was a somewhat unlikely

combination of Gaelic and Celtic scholar on the one hand, and fierce supporter of the Whig establishment on the other. His *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696) was burned in Dublin on the orders of the Irish House of Commons. Toland was also the first pantheist, a word he coined in his *Socinianism Truly Stated* (1705). His *Adeisidaemon*, "the man without superstition," was first published in the Netherlands in 1709. Toland died in England, at Putney.

One might allow a clergyman to be included at this stage, albeit a rather unusual one: ROBERT CLAYTON (1695-1758), Protestant Bishop of, in turn, Killala, Cork, and Clogher, who adopted the Arian heresy and in 1756 suggested in the Irish House of Lords that the Nicene and Athanasian creeds be dropped from the liturgy. A prosecution was started against him, but he died first.

## The Age of "The Rights of Man"

As the eighteenth century progressed, attitudes to France and the Anglo-Protestant supremacy in Ireland radically altered the attitudes of Irish freethought, which, after 1789 looked to republican France for delivery from effete monarchies and religious discrimination.

THEOBALD WOLFE TONE (1763-1798), a lawyer educated at Trinity College, Dublin, needs little further description. He founded the United Irishmen in Belfast (1791) and was secretary to the Catholic Association in 1792. He was a deist and friend, amongst others, of Thomas Paine. He died in prison in Dublin after the unsuccessful risings and French landing of 1798. Whether his death was suicide or murder (to frustrate a successful appeal against his death sentence) is a moot point.

ARTHUR CONDORCET O'CONNOR (1763-1852) was another deist and editor of the United Irishmen's journal, *The Press*. He resigned as M.P. for Philipstown after an unsuccessful speech for Catholic emancipation. In 1803 he joined the French army and married Condorcet's daughter Eliza in 1807. After 1815 he founded and edited the *Journal de la Liberté religieuse*. Another character from this period was WILLIAM SAMPSON (1764-1836), born in Co. Derry, and an officer in the Irish Volunteers. He wrote for *The Press* and the *Northern Star*, and defended the proprietors of the latter paper. After the '98 rising Sampson was banished to France, then went to the United States in 1806, where he died in New York. His daughter married the younger brother of Wolfe Tone, WILLIAM THEOBALD TONE (1791-1828) who may also have been a freethinker.

At this period, too, there flourished GEORGE ENSOR (1769-1843) from Co. Armagh, described by McCabe as an "outspoken deist" and author of the *Defence of the Irish* (1825) and *Natural Theology Examined* (1836); Professor JAMES MACARTNEY (1770-1843) deist and surgeon of great renown in both London and Dublin; Dr. J. A. O'KEEFE, the disciple of Kant, who wrote his essay *On the Progress of the Human Understanding*, published in 1795. And one might also include General BERNARD O'HIGGINS (1780-1846) who was of Irish descent, became a follower of Francisco Miranda (Benthamite, atheist and liberator of Venezuela) and secured the independence of Chile from Spain.

This period of Irish history is not complete without the romantic figure of ROBERT EMMET (1778-1803), another Trinity College student who was expelled and exiled in 1798. He adopted deism in France, and eventually returned

to Ireland to lead the abortive rising of 23 July 1803. Only a few hours before his execution he made a speech from the dock which has become an Irish legend ("Let no man write my epitaph...").

A remarkable Irishman who flourished in the 1820s was WILLIAM THOMPSON (c. 1785-1833), agnostic, vegetarian, teetotaler and feminist; a wealthy Co. Cork landowner who tried to spread Benthamite and Owenite ideas in Ireland. He anticipated Marx with his *Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most conducive to Human Happiness* (1824) and also wrote for the *Co-Operative Magazine*. Then there was JAMES (BRONTERRE) O'BRIEN (1805-1864), barrister and Chartist, who edited Hetherington's unstamped *Poor Man's Journal*. O'Brien also served as editor of the *British Statesman*, *Bronterre's National Reformer* (1837), *The Operative* (1838-9) and the *National Reformer* (1845). Bradlaugh lectured for O'Brien's Testimonial Fund in 1862. A similar stamp of man was LLOYD JONES (1811-1886), whose family were Catholics from Brandon, Co. Cork. He went to Manchester in 1827, joined the Owenites in 1832 and became a "social missionary" and trade unionist. He wrote for the *New Moral World* and *Co-Operative News*, and debated "The Influence of Christianity" with J. Barker in 1839. I would add here MYLES MACSWEENEY (1814-1881), born in Enniskillen but who lived much of the time in London. He wrote for the *Secular Chronicle* and Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*; and produced a pamphlet, *Moses and Bacchus*, in 1874. It is possible that JOHN MARTIN (1812-1875) of the National League and MICHAEL DAVITT (1846-1906), founder of the Land League, were also freethinkers.

### The Irish Rationalists

To the great mid-nineteenth century conflict between science and theology Ireland contributed the brilliant physicist, Professor JOHN TYNDALL (1820-1893), who was a close friend of T. H. Huxley. Tyndall's essay, "Miracles and Special Providence" was published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1866, and his famous presidential address to the British Association in Belfast (1874) included the challenge: "We claim and we shall wrest from theology the entire domain of cosmological theory."

Another freethinker of this period was CHARLES GILL (b. Dublin, 1824) whose book *The Evolution of Christianity* was published anonymously in 1883. This work was quoted by G. W. Foote in his defence during the *Freethinker* blasphemy trials. One might also mention here ALFRED H. O'DONOGHUE, the Dublin educated Irish-American lawyer whose *Theology and Mythology* was published in New York in 1880; EDMUND DE PETHENY O'KELLY, author of *Consciousness, or the Age of Reason* (1853) and *Theology for the People* (1855); and Miss M. S. GILLILAND (b. Derry, 1853) agnostic and author of *The Future of Morality* (1888).

In the latter part of the nineteenth century we must also include the famous rationalists Lecky and Bury.<sup>5</sup> WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY (1838-1903) is commemorated by a statue in Trinity College, Dublin, and wrote a number of detailed histories of Ireland, England, rationalism and European morals. In 1861 he wrote *Irish Sectarianism and English Government*, but in later years became an "apologetic agnostic" and Liberal Unionist M.P. for Dublin University. Professor JOHN BAGENAL BURY (1861-1927) was born in Monaghan of Protestant stock. He was a brilliant linguist and historian, edited a new edition of Gibbon (1896-1900) and wrote the *History of Freedom of Thought*

(1913), the *Life of St. Patrick* (1905) and *The Papacy in the Nineteenth Century* (published posthumously in 1930).

### An Irish Irrationalist

Then, of course, there was the utterly inimitable GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856-1950), born of a Protestant family in lower-middle-class Dublin—"a place of downstarts," as he later called it. Shaw's interest in freethought apparently started with his attending a Moody and Sankey meeting in Dublin in 1875 and observing that those who were "converted" became so objectionable that "their unredeemed friends longed for their relapse from grace." Shaw went to London in 1876, and spent many years "in the wilderness" trying to make a living as a writer. Here he met the leaders of the Secularist movement, including ANNIE BESANT (1847-1933), herself three quarters Irish, and whom he converted to Fabian socialism. Mrs. Besant, in turn, gave Shaw the chance of having some of his early novels published in her monthly, *Our Corner*, such as "The Irrational Knot" (1882) and "Love Among the Artists" (1888). Annie Besant also provided Shaw with the model for Mrs. Lanfrey Clandon in his play *You Never Can Tell* (1897). I cannot possibly discuss Shaw's long list of publications here save to mention his charming *Adventures of the Black Girl in her search for God* (1932). It is as well that the subject of this piece is "Freethinkers" and not "Rationalists," as Shaw took an impish delight in being thoroughly irrational, if only to embarrass and annoy the scientific rationalists who were the backbone of British secularism in the '80s and '90s. Shaw's flirtations with Bergsonian "creative evolution" and "the life force" earned him the label of "a heathen mystic" by G. K. Chesterton. I think we can safely regard Shaw's claim that he was offered the Presidency of the National Secular Society on Bradlaugh's retirement as a production of pure fiction!

### Fin-de-Siècle Freethought

No account of Irish freethinkers is complete without the encyclopaedic character of JOSEPH MARTIN MCCABE (1867-1955), even though he was born in Macclesfield, England of Irish Catholic stock. McCabe was educated by the Franciscans in Manchester and Killarney, and spent twelve years in a monastery as Father Anthony. He broke with the Catholic Church in 1896, and became one of the most brilliant protagonists of rationalism thereafter and in the first half of this century. He was at one time Secretary of Leicester Secular Society, an appointed lecturer of South Place Ethical Society, and a founder member of the Rationalist Press Association. He wrote some 200 books and pamphlets, including the *Rationalist Encyclopaedia* (1948), the *Testament of Christian Civilisation* (1946); and biographies of Holyoake and Shaw (Shaw never forgave him for that!); he also translated some fifty scientific works such as Ernst Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, a famous R.P.A. cheap reprint. It is ironic that McCabe, who did so much biographical work on freethinkers, has received so little study himself. There is, as far as I know, no book-length biography of him in print.

I include here, with some doubt,<sup>6</sup> THOMAS CLARKE (1857-1916) the first signatory to the 1916 Declaration of the Irish Republic. He was born on the Isle of Wight of Irish parents, was reared in Dungannon, joined Clan na Gael in the United States in 1881, and returned to live in Dublin in 1907. After the Easter Rising he was executed in Kilmainham Jail by firing squad.

(Continued overleaf)

## SOME IRISH FREETHINKERS

*(Continued from previous page)*

ARTHUR ALFRED LYNCH (1861-1934) was also sentenced to death by the British, in 1903, for having fought against them during the Anglo-Boer War. The sentence was later commuted. Lynch was born and educated in Australia, but became M.P. for Galway in 1901, and subsequently, in 1909, nationalist Member for West Clare. His other occupations include those of journalist, poet, writer, and medical practitioner. He is perhaps best known for his *Principles of Psychology* (1923), but it is more appropriate to mention here that his *Brain and Mind*<sup>7</sup> was published in 1931 by the Pioneer Press (G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.).

From the second half of the last century to the present day Ireland has produced a number of freethinkers of distinction, particularly in the fields of drama, poetry and fiction; all of whom I cannot list here. Suffice to say that they include WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865-1939), SEAN O'CASEY (1880-1964), JAMES AUGUSTINE JOYCE (1882-1941), SAMUEL BECKETT (b. 1906), and MURIEL MAC-SWINEY (widow of the famous Lord Mayor of Cork). Probably one might also include AUSTIN CLARKE (b. 1896). The contributions of these men and women, coupled with the birth of humanist organisations in Belfast and Dublin, and the support of radical politicians such as CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN, may be the beginning of a significantly Irish strand in the European freethought tradition. At any rate it is clear that the flame that was kindled around Adam Duff O'Toole in 1327 has not died out; neither has

O'Toole's stubbornness and sense of independence. Ireland's unorthodox minority is not unmindful of the exhortation of the Irish theosophist and poet, George Russell (A.E.):

*One charge alone we give to youth  
Against the sceptered myth to hold  
The golden heresy of truth.*

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The text of this article is based on a talk given to a meeting in London organised by the National Secular Society on 17 March 1972. For reasons of space references from the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and from McCABE and WHEELER, are omitted.
- <sup>2</sup> SINNOTT, N. H. 1969 December 27. "Adam Duff O'Toole; an early Irish Heretic." *Freethinker* 89: pp. 413-414, lists most of the sources on O'Toole. Sinnott's sketch of the O'Toole arms is incorrect.
- <sup>3</sup> SINNOTT, N. H. 1971 September 18 & 25. "Another Irish Heretic: John Toland, the first pantheist." *Freethinker* 91: pp. 298-299, 306-307. See also TWYNAM, Ella 1955 July 29. "John Toland (1670-1722)." *Freethinker* 75: pp. 235-236; and TWYNAM, Ella 1968, *John Toland, Freethinker* (Privately Printed, 31 pp.).
- <sup>4</sup> MAGHTOCHAIR. 1867. *Inishowen: its history, traditions and antiquities*. (Londonderry): p. 91. "Maghtochair" was probably the Rev. James McLoughlin, C.C., of Carndonagh.
- <sup>5</sup> SWIFT, John. 1971 May 14 & 15. "Sources of Irish Secularism." *Irish Times*, gives an interesting and up-to-date appreciation of the lives of Bury and Lecky.
- <sup>6</sup> I include Clarke on the indirect authority of SWIFT, *loc. cit.* (May 14).
- <sup>7</sup> I am obliged to Len Ebury for showing me this book, and drawing my attention to Lynch. I have also to thank Antonia Healy and Bill McIlroy for checking, and improving upon, my original list of names.

# REVIEW

## BOOK

### A HISTORY OF THE IRISH WORKING CLASS

by P. Berresford Ellis. Gollancz, £3.50.

*"The Irish Brigade have gone to fight the battle of Christianity against Communism."*

Thus the message went out that General O'Duffy's blue-shirts would be fighting side by side with Franco for a Fascist Spain in which Catalans and Basques, like the Catholic Irish, were to be held in subjection. On the other side Frank Ryan was to lead the I.R.A. into the International Brigade; for in every nationalist movement there is a left and a right. In Ireland the solid centre has long predominated, but the great figures of Michael Davitt in the nineteenth, and James Connolly in the twentieth century have given a new dimension to the struggle for national freedom linked with socialism, whether agricultural or industrial. Agrarian reform and social equality have often gone hand-in-hand with nationalism in Irish history.

It is remarkable that William Thompson the "first Irish Socialist" was a member of the Protestant ascendancy. His theory of surplus value and scientific socialism predated Marxist economics by half a century. Such paradoxes are the rule rather than the exception in the tangled web of Irish history.

Masses were celebrated by the Pope for the victory of the Protestant William of Orange at the Boyne. Many of

the great leaders of Irish nationalism from Wolf Tone and Emmet, via Mitchel and Parnell to the first President of the Dáil, Arthur Griffith, were Protestants. The Protestant Erskine Childers, who refused to compromise with Britain, shaking hands with a firing squad made up of fellow Irish nationalists who accepted the Free State following partition, and whose son is deputy Prime Minister of the Republic, adds up to a very much more confused picture than the tribal warfare in what Andrew Boyd described as "Holy War in Belfast."

It is the merit of socialist and Marxist commentators on Ireland that they have been able to disentangle religion and sectarianism from the real aspirations of the Irish working class towards a nation where Tone's vision that the common name of Irishman would replace Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. But they all too frequently underrate the subjective religious factor.

Like many orthodox Marxists, Mr. Ellis has little compassion for the intolerable dilemma facing those who chose to accept half a loaf rather than see their nation drained in blood after Lloyd George's threats. History will not condemn those who took the moderate view any more than those who chose to fight on.

Mr. Ellis's curious blend of almost Chauvinist Celtic nationalism with orthodox and rather mechanical Marxism leads him to paint an over-idealised picture of the Irish struggle and not least of early Celtic society. He has borrowed not only from Marx and Engels, Connolly and Tom Jackson's *Ireland Her Own* but even manages to take a couple of pages from my own little book *The Manchester Martyrs*. The wide brush and the easy option sometimes replace original research and objectivity. But his account

is none the less compelling reading for students of Irish history for all these criticisms, and it makes an excellent starting point for those who want to go into greater depth.

Mr. Ellis's Celtic socialism was revealed<sup>1</sup> to me some years ago in his *Wales—A Nation Again* which I happened to buy in a Caernarvon bookshop. But whereas Wales became anglicised by taking the British throne, Englishmen became Gaelic by their plantation in Ireland, and even the Orange Ulster-Scot is far removed from the English in his culture and attitudes. Racial and religious myths have little relevance other than as subjective reasons for conflicts which are basically economic, cultural and national.

Mr. Ellis has drawn together many sources and many threads to provide a well balanced narrative that leads from the United Irishmen of 1798 via the Fenians of 1867 and the land agitation to the rise of working class organisations and the Dublin lockout. It is a pity that he did not expand on these rather than attempt to bring the history up to the Premiership of Mr. Faulkner. Much has been written in detail on the Easter rising and the civil war, and no one matches *The Times's* Insight team for exciting contemporary reporting.

We are too near these events to see them in perspective. But a study of the Irish contribution to English Chartism, or English participation in the Fenian amnesty movement are perhaps fields of study that demand greater research if we are to substitute internationalism for the understandable over-emphasis on Gaelic pride that inevitably resulted from centuries of exploitation by England. National self-consciousness is the hallmark of an oppressed but proud people whose diaspora and whose suffering is matched only by that of the Jews or Africans with whom they share the sidewalks of New York or the Borough of Brent.

It is the myopia of Britain in welcoming revolutionists from abroad while hanging, imprisoning and transporting their Irish equivalent that has led to the violence so near to the surface of political life in Ireland.

Mr. Ellis has tried to extract from these threads the development of a socially conscious working class movement in what remains a largely agricultural society, exporting its most talented leaders and obsessed by a physical border as much as the psychological barriers imposed<sup>d</sup> by different religious backgrounds. It is a worthwhile task, and the results are found in this straightforward and useful narrative. For those who want to go behind<sup>d</sup> the tribal warfare which pays lip service to religion, and throws bombs in the name of the Prince of Peace, there is a much more complex and disturbing story of exploitation, famine, national oppression; the use of the Orange card and the Union Jack to divide the Irish nation.

Perhaps only the unity of the Irish working class can lead to the ultimate unity of Ireland that all freethinkers should desire along with Protestants, Catholics and Celtic Marxists like Mr. Ellis. It is an unfortunate refutation of traditional Marxism that the shop stewards of Harland & Wolf will support populist Toryism rather than make common cause with their Catholic minority. But it is national oppression rather than religion, national rather than religious identity which has so confused the development of Irish working class politics.

PAUL ROSE, M.P.

## IRISH COMMENT

"Irishness and Catholicism do not go automatically together. If the Church in Ireland cannot become a healing force, but must resign itself instead to perpetuating a nationalist ideology of a divisive and destructive kind, then it will inevitably lose ground to the secular humanism which is at present working, in co-operation with some of the more farseeing clergy for community reconciliation."

—From the *Catholic Herald's* Opinion column, 23 June.

**12 July, is, of course, a public holiday in Northern Ireland (Orangeman's Day), hence the Irish content of this week's issue (Ed.).**

## DID JESUS EXIST ?

Readers who have followed and contributed to the controversy in these pages over early Christian origins (and who live within travelling distance of Holborn, London) may like to know that Professor G. A. Wells will be lecturing on this subject to South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall) on Sunday, 16 July, at 11 a.m. His title will be, "Did Jesus Exist?"

## LETTERS

### Jesus: Myth or History ?

It emerges from the first half of Mr. Condon's interesting article of 17 June that there may have been an historical Jesus—but one who was executed before 63 B.C. If Jesus ben Pandira did found the Essenes (as Professor Wells seems to accept on p. 247 of his book), and if he was the Teacher of Righteousness whom the Essenes seem to have expected to return as the Messiah, then this could plug a small gap in Wells's argument. On his theory, it is rather difficult to see why the early Christians should have given their supposed Messiah the name Jesus. If they had expected *Joshua* to return as the Messiah (Wells: p. 5), why did they call him Jesus instead? (Admittedly, the two names are the same in Greek, but they are different in Hebrew.) But if they were an offshoot from the Essenes (see Wells: p. 197) they would have expected *Jesus* ben Pandira to return as the Christ.

This hypothesis could also offer a better explanation of the Barabbas incident. Robertson's suggestion why the story was invented (Wells: p. 246) explains a lot, but he is obliged to suppose that there was an ancient cult of a god Jesus—and there is absolutely no evidence for this. On the other hand, if the Essenes venerated Jesus ben Pandira, they may, for all we know, have venerated him as Jesus "Son of the Father", i.e. Jesus Barabbas. (In the Dead Sea Scrolls they never give their Teacher a name.) Then, when orthodox Jews investigated and found out some rather unpleasant facts about him (see Wells: pp. 200-202), the early Christians could have claimed that their Jesus was someone else, and invented the Barabbas incident to try to show this. (That he was *not* someone else is indicated by people like Epiphanius giving Panthera as his family name.)

Of course, this still leaves the biblical Jesus of Nazareth and his doctrines in the realm of mythology, but it looks as if there was someone called Jesus at the back of it all. NICHOLAS REED.

### Objective Reality

It was with great relief I learned that Philip Hinchliff (letters, 24 June) "enjoyed" my letters of 10 June. In all sincerity I must grant his point: "You cannot say that religion *is* dualism . . ." I fully recognise now that the illegal use of a gun to destroy a mad dog is totally unacceptable.

However, superficial explanations of Marxian theory fail to impress me, and the "virulence" of my reply was not due to the nearness or correctness of Mr. Hinchliff's argument, but, having unthinkingly "believed" the catechistical sophism of professorial scholasticism myself, I find it rather annoying to hear this rubbish, asserted and associated with such alien terms as "open-mindedness," "rational," "reason," "scientific," etc. Small wonder that we read: "Marxism provides an emotionally satisfying, if intellectually unconvincing, explanation of reality."

Still, the only immutable natural law, ever claimed by Marx or Engels, accepted by Lenin and to my knowledge never rejected by any leading Marxist since, is *objective reality* (a world existing independently, outside of ourselves). The main body of science has *always* confirmed this basic Marxian principle. Every time science speaks of the world before life or man appeared, it asserts the

correctness of objective reality. And it is upon this *scientific* fact that Marxian theory is founded.

TREVOR MORGAN.

### Marxism as Religion

I wonder if an old codger may comment upon "Marxism and Christianity" as raised by Philip Hinchliffe. Alas, I am afraid I must agree that Communism has become a religion, with each schism claiming to be the only true interpreters of the Holy Script according to St. Karl. What marvellous invective they have invented to hurl at each other: "Deviotionists!" To which there is no answer except to say, "Not me—you!"

Look at what has happened to some of the lesser saints. Poor old St. Leon—could not get far enough from Moscow to avoid being killed by an assassin. Then, of course, St. Vladimir, now the great attraction of countless pilgrimages just to file past the mausoleum. What has happened to St. Joseph? Poor Uncle Joe has become a non-person. How well I remember the lavish praises and adulation heaped upon him! Make no mistake, he really was worshipped and the personality cult built up to extreme heights. Some day, no doubt, we shall hear of the discovery of the Moscow Scrolls! In the long list of the hagiology, we are coming up the "Latter Day Saints": St. Fidel, and the Chairman.

Communism has indeed become a "religion" in the manner of its adherents. On a lighter note, the only "Commie" I have ever met who has a sense of humour is suffering from grave doubts.

And now, Mr. Editor, to you. In your Editorial of 20 May you made claim that the Americans have already lost the war in Vietnam. What you omitted to say was that the North had equally failed to win it. Now, probably 20,000 or 30,000 casualties later where are we? Humanly speaking, how deplorable that the peace talks were not used instead of another invasion. I am not trying to take sides either way, but am convinced that the Americans were truly ready to terminate the conflict, and this could have happened I feel sure. It is a very long time since General Giap won a war.

H. W. DAY.

#### The Editor comments:

It is only fair to point out that by no means all Marxists regard themselves as Communists with a capital "C," that is, adherents of Moscow, Peking, or the C.P.G.B.

As for the cult of personality, Mr. Day should try to obtain a copy of the *Pyongyang Times*; Comrade Kim Il Sung's public image in North Korea makes those of Gentle Jesus, Uncle Joe or Chairman Mao elsewhere pallid by comparison.

We hope to publish soon a reply to Philip Hinchliff's article by Professor Hyman Levy.

### Vietnam and U.S. Presidential Power

Since the publication of your excellent editorial (20 May) about America's atrocious and unending war of aggression in Vietnam, new facts have come to light about the conduct of the U.S. military. Early in June it was revealed that General John D. Lavelle, Commander of the Seventh Air Force, had ordered earlier this year some thirty unprovoked and unauthorised bombing raids into North Vietnam and had reported them as "protective reaction," a so-called defensive manoeuvre that President Nixon initiated. U.S. Intelligence in Vietnam knowingly falsified the Lavelle raids, classifying them as "protective reaction." Lavelle was not court-martialled, but demoted from a four-star to a three-star general and retired on a stipend of \$2,250 a month.

This incident shows clearly that Nixon does not have complete control over the U.S. Armed Forces in South-east Asia and that a real danger exists of some over-eager officer taking it into his hands to drop a nuclear bomb, if Nixon himself does not order this atrocity.

It is common knowledge that the Pentagon has drafted a contingency plan for the use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam. So it is that Congressman Lester L. Wolf has introduced a bill into the House of Representatives to prohibit the President from using a nuclear bomb in South-east Asia without the specific approval of Congress.

This bill is but one of several legislative attempts to curb the President's unconstitutional actions as a species of dictator in certain crucial aspects of foreign affairs, such as undertaking United States military intervention and outright war in foreign countries. This sort of imperialist policy on the part of American Presidents has steadily escalated since World War II. It constitutes a flagrant violation of democratic government, of international peace and of the United Nations Charter.

New York, U.S.A.

CORLISS LAMONT.

### Doubtful Deterrent

Henry Meulen (letters, 24 June) apparently has a partiality for the *non sequitur* and the invalid analogy. On the particular issue of

capital punishment, one can surely reduce to a vicious circle the behaviourist argument that "the best course is to kill" people who "murder deliberately, in cold blood, for gain."

Moreover, one can surely point to a psychological discrepancy in the supporting statement that "whatever treatment we apply must be a deterrent to the *normal* man" [my italics].

CHARLES BYASS.

### Relative Justice

Claud Watson's answer (*Freethinker* letters, 24 June) that "British justice is probably the best and fairest in the world today" is a typical example of the smugness that either amuses or annoys people in other Western European countries who never boast because they realise that all justice can, and may be, abused. Certainly the Scandinavian countries have a superior rehabilitation system for habitual criminals than we have.

May I say to Dr. Watson that I would rather fall into the hands of the Russian police than into those of the Spanish or Portuguese. Essentially, it is a question of degree, but I think I would get a better deal in Russia.

J. H. MORTEN.

### Leading Ladies

I would like to congratulate Barbara Smoker on becoming the second woman President of the National Secular Society.

As one woman president to another, I hope that Barbara Smoker will further the disarmament of religion by getting more women into the N.S.S. and show them that pollution of the mind is the most dangerous of all kinds of pollution. I do not suppose that this point was brought up in Stockholm recently! (I think that the N.S.S. should send a good representative to such conferences to point out the dangers.)

KATHLEEN TACCHI-MORRIS.

President, Women for World Disarmament.

### The Churches' Financial Privileges

In your editorial of 24 June you mentioned the efforts by the churches to secure exemption from Value Added Tax.

Writing to *The Times* (19 June) on the liability of church renovation and other ecclesiastical work to V.A.T., the Rev. Derek Farrow stated that "Churches and charities do not claim a special immunity from the effects of taxation because they wish to be a privileged class, but because they work not for themselves but for others." This is untrue: churches exist, like ordinary clubs, for the benefit of their members. Indeed, their primary objective is to ensure eternal bliss for their members—and what could be more selfish than that?

Yet, unlike any other bodies, churches today enjoy all the financial privileges of charity status as an automatic right, not even having to register under the Charities Act, 1960, and also get away with political propaganda and activity such as other charitable organisations have to avoid like the plague for fear of losing their charitable status (Oxfam, for instance, would dearly like to make political statements relevant to its work, but dare not do so).

The churches are granted income tax exemption, estate duty exemption up to £50,000 and, in the case of the established Church, rates exemption. Moreover, possession being nine point of the law, they can sell valuable land and church buildings which were originally either stolen or purchased out of tithes imposed on the whole population, and to pocket the proceeds for the benefit of the minority that adheres to the beliefs of past centuries. Such buildings as remain unsold are generally under-used—often to the extent of being locked up six days of the week—while many thousands of families live in intolerably overcrowded conditions. How is that for charitable altruism?

We would not wish to impose any financial disincentive to the preservation of church buildings of historical or architectural interest, but, if their upkeep is to be a charge on the public purse, then the public at large should have free use of them as community centres, art galleries, etc., according to decisions of local, not church, authorities.

The National Secular Society has never attempted to obtain charity status, preferring to remain unhampered by the attendant restrictions. However, three of the other national humanist organisations that had previously enjoyed charity status have been deprived if it within the last few years. Two of them were actually accepted for registration under the 1960 Act, but subsequently had their charity status rescinded, on the ironical ground that since they promote a particular ideology, they were accepted in error in the first place. When is an ideology not an ideology? The answer, of course, is that religion is a law unto itself.

BARBARA SMOKER.

President, National Secular Society.

A similar letter was sent to *The Times* but it "was not possible" to print it. (Ed.)