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THOMAS PAINE, PIONEER OF DEMOCRACY

—“RIGHTS OF MAN” EXHIBITION IN LONDON

“The interpreter of advanced ideas to the common man” was how Thomas Paine was described by Mr. F. H. Amphlett Micklewright who opened the exhibition on “Thomas Paine and the *Rights of Man*” at the Karl Marx Memorial Library, Clerkenwell. The exhibition is of particular interest to freethinkers in view of the immense influence Paine’s works have had upon the movement, particularly in Britain and the United States. Paine was, said Mr. Micklewright, “an outstanding figure of a revolutionary period” whose ideas had an immense impact on the industrial society that was emerging in the age of Pitt, Castlereagh and Lord Sidmouth, and who pioneered the idea of genuinely democratic politics. The revolutionary ideas of that period were not entirely new, the speaker said; they could be traced back to the radical politics of the Levellers and Diggers, and the officers of Cromwell’s army—ideas which had been suppressed at the Stuart Restoration, but had lived on to re-emerge with the American revolution, in which Paine had sided with the colonists.

The Age of Reason

Mr. Micklewright added that Paine still deserved tribute for his other famous work, *The Age of Reason*: faced with the Blasphemy Acts and public opinion as it then was, Paine was one of the first people to challenge orthodox theology in a reasonable way.

The speaker also spoke of the various movements—Chartism, Owenism, secularism and socialism—whose early growth had been influenced by the ideas of Paine; and of the publishers and writers who had championed these ideas and Paine’s memory: Cobbett, Carlile, Eaton, Watson, Holyoake, Conway, and the “great analyst” of the struggle between the possessed and the dispossessed, Karl Marx. Today, Paine was still a notable and honoured figure.

Paine’s first publication

Featured in the present exhibition, which remains open for the rest of the month,* are many scarce and unusual publications, for instance a copy of the first Jordan edition of Part I of *Rights of Man* (1791)—the first to be put on public sale, and an early edition of Paine’s first recorded work, *The Case of the Officers of Excise*.

Freethought publishers were among many who issued Paine’s works, either as single pamphlets or in bound “collections.” In this category is Watson’s *Working Man’s Political Companion*, and in the exhibition is a set issued in the 1830s. Other “collected editions” include those of Edward Truelove, the freethought publisher who also issued works for the First International; on show is a copy of his “first real collected edition” of the *Political and Controversial Works of Thomas Paine*, which appeared in the 1840s.

An anti-Paine proclamation

In 1792 the British government issued a proclamation which Pitt, in the House of Commons, admitted was against Paine (though he was not named in it). One of the few copies left of this proclamation is in the exhibition, as is

also a copy of *The Trial of Thomas Paine*. Another scarce item is the open letter of 1793 to the imprisoned Jacobin attorney, John Frost, by Henry “Redhead” Yorke, entitled *These Are the Times that Try Men’s Souls*—from the opening words of Paine’s famous first *Crisis Paper*.

Of more specifically freethought interest is a copy of the first British edition of Elihu Palmer’s *Principles of Nature* (1819), published by Richard Carlile; this, and *The Age of Reason*, were the cause of Carlile’s first major trial. Another Carlile item on show is the edition of Bishop Watson’s reply to Paine, *An Apology for the Bible*, which Carlile published because some “gentleman zealous for the established Church” paid for it (though he refused to sell it).

Other items of interest

As an illustration that anti-Christian sentiments existed in America before the publication of *The Age of Reason*, the exhibition includes a copy of the scarce 1854 edition of Ethan Allen’s *Reason: the Only Oracle of Man*, the first anti-Christian work published in the United States. A minor item, but worth a mention because it was omitted from the bibliography of David Tribe’s recent biography of Charles Bradlaugh, is an edition of *The Age of Reason* with a biographical introduction by Bradlaugh. The exhibition also features eighteenth century political tokens, journals from many countries featuring Paine (including *The Freethinker*), contemporary prints and some of the famous anti-Paine caricatures by Gillray.

“Paine,” wrote Audrey Williamson in the *Sunday Times* (10 September), “is ignored in our schools because history teaching has never moved on from Tories and Whigs, kings and generals. In the U.S. Paine is honoured in education as a founder of American democratic history; in his own country, although his *Rights of Man* had equal influence, he is virtually unknown.” We hope that the present exhibition will stimulate a renewed interest in this great British freethinker.

R.W.M./N.S.

* For further details see the “Announcements” column.

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 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 Holidays, 29 September—1 October, "Brighton for Freethinkers" (leader: William McIlroy). Details and booking forms from Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone: 01-642 8796.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 24 September, 3 p.m.: Annual Reunion (guest of honour: Richard Clements). All members and friends welcome.

EXHIBITION: "Thomas Paine and the Rights of Man." Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Until 10 October. (Monday-Friday, 4-9 p.m.; Saturdays, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.) Admission free.

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.

Freethought History & Bibliography Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Saturday, 30 September, 2.45 p.m.: Christopher Brunel, "Thomas Paine, the Collector's Friend."

Havering Humanist Society, Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane. Tuesday, 26 September, 7.45 p.m.: Mr. A. Perry, "Black Awareness."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 24 September, 3 p.m.: Annual Reunion (guest of honour: Richard Clements). All members and friends welcome.

NEWS

"Regardless of how much South Africa may need expertise and skills, I will not allow in any person who admits to being an atheist. Tolerance and mutual respect are basic needs if people of different societies are to live in harmony."

—Dr. Piet Koornhof, South African Minister of Immigration.

RELIGIOUS "REPENTANCE"

It must be an exceedingly difficult and complex business for prison psychiatrists and criminologists to decide whether or not it is safe to release into society a prisoner who has been convicted of cold-blooded sadistic murders. We therefore offer no opinion on the recent controversy over Myra Hindley, save upon one point. Lord Longford has implied that, because Myra Hindley has become a very religious Catholic she is on that account no longer a threat to society. We are about as impressed by this as we would be to hear that Hindley had become a staunch Nazi or Communist.

Any student of the history of religion could tell Lord Longford that religious fervour has in no way acted as a sound preventive or cure for the homicidal personality. (Far from it!) The suggestion is as appalling and sinister as it is gruesome and naïve, and will merely provide an ample fund of ammunition for the people who want to put the clock back and oppose all responsible and humane reform of our prisons and in the treatment of offenders.

THE RISE OF THE MODERN REICHS

One has to hand it to the military junta in Greece: they do not merely sink back into the Middle Ages, they positively plunge. Even the normally reactionary Orthodox clergy are "kicking against the pricks" of a régime whose original cliché was "Christian Greece." The Greek government has now instituted ecclesiastical courts, with powers to exile dissident priests to remote monasteries for life. What next, one wonders? They are already employing most of the horrors of the Middle Ages, but if they turn the clock much further back the colonels may run foul of two pugnacious ghosts called Pericles and Socrates. We strongly suspect that the spirit that kindled the word 'democracy' is by no means dead, despite the military police; so uneasy must lie the heads that have usurped the Greek crown. One day, there will be a reckoning.

The Dark Ages have not just descended on Greece, however. In Spain Lieutenant-General Carlos Iniesta has regaled the press with a speech at Franco's birthplace in which he described 'El Jefe Supreme' as the greatest genius in the history of the world! "After Franco, Francoism will continue for centuries!"

Amin's soulmate

In our 19 August number we drew attention to the similarity between Sergeant Amin's persecution of Uganda's Asians and the attitudes of a certain Austrian corporal: both claimed that they were fulfilling the will of God. Amin has now shown his true colours: "When Hitler was Prime Minister and supreme commander of Germany," he pronounced in a recent telegram, "he burnt over six million Jews. This is because Hitler and all German people knew that the Israelis are not people who are working in the interest of the people of the world . . ."

S AND NOTES

COURT CIRCULAR

His Holiness Pope Paul, speaking at Castelgandolfo on 13 September, condemned modern immorality, marital infidelity, unbridled corruption, birth control, abortion, psycho-analysis, sex education, indecent exhibitions, and "obligatory eroticism"—yet again!

We are unable to confirm or deny reports that His Holiness and Mr Malcolm Muggeridge are going halves on a tape recorder.

SOVIET JEWRY

According to a *Guardian* report (11 September) Jews in Moscow were prevented from attending the city's only synagogue open for Jewish New Year services. A ban was apparently imposed on pedestrians in all streets surrounding the synagogue, and Jews are obliged to walk to services. Subsequent reports say that the Yom Kippur ceremonies were allowed to proceed without interference. We are reminded that the Soviet constitution guarantees freedom for both religious observance and atheistic propaganda—in theory.

INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

In a speech to a recent conference of the International Bar Association M. Jean-René Farthquat has proposed an international agreement on marriage and divorce so that a divorce granted in one country should automatically be valid in any other. As usual, of course, we can expect this eminently sensible and humane suggestion to receive vicious international opposition from "religious leaders" and other obscurantists.

ANGEL MAIL

Details of this year's Christmas stamps have now appeared. The public has a splendid choice between 2½p angels, 3p angels and 7½p angels!—Not so much as a spring of holly, or even a robin sitting on a spade for us godless lot!

We would not mind so much if the presence of angels on our stamps speeded up the mails a little. What with delays, rising costs, and further cut-backs in collections and deliveries, the Post Office probably feels in need of all the divine assistance it can get; or, at least, pious hope!

FIFTY YEARS AGO

An eminent Christian lady, Dr. Marie Stopes (who first came into the [Birth Control] movement three years ago), has actually been told by God to tell the Bishops it is their duty to spread the gospel of Birth Control everywhere . . . So earnest is she that she has felt it her duty in an article in the . . . *Cambridge Magazine* . . . to remove some "historical prejudices." The gist of this article is simply that Bradlaugh and Besant (as she likes to call them) had "buted in baldheaded" into the movement quite unnecessarily—in fact they really did harm to the cause of Birth Control which would have been better off without them . . .

Neo-Malthusianism or, as it is now called, Birth Control, has achieved recognition mainly through the sacrifices and devotion of Freethinkers, and particularly does this apply to Charles Bradlaugh. That Christians can now come forward thirty years after his death to take the credit of his work (or to give some other Christians the credit) is in the irony of things. Some of us can only protest and leave it to time for the truth to come out. But I hope I have said enough to shatter the shallow pretensions of Dr. Marie Stopes . . . and for those who wish to study a brilliant example of egomania and are interested in sex or religious psychology, I can recommend her article in the *Cambridge Magazine* . . . And I hope Dr. Marie Stopes or any of her followers will oblige with a reply.

—Herbert Cutner in *The Freethinker*, 24 September, 1922.

This appalling so-called statesman has also been claiming that the British government is trying to murder him. We hope that H.M.G. will not be so gauche as to deny it—this might allow Amin to sleep soundly in his bed at night, which is more than at present he deserves. Somewhere on the banks of Lake Victoria we conjure up a vision of the ghost of the great Paul Robeson, sadly writing a spirit letter to *The Times*: "Come home, Sanders of the River! All is forgiven!"

Corporal Schickelgruber may have expired long ago amid the rubble of his thousand-year-Reich; but from Pretoria to Kampala, Athens to Madrid, his political heirs go goose-stepping on.

Hired GUNS IN THE PHILIPPINES

"In the Philippines . . . instead of white men against Indians, it is Christian settlers against primitive tribesmen and Moslems. But the hired guns are here: they are called 'Ilagas' (rats) if they kill for the Christian cause and 'barracudas' if they are Moslem gunmen . . .

"No one is sure how many [have] died, but more than 700 killings were officially reported in the first 10 months of 1971. Although the battle lines were drawn between Christian and Moslem, the war is not religious but over politics and land. At heart it is the Moslems' fight to preserve their system and their culture. Their cause seems hopeless."

—Lee Lescaze in *The Guardian* (29 August).

THE UNTOUCHABLES

New Delhi has recently been plunged into several days of rioting, looting and arson following the death of a 17-year-old Harijan ("untouchable") girl who had the temerity to offer her high-caste school principal the traditional gift of sweets to commemorate Krishna's birthday. The young girl was angrily snubbed, and her body was subsequently extracted from a well—it is not yet known whether death was due to suicide or murder. *The Guardian* has carried reports of twenty untouchables being burned alive in Uttar Pradesh state, and a Harijan being stabbed to death for trying to bathe in a public tank at Jhansi.

Sickened at such real obscenities, we can only repeat the time-honoured sarcastic comment of *Freethinker* editors: religion is such a comfort.

INDIAN SECULAR SOCIETY

The Indian Secular Society is hoping to build up a capital fund by means of life membership subscriptions from Europe and elsewhere. The I.S.S. is committed to the promotion of secular, human values in Indian society, and to combat obscurantism in all its forms. It believes that "the most serious threat to the development of India as a secular democratic state . . . comes from religious obscurantism."

If you would like to help the work of secularism in India you can take out a life membership subscription to the Indian Secular Society* for £18 (U.S. \$42 or Rs.300). Life members resident outside India will also receive the Society's journal, the *Secularist*, regularly by air mail. Ordinary membership of the I.S.S. costs £1.20 (Rs. 20) per annum.

*4 Joothica, 22 Naushir Bharucha Road, Bombay-7, India.

JOSEPH ARCH: SOME CENTENARY REMARKS

ERIC GLASGOW

Perhaps it is significant of urban industrial preponderance in Great Britain since the Industrial Revolution that there is no article on Joseph Arch (1826-1919), the founder of the Agricultural Labourers' Union, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Instead, one must go to the General Catalogue of the British Museum, which lists five separate items relating to Arch. These include two very early and scarcely definitive studies, both of 1874, and another unsatisfactory book of 1886; as well as Joseph Arch's own *Autobiography*, with its illuminating preface by Francis Countess of Warwick, first published in 1898, but re-issued in a modern edition as late as 1966.

Of course, one can always fall back upon the potted versions of Arch's life and work which occur in the *Everyman's Encyclopaedia* (1967 ed.), and in the only slightly longer article, by Morris L. Pearl, in *Chambers' Encyclopaedia* (1966 ed.). Both of these have their uses, especially in the former's reminder that the historian, Justin McCarthy, called Arch the "emancipator of the agricultural labourer," and in the latter's reminder that Arch regarded the demise of militant trade unionism, at least in agriculture, as a desirable and likely outcome of the Gladstonian reforms.

Nevertheless, one does need to probe a little further if one is to discover the full relevance of Joseph Arch, especially in 1972, the centenary year of the formation of the Agricultural Labourers' Union. Already the submergence of agriculture beneath the advancing tides of our contemporary industrial society has provoked and maintained a reaction in favour of rural themes and pursuits which is, of course, especially noteworthy during the green summer months.

Early hardship

Writing in the warmth of another English summer I recall, with appreciation and sympathy, all that Joseph Arch did for the welfare of the English rural worker back in the recesses of Victorian England. He was a Warwickshire man, of course, born at Barford, on 10 November 1826, and he died, almost a century later, on 17 February 1919. As a boy, he endured great hardships during the years leading up to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846; he experienced, at first hand, the oppressions of the local "Squarson," whose Christianity extended no bounty for the poor. He began his working life (rather like William Cobbett) as a "farmer's boy," crow-scaring at the age of 9, and for fourpence a day. Later, his agricultural labours became more varied and exacting, and in his early forties he returned to live in the old cottage at Barford, working as a hedger and ditcher. He married in 1847, and about the same time he settled for political Liberalism.

By 1872 Joseph Arch was an honest and relatively prosperous farm-worker who had earned the confidence of the men in his own walk of life. So he might have remained, had not the rural depression which followed the bad harvest of 1871 driven him into organising the Agricultural Labourers' Union for the improvement of their pay and conditions. It all began with a meeting of nearly 2,000 farm-workers under a chestnut tree in the neighbouring village of Wellesbourne: men flocked in, from Barford, Moreton, Locksley, Charlecote and Hampton Lucy, as well as from Wellesbourne itself—a regular carnival course which Arch addressed from an old pig-stool.

"In the flickering light of the lanterns I saw the earnest upturned faces of these poor brothers of mine—faces gaunt with hunger and pinched with want—all looking towards me and ready to listen to the words that would fall from my lips."¹

Once started, the movement spread quickly, far beyond the confines of Warwickshire. On Good Friday, 1872 (some six weeks later), the newly-fledged Union held a large public meeting in Leamington, which was attended by Auberon Herbert, Jesse Collings and others; and thereafter popular support came in from Buckinghamshire, Norfolk, Dorset and elsewhere. By the end of the year the movement had reached London, with a meeting at Exeter Hall which included Sir Charles Dilke, Charles Bradlaugh, A. J. Mundella, as well as Joseph Arch himself.

"A born leader of men"

Although the Agricultural Labourers' Union was effective, it did not command a large membership until after 1906. However, its existence helped to secure the vote for the agricultural workers, which was granted by Gladstone in 1884. Arch himself, a loyal supporter of Gladstone, was the Liberal M.P. for North-West Norfolk (1885-1886 and 1892-1900). He has been described as "a born leader of men and a natural orator."² Yet he would never have been able to achieve what he did if he had not been relatively prosperous, as a skilled hedger, always in demand, and with the security of his own cottage at Barford. In the end, he used his own outstanding gifts, both as a worker and as an organiser, to help his fellow-men: they certainly needed it in the conditions of rural employment of 1872, and it is their evident betterment, in subsequent years, which constitutes Joseph Arch's claim to be remembered a century later.

The English agricultural worker still has his problems and his grievances. Nevertheless, it is certain that without the abiding work of Joseph Arch he would be much worse off. For it was Arch who showed that English agriculture needed to be saved from neglect and disdain; and at the very end of his busy and tempestuous life he could still look back to the first meeting, under the Wellesbourne chestnut-tree in 1872, as its crucial and cardinal event. So perhaps, should we, in the year of its centenary: it is part of the English past, and even now continues to evoke rural and pastoral images, more natural and simple than any of the industrial or technological factors which tend to overshadow the realities of our current lives.

NOTES:

¹ ARCH, Joseph. 1966 ed. *Autobiography*: p. 43.

² ORWIN, C. S. 1949. *A History of English Farming*: p. 105.

WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN

By BERTRAND RUSSELL

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A REVOLUTION IN EVOLUTION?

CHARLES BYASS

Although evolutionists still have their disagreements, in general they now seem to agree that the evolutionary process is not a process of nature towards ever-improved forms of life. Evolutionary change is in itself neither for the better or for the worse; only through the vanity of *Homo sapiens* can the course of evolution be associated with any qualitative sense of "progress." Further, there is an implied absolute standard (some perfect form of life) in the idea that evolution is nature's way of progressing towards ever "higher" or "better" things. In reality, of course, Utopia is no place at all to live or die; and anyway, how can nature improve on being a robin or a rat?

If evolutionary change does not occur in accordance with any life-improving standard, it does evidently do so through a process of natural selection. There is, in this, a kind of natural standard of "adaptability" and of "the survival of the fittest." Indeed, some forms of life last longer than others—and earlier ones sometimes longer than later ones. In terms of survival value, human beings have a long way to go to bear comparison with the dinosaurs.

However, if the human species has only survived for a comparatively short time, its coming surely brought with it something of an evolutionary revolution. For from its early days of intelligent stone-throwing, the species has developed rapidly via cultural "short-cuts" through the slow course of evolution up to that time. It is as if a new form of evolution had evolved and developed a means of "discovering itself." The recent developments in the many fields of science are remarkable for their explosive "evolutionary" speed. And have we not come to a time when, genetically, our species has the power to change itself? The human possibilities of "intervening" in the course of evolution may well have some profound and disquieting effects on our orientation as individuals. Yet are there not also the disturbing effects of recent psychological developments?

In short, our discoveries and limited knowledge of "nature" include human nature; the question is: how can we apply such knowledge for the benefit of ourselves without changing, or even "losing", ourselves?

REVIEWS

BOOKS

THE IRISH CRISIS by C. Desmond Greaves.
Lawrence & Wishart, £1.

When the last bonds of confidence with the British Army had been broken, subsequent disturbances in Northern Ireland revealed "the days of reprisal had arrived, and soon the bomb was holding the headlines and confusing the issues," Mr. Greaves writes in this astonishingly well-researched book. Newspapers and television, being too often interested in politics as a branch of show business, naturally gravitate towards the sensations of the bomb and the gun. The latter have been but symptoms of an underlying but too little examined malaise.

The Irish Crisis is horrifying in what it reveals, both indignant and compassionate in tone, and sensible and reasonable in its conclusions. Mr. Greaves is direct in his approach. He writes that "what is wrong is the most fundamental thing of all, English rule, which places them [the Six Counties] in the wrong jurisdiction, under a class incapable of catering for their needs." He has an almost disturbing matter of getting down to basics. Ireland is one, historically, geographically, culturally and by sentiment. To speak of majority wishes, meaning the wishes of Northern Protestants, being obeyed on the partition question is to perpetuate a dangerous and mistaken fiction: for they are the minority. This point is essential for an understanding of Mr. Greaves' thesis and Ireland's problems.

It is interesting, as the author points out, that according to the "two nations" theory, "if the Irish remained within the United Kingdom they were one nation, if they tried to get out they were two." And those so fond of maintaining that the Six Counties are "an integral part of Britain" are the very ones who would deny to large numbers of

their population the very political rights enjoyed in the rest of the country. Towards the end of the book, the author remarks:

Civil rights are not merely Catholic rights. When the civil rights movement began there was a firm intention to fight for the rights of the Protestant people equally with those of the Catholics. For the Protestants also suffer from the undemocratic nature of the Stormont régime. They are constrained to suffer their own disabilities because those of the Catholics are worse . . . Permit oppression and you suffer it. That rule has been proved throughout the world.

The ultimate gerrymander was partition which took a third of the population of a free Ireland, 40 per cent of the taxable capacity, as well as the main industrial area and the largest city, Belfast, a port through which passed a third of national trade. Even then, Britain has ensured Dublin's economic dependence, while Stormont is subordinate, not federal, in status. Its powers in all the essentials of national life: taxation, posts and communications, defence, legislative ability and economics, are so circumscribed that it is "imprisoned and powerless" in the face of difficulties. The Six Counties are heavily subsidised economically, while the power of private companies and rentiers has grown enormously.

Unionist power has been maintained by housing and job discrimination, intimidation, gerrymandering, the Special Powers Act, murder, terrorism, bombings and the encouragement of sectarian antipathy. Mr. Greaves shows how Protestants hold the overwhelming majority of local government appointments, even the most menial, in areas of Catholic dominance. There were no elections in Omagh between 1922 and 1959, while under the residential occupiers' qualification in local elections, one third of adult citizens have been disenfranchised. The illegal Ulster Volunteer Force, police and the 'B' Specials have attacked Catholic areas, while the petrol bomb was introduced to Northern Ireland by Protestants. Paisleyites have ambushed and savagely attacked peaceful civil rights marchers, and Catholic youths and children have had the letters "UVF" scratched on their arms and abdomens with broken glass and razors.

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Mr. Greaves, rightly, believes that the Tories seek to maintain Unionist power, while the Labour Party is only willing to restrain it but not to consider the border question. One of the most convincingly argued parts of a well-argued book reveals the hollowness of Harold Wilson's proposals.

A united Ireland has possibilities for industrial, agricultural, and economic development and self-sufficiency, and political and social advancement. It can only be achieved by a general settlement which includes the withdrawal of British troops and the recognition of Irish sovereignty, as Mr. Greaves says, even if his reliance upon united working class action is a little optimistic.

This is one of the most outstanding books to date on the Irish situation. It contains the kind of information, case histories, exhaustive analysis and concern with fundamentals that demolish all the myths, lies and horrors of Unionist rule. It is also a catalogue of shame about the self-interested and short-sighted policies and connivance of successive British Governments.

TERRY PHILPOT

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JAMES CONNOLLY

by C. Desmond Greaves. Seven Seas/Lawrence and Wishart, £1.

It has been said of those executed after the Dublin Insurrection of 1916 that they were more effectively dead, as martyrs, than when they were alive. It was certainly untrue of James Connolly, the outstanding Irish political figure of this century. His character was sufficiently dynamic for it to be inconceivable that he would have attained a three score year and ten lifespan, without achieving some sort of socialist republic comprising all Ireland.

He was one of the few Marxist theorists from a genuinely proletarian background. In his native Edinburgh he worked as a corporation carter and as a self-employed cobbler. Prior to that he had, like Bradlaugh, enlisted in the British Army and as Bradlaugh before him, had served in Ireland. For the rest of his working life he was mainly a paid (and sometimes very irregularly paid) official of trade unions or of the more revolutionary socialist parties. Since Connolly's day, Irish academic historians have had to take notice of his *Labour in Irish History* (1910). Like most of his work it was written originally in the form of articles for a socialist periodical.

Connolly has been a strong influence for secularism in Ireland. He married an Irish Protestant and continually incurred the wrath of Catholic clergy and clericalists. In 1910 the growth of socialism in Dublin sparked off a series of hostile lenten sermons by Fr. Kane, a Jesuit. Connolly counter-attacked with a series of articles, which are still in print as a pamphlet, *Labour, Nationality and Religion* (1910). He was severely wounded in the 1916 Rising, and had to be shot sitting in a chair. He received the last rites of the Catholic Church and clericalist commentators have since claimed that this amounted to a repudiation of his whole life's work. Whatever his views of a hereafter, his concern was very much for the present material world.

Connolly's internationalism was of the international variety, as distinct from that of which the ideal is a grey, rootless, lumpen proletariat. While his formative years were spent in Scotland, he lived from 1896 to 1902 in the United

States where he became a full time organiser of the Industrial Workers of the World (the "Wobblies"). When the first world war broke out, he decided that as far as Ireland was concerned the opportunity would not go by default. Through his influence the Citizen Army, formed as a result of police brutality during the Dublin Lock-out of 1913, set the pace for the "bourgeois" republicans. His own execution was followed by the death, either in the war of independence, or the civil war, of those individuals, whether basically socialist or republican who might have synthesised the two traditions.

After Connolly, the Irish Labour movement came to concentrate on purely bread-and-butter issues instead of acting as a leaven to traditional nationalism. Its influence accordingly became minimal. Britain's gift of special status to Irish citizens bore out the warning about Greeks. It ensured the English economy a source of readily assimilable and mobile WASC, if not WASP, labour. Whether doctors or ditch-diggers, the cost of their pre-productive years has been borne by the Irish community. Apart from this blatantly misapplied philanthropy the panacea of easy emigration has ensured that the population pressure which would otherwise have forced successive Irish governments to come to grips with their problems has been siphoned off. As early as 1897, Connolly had warned against this type of situation.

Much has been written about Connolly and will continue to be written about him. L. Desmond Greaves's *Life and Times of James Connolly*, which first appeared in 1961, is certainly the definitive biography. Painstakingly researched, it brought to light much information, hitherto unknown, for instance the fact of Connolly's military service. Not surprisingly, Mr. Greaves was a founder member of the Connolly Association, which was formed in London in 1937 and since 1948 he has been editor of the association's monthly *Irish Democrat*. The reissue of his biography as a paperback is very timely. Although it is sure of a good sale in Ireland, an even wider sale in England would help fill the Irish lacuna common to most English people who are not regular readers of *The Freethinker*.

PADRAIG O CONCHUIR

THE MASKS OF HATE by David Holbrook.

Oxford: Pergamon, £3.75.

Holbrook tells us that in recent productions on stage and screen

... there have been scenes showing women hanging naked on meathooks, raped, having their breasts cut off with kitchen knives, having their vaginas syringed to purify them of devils, and so on. Defecation on the stage has been simulated, and in one play the three characters at the end were dead, naked, and swilled about in tanks, until, at the end, parts of them were eaten. In one film a woman was shown tied to a post while being pelted with excreta" (p. 206).

—And so on *ad nauseam*, and beyond.

There is something badly wrong with any public which keeps crowding in to enjoy performances of this sort; thus making them most profitable to stage or to screen, as the case may be. There is also something very wrong with all those critics who are ever ready to think up oh-so-with-it reasons why such popular and hence profitable performances are artistically splendid and or in some other way to be admired. These things need to be said, and said

again, and I too am willing to stand in the pillory for saying them; to be despised as an ally of Mrs. Mary Whitehouse; to be accused of provincialism; even to be abused—oh must horrid spot!—as a Conservative. It should be recalled much more often than it nowadays is that the folklore figure best known for always moving with the times was that supreme trendocrat, the Vicar of Bray!

In spite, or perhaps rather because, of this sympathy with the the direction of Holbrook's attack I found this massive book unrewarding. What seems to me almost wholly valueless is what he probably regards as the main point. For the dust jacket tells us, "The critical approach is based on ten years' research into recent psychoanalytical thought and the new approaches to man's inner needs that spring from it. Most important here are the diagnosis of schizoid factors in the personality, and the study of perversion." Holbrook himself provides the best comment upon the present production. He quotes something well said by the psychologist D. W. Harding about Marshall McLuhan:

That such writing can be accepted raises discouraging questions about the reading capacity of the educated public. Tom Wolfe . . . suggested that people will begin to insist 'Start proving it.' That suggestion seems late in the day, but in fact a prior demand is necessary: 'Start saying it'—i.e. make a statement sufficiently unambiguous, with terms sufficiently defined, to be capable of proof or disproof . . . (p. 244n).

The trouble with the psychoanalysings which are, I imagine, so crucial to Holbrook's own picture of what he is supposed to be doing, is that one does not know, and is not told, how, concretely, one could test whether they are true or false; and, consequently, one does not know what, if anything, is actually being said. Thus Holbrook writes, without the quiver of a smile:

Surely from my analysis of the primitive elements in *Goldfinger* it will seem likely that such works as Fleming's must inevitably spread hate abroad in our society. This hate, however, is disguised because what is inculcated in us is hatred of woman and hatred of the female element in ourselves—and to this we are unusually prone, since one possible solution to life is to avoid humanness if we can.

The following paragraph continues at the same spanking pace: "Detection of the origins of Fleming's hate reveals it as originating in 'the homosexual position'" (p. 121).

Holbrook's whole treatment of the James Bond phenomenon made me long to have George Orwell with us again. Holbrook gives that phenomenon thirteen of his twenty-eight chapters. Certainly it demands attention. Holbrook is entirely right too to bring out both what a remarkably poor writer Fleming was and—what is infinitely more important—how much sadism, male chauvinism, and other nastiness there is wrapped up in all the sophisticated tinsel. But Orwell would have said all that is worth saying in a single article, and that without any of the psychoanalysings. Remember his study of that poor man's proto-Fleming, James Hadley Chase. Orwell too might also have recognised in Raymond Chandler a writer in every way superior to Fleming, and one whose work shows that the genre is not perhaps beyond redemption.

So my advice to anyone thinking of reading *The Masks of Hate* is: don't. Read or re-read some of Orwell's essays; and, for an attack on the rejection of both rationality and civilisation by so many contemporary cultural heroes, try Duncan Williams' *Trousered Apes* (London: Churchill, 1971).

ANTONY FLEW

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LETTERS

Political Origins of Christianity

I was interested by Enid Rob's letter in *The Freethinker* of 9 September. One or two points arise from it, on which I would like to comment briefly.

First, the writer says that unless Jesus is taken at his own valuation—and on this there is considerable difference of opinion—he was “undoubtedly guilty of blasphemy.” It has been pointed out that if we take the words alleged to have been spoken by Jesus at his trial, as recorded in the earliest Gospel, Mark 14:62, in which he assents to being “the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One” and says they “will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power”; the resultant remark of the High Priest, that Jesus had spoken blasphemy, cannot be regarded as a right assessment of the situation. To claim to be the Messiah was not blasphemous, according to many commentators—although it should be pointed out that others have regarded it so. For a full discussion of the matter I would refer (amongst others) to that given by Vincent Taylor in his *Commentary on Mark* (2nd ed.: p. 568f). At least the assumption of blasphemy is questionable.

The second point is that the writer suggests that the movement might have been “more political than is now made out.” I would comment that recently there have been many attempts to claim that the movement was indeed a political one, as can be seen from the writings of Robert Eisler, S. G. F. Brandon, J. Carmichael, R. Furneaux, to cite but a few, and that the trial scene as recorded in the Gospels, which attempt to fix the charge of blasphemy on Jesus, and so lay the blame for his death on the Jewish leaders and people, is a fiction by the writers of the Gospels. The whole argument for this is fully considered in *The Trial of Jesus* by Brandon; Paul Winter's *Trial of Jesus and Who Crucified Jesus?* by Solomon Zeitlin might also be consulted on this.

Assuming that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed an historical person—and I have yet to see Professor Wells's admirable thesis seriously refuted—the political origin of Christianity would seem to correspond better to the slender references to it outside the New Testament writings, and would also help to explain the otherwise irresolvable inconsistencies in the Gospel records. As Schopenhauer observed: “All we really know about Jesus Christ is the passage in Tacitus”: “. . . Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius suffered under Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judaea.”

(REV.) MICHAEL BRIERLEY.

In defence of Agnosticism

In his critique of Jacques Monod's *Chance and Necessity*, Trevor Morgan (19 August) has strung together a riotous medley of misunderstandings and fallacies. Some of these were effectively dealt with in earlier correspondence, so I will confine myself to a defence of the agnostic outlook against Mr. Morgan's assurance that he *knows* what is the case and what is not.

If Mr. Morgan is going to talk philosophy in the pages of *The Freethinker*, he should know what he is talking about, and to call the views of Berkeley “subjective nonsense” suggests that he does not. There is no logical connexion whatever between philosophical idealism and religious belief, since to hold with David Hume (who was an unbeliever) that our experience of what we call the external world is far from being a reliable path to knowledge does not commit one to belief in God. Why should it? Hume's contention that the peculiar psychological make-up of human beings drives them to formulate theories of reality does indeed place mind, and not matter, in Mr. Morgan's “primary position.” But our “knowledge” is then only the fruit of our mental interpretation of our experiences. There is nothing in all this that compels one to maintain the independent existence of an objective reality.

For Berkeley, so-called external reality existed only when it was being perceived by mind. To account for the fact that the external world existed before man, he was driven to postulate the existence of an eternal perceiving God. This, although bizarre, is a perfectly possible philosophical approach to the problem. The metaphysical arguments for God are not to be dismissed as easily as Mr. Morgan may imagine. However, for my purpose it is essential to point out that the view that what is experienced is identical with the experience itself (idealism) commits one to the central rôle of the mind in the knowing process, but not necessarily to belief in deity.

How far our sense-experiences represent *adequate* guides to “reality” is not really relevant to my argument. It is enough to point out that we cannot *know* that our sense-data correspond

exactly to reality, which refutes the naïve realism of, say, Marx and Lenin, who assert that they do, but without supporting argument. Indeed, to say that our impressions of the external world form a reliable account of reality, and allow one to maintain that such reality does objectively exist, presupposes that there is some other criterion by which we can test the validity of our sense-impressions. And whatever this criterion might be, it is certainly *not* rooted in sense-impressions. So if Mr. Morgan chooses to believe that there is an independent world existing outside of consciousness, it is up to him, but he should be aware that such a belief cannot be demonstrated.

What we regard as regularities in nature, as Hume pointed out, is ultimately based on the capacity of the mind to organise its sense-data and impose patterns. To believe that patterns and regularities exist independently of this organisational ability of the mind is to believe something which may well be true, but which we cannot *know* to be true. Just as religious belief can effectively be criticised by the verification principle, so can Mr. Morgan's dialectical materialism. It becomes a metaphysical position, in the strict sense of the word; that is, it lies beyond all experience and cannot be subjected to the ordinary tests of experience. Very general assertions about the nature of reality are not to be confused with the laws of science, which formulates its hypotheses at a much lower level of generality and is able to specify what would refute them. But how can you possibly confirm, or refute, the assertion that reality is ultimately dialectical?

Agnosticism, which makes no such claims to know what reality is ultimately about, therefore seems to me to be a more acceptable position. And it is one which seems to fit the spirit of Hamlet's declaration that “there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” I can well understand that an ardent ideologist like Mr. Morgan would find the agnostic position unacceptable, but at least it stops one from making assertions about the nature of reality which are cognitively meaningless.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF.

A Plea for Optimism

R. Reader's “World Malaise in History” reminds me of the reaction that sets in when a well-intentioned writer, either from old age, illness or élitism, becomes removed from practical human achievement. The case of H. G. Wells is an example of all three. Mr. Reader I do not know, so I am only guessing; but freethinking and pessimism seem to me a contradiction in terms.

I am a very practical workman; always close to nature and the elements, and involved with the achievements of others in dozens of ways. Thus Mr. Reader's “monstrously imbecile . . . competition” loses its power to make me despair.

The illusion of the malaise theory is exposed by the current social engineering in China. “Serve the people,” “combat self” and “it is right to rebel” motivate a huge population. Certainly a difficult adjustment for sophisticated Western élites, but not for the great majority of the world's people, in whose hands the future lies.

Man has achieved so much in his—and her—long history, and can solve the current and future problems as well.

JIM LITTLE.

Attitudes to Mental Illness

I am grateful to Jim Little (letters, 9 September) for criticising the power of psychiatrists and raising the tragic case of Mrs. Spalek.

Like Mrs. Spalek, I am in the same position with my brother Francis, who has been in Broadmoor since 1958 (though never convicted of a crime) and is suffering from a schizophrenic illness. I have had to stand by powerless and watch the authorities inflict E.C.T. and injections of moditone on him; these, together with close confinement, result in a person who, at only 34, is lined, grey, and old before his time. It is even admitted that E.C.T. is valueless for schizophrenia, and many psychologists condemn the method anyway.

Legislation, to protect both patients and relatives, was never more vital. Society has got to grow up in its attitude to schizophrenia, and here I would echo the words of Laing that it is we who fail by not trying to understand schizophrenia, and who, in many cases, seemingly cause the condition through interpersonal relations.

With Jim Little I appeal to everyone to help remedy the present appalling situation.

NATHAN MORRIS.

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