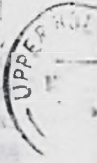




# FREETHINKER



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## FRANCO—DICTATOR, TERRORIST AND RELIGIOUS FANATIC TILL THE END

General Franco was reluctant to depart this life despite his 82 years, the distressing nature of his last illness, and confident expectation of eternal bliss. Although attended by 32 doctors, this faithful son of the Church placed his hopes of recovery elsewhere: "If the doctors fail, God will succeed," he said. Throughout the last five weeks of illness he placed more reliance on objects of piety than on surgical instruments. His sick-room was cluttered with such grisly and ludicrous examples of reliquary as the embalmed arm of a medieval saint and a mantle said to have been worn by the Virgin. The last of Europe's dictators retained his religious superstition and fanaticism till the end.

During his long career of villainy and repression, Franco's greatest ally was the Vatican, and he reciprocated by guaranteeing the Roman Catholic Church's dominance of educational, social and cultural life in Spain. Franco did not assume full power until 1939, but the scene for his victory was set eight years previously. The Second Republic came into existence in 1931, despite virulent opposition by the Church and her allies. The Provisional government proclaimed complete religious freedom; compulsory Catholic education in the schools was abolished and the Concordat with the Vatican was repudiated. Cardinal Segura, Primate of Spain, issued a pastoral letter in which he referred to the new regime as "the triumph of the enemies of Jesus Christ." Significantly, he called for a new political movement, led by Catholic Action, in defence of the Church.

The Republican government was assailed from all sides and after five stormy years the Civil War started. The Church was solidly behind Franco and the right wing insurgents from the beginning. Pope Pius XI gave his blessing to "those who have assumed the difficult and dangerous task of defending and restoring the rights of honour of God and of religion." Hitler and Mussolini, at the invitation of

the "patriotic" dictator, sent in their guns and bombers which reduced large areas to rubble and killed hundreds. No doubt many of those who danced in the streets when Franco's death was announced were remaining survivors or descendants of those who died in the air raids.

In March 1939, the Nationalist troops entered Madrid, and Pope Pius XII sent a message to Franco: "Lifting up our hearts to the Lord, we give sincere thanks with Your Excellency for Spain's desired Catholic victory. We express our hope that your most beloved country, with peace attained, may undertake with new vigour the ancient Christian traditions which made her great. With affectionate sentiments we send Your Excellency and the most noble Spanish people our Apostolic Blessing."

The message was characteristic of its sender. The reactionary and authoritarian Pius XII was friendly towards every right wing dictator and, as Cardinal Pacelli, Papal Nuncio in Berlin, had been closely associated with those who had schemed to bring Hitler legally to power. Like Franco, he remained officially neutral during the second World War, but with his record there is little doubt where his sympathies lay. One suspects that his "affectionate sentiments" for Franco were strengthened when the Spanish dictator sent the Blue Division of "volunteers" to fight alongside the Germans on the Russian front.

### The Church Triumphant

The reign of terror started in earnest when Franco and his supporters gained control of the country. Charles Foltz, a former chief of the Associated Press in Spain, estimated that the executions and murders carried out by the Fascist regime exceeded the number killed on both sides during the Civil War.

Franco restored the "rights" of the Church, and  
*(Continued overleaf)*

## Franco

in the terms of the *Fuero de los Espanoles*, the so-called Spanish Charter, of 1945: "The profession and practice of the Catholic religion, which is that of the Spanish State, shall enjoy official protection . . . No other outward ceremonies or demonstrations than those of the Catholic religion shall be permitted." Even that did not satisfy the Spanish hierarchy who pressurised the government for even sterner measures against non-Catholic religionists. As a result, the Ministry of the Interior issued a decree, not made public until 1950, that outlawed all Protestant activities.

This decree was in accordance with the policy promulgated by the Jesuit author of "The Conditions of Protestants in Spain", published in *Civiltà Cattolica*, the editor of which was appointed by the pope himself. The Jesuit writer declared: "The Catholic Church being convinced by reason of her Divine prerogatives, that she is the one true Church, claims for herself alone the right to freedom, for this right may only be possessed by truth and never by error." The Spanish bishops issued a joint pastoral letter in which they described the article as "a magnificent defence of our position on Catholic unity."

Franco lumped together Protestants, Freemasons, liberals and atheists as enemies of God and of the state. He bitterly denounced the Jews when it looked as if Hitler might win the war, and his Falange party absorbed much of the Nazi racial philosophy. Textbooks for use in the nation's schools—controlled by the Church—contained anti-Semitic diatribes.

## Democracy—Franco Style

Only once, in 1947, did Franco attempt to get popular sanction for his status, and even that referendum was rigged. The Spanish people were asked to vote on the Law of Succession which had already been passed by a hand-picked parliament. The question on the ballot read: "Do you ratify with your vote the Law of Suppression to the post of Chief of State as approved by Parliament on 7th June 1947?". There was no choice; Franco was to be given tenure of life as Chief of State with power to turn over the government of Spain to a king. The Church virtually instructed Catholics to vote in favour of this arrangement, every opposition leader was in prison and nearly two million citizens were disenfranchised because of their war records. Not surprisingly, Franco won, and a year later announced his intention to keep the job for life.

When five young Spaniards were sentenced to death recently for acts of terrorism, Franco ignored pleas to spare them. They were shot on the personal decision of a man who had been Spain's foremost terrorist for nearly half a century.

The Roman Catholic Church, whose leaders are

continually whining about religious persecution in Communist countries, played a key role in the establishment and the maintenance of Franco's brutal and discriminatory regime. Cardinal Gonzales, Primate of Spain, conducted the funeral service for Franco in the Valley of the Fallen, a monument consisting of a basilica and six chapels, hewn out of the mountainside by the slave labour of political prisoners. Appropriately it is surmounted by a huge cross, the symbol of blight and repression in Spain and other countries where Christianity has triumphed.

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## Freethinker Fund

Our thanks are expressed to those readers who contributed to the Fund during the period 21 October until 24 November. Anonymous, £1; Anonymous, £1; Mr and Mrs C, £1; W. Craigie, £1; In memory of H. E. Follett, £3; A. C. Free, 25p; J. Jeffery, £3.55; Miss E. Johnson, £2; W. Lazarus, £3.50; N. Leveritt, £1.50; S. J. Mace, £3; Mrs W. Mawson, £5; P. J. McCormick, 25p; T. Myles-Hill, £3.50; R. H. J. Reader, 25p; R. J. Sandilands, £2.50; Mrs M. Scott, 50p. Total: £32.80.

**Freethinker Defence Appeal.** There has been an excellent response to the Appeal which remains open until 31 January 1976. A full list of subscribers will be published. Donations should be sent to the editor of "The Freethinker", 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

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## OBITUARIES

### J. C. MONCK

John Charles Monck, a lifelong freethinker who belonged to the old Metropolitan Secular Society, has died in London after a long illness. He was aged 74. There was a secular committal ceremony at St Marylebone Crematorium.

### F. WARING

Frank Waring, a member of the British Humanist Association, collapsed and died at Euston Station, London, on 20 November. Mr Waring, who was a leading authority on steel production in this country, was on his way to Coventry to address a meeting of engineering executives. He was 60 years old. Our deep sympathy is extended to his wife, son, daughter and other relatives.

Barbara Smoker, president of the National Secular Society, conducted the committal ceremony at Beckenham Crematorium on 25 November.

Last month we announced the publication by the British Humanist Association of a new booklet entitled "Objective, Fair and Balanced: A New Law for Religion in Education." Brigid Brophy, author of "Religious Education in State Schools" and a resolute opponent of classroom indoctrination, argues that the proposals in the BHA pamphlet and in the draft parliamentary Bill which is published as an appendix, would not, if enacted, end the privileged position of Christianity in the nation's schools.

The BHA must lack both feeling for language and a sense of the ludicrous. Its proposed replacement for Religious Education is called "Education in Stances for Living." This gobstopping term, fit only to be translated into a statue in the main square of a People's Republic ("Worker assuming a Stance for Living"), apparently originated in a syllabus for RE. The BHA has picked it up, praises it as "helpful", jargonises it as "ESL" and, in a pamphlet of dull, loose argument, inept expression and wobbly syntax, elaborates it into a stupendous non-subject. Compared to ESL, such academic fabrications as "Women's Studies" appear to have genuine content. ESL would consist of a selection of the answers, religious and non-religious, that people give to "ultimate questions". "Ultimate questions", it seems, include "the nature of man, his relationship with other men and his place in the universe"—a formulation that itself provokes not an ultimate but an immediate question: given that "man" is being used generically, what "other men" could he conduct relationships with? Neanderthal Man? Little Green Man from Mars? The muddle is typical of the pamphlet and, no doubt, of what would go on in ESL lessons.

The selection and presentation of "Stances for Living" must, according to the BHA, be "objective, fair and balanced." In trying to explain what it means by "balanced", the pamphlet pronounces that the teacher "has no right to bias the children for or against any of the stances for living which are worthy of respect in contemporary Britain and the World." Whose respect it has in mind, and who is to judge whether a particular stance is worthy of it, the pamphlet simply doesn't say. The potential ESL teacher is left without a hint of whether he has or hasn't a right to bias the children about, for example, fascism, flat-earthism and astrology.

The pity of the pamphlet's flabbiness is that muscular Christians will walk all over it and its proposals. The proposals for voluntary schools are obscure, but the pamphlet says it is proposing "no important change in the 1944 Education Act concern-

ing Voluntary Schools." It is only in county schools that it proposes to scrap RE and the act of worship, both of which schools are at present obliged to provide. The BHA would allow a county school, if it wanted to, to provide ESL instead.

The term "ESL" has at least been kept out of the draft parliamentary Bill printed at the end of the pamphlet. The draft speaks of education "with respect to religious or non-religious outlooks or systems of belief." (I hope the BHA has taken legal advice about that first "or". I suspect it might permit a school to give education in religious outlooks only, opting out of the non-religious ones.) The draft provides that any such education given in a county school "shall be objective and (taken overall) fair and balanced over the range of such outlooks and systems of belief," and it adds that fairness and balance "shall be judged in accordance with proper educational principles."

### Confusion and Indoctrination

The upshot, were this enacted, is easy to guess. Things would go on, in county as well as other schools, pretty much as they do now. Schools without a powerful Christian on the staff, many of which are probably breaking the present law, would see no reason to provide ESL lessons, which would merely put the school and the teacher in danger of breaking the new law. There can't be many open-minded teachers confident they could produce the fair and balanced conspectus of views the draft Bill requires them to give (without, incidentally, the help of an agreed syllabus). There must be even fewer confident they could defend themselves against an accusation that their teaching was not in accordance with "proper educational principles", especially since the Bill omits to say who is to judge the principles to be proper to what. The draft Bill is simply deterring fair-minded teachers from taking on what their very fair-mindedness will show them to be a dangerous job. Convinced Christians, on the other hand, would volunteer in their scores to give ESL lessons—and would without scruple go on pouring out Christian propaganda exactly as they do now.

The BHA pamphlet, as insensitive to human psychology as to the English language, has failed to notice that one of the things convinced Christian teachers are most strongly convinced of is that the religious propaganda they utter *is* "objective, fair and balanced." My English teacher didn't bother to suppress the information that Shelley wrote an essay on the necessity of atheism. She told us straight out—and added, with a sweet, understanding smile: "Of course he wasn't *really* an atheist. No one who wrote such lovely poetry *could* be."

(Continued on page 183)

# A Merry Mithramas to You All!

JAMES M. ALEXANDER

It is well known that Christianity was one of a number of "mystery" religions. One of the most important of these was Mithraism, which James M. Alexander considers in this article. He examines the differences between Mithraism and Christianity and the factors causing the latter to become the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. Christianity, he proposes, far from being a religion of slaves, developed a strong power base and subverted the army.

Just how an obscure oriental sect, one of many similar mystery religions within the Roman Empire, became the all-powerful Christian church in a comparatively short time is difficult to comprehend (always ignoring divine intervention or revelation on the road to Damascus). Textual criticism of the gospels with non-existing originals (how this can be really objective without original documents has always puzzled me) is of no assistance in determining the mechanics of the success of Christianity. Nor are statements that Christmas is celebrated on 25 December because the sun-god Horus had his birth festival on that date—which he didn't, anyway!

First, the absolute beginner in the study of religions would ask, which Horus is being referred to? In pre-dynastic Egypt there were several local tribal gods with this name, which in Egyptian is Hor; Horus is but the Latinised form. These earlier deities were adapted and amalgamated with others to conform with later beliefs, the result of political needs arising from the unification of the land under one ruler. Two main gods with this name were the sky-god of invaders from Libya, whose symbol was a falcon, and another worshipped in the Delta, who was later assimilated into the Heliopolitan cosmology as the son of Isis and Osiris.

Second, the Egyptian calendar had twelve months of 30 days each, with five intercalary days, designated as the "birthdays" of five important deities, inserted at the end of the year. The second of these days was sacred to Horus, and the new year commenced with the Nile inundation coinciding with the heliacal rising of the Dog Star, Sirius—a date approximating to our 15 July. It is not always understood that primitive sky and creative gods were only solarised much later with the institution of a single ruler, an organised state priesthood, and the adoption of a solar calendar.

In those early centres of civilisation, like the Nile, Tigris—Euphrates and Indus valleys, the sun was regarded as a somewhat destructive force and an enemy of the farmer. The only really indigenous solar religion is found in northern latitudes, where the re-appearance of the sun after the cold and snow is an

event to be welcomed. Hence the midwinter Yuletide fires which burned throughout northern Europe on or about the winter solstice each year. All other sun-gods are creations of a politically minded priesthood.

Christmas was not regarded as an important Christian festival until the fourth century. The early Church was inclined to place the birth of Jesus in March, at the time of the spring equinox. This may have been a hangover from the period when it was mainly a Jewish heresy and Passover still celebrated by its adherents. Indeed, at one time or another the birthplace has been placed in almost every month of the year. When it was imported into Rome it was as yet another oriental mystery initiation cult of a type very familiar to the Romans.

## The Early Christians and the Mysteries

The ancient world of the Mediterranean had an exotic fabric of esoteric "mysteries", such as those of Isis and Mithra, as well as the rites performed at Eleusis. These mystery cults were a means of expressing and satisfying the need for a personal and dramatised faith that could provide the assurance of immortality. The religious experience provided by the rituals gave an extra dimension to the official state religions and the traditional worship at agricultural and fertility shrines. In this connection it is important that we understand the original meaning of the word "mystery" and how it has changed. The Greek word "mysterion" meant a ritual performed only in the presence of initiates. In Latin the meaning was gradually extended to include "secret". In the New Testament it is used to refer to revelation from God. These changes have given the wrong impression that the mystery cults involved secret doctrines and contained hidden truths to which the outsider could not penetrate. In fact they were mainly concerned with the enactment of sacred dramas and repeated rituals. The point of participation in them was not to learn, but to experience a change—a change that was not just a matter of spiritual ecstasy, but a form of rebirth.

These cults often included a physical enactment of fertility rites, and other sexual practices (these were charges brought against the early Christians) and they did not always have an easy time in Rome. As the city extended its boundaries and acquired an empire, it became a centre for the introduction of foreign religions, many brought by immigrants from her new territories. These often conflicted with traditional and official beliefs. A wave of Dionysian practices swept Rome in the second century BC, and were suppressed because of alleged excesses in 186 BC. The cult of Isis, constructed out of Egyptian mythology by Ptolemy I as a means of uniting his Greek and Egyptian subjects, spread rapidly in

the Hellenic and Roman worlds. There were periodic attempts to suppress it, and in 19 AD, under Tiberius, the priests of Isis were crucified following sexual scandals.

You may well ask, what has all this to do with Christmas? At the onset I enquired how the obscure Christian sect rapidly advanced to become the religion of Rome. Ignoring generally accepted explanations I have attempted to show the similarities with other oriental cults. With two exceptions the mystery sects conveyed no doctrine, established no "church", and were not mutually exclusive. Participation in them was not incompatible with other religious observances. The two exceptions were Mithraism and Christianity; in both of these theological dogma was advanced a stage further. Let us examine how one absorbed the other.

### Mithra Marches With the Legions

According to Chairman Mao, political power proceeds from the barrel of a gun. In the Roman empire it certainly rested in the swords and spears of the legionaries. The importance of maintaining friendly relations with the army and respect for their traditions and beliefs was realised by more than one emperor; eventually the army became so powerful politically that it took to itself the role of electing him. When Mithraism became predominantly the religion of the legions, with the title of "Invictus" it was helped by imperial encouragement and several emperors adopted that title for themselves.

Mithra was originally an Iranian sun-god. The rise of Zoroastrianism involved the partial eclipse of the older polytheism, and Mithra suffered in this temporary setback. In the evolution of the new faith however, the older myths were reintroduced and adapted. Later Mithraism emerged as a separate cult with Mithra himself as supreme lord, but with traces of Zoroastrian teaching attached. Thus he was regarded as the source of good, involved in a struggle with the forces of evil and disruption. The main instrument of victory over evil was the sacrifice of a sacred bull. Now, the two almost universal animal symbols of fertility were the bull and the ram, and the Christians adopted the latter as theirs in the form of the "Lamb of God". The Mithraic initiate was baptised in the blood of the dying bull, and then partook of a sacred meal consisting of the elements of bread and wine. There were seven grades of initiation, each called, significantly, a sacramentum, a term also used for the oath of loyalty taken by the recruit upon entry into the legion. (Significantly there are seven sacraments in the Roman church to this day.)

That Mithraism was the religion of the army and was widespread within the empire is shown by the discovery of temples as far apart as Syria and the borders of Scotland. It was well adapted to a disciplined military environment; the identification of

the individual with the god in his struggle against evil strengthened solidarity in battle against the enemies of Rome. The promise of immortality induced courage and unity in a force that was racially and culturally very mixed. As in Christianity, there was little or no place for women in the services. How then, did the one great religion of the Roman world that was so similar to, and had most in common with Christianity vanish to leave its chief opponent to inherit political and theological power?

### Christianity Triumphant

One of the many myths often accepted without question even by unbelievers, is that Christianity was essentially a religion of slaves. There is no valid evidence for this assertion, and it persists because it has suited Christian apologists to perpetuate it. To the contrary, by its very nature it was more likely to attract bored, idle Roman matrons who were in the habit of trekking from one mystery cult to another. It was also likely to be the popular pastime of the well-heeled tradesmen and solid citizenry. The existence of costly catacomb burials (if these are Christian, as claimed) are indicative of wealth among many adherents. The reticence and secrecy surrounding the eucharist as well as the exclusion of probationers—those not yet baptised or who had not graduated to their first communion at Easter—added to its attractions for those who, with growing wealth and economic power, aspired to inclusion in an elitist society denied them by their birth. If slaves participated it was probably as a whim of, or in conformity with, their masters and mistresses. While Christianity differed in some respects from the other sects, it drew upon the religious feelings that gave the latter their vitality. It preached immortality, a resurrected god, renewal of life through baptism, efficacy of sacraments, and a eucharistic mystery. Its doctrines and the repudiation of polytheism provided a solution to the problems of the upper-class intellectual, whilst its influence among an increasingly important middle-class with political ambitions provided it with a power-base of no mean order.

As the inevitable collapse of Roman imperialism drew ever nearer despite the growth of—and perhaps because of—a wealthy mercantile, artisan and urbanised population, the politically orientated Church was born. How did Christ supersede Mithra? I offer this proposition: the Christians subverted the legions. Realising that real power lay in a disciplined body with a regimented religion so similar to their own, they proceeded to win over the army, the one cohesive force remaining in a growing state of anarchy. And in the process ensured their own survival and ascension to supreme authority.

So today we celebrate Christmas, and not the feast of *sol invictus*, "the unconquerable sun", title of Mithra, the one possible alternative whose birth really was celebrated on 25 December.

# Humanism and Christianity—the Essential Difference

MARGARET KNIGHT

In 1955, Margaret Knight gave two broadcast talks on "Morals Without Religion" and caused a clamour that reverberated through Broadcasting House and religious institutions for several years afterwards. Fleet Street condemned "the unholy Mrs Knight", and critics accused her of not knowing enough about the religion she had attacked. Mrs Knight, an educational psychologist and University lecturer, embarked on a reading programme in which she studied the Bible and books about the origins and history of the Church. In the light of the wider knowledge thus acquired, she later wrote: "I now incline to the view that the conversion of Europe to Christianity was one of the greatest disasters of history." Margaret Knight was heard recently on the BBC World Service and the text of her talk is published below, by permission.

Twenty years ago, in Great Britain, it was not considered respectable to be an atheist—to say openly that one didn't believe in God was a quite audacious thing to do. I speak from experience, because I *did* do it—very openly indeed, in fact in a BBC radio programme. And the effect, in the words of *Time* magazine, was nearly to lift the roof off Broadcasting House.

The reaction wasn't entirely hostile by any means—of the 2,000-odd letters I received after the broadcast, considerably more than half were letters of support. But there was certainly an almighty fuss, and some people were very angry indeed. But that, as I said, was 20 years ago; such a fuss would be unthinkable now, for the climate of thought about religion has changed profoundly. It is now quite respectable to be an unbeliever. However, most unbelievers today don't call themselves atheists: they prefer the word humanist, which is certainly a much better term. To describe someone as an atheist is simply to say what he doesn't believe: to describe him as a humanist is to go beyond that and to indicate what he does believe.

Now we—the humanists—believe that, since there is no reason to suppose that we live on in another world after death, it is all-important to improve the quality of life in this world; and we believe that man should pursue this aim through the use of his own moral and intellectual resources, without looking for aid from some Higher Power. And we believe that morality is the creation of the human community; that it is concerned with the relation between man and man, not with the relation between man and a supposed superhuman Law-

giver. I will enlarge on this point later, but let me just say now that there is nothing new in these doctrines. Humanism derives from a tradition much older than Christianity or Islam. The great classical civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome were rooted firmly in humanist values, and it has been argued that the decline of these values in the West, after the conversion of Europe to Christianity, was a major setback to human progress.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that in Britain today a large number of people—possibly even a majority—are, in effect, humanists, though they don't always use that term—one might say that they are humanists without knowing it. On the other hand, there are still many people who are strongly—even vociferously—opposed to humanism, mainly because they think that most people need the belief in God to deter them from wrongdoing, and that if the belief disappeared we should have a moral landslide.

But this, really, is a load of rubbish. It is just not true that people can't be good without believing in God. Moral behaviour is not a matter of conforming to a set of rules laid down by a higher power. It is a matter of acting so as to increase human well-being and reduce human suffering; a matter of behaving in a sensitive, considerate, co-operative way to other people; of realising that other people's claims and interests matter as much as our own.

## "Law of the Jungle"

Now traditional Christian belief—and I'm referring only to Christianity now, as I'm not really qualified to talk about other faiths—has long been that co-operative, altruistic, compassionate behaviour is not something that comes naturally to us. The only really natural form of behaviour, it is supposed, is selfish behaviour; and if we help other people, or make sacrifices for them, this can only be as a result of religious training and religious conviction.

But, you know, this is all rubbish too. After all, even the social animals co-operate (by social animals, of course, I mean animals that live in packs, herds, troops or whatever, as distinct from those that are solitary). Recent "field" studies of the social animals have shown clearly how mistaken was the old, traditional view about the so-called "law of the jungle". Life in animal societies is by no means just a savage free-for-all of each one for himself. There are occasional fights and squabbles of course, as there are in all communities. But in general members of animal societies get along very

amiably together; they co-operate in finding food and taking care of the young, and sometimes even sacrifice their own lives in defending the young from predators. And no-one suggests that they do this from religious conviction!

Now man is, in the biological sense, a social animal too. Since the dawn of history, men have lived in communities—indeed this is true, not only of our primitive human ancestors, but of our pre-human ancestors the so-called ape-men or hominids. Man has never been a solitary species. As the ancient Greeks and Romans well realised, we are born and grow up in communities, and it is natural for us to have a good deal of fellow-feeling for the other members—natural for us to like other people, to want them to like us, and to be concerned for their happiness and well-being as well as for our own.

But now I must guard against misunderstanding. I'm not suggesting for a moment that human beings are entirely altruistic. Obviously, we're not always friendly and co-operative, any more than the other social animals are. Obviously, we don't always feel like helping our neighbour—there are many occasions when we may feel more like hitting him on the head! To put this in more formal language, we have in us two basic impulses or tendencies, which pull us in different ways—the social or co-operative on one hand, and the aggressive on the other. And when we're obstructed in getting what we want, the aggressive impulses tend to get the upper hand.

### Conflicting Impulses

This is so obvious that there is no need to argue about it. But what I do want to maintain very strongly, as against the traditional Christian view, is that these two conflicting tendencies, the co-operative and the aggressive, are biologically on a level—both part of our innate, instinctive equipment. It is a mistake to think that whereas the aggressive tendencies appear spontaneously, the co-operative tendencies have to be built up in us by religious teaching. It is a mistake to think that if we hit our neighbour on the head we are behaving naturally, whereas if we help him we are curbing our spontaneous tendencies because we think that is what God wants us to do. And if anyone doubts this, let me quote to him the eminently reasonable statement made by the "father" of evolutionary biology, Darwin. He said, "It can hardly be disputed that the social feelings are instinctive or innate in the lower animals: and why should they not be so in man?" Why indeed?

Well now in conclusion: both these conflicting tendencies, the co-operative and the aggressive, were doubtless very necessary for man's survival in the primitive state. But in the sort of highly organised community life we lead today, it is

desirable that the co-operative tendencies shall be encouraged and strengthened, and the aggressive tendencies kept to a large extent under control. And that, in essence, is what morality is all about. It is not something that has been imposed on man from above by a supernatural lawgiver: it is something that has been worked out, and is still being worked out, by men themselves, as an aid to living happily together in communities. And this last statement summarises, I think, as well as any single sentence can do, the essential difference between the humanist and the religious views of life.

Dora Russell's Autobiography

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### Off Balance

And she was only an English teacher. Your true, trained, Christian RE teacher believes he has given "objective fair and balanced" coverage to the opposition when he has warned the children against the wiles of Satan.

Under the BHA provisions it would, of course, be open to a parent (provided he could find out what took place in the classroom) to complain that an ESL course given by a Christian teacher was not in fact balanced. However, the draft Bill is so misty that it would probably, while putting all ESL teachers at risk, be unable to catch one. Still, it might give religionists pause—were it not that another section of the draft Bill obligingly gives them a complete and perfect bolt-hole. The requirement of balance is, this section says, waived when the pupils are pursuing a course laid down by the syllabus for an external examination which the school intends to enter them for. The Bill would, in fact, produce nothing except a new fashion in county secondary schools for intending (the intention need never be acted on) to enter all the pupils for O and A level Religious Studies.

## "STANCES FOR LIVING" IS BOTTOM OF THE CLASS

Geoffrey Edge, MP, has promised to introduce a Bill on school religion on the lines of that which has been published by the British Humanist Association in its booklet *Objective, Fair and Balanced*. Mr Edge claimed in a recent broadcast that such a Bill would enjoy wide support in the House of Commons.

It is evident from comments made to *The Freethinker* that whatever support this Bill may receive at Westminster, many humanists—particularly those who have been active in the campaign against the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act—are exceedingly dubious about the BHA proposals.

G. N. Deodhekar, a teacher and a leading member of the National Secular Society, draws attention to clause 26 of the Bill. He says that this clause would, in effect, forbid acts of worship as a general rule in schools, but occasional acts of worship or religious ceremonies may be arranged as part of an educational course. Mr Deodhekar adds: "The idea that religious worship or ceremony, such as confirmation, or even marriage, is organised as a form of educational play-acting, would be repugnant to those who are genuinely serious about their beliefs. There would also be in today's urban multi-religious schools a plethora of Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh acts of worship and ceremonies to be organised.

"The whole concept is messy, divisive, illogical and unnecessary. Films, for instance, could serve the educational needs adequately and inoffensively. Most MPs who concede the need to change the law on school religion will, I believe, not want such a complicated solution, but will opt for a simple one; namely that religious worship and ceremonies should take place in Sunday schools, churches, mosques or in the home, and not in schools."

Margaret Knight, an educational psychologist and author, says that the BHA report cannot be faulted where it describes and criticises current policy and practice regarding RE. It states an unanswerable case with force and clarity. But Mrs Knight regards the BHA proposals for amending the 1944 Act as "somewhat unrealistic", and she wonders whether there is any good reason for the law to be involved in this field at all. She finds herself "inclined to agree with the *New Humanist* reviewer that the best solution may well be 'simply to repeal the relevant sections of the Act without putting anything in their place, and leave teachers, parents and pupils to sort out the problem between them.' This could be done perhaps with the aid of advice, though not directives, from the Ministry of Education."

Michael Lloyd-Jones, a former member of the NSS Executive Committee and co-author of *Sex Education—the Erroneous Zone*, describes the BHA

## NEWS

document as "remarkable for the way in which vital questions are glossed over and serious objections are ignored.

"There is no reason to believe that the BHA's proposals offer a real chance to put an end to the injustices of the present situation. On the contrary, Christians would still be able to ensure that their religion dominated the syllabus and would even be able to claim, not without justification, that their work was sanctioned, and thus approved, by humanist-inspired legislation.

"Even if the new law did ensure the widespread introduction of comparative religion, with a brief survey of some of the secular philosophies thrown in, it is far from obvious that this will represent a major advance on the present system. It is hard to see what would be gained, apart from increased confusion and irrelevance, from a law which aimed to replace a programme of instruction in one form of decadent superstition by a programme of instruction in many.

"The BHA's proposals are objectionable in principle and unworkable in practice. They represent a major concession to the religious lobby".

Merle Tolfree, who was actively involved in the Humanist Teachers Association, says that the new BHA proposals result from the failure in Birmingham last year to win acceptance for a more liberal RE syllabus which would have treated non-religious philosophies like humanism and Marxism on an equal basis with religion. "But," Miss Tolfree declares, "the syllabus was declared to be illegal, and a revised version, with a strong religious bias, was produced to placate the authorities. It was evident that 'Education in Stances for Living' could not be accepted as educational under the present law and that the only thing to do was to change the law.

"The BHA has always been ambiguous on the question of religion in school, and although their new proposals would liberalise the situation, their effectiveness would depend on how, and by whom, they were treated. It is regrettable that provision has been made for worship which is so widely condemned as an educational practice. A simple move to repeal all the clauses concerning religion in county schools would have been sufficient."

During the last decade when the National Secular Society and secular elements within the Humanist Teachers Association have been campaigning against the privileged position of Christianity in the state education system, vast subsidies



# AND NOTES

for Church schools, and the establishment of schools at taxpayers' expense by non-Christian religious sects, the BHA has usually stood on the sidelines. A morbid fear of being involved in a controversy that may become a little rumbustious at times has made some humanists adopt vague attitudes and seek allies in "liberal" religious circles. Had the BHA thrown its weight behind the campaign for secular education, instead of wasting time and resources and avoiding the basic issues, it may now have been possible to promote a really effective parliamentary Bill.

The futility of tampering with the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act instead of abolishing them was well illustrated last month by a *Methodist Recorder* article from the pen of David Mudd, MP. Mr Mudd informed *Recorder* readers that he was worried about the suggestion of reducing the place of Christianity in education. He then issued this rallying-call to his fellow-Christians: "... instead of considering the down-grading of Christianity in the classroom, we should be working for an extension of Christianity in the fabric and the purpose of our schools."

Mr Mudd is a stout defender of freedom of choice "... provided it is the basic freedom of the child to be taught constructively rather than the basic freedom of the non-Christian idealist to teach destructively... the freedom I support is the freedom to study within the concepts and guidance of the Christian belief, and not the freedom of those who would destroy Christian standards to embark upon their destructive work in the classroom."

There you have the authentic voice of the Christian indoctrinator—no concern for parents who have no choice but to send their children to Church schools; no sympathy for non-religious pupils who cannot withdraw from RI and acts of worship without parental consent; no respect for non-religious teachers who have to become hypocrites before their pupils and colleagues. And certainly no nonsense about "Education in Stances for Living."

When will all humanists realise that the occasional trendy bishop and the liberal Christians are an ineffective minority within the Church? Church leaders and religious educationists, unable to persuade adults to participate in acts of worship, are not going to be gently persuaded to give up their hold on captive classroom audiences. It will take a more formidable effort than this BHA report and Bill to dislodge them.

## BRITISH CATHOLICS DEFY THE VATICAN

A new book, described by the *Catholic Herald* as closely reasoned and carefully written, has been published by a group of Catholics in Britain, despite strong Vatican disapproval. *The Population Question*, which took 20 experts two years to write, poses the question of parenthood in relation to the increasing world population. It was written at the request of the Council of International Catholic Organisations, a body which, although independent, has close links with the Vatican. Several British organisations are affiliated to it, and some of its associated groups have consultative status at the United Nations.

*The Population Problem* was banned by the Vatican, but a censored version was published in France. The section deleted from the French edition is included in that which has appeared in this country, and is expected to cause much controversy. Father Michael Ingram, a co-editor, commented: "The Vatican think they have killed it," and he feels that the Church may over-react to the English edition.

Father Ingram said that the CICO commission on population was under continual pressure from the Vatican, whose representatives attended all major meetings. The book's publishers claim that a copy of the secret directive sent to hierarchies throughout the world, urging them to put pressure on their governments not to liberalise laws on family planning, was given to the president of CICO to persuade him to ensure that the commission adopted this line.

The book is divided into four sections and in the first of these, on the demographic aspects of population, Father Arthur McCormack discusses the implications of continually increasing population. He argues that the Church and its lay organisations must face the fact that we are confronted by the urgent and serious prospect of the world population doubling in the next 30 years.

This book is certain to stimulate debate within the Church on the question of family planning. Thousands of Catholic couples have made their own decision in defiance of Rome, and the days of large Catholic families in Britain and elsewhere are passing.

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Hector Hawton, the veteran humanist journalist who contributes to the columns of "The Free-thinker" and writes a monthly column for "New Humanist", recently underwent a major operation at University College Hospital, London. Mr Hawton's friends in freethought circles will join in wishing him a complete recovery, but it will be some time before he resumes his activities.

THE LIFE OF BERTRAND RUSSELL by Ronald W. Clark. Jonathan Cape and Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £6.95.

In two respects at least Ronald W. Clark has undertaken an immense task—to deal with the extent and complexity of Russell's life, as well as the vast amount of material, published and unpublished. He has the possibly unenviable advantage of being the first person allowed by the Russell Estate and McMaster University to make use for publication of the Russell archives; he has also the correspondence between Russell and Lady Ottoline Morrell and Lady Constance Maleson, both now no longer living. One must give him considerable credit for exhaustive work, which no one who has ever undertaken research should undervalue.

But several considerations arise in dealing with archives. The volume of the material is overwhelming and indigestible in a short space of time; how much should be verbatim, how much paraphrased; most important of all, what should be selected for publication and what left out. As I indicated in my autobiography, Russell left his papers to two Trustees, Countess Edith Russell and Anton Felton, of the Russell Estate. They had the power to destroy or otherwise dispose of these papers. None of Russell's children have been told what has or has not been preserved of family correspondence. I do not know if any letters of mine to Russell exist; if so, I have been informed that, on Russell's orders, they are not to be published till five years after my death. All this is relevant only in the sense that a biographer is inevitably highly selective in the use of material and will be guided by his own opinions, values and tastes, as well as by the availability and sheer superabundance of documents with which he has to deal.

Perhaps I should say at once that I am one of those who dislike the modern passion for prying into every detail of people's private, more especially their sex, lives, and the hoarding up of letters and papers for the purpose of sale and future "revelations". Many letters survive, of course, for sentimental reasons and may later be discovered. But others are both written and preserved by those concerned out of a sense of their own importance; these, to the disadvantage of humbler persons, survive to make and possibly distort history. I do not know to what extent learning more about a writer or statesman may damage the image one may have formed of him. I do know that, when I read how the wife of John Donne gave birth to twelve children and died in childbirth, it tarnished somewhat for me the glory of his love poetry.

But I want first to comment on Clark's handling of Russell the mathematician, philosopher, rationa-

## FREETHINKER

list, political reformer and agitator. Clark gives chronologically the relevant information and extracts from letters, and as regards the achievement with Whitehead of *Principia Mathematica*, there is little that anyone not expert can say, except to note the agony and exhaustion the work entailed. But when it comes to other activities, Clark fails to get inside the spirit of Russell and the times through which he was living. Clark is either lacking in the necessary imagination and empathy, or else he is too right-wing in politics to do justice to Russell's campaigns. He is certainly, like one aspect of Russell himself, a class and cultural snob. We are frequently reminded that Bertie was "a Russell", so inspired by great traditions that his aristocratic bearing at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm was such as to "put the Royal Family at ease!"

Exploration of religion with Ottoline has space, but the great battle for reason against authority, intolerance and superstition is scarcely mentioned. But this mattered greatly at the period when a mere handful of "Heretics" in Cambridge, with C. K. Ogden were upholding the young in their unbelief amid an environment of compulsory chapel-going in the Colleges. Nor is credit given to Ogden, the rightful inventor of the impudent "Today and Tomorrow" series to which both Bertie and I contributed. I have been credited with "influencing" Bertie towards anti-religion. The truth is that both of us had to struggle free from a religious upbringing. And, in fact, one of Bertie's first suggestions to me on our return from China was that I should join the Rationalist Press Association and the Independent Labour Party. We both attended dinners of the RPA, Bertie worked and wrote for them for half a century, and was their President from 1955 till the day of his death. He was on the Panel of Distinguished Members of the National Secular Society, to whom he gave a lecture in 1927 on "Why I am not a Christian", which was later published by the NSS and the RPA.

To the National Secular Society on the occasion of their centenary as late as 1966 he wrote: *It is good news that the National Secular Society is publishing a centenary brochure, and I am glad to take this opportunity of congratulating the Society on a hundred years of successful work for liberal causes. Ninety-eight years ago my father was defeated in a Parliamentary election because he advocated birth control. Throughout the disgracefully scurrilous campaign his opponents alluded to him as Vice-Count Amberley. A Bishop accused him of infanticide and his usual political friends fought shy*

# REVIEWS

*of supporting him. Not only in this matter of birth control, but in all questions where sex plays a part, there has been, during the last hundred years, and especially during the last fifty, a profound change in which the National Secular Society has taken a valiant part. The Blasphemy Laws, though still on the Statute Book, have become a dead letter. There still remains much to be done to secure a rational ethic, and we may look forward confidently to the continuation of the valuable work of the National Secular Society in this field. I wish all success to the Society.*

In 1964 this was his contribution to the NSS campaign for Secular Education: *The attempt to impose religious belief on children should be resisted. Religious doctrine is arbitrary and entirely the province of those who wish to maintain such views as they find adequate to their needs. It is entirely unacceptable, however, that doctrine should be foisted upon the young as a matter of duty in the course of their education. I welcome the campaign against compulsory chapel and religious coercion in our schools.*

As we all know, from present controversy, none of these causes can be called a dead letter. And Bertie Russell stands out in his time, as great as Voltaire in his, as a tireless fighter of great integrity who was a support and inspiration to multitudes among the confused and troubled, to whom he brought relief and clarity of thought.

On philosophy Clark rightly gives space to the harrying of Russell by Wittgenstein. As I have never been a Wittgenstein fan I can only feel sympathy with Russell, when, in the midst of writing the results of very hard-won thought, he was assailed by attacks on his personal character and by theories that seemed to destroy the very foundation of his work. As to this now I cannot judge, but at that date, since I was studying philosophy and eighteenth-century thought myself, I enjoyed Bertie's application of the atomic and analytic method to matter and mind, and I recall sharing his puckish delight that Einstein had "upset MY Newtonian cosmology."

The story of Russell's pacifism from 1915 onwards is usefully told in detail from Russell's angle. This was the time in Russell's life when he was most emotionally alive, and was able, in great meetings, to reach out and feel himself at one with the mass of ordinary people. But it does not convey just what Russell meant to us young men and women, a man who stood up alone for the sake of life, conscience, the hope of a better world. We would have followed him anywhere.

By the same token, Clark's estimate of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Committee of 100 is totally inadequate. Those of us who had been young beside Russell in 1916 now found again the champion we needed. At its outset, CND was an uprising of intellectuals, who were among the few who really understood the meaning of nuclear weapons. It did not come from the mass of the people. But, as information spread, it became a great movement of morality, humanity and compassion. It was pre-eminently a movement for which the very combination of qualities that Russell possessed were required. That work, the manifesto with Einstein, and forming the Pugwash group of scientists, had an effect on world opinion which will never be forgotten if our history survives.

Searching my own beliefs I find that there is no cause which Russell led or supported—apart from several aspects of his hostility to Russia—with which I have not been in whole-hearted agreement. Strange as it may seem to this more cynical age, there were some things which Russell and my generation really believed and knew we had to fight for. Nor should it be forgotten that many benefit today from some, at least, of our victories. There have been great changes in the marriage laws, in the relations of men and women, and in the theory and practice of education. Some of us innovators and pioneers indeed have lived to see our ideals distorted and misused; "free love", for instance, is not the same thing as "having sex", nor is much of the education today styled "progressive" in accord with what Russell and I intended.

About our school Clark has pieced together information from various sources. His use of hearsay, innuendo and anonymous malicious gossip is, in a serious book and on such a subject, inexcusable and near libel. Seducing members of the staff was not, as implied, Bertie's habit. Remarks to the staff about women alleged to have been made by Bertie, are quoted from sources not given and an anonymous teacher claims to have been sexually approached. Such statements, which may even be deliberate falsehoods by those who made them, should not have been reported by a scrupulous biographer. The one case, to which the quotation from my divorce refers, is fully told in my book and arose in our own home before the school started, as did any subsequent incidents of the kind. We kept our private lives apart from the school. It is also untrue that Griffin Barry ever came to stay at the school until after Bertie had left it and me for good. As regards the staff, they did have reasonable liberty for their own lives; a bungalow classroom some distance from the main school house could be used now and then to give a party to their friends. Two marriages took place among the staff, who were, in the main, loyal and excellent teachers. My daughter Kate has written that she learnt more at our school than at any other time of her life.

Clark gives the impression that we taught the children about intercourse and sex fully in biological terms. In fact we did not; our sex teaching by present standards was old-fashioned. We were not dealing with adolescents; we answered questions, did not discourage or discuss masturbation; our aim was to let the children feel that there was nothing unclean or improper about their bodies. (I am, in fact, dubious about the way sex teaching is done nowadays.)

Even where he quotes from published statements by Bertie or me, Clark gives a false impression. We were not in entire agreement; I did not teach socialism in the school; its basis was democracy instead of authoritarianism, and co-operation rather than competition. At that time it seemed as if our social system were moving in such a direction, which, regrettably, cannot be said now.

Clark quotes from an article which I wrote about the school fairly recently in the journal *Anarchy*, as if the views it contained were from Bertie and me. In fact I stated clearly at the beginning of the article that this account related only to the time after Bertie had left. The fully democratic Council, with domestic staff and gardeners, was my innovation, as was the teaching of history from the beginning of the world, associated with biological and archaeological objects found by the children. But Clark rightly assesses that Bertie found the financial drain of the school unbearable and that, while he took pleasure in elaborating theories of education, he lacked the patience and community spirit to put them into practice.

Where his sources are other writings by me, Clark, either by carelessness or selective omission, again gives false impressions. I was attacked in America in 1928 for my book *Hypatia*, which contained views about sex, not for the *Right to be Happy* which did not. My autobiography, recently published, and which he has obviously read, contains incidents in which I participated. He states that the idea for the book *Prospects of Industrial Civilisation* came to Bertie on the ship for China, but not that it arose entirely from theories about the nature and effect of industrialism which, as I explained, I put to Bertie in the midst of the Red Sea, theories which he called highly original and are elaborated in my own book.

I also tell the full story of the onset of Bertie's illness in China and how two Chinese chauffeurs and I played our part in helping to save his life, by getting him back from the Western hills, and demanding the opening of the gates of Peking. Clark dismisses this as a car with a puncture on the way back from Bauding, the place where previously he had caught the chill which later developed. The photo of Bertie facing pp.320-321 is one I took of him on the wall of Peking not the Great Wall; the other showing him on a veranda, taken by Mr Chao, is of our own Chinese house, not the Univer-

sity, and there is a shot of me, back view, also photographing him. When it comes to my marriage to Bertie, Clark gets the registry office wrong; it was Battersea, not Chelsea. Nor was there any celebration or speech by Frank Russell, other than his characteristic remark that the Registrar had tried to marry him to Eileen Power, the other witness, before we arrived. My son John was born at 31 Sydney Street, Chelsea, and not in hospital. These things are all related accurately in my autobiography.

Clark seems deliberately to play down the wives in this story, possibly because three of them are still alive. But I think there are other reasons. The temptation to make use of the rich harvest of the Ottoline and Colette letters was very great; one or two that are included contain important information, but it might have been preferable to keep most of them for the two books of correspondence which will undoubtedly be published. Ferreting out every detail of the sex life of eminent persons is the passport to a large sale and evokes the greatest attention from reviewers. Why does not Women's Lib protest against the spate of male chauvinist sex which has, for weeks, been flooding our Sunday press? First we had Augustus John, now we have to have Russell and Shaw. Unavoidably I have to deal with Bertie's attitude to women.

In the tradition of Englishmen he was brought up to know nothing about them, except to place them in two categories; wives for child-bearing and domestic chores, the rest for romantic liaisons, or the purely physical satisfaction of the sexual appetite. To Alys, the very young Bertie was an insufferable little prig and snob, correcting her grammar and manners, informing her that she was "fat" and unintelligent. For years, depriving her of "conjugal rights", he did not seek a divorce. It must be remembered that, at that date, divorce broke professional careers and husbands assumed that wives could do without sex. (James Barrie never consummated his marriage and was hurt and astonished after many years of pretence, when his wife wanted to leave him.) I note that at one point Alys, possibly in desperation, asked Bertie if he would "acknowledge" a child if she had one. In her Quaker way she believed in free love and also in women's rights.

Fortunately Ottoline took him in hand, arousing in him aesthetic values which he lacked, bringing also the warmth of a real companionship with a woman. His letters to her reveal a part estimate of himself: "I have a perfectly cold intellect which insists upon its rights and rejects nothing. It will sometimes hurt you, sometime seem cynical, sometimes heartless . . . you won't much like it. But it belongs with my work—I have deliberately cultivated it and it is really the main thing that I have put discipline into . . . the sudden absolute cessation of feeling when I think must be trying at first. And nothing

is sacred to it—it looks at everything quite impartially . . . ” (p.139).

Ottoline responded: “It was exhausting but delightful for me to have my mind kept in strict order . . . I often . . . wanted to hide under shady sentimental willow trees but this was never allowed”. Indeed Bertie’s gift to her, and to me, as to any intelligent woman or man whom he valued, was to inspire that poise and self-confidence which spring from discovering one’s inherent talent. Thus he evoked in Ottoline the capacity to queen it later among her Garsington intellectual coterie.

Ottoline notes in her diary that concern for the nation, due to their aristocratic lineage, was a further bond between them. One entry goes to the heart of Bertie’s tragedy: “He is so lonely and tortured by his brain incessantly working, and he cannot be sympathetic to the things that so much affect me. His body and mind seem to have a huge gap between them . . . his intellect is so immense but *en l’air*, not *en rapport* with the things of this sensual life. No visionary power or imagination in that direction or what there is is very arctic and bare.”

The pursuit of intellectual excellence at no matter what cost, and the dominance of the scientific mind, sharpened for the uncompromising pursuit of truth, had, at times, brought both Russell and Whitehead to the verge of madness. Men were intoxicated by their exciting discoveries in physics, and, so exacting was the work in this field and in mathematics, that even at an early age men’s brains became too old to cope with it. I also have written of this remoteness of Bertie’s intellect, seeing in it not only the danger of individual isolation, but the peril of an entire society dominated by the schizophrenia of a scientific élite.

When he comes to Bertie’s dilemma about Colette and myself, Clark sets the scene like a Barbara Cartland novel that I recently read. A nobleman of ancient lineage, deciding that the time has come to beget an heir, begins to extricate himself from his aristocratic mistresses and seek a likely candidate among young débutantes. The eligibility of the selected young woman, said to be gentle—and even intelligent—is discussed by the titled ladies. She may be taken on trial, but should she, after journeying to China, presently fail to deliver the goods, may be discarded in favour of previous loves, irrespective of her sacrifice of her own promising career. Reading this, I can only say (like Bergson when Bernard Shaw insisted on expounding his philosophy for him) “O no, it was not quite *zat*.” Clark is well aware that the pursuit of truth did not apply in Bertie’s pursuit of ladies, hence he might have guessed that the impression given by the letters he cites, is not the whole story.

I was, of course, ignorant of the depth of his relations with Colette. Their love began when, through the war, Bertie was most alive emotion-

ally and nearest to the way ordinary human beings feel. Clearly there is reason to see in this the love of his life, and that they should have married then. But the question to ask is why did Colette, professing eternal love, not wish to go with Bertie to Russia and China? Why did he hide the fact that I was to be with him? Colette faced the same choice as I—to live day by day beside a man of austere intellect and have children; or the glamour and colour of the theatre, and the dramatic expression of her own personality. Bertie once wrote that he liked to live like the great characters in Shakespeare or Grand Opera; so, perhaps, did she. Both were a bit theatrical; and passionate meetings and partings did not involve any lasting commitment.

The reticence of Bertie’s letters about my lone disappearance into Russia covers, not so much indifference, as our bitter quarrel before he went. Faced with my anger because he broke his promise to “start our life” by going there together, he had—always admiring an adventurous spirit—more or less dared me to go alone. Alarmed at the result, he was not, as Clark says, inactive. But there was little he could do. He wrote desperate letters to the British Consul in Reval and urged Arthur Watts to find me and get me out. In the event, I presently returned from China, having helped to save the life of the father and delivered the goods in the shape of his son—possibly to the misfortune of all four of us.

I did not aspire, as Colette suggested, to become the Empress of all Russells. Experiencing three generations of them, I found, as she did, that the relation is quite otherwise. Bertie often mentions his own lustfulness. I doubt if he ever experienced the full sexual thrust of the male. It was inhibited in him by his cold loveless aristocratic upbringing, and by his own intense devotion to his intellect. He was a frightened small boy, a will-o’-the-wisp, a lonely man out in the cold without the constant physical and emotional warmth of a woman beside him.

Since Clark stresses sex issues, women cannot easily evade them. Should romantic love prevail over a trail of mental breakdowns, broken marriages and careers? What do we mean by love, anyway? We seem obsessed by sex; our sex codes are in confusion. Do we now—as so it seems—evaluate men as sex objects in the way that men have traditionally evaluated women?

Do women propose to emulate and themselves live by the masculine sex code? Have they not something better to contribute from the inspiration of their own psyche both to human love and human society? Are not the lack of love, the growth of self-seeking in our society traceable to the very same causes that bedevilled Bertie’s own ideals in his personal life and beyond? These were the sort of problems with which those of us struggling for sexual liberty and understanding were deal-

ing and which are smirched by Clark's prurience.

Ronald W. Clark no doubt thinks that he has told the complete story without fear or favour. In fact the whole tone of this book denigrates Bertie vis-à-vis the Establishment. Amid all the detail about ancient lineage and the rest, one element is missing—the spark of genius. Bertie had insight and vision which I am glad that my life allowed me to come in contact with and to share. Was he ever really wrong about human choices and human destiny? What choice is the world making even now?

DORA RUSSELL

## THEATRE

**THE FOOL** by Edward Bond. The Royal Court Theatre, London.

The life of John Clare is an ideal subject for Edward Bond's new play, for Clare was a working-class, rural poet, living in the harsh age of early industrialisation and eventually going mad. As one of the characters says, "It's all trouble and no joy." Bond has never spared his audience from the violence of the world and the mind. Yet, so spare and lean is his writing, so telling the visual images he provides, and so compassionate the underlying intent that I found the play a very worthwhile experience (entertainment is hardly the right word).

In the first Act John Clare, played with acerbic vitality by Tom Courtenay, is peripherally involved with a group of agricultural labourers who run amok with rage at the injustice of falling prices and wages and the enclosure of common land. (It is just after the Napoleonic War.) In one of the most graphic and painful images of the play the parson is stripped naked and accused of robbery, on the evidence of the whiteness and thickness of his flesh. Beside them crawls a wounded companion covered with a blood-stained cloth, who is later accidentally shot by the forces of authority and establishment. The leader, Darkie, given a fine, fiery performance by Nigel Terry, was the brother of the woman who Clare married and the memory of seeing him in prison condemned to death haunted the poet.

The second Act opens in London with John Clare enjoying a moment of literary fame after the publication of a volume of poems. Here Admiral Lord Radstock, given an excellently humorous performance by Bill Fraser, asks the question "Who controls the brute in man?"—a question from which Bond will not let his audience escape—and criticises some radical lines in Clare's poems. Ironically, polite society meanwhile encourages a boxing match for profit and amusement and introduces Clare to Charles Lamb, melancholic in drink, and his sister carrying her own straight-jacket in a large decorated bag in case she should go beserk.

Clare is unable to make a living from his poetry and endures a life of poverty, scribbling continuously and tormented by his wife who curses the inventor of ink. Bond powerfully demonstrates the impotence of a writer in the face of hunger and his economic dependence on polite society. Clare's subsequent madness is clearly rooted in the tensions of being a writer with no readers, no money, and no understanding from his wife; this condition is related to the twin authority of the landowners and the Church. (Clare responds to the parson's gloomy hope that death will soon come to them all with the words "Then you can lie in your churchyard, 'stead of lying in the pulpit.")

The play is directed by Peter Gill with a fine attention to details of light and shade. *The Fool* is almost Shakespearian in its dark and light imagery and animal comparisons, and in the depth of social and personal experience presented. Nevertheless, for all its impressive theatrical qualities, which I am sure would become more evident with a second viewing, it seemed to me a little too unrelieved in its pessimism to be anything but a partial view of life.

JIM HERRICK

## LETTERS

In the introduction to "The Tomb of St Peter" by R. J. Condon ("The Freethinker", October) it is stated that Peter was never in Rome at any time.

This may well be so, and it may be that Peter never existed at all, as R. J. Condon says. But it is a fact that when the Emperor Constantine the Great built the first St Peter's Church in the first half of the fourth century, he chose a site for the church on the Vatican Hill in a cemetery, because he believed that the Apostle Peter was buried, or had been buried, in that cemetery after being crucified in the Circus nearby about 65 AD. It was contrary to Roman Law to desecrate a cemetery; nevertheless, Constantine did so by closing the cemetery, levelling the hill, and filling in many of the graves to provide a sure foundation for the great structure.

The tombs and memorials, a few of which are Christian, which were not destroyed by the erection of the first St Peter's (the present one is the second church on the site) are in the crypt of St Peter's to this day, and some were discovered during excavations conducted by Professor Enrico Josl, and others, just before and after the last war. Other tombs cannot be excavated because of the dangers to the foundations of the present building.

I inspected the excavations a few years ago and have looked at two books on the subject. As far as I know, no bones identified as Peter's were ever discovered. What was found was a number of memorials and graves directly under the present High Altar, and the remains of what they believe was a shrine of the second century there. It is now believed that shrine was dedicated to the Apostle Peter, hence the large number of tombs around it. Peter may be a myth, but Emperor Constantine thought him real enough in 320 AD as a historical figure. The question is—was Constantine right? Did Peter really die in Rome?

EDGAR M. KINGSTON

(Continued on back page)

# Poor Tom's A'cold

R. J. CONDON

The pagan traditions associated with the winter solstice at Christmas time have been carefully studied by R. J. Condon. He now pursues this subject by looking at the traditions and etymological associations relating to St Thomas' day.

The ancient solar festival adopted by the Church as the birthday of Christ marks the end of the winter solstitial period. Until the early years of the present century the solstice itself was celebrated with a variety of customs as the festival of the poor. In the church calendar 21st December is dedicated to St Thomas the Apostle. An old rhyme calls it: "St Thomas grey, St Thomas grey; Longest night and shortest day."

Poor women went a-Thomasing or a-gooding, going from house to house begging materials from which to make Christmas cakes and other seasonal fare. Those who never begged at other times thought it no shame to do so on that day. Charities for the poor were distributed, and in some churches a collection called St Thomas' Dole was made for them on the Sunday nearest to 21st December. Those short of worldly goods were remembered on the shortest day, but why the latter should be connected with St Thomas is not so obvious. It has been suggested that Doubting Thomas was chosen because it was the custom to feign doubt as to the sun's ability to survive the solstice, fires being lit on that day as a charm to keep the luminary going. Possibly the saint never had a human existence but was fabricated, like St Dionysius, from a pagan god with a similar name. The Egyptian Tum, called Tomos by the Greeks, was reckoned to have been the one god from whom all others sprang. His name was synonymous with that of Ra as the sun. In a secondary character Tum was the setting sun, the feeble and dying sun of evening and the cold, dead sun of night. Egypt has no winter to speak of, but elsewhere the role of Tum as the dying sun seems to have been transferred from the diurnal to the annual sunset. At any rate the Romans gave his name to autumnus, the season of the sun's decline ending in its death on the last day.

Tum's name has come down to us in countless forms, all conveying the idea of weakness or some other deficiency. We have for example tumble, dump, dim, tame and timid. Tum was the sun of the underworld, hence the Greek tumbos, our tomb. Tom is almost inevitably the name given to poor, weak or small characters, as Tom-all-alone, Tom-Tiddler, Tom-noddy, Tom-fool and Tom o' Bedlam. Tum is twice named in Tom Thumb, the latter appropriately the lowest member of the hand. Here

we might mention that St Thomas is traditionally very short; in Essex it used to be said that a well-grown lad would make four of him. At Bromyard, Herefordshire, a funeral service was read over Old Tom, as the departed year was called. Tom, in short, personifies all that belongs to the lower or winter sun.

Onions were formerly associated with St Thomas. One of the cries of London was: "Buy my rope of onions, white St Thomas' onions." An onion under a maiden's pillow on St Thomas' night would, it was hoped, induce the Apostle to send a dream of her future husband. The onion had a mystical significance from the seemingly endless number of layers or skins which could be separated from it. Godfrey Higgins, in his *Anacalypsis*, says it was adored by the Egyptians for this property, as a type of the eternal renewal of ages, being sacred to the Father of Ages. This would have been Tum, styled Lord and Creator of Eternity in the introductory hymns to the Book of the Dead. In Britain the onion was sacred to Hu with the Wings, a Druidic sun-god. The winged sun was a device of the Egyptian Hu, a manifestation of Tum.

Thomas is "called Didymus" in St John's Gospel, from the Greek didymos, a twin. This is tautological, for all authorities agree that Thomas itself means twin. Early Christian writers, at a loss to account for the other twin, used their imagination. The Clementine Homilies, for example, give Thomas a twin brother named Eliezer. In the apocryphal Acts of Thomas, dating from the third century, the Apostle's twin is none other than Jesus; identical twins apparently since they cannot be distinguished apart. This work, incidentally, has Thomas building a palace in heaven, as Tum does in the Book of the Dead.

The *Encyclopaedia Biblica* gives tehom, meaning twin, as a Hebrew equivalent of Thomas, although the word does not appear to have been used by the Jews as a personal name. It so happens that tehom is the word employed in the Genesis creation story to denote the primeval flood, which God divides in twain by means of a firmament. In the Babylonian original of the story tehom is Tiamat, a female monster who is the primeval ocean personified. The god Marduk cuts Tiamat in twain, producing the waters above and the waters beneath from the two parts, or heaven and earth in another version of the myth. Here, it is suggested, is the reason why tehom or Thomas is the twain or twin.

Tiamat or tehom as the cut one found its way into Greek. Tomos is a part cut off, tome a cutting. A-tome is that which may not be cut, the atom. In English -tome and -tomy indicate cutting, as in epitome and anatomy. Tum, the sun of autumn, is cut off on St Thomas' Day, to begin his annual pilgrimage anew on our Christmas Day.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF STIRNER

Geoffrey Webster wrote an able and substantially correct description of the philosophy of Max Stirner ("Max Stirner—the Unique One", "The Freethinker", October). However, it was flawed by an excessive dependence on R. W. K. Paterson's "The Nihilistic Egoist". Whilst this study is interesting and useful, Paterson depicts Stirner throughout as a metaphysical bogey man. Anyone who cares to read Stirner's "The Ego and His Own" will realise how wrong Paterson was. The "sinister figure" of the Stirnerite, as I think Mr Webster will now agree, is the figure that emerges from the pages of Paterson's book, rather than from the pages of Stirner.

With regard to Stirner and anarchism: Stirner's egoism is certainly incompatible with the evangelical socialism preached by "anarchists" such as Kropotkin and Malatesta. It provides, however, a sound philosophical foundation for what is known as anarchist individualism, despite Paterson's contentions.

S. E. PARKER

## WORLD GOVERNMENT—WORLD TYRANNY

In his article "1914 and all That" ("The Freethinker", November), I. S. Low recommends that we consecrate ourselves to the eventual establishment of a global administration or, as he calls it, "World Government".

Irrespective of our own political views, I think that reasonable people will admit that national governments are monolithic and authoritarian. But if this applies nationally, it may be a thousand times worse in the case of planetary government. If national governments are not directly accountable to the individual citizen but stand above him as something sacrosanct and essentially unassailable, then why suggest this deplorable state of affairs on a global scale?

It should be sufficient for us to calmly acknowledge that we all inhabit the same world; it is not necessary to abandon our dutiful allegiance to the god of the nation-state and then prostrate ourselves before the even more tyrannical Moloch of a global administration. I relate to you, neither as "Englishman" nor "fellow human being", but simply as . . . you. If this is done, where is the need for a world government?

GEOFFREY WEBSTER

Editor's note—In I. S. Low's article (paragraph 8) the following sentence appeared: "This is also the reason why she had to develop democracy." It should have been: "This is why she was unable to develop democracy." The error is regretted.

## THE FREETHINKER

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## EVENTS

**British Humanist Association.** Annual Dinner, The Printer's Devil, New Fetter Lane, London EC4, Saturday, 13 December, 7 pm. Tickets from the BHA, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Telephone 01-937 2341.

**Havering Humanist Society.** Harold Wood Social Centre, Tuesday 6 January, 8 pm. Jim Herrick: "Sense and Nonsense from the East."

**Humanist Holidays.** Christmas (Oxford) and Easter (Worthing). Details from Mrs M. Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone 01-642 8796.

**London Secular Group** (outdoor meetings). Thursdays, 12.30-2 pm at Tower Hill; Sundays, 3-7 pm at Marble Arch. ("The Freethinker" and other literature on sale.)

**Merseyside Humanist Group.** Lecture Room, 16 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. Meetings held on the third Wednesday of the Month, 7.45 pm.

**Leicester Secular Society.** The Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Sunday meetings at 6.30 pm. 14 December, Margaret E. York: "Richard III—the man and the Legend." 21 December, A. Davis: "Belief Systems: Their Origin and Uses."

**South Place Ethical Society.** Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday meetings at 11 am. 14 December, Lord Brockway: "I Knew Bernard Shaw." 21 December, no meeting. 28 December, P. J. Caine: "The Significance of J. A. Hobson." 4 January, A. J. Ellison: "ESP—Fact or Fallacy?" 11 January, Denis Welland: "Moncure Conway and Anglo-American Relations." Tuesday evening discussions at 7 pm. 16 December, Alan Sim: "Deducing Morals from Purpose." 30 December: "That Women's Emancipation has Gone far Enough." 6 January, Albert Lovecy: "Dr Coggan at the Crossroads."

**Surrey Humanist Groups.** Reigate, Sunday 18 January. Seminar on non-religious funeral ceremonies. Details from Mrs M. Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone 01-642 8796.

**Waltham Forest Humanist Group.** Wood Street Library, Forest Road, London E17. Tuesday 16 December, 8 pm. Open Forum.

**Worthing Humanist Group.** Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday 25 January, 5.30 pm. James Hemming: "What is Education About?"