

## OBITUARY NOTICE

### RONALD GODFREY LIENHARDT

17 January 1921 to 9 November 1993

It is with deep sorrow that we have to announce the death of Godfrey Lienhardt on Tuesday, 9 November 1993 after a short illness. From his arrival in Oxford in 1947 until his death, Godfrey was such a part of Oxford anthropology that it is difficult to imagine what it will be like without him. Oxford and the wider anthropological community has lost one of its greatest characters.

JASO also has lost a valued friend and supporter. Godfrey always took an interest in the Journal and its fortunes, and on a number of occasions chose it as the vehicle for publishing his work. We were particularly honoured to be able to publish his essay 'Frazer's Anthropology: Science and Sensibility', the revised text of his 1991 Frazer Lecture, in our last issue.

Obituaries have already appeared in the *Independent* (17 November), the *Guardian* (19 November) and the *Sudan Democratic Gazette* (December) and we hope to be able to publish appreciations of Godfrey's life and work in future issues. In the meantime, we are pleased to be able to publish on the following pages the text of an address delivered at his Requiem Mass.

The Editors

A Memorial Fund is to be established in Godfrey Lienhardt's name. It will be administered by Wolfson College, Oxford, and used to foster research. Wolfson College is also to host an event, to be held on the afternoon of Saturday 7 May 1994, to commemorate and celebrate his life. Further details about both the Memorial Fund and the event are available from the College Secretary, Wolfson College, Oxford OX2 6UD, to whom contributions to the 'Godfrey Lienhardt Memorial Fund' may be sent.

## GODFREY LIENHARDT

*Text of an address delivered at the Requiem Mass for Ronald Godfrey Lienhardt held at The Oratory, Oxford, the Catholic Church of St. Aloysius, on Tuesday, 16 November 1993.*

THIS is an immensely sad occasion, but I do not wish to dwell on its sadness; nor would Godfrey have wanted me to. The time I am allowed is far too short to do justice to my subject, even if I were able to. A biographical sketch is out of the question; anyway, in my view, such dry bones are better confined to the obituary columns. Neither is this the time nor the occasion for an assessment of Godfrey's significant contribution to anthropology; that is better left to the pages of learned journals. What I want to do in the few minutes available is talk about Godfrey as Godfrey. Such an approach inevitably depends to a great extent on personal reminiscences and impressions; something each of us individually has. I hope that by talking about mine, you will be able silently to recall and think about your own.

When putting together notes for this address, I found that I have absolutely no recollection of my first meeting with Godfrey. I know it must have been just over 30 years ago, but the transition from not knowing Godfrey to knowing him seems to have passed for me without memorable incident. I do remember when we discovered that our birthdays fell on the same day of the year—something we had in common with Radcliffe-Brown. We jointly celebrated the event thereafter. However, Godfrey was not necessarily that easy to get to know, for he could hold strong and not always entirely reasonable prejudices. Godfrey could be witheringly and hurtfully dismissive, and, for some, getting to know him required patience and determination. But once accepted into his circle they would find with Godfrey a deep, loyal and enduring friendship. Perhaps the best evidence for this is the extraordinary degree to which this loyalty and friendship have been affectionately

and steadfastly reciprocated—by you, and by many others all over the world who cannot be here today.

Godfrey loved being with his friends, and I doubt that he was ever happier than when surrounded by a group of them in one of the various pubs he frequented over the years. Conversation, and he was a great conversationalist, was an important art form for Godfrey. But it was not simply the conviviality of such surroundings that was important in drawing people to his side. When he was in hospital, something which occurred with distressing frequency in recent years, he could always be assured of a constant stream—flood, might be a better description—of visitors, many of whom travelled from London or further afield to see him.

What perhaps is remarkable is the wide range of Godfrey's friends. You are not simply academic colleagues but people drawn from all sorts of backgrounds, ages and countries. Nor was his a closed circle; there was always room for more. Last June, a few days before the examinations, I took a couple of my students for a drink and a sandwich, and Godfrey happened to join us. When I had to leave, the two graduates stayed on for a long time; they were, they later told me, intrigued and fascinated by him. Godfrey also enjoyed the occasion and just before the beginning of this academic year he asked me whether I would be able to arrange for him to meet some of this year's intake.

In many ways, you, his friends, substituted for the close family that he otherwise lacked, especially after the death of his brother Peter. He felt that loss very deeply and for a period became, by his standards, almost a recluse. I am certain that Godfrey would welcome the inclusion of Peter in our thoughts and memories today. However, as happens in even the most harmonious families, Godfrey was not above testing the relationships internal to his. You can probably think of your own examples. A particularly fine example was his plan—or threat—to retire to Madrid or Lisbon. This idea brought forth a volley of protests and objections, which, one suspects, was just the point of the ploy.

An aspect of Godfrey's friendship was not only his generosity of spirit, but also a more material generosity. I do not wish to say much about this as it was always conducted with careful discretion and usually with total anonymity. I doubt that Godfrey ever thought much about money. His own needs were relatively simple: he ate sparsely—too sparsely perhaps; he dressed himself as often as not at Oxfam; and he cut his own hair.

There was a similar unworldliness in his approach to technology—perhaps best exemplified by his typewriter, an upright model of between-wars vintage which he never gave up using, despite the effort required to work the keys. However, in recent years, when he found it difficult to go out in the evening, he was persuaded to have a television set and fell for some most un-Godfreyesque programmes. 'Coronation Street' and 'The Bill' had become his favourites, he once confided with a wry smile.

It would be difficult for me to talk about Godfrey for long without the word 'smile' coming up. For me, one of the fascinating things about Godfrey was

watching his smile—or better, smiles. He had a whole repertoire of them that involved different parts of his face in various combinations. All had their own clear meanings which had to be learnt if one was to understand him. There was one which started in the corners of the eyes and ran across the bridge of the nose, which meant roughly: ‘I know that what I am saying is not exactly accurate but I am not going to spoil a good story for a ha’p’orth of truth.’ Another, in which the mouth played a more prominent part, indicated: ‘I don’t believe a word of what you have just said but I cannot be bothered to say so.’

If the smiles were a sort of disguise, he also wore a mask of apparent indifference to many things, matters that he actually felt quite deeply about but often could not bring himself to face up to. This could be infuriating and even, at times, seems to have deceived Godfrey himself. Although I have no evidence to substantiate it, this I suspect is what happened to the part which religion played in his life—the practice, if not the belief of which he turned away from, but to which, at the end, as this requiem mass held at his request indicates, he returned.

It does not seem long ago, and indeed it is a frighteningly short time only, since many of us were gathered at Wolfson College here in Oxford to mark Godfrey’s retirement. That event, a marvellous party, in itself is evidence enough of the affection in which Godfrey was held. It is a great sadness that the intervening years were marked by his increasing frailty. He himself had begun to realise that the time when he could continue to live alone was limited, and not long before his final illness was expressing some anxiety on this score. For those of you who had not seen Godfrey recently, you should know that he had become very frail. However, this was merely a physical decline; the mind remained strong and mischievous, and even until close to death there were flashes of that acerbic wit and hints of enigmatic smiles.

Godfrey is no longer with us in person, but I know that whenever a company of his friends meet, his name will be on their lips. Godfrey will be there in memory and in spirit. Knowing Godfrey has enriched my life and I am sure that it has done the same for yours. God bless him.

PETER RIVIÈRE

**PHILIP BAGBY STUDENTSHIP  
IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY  
1994-95**

Applications are invited for the Philip Bagby Studentship, which is open to graduates of any university who are suitably qualified in social anthropology. The period of tenure will not normally exceed two years, and is for a *maximum* of three years. The award will cover University fees (at the rate for UK and EC students) and college fees, if applicable, plus a maintenance grant the value of which will be at least £4720 (the rate for 1993-94).

Further details are obtainable from the Secretary of the Anthropology and Geography Board, c/o the Oriental Institute, Pusey Lane, Oxford OX1 2LE.

Closing date for applications is 28 March 1994.