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Around and About

AHA

THE national headquarters of the American Humanist Association has moved from Yellow Springs, Ohio, to California. The new address is: Humanist House, 125 El Camino del Mar, San Francisco, California 94121. This address will also be shared by the Humanist Student Union of North America.

BHA

THE British Humanist Association is to hold its first Annual Meeting for Group Representatives at Conway Hall, London, on Saturday, January 13. Starting at 11 a.m., the Meeting will begin with a discussion introduced by George Mepham on 'The Place of the Groups in the BHA'. Ivan Geffen will introduce a discussion, 'What Makes for a Lively Group?' at 3 p.m., which will be one of several contributions under the general heading 'The Working of a Humanist Group'. A soup and sandwich lunch will be provided.

On the same day, at 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, W8, there will be a Wine and Cheese Party organised by the BHA to enable new BHA Members to become acquainted with the Executive Committee and to learn, in an informal atmosphere, more about Humanism.

Humanist Groups

ALF GILLER, Honorary Secretary of Redbridge Group is forming a new Group in Chelmsford. The Inaugural Meeting is to be held in February.

The Formative Meeting of the new Wimbledon Group was held on December 17 at which a committee was formed.

Mr. B. J. Barnett, Chairman of the Merseyside Group is organising a new group within the Quarry Bank Comprehensive School in the Merseyside area.

Belfast Humanist Group has applied for affiliation to the National Secular Society.

An excellent article appeared in the December issue of *Rationale*, journal of the Southampton Humanist Society, entitled 'Why I am Not a Christian', which is the text of a talk delivered by Roy Matthewson to the English Christian Association in Geneva.

* * *

IHEU

THE International Humanist and Ethical Union is to hold its 1968 European Conference at Hanover in Germany. It will open on July 14 and close on July 19. Delegates from the BHA will include Harold Blackham (BHA Director) and Michael Lines (Executive Officer).

* * *

Jean Straker

AS a resident of Camden, London, Jean Straker is concerned that the local Human Rights Year (1968) Group should not overlook—or permit to be misinterpreted—Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion . . .") which implies freedom *from* religion and religious interference from those who have rejected religion and want nothing of it. Accordingly, he has forwarded a memorandum to the 'Religious Affairs Group' of the Camden Campaign for Human Rights Year setting out five very reasonable (Humanist!) propositions. Humanists, resident in Camden, may care to take note.

* * *

NSS

FEELING it is high time the campaign for voluntary euthanasia was given added impetus, as a first step the NSS has organised a debate and is issuing a statement. The debate is to be held at Conway Hall, London, at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday, February 1. Norman St. John Stevas, MP, and David Tribe (NSS President) will be among those taking part. Both the meeting and the State-

ment, shortly to be issued, will be headed 'The Right to Die'.

David Tribe is to act as Chairman at the Human Rights Year Dinner to be held at the Pavour Arms, Page Street, SW1, on April 6. Speakers are to include Renee Short, MP, and Peter Jackson, MP.

The NSS recently issued a 'Message from the President' which has highlighted many important points in the history of Freethought in chronological order. A similar chronology appears—this time with regard to the 'Secular Education Campaign'—in the Secretary's January *Bulletin* which has just been issued.

* * *

PL

AT the meeting of the new Council, held in December, the Progressive League renewed its affiliation to the National Peace Council, National Council for Civil Liberties, Central Council for British Naturism, Abortion Law Reform Association, Local Government Reform Association and the British Humanist Association.

The new PL President is Mrs Lena Jeger, MP for Holborn and St Pancras. She is the third woman, and the first MP, ever to hold the office.

'Public Law and Private Morality' is to be the title of the Weekend Conference to be held at a hotel in Eastbourne, February 23-25. Mrs Jeger will speak on Law and Sexual Morality, John Maddox (Editor of *Nature*) will speak on drugs and H. A. Haydon and Avril Fox will speak on different aspects of censorship. Ambrose Appelbe will also contribute a talk.

* * *

SPES

OF the many excellent meetings to be organised by the South Place Ethical Society during the next few weeks, 'The Population Explosion'—a talk by Jack Parsons—is to be particularly recommended. This meeting will be in the 'Tuesday Discussion' series at 6.45 p.m. on January 16. The venue will, of course, be Conway Hall, London.

FREETHINKER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone HOP 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.; Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Belfast Humanist Group, Annual Dinner at the Chimney Corner Inn, Glengormley, Friday, January 19th, 8 p.m. Enquiries: Mrs Heather Reid, Flat 9, Henderson Avenue, Belfast 15.

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group, The Lecture Theatre, Southgate Technical College, High Street, London, N14, Wednesday, January 17th, 8 p.m.: PETER FRYER, "Censorship".

The Cambridge Humanists, New Hall, J.C.R., Friday, January 19th, 8.30 p.m.: Social evening.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Sunday, January 14th, 6.30 p.m.: C. E. B. ROBINSON, "Race Relations and the Law".

The Progressive League, The Whitehall Hotel, 9-11 Bloomsbury Square, London, WC1, Sunday, January 14th, 7.30 p.m.: GWEN BLACKWELL, "Psychiatric First Aid".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, January 14th, 11 a.m.: Professor T. H. PEAR, "Dangers of Detachment in Social Studies"; Tuesday, January 16th, 6.45 p.m.: JACK PARSONS, "The Population Explosion".

West Ham Branch NSS, Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead, London, E11. Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

West Kent Branch NSS, Public Library, The Drive, Sevenoaks. Public meetings on the first Wednesday of the month at 8 p.m.

Letters to the Editor

Adoption

I DON'T know what Miss Carey-Cassel (December 22) is really on about, but I think she has confused herself with her terminology, and may be short on contemporary findings in the field of inherited personality traits and the psychology of behaviour—development of personality, conscience and conditionability, etc. Does she know, for instance, that there is a type of child who is almost impossible to condition, and who lives through a sadly recognisable behaviour pattern about which parents and school teachers can do nothing? These unfortunates often begin to recover between the ages of 25 and 45, but by then a great deal of harm has inevitably befallen them.

If only Miss Carey-Cassel's simple philosophy were borne out in fact, how much easier would be the work of adoption societies. All they would need is a good card index, a sufficient supply of exemplary adoptive parents, and babies could be happily and safely portioned out on the basis of first come first served.

In reality, of course, adoption organisations have to employ highly specialised medical and social case-workers because babies unwanted by their biological parents have to be carefully fitted out with substitute adoptive parents and families who 'match' as nearly as possible the type of environment each child would have had if it remained with its natural family. This was being done even as long ago as 30 years by some of the reputable and experienced societies. It took nearly two years to find our first adopted baby, who is now 28 and married, and the matching was meticulous, not only in social, economic, aesthetic and intellectual particulars, but colour of hair and eyes, parents' professions, hobbies and personal idiosyncrasies were all carefully noted down.

At the risk of repeating myself and still further infuriating Miss Carey-Cassel—who has already completely missed the point of my reply to Mr Bynner's question about babies offered for adoption—I must stress that all this careful matching is now extending into the molecular biology of the parties concerned, and it is therefore well-nigh impossible to find well fitting off-the-peg adoptive parents for children who fall within the special categories outlined in my letter on the subject. There are more categories such as the children of alcoholics and drug addicts which lack of space does not permit me to mention in detail, but surely it is not beyond the imagination of any reasonably concerned person to realise that many babies *cannot be* matched, simply because families from their kind of *natural family* background are not the kind of people able or willing to adopt other people's unwanted offspring. Adoptive parents have some rights—they are not an unpaid branch of the health and welfare services—and unless their needs are as carefully catered for as those of the babies they adopt, nothing but tragedy will ensue.

ISOBEL GRAHAME.

Adoption is good 'for some'

I AM grateful to the Editor and to my friend Isobel Grahame for re-opening discussion of the social questions of illegitimacy and adoption. They are related because a large majority of children placed in this country for adoption are illegitimate. This handicap by itself should not deprive them of the opportunity of a normal family upbringing, although in practice it often does. It would be better for them if they could remain with their natural mothers, as in Denmark where the large majority do, because public attitudes to the unmarried mother are not censorious, as they are here.

The questions which need to be asked, about a child's suitability for adoption, are not whether he is illegitimate and his father has deserted and disappeared, but what can be done about his present situation. The responsibility for deciding the child's suitability should rest with some impartial body and not with persons, however devoted, having a professional interest in retaining the child in their care.

W. BYNNER.

Wagner and the Will to Live

IN his letter (December 29), Mr I. S. Low does not mention the tremendous influence exerted upon Wagner by the philosopher Schopenhauer.

Wagner, having spent the whole of one summer reading four times *The World as Will and Representation*, sent a poem to Schopenhauer headed "With Reverence".

Schopenhauer's philosophy of *the will to live* is evident in Wagner's music.

JOHN SUTHERLAND.

HUMANISM AND THE NEW LEFT

Douglas Bramwell

THE New Left is a term which has come to be used, in the USA and UK, for a miscellany of protest movements which, in recent years, have made themselves noticed by their direct modes of action. CND, the Vietnam anti-war movement, the civil rights movement, and similar organisations are familiar by their marches and demonstrations which, peaceful in essence, occasionally spill over into violence.

The other main facet of the New Left is its obvious appeal to the young; at the core of the protest marches and demonstrations are the students. Why have so many young people turned from conventional politics to sit in the streets of London or march through the American South?

LEFTS OLD AND NEW

Until the second world war the main political problems centred on the poverty of the mass of the people, and the political movements of the left at the time offered alternative solutions to the poverty problem. Socialists, and in particular Marxists, analysed the state of society and built up a body of theory by means of which they endeavoured to show the superiority of socialism over capitalism and the inevitability of its coming. The left was, therefore, essentially a movement of protest against the conditions of the time.

Today the problems have changed. Western civilisation is in the midst of the age of affluence. The capitalist system has become softened by liberalisation and semi-socialisation and, for the majority, the general condition of life is reasonably comfortable. More than ever, young people have opportunities for education and advancement within the framework of the liberal-capitalist society; and yet they protest as they have never protested before.

But the subject of this new protest—the protest of the New Left—differs from that of the Old Left. No longer is it the general condition of the masses; rather is it the hypocritical acceptance by society—leaders and masses alike—of actions and policies which are a denial of the very ideals on which liberal capitalism is supposedly based. The war in Vietnam, the nuclear weapons, the colour discriminations and the forgotten corners of poverty, all these are seen as hypocritical denials in practice, of the high-sounding ideals of liberalism as embodied in, say, the American constitution. And we must note, in passing, that in the Soviet Union a similar movement is to be detected raising its protests against the hypocrisy of the Communist establishment.

The mode of protest of the New Left differs from that of the Old. The New Left has seen the breakdown of the ideological theories of the Old and, in reaction, turns its back on ideology as a necessary background to action. The action of the New Left is direct action, not based on a theory of society but springing reflex-like from an awareness of suffering and danger. It is almost existentialist in its directness, its sense of awareness, its dislike of theory and its overwhelming commitment.

We have seen, then, that protest is an element common to Lefts Old and New. We might, in fact, define the 'left' in politics as those movements which are critical in their basic attitude to the society in which they find themselves

and whose actions are directed toward changing that society. Thus the left comes to mean 'progressive' rather than 'socialist', socialism being but a particular embodiment of the progressive attitude.

PROTEST AND AUTHORITY

All movements of the left, on this definition, tend to be critical of authority. The attitude of the New Left is more radical, for it is critical of authority in general.

In the past, to provide the necessary leadership and organisation, left-wing movements have tended to set up their own authority in opposition to the established authority of which they were critical. These authorities of the left were, indeed are, not necessarily less authoritarian than their opposition; few authorities have been more strongly entrenched than the Party in the Marxist movements.

By contrast, the New Left, with its emphasis on directness of action and its antipathy to ideology, has come to mistrust all authority. The movement's anti-ideology is in fact but an aspect of its anti-authority, for it is well aware that an established ideology too often becomes an abstract justification for a rigid authoritarianism; Marxism and the Church are obvious examples.

Anti-authority is not, however, confined to the young people of the New Left but is an attitude which is growing in society at large. The meanest minds express it in such phrases as "All coppers are bastards". But basically the attitude is healthy and springs ultimately, perhaps, from the success of the scientific method in proving the fallibility of the traditional authorities of parent, Church and state.

A HUMANIST CONTRIBUTION ?

Without some ideology, without some leadership and authority, no political movement can become an effective weapon of social change. Within the New Left this is now being realised and some attempts are being made to create an acceptable ideological background for action.

In the past all ideologies have been too speculative. Without sufficient observational data about the behaviour of man in society, theory has run amok to give such unscientific predictions—despite claims to the contrary—as those of Marxism.

Social science is still too much in its infancy to allow even the beginnings of the prediction of the long-term, large-scale effects of social policies. But at least the lessons of the past should prevent the political theorists from building too complex a structure on too little knowledge and slaughtering millions on the strength of its predictions. Speculative political ideology must remain only just ahead of sociological knowledge; far enough ahead to prompt social testing of its theories, but not so far ahead as to give the impression of building fanciful utopias.

Likewise, political authority must be only as firm as the facts justify, and must be flexible enough to accommodate itself to new social knowledge. In the past, the critics of authority have had to justify themselves before authority yielded to their demands. In the future the position must be reversed; there will be no inherent respect for authority,

it will have to earn the respect of society by justifying itself in the face of social facts.

Perhaps it is here that Humanism can make a contribution. Humanism, the author believes, is a movement of the left in the sense used in this article. It is a movement which is critical of the values and actions of established society, and will remain so until it becomes itself the established system of values—how long? Humanism is a voice of protest in the name of the human person; and this is the very essence of the New Left.

But the New Left—or, to use a term to cover the wider, less active sense of protest widespread in society at large, the new social criticism—has been, until now, too existential, too non-rational, too anti-scientific for effective political and social action. Humanism, with its background of rationalism and scientific method, can surely contribute to providing the new social criticism with the rational, scientific

ideology that it so badly needs to become an effective weapon for the human cause.

The lapel badge that reads "The psychedelic baby will eat the cybernetic monster" is an accurate reflection of the anti-scientific attitude of the New Left. But the New Left must be shown that cybernetic monsters are non-political. To many of the critical young, science is an integral part of the existing social system. They must be shown that this is not the case, that science and its values are—or should be—impartial to the social system in which it finds itself, and that the knowledge that it yields can be used to further any end to which society cares to direct it. And scientific Humanists must teach the protesters the one solid fact that science is the only means that man has of ridding the world of the hunger and poverty that make political and social progress impossible for more than half its people.

THE FLAVOUR OF HUMANISM

Michael Cregan

EACH philosophy and religion has its own flavour. I use that word deliberately as any organised group adhering to a comprehensive scheme of the universe and man's place in it tends to convey an initial image, an emotional tang. Catholicism for me, for example, conveys two images: one—a source of true Christian, indeed human, love representing my ideal of the Church as it should be; the other—a stultifying oppressive burden, this deriving from my experience at a segregated Catholic grammar school.

The initial image is important to any group, as it affects the attitude outsiders will take towards it (whether they will investigate it or ignore it, etc.). Humanists have a set of beliefs and attitudes which they wish to present to a wider and wider public. The general public, however, have inherited through a network of sources a Christian attitude even if only the nebulous belief that "there must be something there". Therefore, they meet Humanism as something relatively alien, hence Humanists too should interest themselves in their immediate appearance.

What, then, is the flavour of Humanism?

To me it appears unfortunately unflattering. At first glance Humanists present the appearance of a group of arrogant bigots, impatient of any conflicting "world view" (particularly if it is religious) even when that view has a *prima facie* case to be heard.

For example, what many Humanists seem to consider biting satire turns out to be the same overworked and tired jokes about 'playing harps' and having a 'reserved

seat on the train to heaven'. Sometimes this 'satire' simply sinks to the level of bad taste, like the remark of a FREE-THINKER contributor who could not "soberly credit a Creator with needing something to put his backside on".

In general I find the caricatures of Christian belief and believers that Humanists too often draw, and the way in which they attack them, both aesthetically repugnant and philosophically dishonest.

The characteristic faults of the Humanist, as I see them, find their epitome in one of the late Harry Lamont's articles. For example, "Don't listen to the dismal Johnnies who preach of hell-fire and damnation. *Most of them suffer from some form of religious mania*" (my italics). Of course there are people who are bound hand and foot to religion without either the courage or the desire to submit it to any form of rational examination. But to suggest that the majority of Catholics—who presumably fit this category of "dismal Johnnies"—are suffering from a psychiatric illness is simply abuse, and smacks of name-calling and nose-thumbing. Another example, though less blatant, is the abusive ". . . Sermons . . . may be good for one's self-discipline. Usually the ranting goes in one ear and out the other", and again, "Priests and other professional holy men have an interest in making you feel sinful so that you will attend their services and be impressed by their jiggery-pokery". To reduce every priest to the level of a patent medicine pedlar, selling useless lotions for a quick profit, is to deliberately shut one's eyes to the number of sincere clerics who do a great deal to help in the personal problems of their parishioners, and the excellent social work they do in many fields. (Although the Humanist may assert that the creed they hold has no rational basis, this doesn't mean their integrity and concern for others cannot be respected.)

And after all that, the writer had the gall to state that he was giving us his "honest opinion, as free from bias as I can make it"!

If Humanists wish to draw converts from their Christian opponents and from those who are not yet sure which philosophy to embrace, they must first of all engage them in dialogue. And if the Christians and the uncommitted find the same Humanist image that I see, they will not think it worth the trouble.

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FIFTY QUESTIONS ON THE NATURE OF THINGS: II

Charles V. Bryan, LL.B.

"GOD moves in mysterious ways", etc. This is a convenient, but evasive statement. Instead of investigating his mysterious ways, while we're on the subject of vastness, why not tackle "God"—any god? Take the Christian god, for instance.

Faintly imagining the vastness of Eternity, Space and the Universe, can any mind comprehend a god great enough and powerful enough to have created them. Surely this is inconceivable, if we are considering a thinking, planning, personal god. If we consider instead, the interchange of Energy-Matter, subject to the "law" of Chance, we can, if we wish, consider this combination a trinity of god-heads—an immortal, unmoral, three-in-one god. We can also describe Man as a thinking, planning, mortal god—and Man certainly merits this description.

As J. D. Taylor, MD, has well said: "Criticism, doubt, investigation, rejection and modifications are the means by which Man's social progress is achieved". All through the Old Testament we find the Man-made imaginary god of the Bible used exactly the same means, mostly in a sanguinary manner indeed. One would expect infallibility from an almighty and all-knowing Being.

Following the reasoning that Space and Eternity are omnipresent and that Matter is eternal, is it not safe to assume that Energy-Matter has always existed (that neither had creation nor beginning)? It may be that in the unfathomable past, concentrations of matter existed which were not perceptible to any instrument comparable to human eyes—that the world was mostly Energy engaged in minute transformations into Matter, and *vice versa*. However, it is unlikely that all the tremendous concentrations of Matter we call worlds will ever resolve themselves entirely back into Energy.

It is claimed that to create life is the prerogative solely of a Superior Being. Is it not justifiable to think that Man, given all Eternity, could create life from the elements? And, being a planner, he certainly would be more choosy in his creations than blind Nature. For example, what was the use of creating the lizard-like saurians (dinosaurs, etc.) which infested this world for a hundred million years, only to disappear?

Man's emergence from barbarism is recent, and far from complete. Many people live a century, and only sixty centuries, sixty steps taken in the past, lie between our so-called "civilisation" and the dawn of history. Human nature may change, but only gradually, if ever, and only from the eternal law of cause and effect. Man, like the other animals, acts selfishly, for his own satisfaction, comfort or safety. Through trial and error and successful experimentation, he acquires new habits of thought and action, cooperation and tolerance. He will think in new categories.

If by a miracle some modern "Witch of Endor" could bring back to life a tribesman of sixty centuries ago, we'd find that after his amazement at our present mechanical and electronic progress had subsided, this tribesman, be he sheep-herder or medicine-man or warrior, would think in our category—for his mind, we'd quickly learn, would be as capable as our own.

War has always existed. Haven't groups tried it, then nations, then groups of nations? Wars grew, as power increased with which to engage in war. Now there are but two Powers left able to engage in effective warfare globally—and both well know such a war to be both murder and

suicide. Therefore the thinking of Man regarding war, is changing.

Man now has to decide between genocide and tolerance. He must learn to live peaceably or perish.

Spending billions on missiles, and satellites which boomerang so often, is justified on the theory that whatever is good for science or munition-makers is good for our economy. Admittedly, it is more merciful to "shoot at the moon" than at our fellow-men.

Faith is said to "move mountains". As a matter of fact, a whole world-full of faith would be powerless to move the proverbial mustard seed. In 1956 a certain Californian, Professor Zwicky (an expert at being expert) declared that Man now has sufficient know-how to chop chunks off Jupiter and make new planets.

The Bible declared "God created the Earth for Man", and made Man its master. He created much other life for Man to master, but as yet Man hasn't mastered it completely. Nor himself!

Some of this life lives at the expense of Man, its "master". On whose side *is* God—on Man's, his darling creation, or on the side of virus, disease, *et als*? It appears that Man was chucked into this vale of tears without his consent, to sink or swim in a pestiferous morass; to be preyed upon by the very things he was supposed to master.

This is a world in which animals live by the torture and death of other animals; is it not a combination of torture-chamber, butcher-shop, charnel-house and morgue, in which bugs have the final victory? The invisible viruses, microbes and bacteria may be legacies left Man by the innumerable saurians which lived in the fetid swamps in a polluted mist that covered the earth for millions of years, during which the sun's rays had not yet reached the earth. "It had not rained on earth", declares the Bible. Sunbeams could not penetrate the dense atmosphere.

Christ is said to have suffered on the cross to save Man from his sins. The Bible tells us that when God took a notion to create, his first creation was Jesus (Logos). As an afterthought he created Satan (Lucifer). To keep Jesus company? Since Jesus was also a god he helped the primal deity create worlds *ad infinitum*, until he decided to take a vacation on earth for a spell.

Instead of Jesus complaining about suffering and dying like a mortal man, shouldn't he have welcomed this chance to get away, even briefly, from this business of sitting at the right hand of his father and creating this and that through all Eternity? Even Man would tire of the job of making and busting up worlds for ever and ever.

Since the "time" he spent on Earth meant nothing in Eternity—and since he had the certain knowledge that his death in human form meant an immediate return to glory, what was there for him to cavil about?

Surely every man and woman who ever lived would jump at the chance to endure Jesus' comparatively trifling sufferings if they were assured of being transported to heaven and glory for ever and ever.

Instead Man has been told to work and suffer, to have faith and hope, to believe without proof. In return, he is promised a vague reward "somewhere beyond the rainbow"—and has a unilateral contract to solace him and reconcile him to his mortal fate. For, as the Bible declares, in a moment of frank truthfulness:

"Man and animals are of one flesh. As the animals die, so does Man. All is vanity."

[Concluded

CRITICISMS OF EVOLUTION

A. J. Lowry

SCEPTICS not in touch with Fundamentalist ideas will find it hard to believe that even today a large number of people remain adamant in their consideration of the Theory of Evolution as an example either of human error or of diabolical intervention. Great torrents of literature (stemming mainly from the Watchtower press) confidently 'expose' the 'fraud', so that there are now many thousands who bumptiously congratulate themselves on having 'seen through' a theory of whose details they are in complete ignorance. Precisely what the individuals thus affected put in its place depends very largely on which sect they happen to belong to. All believe in divine creation, but the calculations of the Jehovah's Witnesses leads them to the belief that this act took place about 49,000 years ago, the creation of Adam having occurred in 4026 B.C. (in the autumn), exactly 6,000 years before the world is due to end in 1975. The Pentecostals, on the other hand, scorn such pretensions to knowledge. Few ever assert any date for the creation of the Earth, and most are content with any explanation of the origins of life, provided only that it is at variance with the evolutionist's. In contrast to these, the Mormons (or Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as they are more correctly called) appear reluctant to give much information on the subject, but the official view of their organisation is that the earth was created some 15,000 years ago, and, an indefinite time later, was inhabited by Adam, who was begotten of God after an act of sexual intercourse between he and his wife!

The Strength of the Attack

The arguments advanced by all these sects against the object of their vituperation are as varied as they are symptomatic of the illogicality of their progenitors. I remember once reading a Pentecostal booklet by a graduate of an American university. The author advised his faithful readers that they could easily disprove evolution by requesting its adherents to explain why, if man had inhabited this planet as long as they claimed, he had not yet reproduced himself until he was piled eighteen miles high into the stratosphere. This particular author assured his flock that evolutionists have absolutely no answer to such questions. Presumably he considered it quite a feasible proposition for the human race, having increased its numbers until, say, it was piled one mile high from the surface of the earth, nevertheless finding sufficient food and water, not to mention air, to inexorably continue the process of multiplication by the factor of eighteen.

A rather more serious, but nonetheless erroneous view is taken by critics who claim that evolutionists can provide no solution to the problem of the origin of life. Unfortunately, I have never yet heard one of these critics give a satisfactory definition of that term, or state whether, for the purpose of their argument, they consider DNA and amino acids as living or inert. Also, the criticism itself, when more fully understood, becomes a contradiction in terms. Evolution teaches that the higher forms of life developed from unicellular and subcellular organisms, which, being too lowly to possess any calcareous parts, would be extremely unlikely to leave any trace on the fossil record. The theory is hence being criticised for not producing evidence, which, by its very own doctrines would be largely non-existent.

A variation of this argument consists of demanding why the missing link has never been found. From the expression of self-satisfaction on the faces of those asking this question, it would appear that the only decent response an evolutionist could make in the situation, would be to disappear in blue smoke. In practise, however, the conversation usually goes something like this:

'Why hasn't the missing link been found?'

'Well, take Zinjanthropus.'

'Eh?'

'It's one of the sub-species of the Australopithecines.'

'What?'

'Well, you know Pithemanthropus . . .'

'Er . . . excuse me, I've just remembered a most important appointment.'

The fact of the matter is, of course, that dozens of 'missing links' have been discovered, many of which bridge the gap between modern man and his simian ancestry, but the devotees of the Word of God, through ignorance either natural or wilful, do not and will not know of them.

Development of the Theory

A criticism levelled at evolution by many of the Fundamentalist sects is that it has changed its beliefs so often as to forfeit the right to serious consideration. I saw this opinion expressed most eloquently in an illustration published by the Jehovah's Witnesses (of all people). This consisted of a drawing of a scientist, clutching a monkey by the hand and running behind a series of barricades labelled 'Acquired Characteristics', 'Natural Selection', 'Mutations', etcetera, through which was breaking a tank, boldly marked 'TRUTH'. The inference was that evolutionists had adopted each of these explanations in turn to give credibility to their views, but had been forced to abandon them in the face of advancing knowledge. As such, of course, it hardly requires the comment that it constitutes a grave misrepresentation of the facts. Though it is true that they did in the days of Mendel, evolutionists no longer adopt an either/or attitude to the question of mutations and natural selection, realising that both co-operate in the affecting of the evolutionary process. Of course, neither Lamarck nor Darwin were infallible, and the earlier theories have to some extent proved incorrect, but this is no more than has occurred in astronomy, physics, chemistry, psychology, and most of all theology; so that if the criterion of historical development be employed to detect invalidity, the Fundamentalists, must, to be consistent, entirely reject the Christo-Judaistic theological reformations, and return to the word-magic and sun adoration of the earliest Egyptians.

The pertinence of Fundamentalist objections to the theory can perhaps best be judged by the following little anecdote. I once put evolution to a young Pentecostal possessed of great zeal and very meagre intellect. He replied that he knew evolution was wrong because (believe it or not) after Darwin had proposed it he had grown a beard. Assuming this biographical detail to be correct, I wonder what it proves of the multifarious illustrations of a whiskery saviour which so often beam at us from children's gospel books?

Many critics have insisted that if evolution is true it should be observable in our present era. The answer to this, remembering that because of the vast time scales involved, the development of species through recorded history is liable to be slight, is that such development does occur. Probably the most noticeable of these changes is the occurrence of industrial melanism, a process whereby a gene greatly darkening the colour of moths (and other creatures) and previously kept in check by natural selection and its own injurious effects, by bestowing upon this species in modern industrial areas, a camouflaging effect against the grimy trunks of trees, has so enhanced these sports' chances of survival that throughout great areas of contemporary industrial countryside, they have completely replaced the original strain. Evolution finds no difficulty whatsoever in explaining such information, but as yet I am still waiting to hear the Fundamentalists' explanation.

Back to the Bible

Having considered at some length the arguments by which evolution is (supposedly) overthrown, let us now enquire as to what the Fundamentalists intend to put in its place. This, in brief, consists of a belief in divine creation. We may well enquire as to the *modus operandi* of this wonderful procedure, and the answers we receive can be roughly divided between moderate and extreme interpretations of the Book of Genesis. To regard the Bible as a scientific textbook (as many suggest that we do) leads ultimately to word magic; 'And God said . . . and there was . . .'. A further complication arises from the fact that there is not one creation myth, but two (Gen. 1 : 1—2 : 4 and Gen. 2 : 4-25), which, unfortunately for their devotees stand in mutual contradiction. Such Fundamentalists also show a marked reluctance to read the early Hebrew commentaries on their sacred texts, where they would find, for example, that in the second creation story, God originally created the animals to assuage Adam's sexual appetite, but the latter, finding little satisfaction in such divinely-ordained bestiality, eventually prevailed upon Him to create him Eve. From the same source they would also learn of Lilith and a host of other mythical characters who, in the early stories, placed the Lord's prestige in considerable jeopardy, and were thus expunged from the texts by the pious rabbis following the return from exile. Such Fundamentalists as I have approached on these subjects, can offer only the highly unpalatable explanation that the Jesus of more recent date have invented these stories out of a fiendish and self-immolatory desire to defile the scriptures they have in common with Christianity.

A Reconciliation?

As an alternative to the extremist position that where science and the Bible disagree, then so much the worse for science, the more intellectual of the Fundamentalists attempt to find a reconciliation between the two, proclaiming with great confidence that science and the Bible are today in complete agreement. Unfortunately for the stability of such a belief, however, it runs completely contrary to the established facts. Such people are prepared to concede that the six days of creation are not to be taken literally—indeed I know of no-one today who retains this belief—but explain that they represent the six periods into which the history of the world may be divided. Of course it is true that the history of the world may be divided into six periods to agree with the Book of Genesis; it may equally well be divided into seven periods to agree with the size of my hat, or into any other number of periods to agree with anything

whatever. But the point is that such a division is not particularly useful, and in the more usual methods employed in classifying the remote past, a division into six periods is rarely if ever used.

But the really amazing proof of the Bible's validity, such people maintain, is the way the ORDER of creation given in Genesis and by science, exactly coincide. The second creation myth referred to earlier, since it places the creation of man before that of the animals, is conveniently ignored, and attention is centred on the story related in Genesis 1. A glance through this document reveals that the earth is three days (or 'periods') older than the sun and the stars (Gen. 1 : 1, 16, 19), that Heaven has a physical location, above which is placed a considerable quantity of water (Gen. 1 : 7, 8), that the existence of fruit trees pre-dates that of fishes (Gen. 1 : 11-13, 20-23)—an error of timing to be measured in hundreds of millions of years—and that light and darkness required divine separation on two specific occasions (Gen. 1 : 4, 18).

Alternatively, a connection is found by others between the teachings of science and Gen. 1 : 2. Despite the contrary evidence of Gen. 1 : 1, the phrase, 'And the earth was without form and void', obviously refers, so they say, to the dark nebula existent before the creation of the earth. I know not how many brain-hours were expended in producing this hypothesis, but all of them could have easily been saved had the apologist responsible read a little further. For in the same verse we find: 'And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters'—which necessitates a belief in the existence of liquid H₂O in a cloud of hydrogen gas whose temperature is close to absolute zero.

It is hardly necessary to point out that science endorses none of this nonsense, but the myth of an agreement between them continues to persist, as a result of the efforts of those who would dearly love such an alliance to exist.

The Facts Explained

I recently had the rare experience of meeting a student doctor who subscribed to the beliefs outlined above, and supported the notion of the divine creation of man. He explained the existence of the remains of Neanderthal Man by suggesting that primitive societies cremated all their dead with the exception of the deformed, who were buried, and that these remains were then excavated in our own age, and erroneously proclaimed a sub-human species. This must have been an amazing society indeed, in which its members must have gone to considerable pains to further frustrate archeological progress, by completely destroying all trace of themselves or even their fires! Such arguments are, of course, only one step away from the eighteenth century view that the fossils were put in the ground by the devil, to test one's faith in God.

Neither does Fundamentalism fare better in its attempts to explain away other extinct species. I remember once asking a Jehovah's Witness who was eager to convert me, why, assuming his theory to be correct, God created the dinosaurs only to later destroy them again. His answer was that God created them for the purpose of crashing pathways through the primeval swamps as they lumbered their bulks across them. He was, however, completely at a loss to explain what God wanted with such pathways, or to explain why an omniscient divinity could not have contrived an easier method of obtaining them. Such explanations, attaining neither coherence nor credibility, are still nevertheless advanced by such people as an alternative to, and an improvement upon, evolutionary teaching; all to

the mental confusion of those not sufficiently well educated to realise precisely how ridiculous they are.

The Point Of It All

The point is that evolution is here to stay and will not be affected by the illogical and confused thinking of its opponents. It is high time that all people everywhere recognised that as an explanation of the origins of life, the Bible has nothing to offer but error and fantasy, and, if they are interested in such questions, discover the correct answers to them by becoming better acquainted with evolutionary fact. In the meantime, until its critics discover precisely what they are talking about, it would be to the advantage both of themselves and of everyone else, if they terminated the torrent of abuse they continually pour upon a theory they do not understand.

REVIEW

David Tribe

THE SEMINAL last hundred or so years in the democratic life of the nation have been the hunting ground for much research of late, and in this field a useful contribution has come from Stephen Mayor. *The Churches and the Labour Movement* (Independent Press, 36s) deals with the relation between the major Christian churches and the British working class-socialist-Labour Party complex from 1850 to today, though most of its concern is with the period before 1914. Dr Mayor is a Congregationalist minister and Leverhulme Research Fellow in Ecumenical Studies at Mansfield College, Oxford, but he does not exaggerate the role of his own denomination, which has by the way produced such colourful figures as W. T. Stead, Ben Tillett, Keir Hardie, Samuel Morley and Harold Wilson, or indulge in diplomatic vacuities.

He freely admits that the working classes the churches knew "were not the working classes who were creating the Labour movement" while "more worldly minded agencies led the advance" in social consciousness. Whether or not Christian Socialism was Christian it was certainly not socialism, and by 1914 "had become so vague that almost everyone could be a Christian Socialist". Exaggerated claims recently made for Methodism in the Labour movement are pricked, and Nonconformism is shown to have been little more successful than Anglicanism in evangelising the proletariat. Wesleyans and Congregationalists were for the most part *petit bourgeois*, and their influence in trades unions and co-operative societies did not extend beyond the "golden age" of "New Model" unionism in the 1870s and 1880s, between the revolutionary unionism of the thirties and forties and the "New Unionism" from 1889. Personal comment is minimal and well-documented with extracts from religious journals and biographical sketches of most of the significant figures. There is interesting matter on the settlement movement, the Guild of St Matthew, the Christian Social Union, Church Socialist League and their offshoots, Roman Catholic (to fight secular education) and Jewish trades unions, and curiosities like the Freethinking Christians and Communist Church.

For a work of such length and complexity the book is happily free from factual errors within my knowledge, save that "Old Roman Catholics" are a branch of the *episcopo vagantes* and not lapsed Catholics, the League of Empire Loyalists is older than stated, and the Conservatives did make some attack (perhaps to be emulated by Wilson) on the NHS. But there are rather more serious reservations about such a project. What is original in the book, and the greater part of it, is a processing of the comments on the Labour movement by the *Guardian* (not *Manchester*), *Church Times*, *Church Family* (now *Church of England Newspaper*, *Nonconformist* (later *Independent*), *British Weekly*, *Universe* and *Tablet* up to 1914. Indeed the book rather reads like a doctoral thesis in this field which has been expanded and brought up to date. We are given however rather vague information about these publications, even to the date of their foundation or disappearance (of two of them), and who precisely owned and controlled them. But even if this aspect had been properly documented, the question

would still arise to what extent these journals represented the denominations. The advantage of doing similar research in the papers of radical movements is that their proprietors and editors are much closer to the centre of power and they tend thus to be more authoritative. In religious analyses shadowy "personalities" like F. D. Maurice are apt to become more prominent than their real historical significance seems to warrant. Outside the Working Men's College, what did this man really represent?

Inevitably such an approach gives a special colour to other movements referred to. Holyoake thus appears to be more prominent in secularism than Bradlaugh, simply because he moved more in Christian circles. But Dr Mayor does correct the too frequent equation of the theological with the political Right. In Britain the attitude of the Catholic Church was greatly influenced by its high proportion of Irish labourers, and because the more "established" wing of the Establishment in the nineteenth century was Evangelical, Anglo-Catholic vicars got the worst livings in the slums and there tended to get caught up in working-class movements.

I have unfortunately to end with a complaint. The book has a Foreword by George Thomas, who has presumably not read it or any other honest social history. Thus he proclaims: "Christianity is an all-embracing faith which claims pre-eminence in every field of human endeavour. That is why inspired Christians have been to the fore in every great struggle for the advancement of human rights". He tells us that "today in Westminster there is a solid core of Labour Members of Parliament who are in politics only because they see it as a proving ground for their faith". I wonder if their constituents know. I also wonder how long it will be before a Government Minister will so far forget his "impartiality" as to associate himself with a secularist cause.

CORRECTION

IN *Humanism—As I See It* by Barbara Smoker (December 22) the final line of the second paragraph should read:

The Humanist is basically democratic, whatever his political persuasion, and is concerned to give posterity "a proxy vote"—by trying, for instance, to preserve for posterity our heritage of beauty and culture and a fair share of the earth's exhaustible resources.

We apologise to Miss Smoker for omissions and errors in this paragraph.

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