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Friday,
March 1, 1968**SPAIN**

Christopher Brunel

CHANGE in backward, Catholic Spain? General Franco was cunning enough to evade the fate of Hitler and Mussolini, yet changes are now taking place in Spain that show him fast to becoming isolated and out-maneuvred. Just how the Spanish people are struggling against their wily dictator was seen recently at a Paris conference that I attended, and which even *The Times* seems to have missed—the Fourth West European Conference for Spain.

Aware of world public opinion, the Franco authorities themselves have made claims about liberalism of the régime in recent years. But the repression and the censorship remains—though they have changed considerably. The French lawyer, Charles Lederman, gave details of some of the changes. While the Military Courts might not be sentencing workers and intellectuals to long terms of imprisonment to the same extent, the repression by the Public Order Courts have intensified; here the sentences were less spectacular. But without going to court at all the police had the right to impose fines, even up to five thousand pesetas, and they could maintain arrested people in gaol until the fine was paid.

M. Lederman also said that people who were arrested, even for a few hours, might lose their jobs, and employers were entitled to lay them off without severance pay. Homes were visited by the police without reason, in order to intimidate the families of suspected persons and prevent the families from taking part in political activities. Typical of fascist state, when a person comes out of prison, the police may wait for him and beat him up, M. Lederman saying that in a number of cases the victims landed up in hospital as a result of their treatment.

The liberalisation of the press was negated by a system of claiming that anything distasteful to the Spanish authorities was "an official secret", which could not be published.

Another speaker with first-hand experience reminded the conference how the Spanish War was started by an uprising of "Defenders of Christian Religion" who wanted to choke popular feelings, as expressed in the elected Republic Government of the day; the suppressive nature of the present hierarchical Spanish State, he maintained, stemmed from those times, and it still held to the principle that some were destined to rule, some to obey. In this way gypsies, who were only suspected of the theft of livestock, were tortured, and the same style of treatment meted out to others. He ended by saying that *Opus Dei* advised, "Humiliate yourself—it is good to suffer"!

But the attitude of the leaders of the Catholic Church is becoming increasingly challenged in Spain—and challenged from within the Church itself. The ordinary Catholic priests in Spain are siding with the workers, the students and the professional classes who are turning away from Franco. A Spanish Catholic priest, speaking to the conference incognito for his own safety, claimed that even some of the Bishops encouraged them, though from what others

said I would think that these Bishops were in a minority and not prepared to come out openly in their anti-Franco beliefs.

In the Spanish Universities, where there were thinking people—students and professors alike are taking militant steps against the authorities, so much so that there was now a special police force in the Universities themselves.

Perhaps the biggest changes are taking place in industry with the formation of Workers' Commissions (*Comisiones Obrera*). In contrast to the stooge Trade Unions, set up by the régime, they are illegal, but so great have been the changes in Spain in recent years that the Workers' Commissions do not need to work underground. Naturally, they cannot function in the same way as Unions in other countries with well-staffed offices, and so it is not easy to get up-to-date and detailed information on their efforts to help the Spanish workers. The Workers' Commissions have representatives of all the workers in a factory or mine, and anyone, irrespective of political or religious affiliations, could be a member. This broad basis of operation is typical of the rising spirit in Spain today; it is united, and so it is strong. It is, in a sense, apolitical, its only politics being to get rid of the Franco régime.

The wife of one of the imprisoned leaders of the workers, Madame Marcelino Camacho, briefly and movingly told the conference that the people of Spain demanded amnesty for all political prisoners, the return to Spain of all exiles, and an end to repression.

Representatives from a dozen countries were at the Paris conference to show their solidarity with the Spanish people. This can take several forms, varying from collecting money for students expelled from their University for anti-Franco activity, or to send lawyers from outside Spain as observers at trials, to making representations to our own governments. Speaker after speaker stressed that the Spanish people themselves will decide how to fight against their repressive régime—similarly, we can in our own countries decide how best we can help them.

NEW HUMANIST GROUP AT CHELMSFORD

A NEW Humanist Group has been formed in the Cathedral town of Chelmsford in Essex, whose MP, Norman St John Stevas, is a Roman Catholic. Promises of strong support were received from more than thirty prospective members at a Public Meeting held in Chelmsford's Shire Hall on Thursday, February 8, and convened by the already flourishing groups existing at Brentwood, Havering, Redbridge and Southend.

Talks were given by Alf Giller, Secretary of the Essex (Humanist) Council, and by Michael Lines, Executive Officer of the British Humanist Association. The chair was taken by Chelmsford Humanist George Allen.

Acknowledgements to Mrs Jill Fincham for submitting a full report from which the above is extracted.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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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 01-407 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 and MCRAE.

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

Birmingham Branch, NSS, Midland Institute, Birmingham, Sunday, March 3, 6.45 p.m.: A meeting.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Regency House, Oriental Place, Brighton, Sunday, March 3, 5.30 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, OBE.

Cambridge Humanists, Mill Lane Lecture Rooms, Cambridge, Thursday, March 7 (8.30 p.m., in the Union Chamber, joint with the Heretics and the Jewish Society): Dr JOHN ALLEGRO, "The Dead Sea Scrolls".

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group, 82 Westpole Street, Cockfosters, Barnet, Thursday, March 7, 8 p.m.: Rev. TOM DALTON, "What Humanists have in common with Unitarians".

Leicester Secular Society, The Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, March 3 (87th Anniversary), 6.30 p.m.: F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT, "Leicester Secularism Over The Years".

Lincolnshire Humanist Group, Eastgate Hotel, Lincoln, Thursday, March 8, 7.30 p.m.: "The Agnostics Adoption Society".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, March 3, 11 a.m.: Lord SORENSON, "Mystical Humanism".

South Place Sunday Concerts, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, March 3, 6.30 p.m.: Dartington String Quartet. Haydn, Shostakovich, Beethoven. Admission 4/-.

CREATION OR EVOLUTION?

A. J. Lowry

A Reply to the Rev. Strother

IN giving answers to as many of the Rev. Strother's points as are sufficiently intelligible to warrant them, I should like to begin by explaining that the reason why I discussed only irrelevant criticisms of evolution in my article of January 12, was that before reading his piece in the FREETHINKER (February 16), *Mr Lowry and the Myth of Evolution*) I had never heard of any others. After reading it I am still in the same position.

The Rev. Strother attempts to discuss the origins of life, whilst 'leaving aside' the definition of that term. He tells us that the environments employed in the experiments were 'pure speculation' and not 'based on actual knowledge', though he is presumably leaving aside the definitions of those terms, too. Such attitudes merely underline the point which I made in my original article—creationists will not define the terms in which they make their criticisms, for fear of being intelligible, and hence being open to disproof.

If families and orders appear suddenly in the fossil record, as the Rev. Strother states, I should like him to classify the Archaeopteryx, the Cephalaspis and the Seymouria. I have already explained why pre-Cambrian life would be unlikely to leave fossil traces, and I can see no point in repeating that explanation here. In reply to his next point, the phylum Chordata does not suddenly appear in the fossil record, and the evidence which may be mustered to prove that it evolved from lowlier forms of life would be sufficient in itself to prevent divine creation ever being considered as a serious alternative to evolution.

Obviously the Rev. Strother has completely failed to understand my point concerning industrial melanism, so I shall perform the courtesy of explaining it to him. I employed industrial melanism as an example of how changing environments can, through natural selection, encourage the development of a strain previously held in check. I was not suggesting that industrialisation *caused* the mutation to appear, merely that its presence allowed these mutants to flourish. Hence, although these mutants have occasionally appeared since time immemorial, only of late has industrialisation allowed them to increase and multiply to form a 'new' strain. If this argument is still beyond his grasp, I would suggest to the Rev. Strother that he writes to me directly for coaching in elementary biology.

For the Rev. Strother to take up the cudgels over *homo habilis* was a very silly mistake on his part. He claims that 'the earliest known fossil men are identical with those living today', yet the brain capacity of *homo habilis* is only 680 ccs., one half the volume of that of modern man. Palaeontologists place him below *homo erectus* in their classifications, and it remains debatable whether he is really a *hominine* at all, many considering him to be a more advanced Australopithecine.

Of course, the Rev. Strother makes no constructive suggestion as to how Zinjanthropus and his like would fit into his divine creation theory, but perhaps on this point he would agree with another creationist I know. When I asked this young man how such remains came to be in the ground, he unhesitatingly replied that they were 'fossilised angels'! Such is the intelligence of those opposing evolution.

THE NEW LOOK

F. H. Snow

ELDERLY sceptics are apt to dwell upon the 'good old days' when rationalism and unbelief were regarded as synonymous. Personally, I have resisted the temptation to cast a rosy aura on the period during which I changed from religious emotionalism to atheism, but find it impossible to view with equanimity the modern trend to give scepticism a new look under the name of humanism.

In the time to which I have referred, humanism was a more than unfamiliar word. In fact, I never heard it used. The believer and sceptic knew just where each other stood. Today they do not. The believer knows where he wants to get the sceptic, but the sceptic, or rather, humanist, isn't sure where he wants the religionist to be. He is less emphatic as to his disbelief than the generality of Christians are as to their belief, and far less articulate than his secularist forerunners.

Humanism's aspect is suggestive of a relinquishment of rationalism's original and principal objective, the elimination of religious belief in the foreseeable future. By all the signs, humanism is content to await the slow progress of a mildly-sceptical secularism, to bring about superstition's decrease in the misty centuries ahead. Social reforms and ethics therefore concern her more importantly than the negation of Christian belief. Her spokesmen, and contributors to humanist journals, rarely admit to the title of atheist. A few Humanists even suggest that the controversial issues between Christianity and secularism have long been decided. I would like to ask, in the minds of whom? And what are the issues that have been decided? The Churches have tacitly accepted the theory of evolution, and hellfire is discounted by the Catholic and Anglican communities; the six days of creation are now regarded by those bodies as signifying great ages, though in clear contradiction of the literal meaning of the "evening and mornings" of Genesis. In what else have they capitulated to the impact of modern thought? Their pulpiteers, save for a few such as the Bishop of Woolwich, still preach the reality of God, heaven angels and damnation—even if of the unfiery kind. The great bulk of Christendom holds firmly to fundamental doctrines.

Today, as sixty years ago, when the forces of unreason are presumed to have been controversially disposed of, thousands of God's Houses throughout our triple-nationed realm ring each sabbath with praises of a heavenly Lord, and their congregations are regaled with the story of Jesus' love, and his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and intercession for sinning humanity. Moreover, television screens show, every Sunday of the year and oftener, scenes of fervent worship. One hasn't to await Billy Graham for evidence that the 'old battles' are far from won.

It is certainly not the general public that regards the conflict between belief and unbelief as settled in favour of the latter. There is no common opinion to that effect, as the mass of letters affirming belief, in connection with the Quinton Hogg debate, indicates. Extensive contact with the working fraternity has assured me of its general ignorance, both of the issues in long past controversies, and of reasoned argument for belief or unbelief. Save with a tiny minority, childhood indoctrination decides in favour of the former.

In whose minds, then, save those of some humanists, have the battles of the past been won, and challenge of religious dogma made abortive? God is still in his heaven,

though all is anything but right with the world. With fundamentalism being roared in the great majority of Britain's places of worship, Christianity appears quite unaware of a rationalist victory. She behaves as though there had never been anything to be decided, whilst shirking the crossing of controversial swords with her arch-adversary, atheism, from whom she has long disengaged herself. In the eyes of the indoctrinated and undiscerning, her specious creed remains unconfuted. "The shrill bell rings, the censer swings, and solemn chants resound" to the approval of Catholic millions; the Heavenly Father is extolled by many other millions and accepted as fact by most of the non-worshipping public. In whose minds have the credal barriers to right thinking been demolished, and the way cleared for humanist progress?

The hard truth is that the fight is before us. The vital task of enlightening the masses as to the case against God, still confronts secularism. The increasing number of humanist groups should not lull us into undue optimism. To the 'man-in-the-street' the terms Freethought, Secularism, Rationalism, Humanism mean little or nothing. The meetings of intellectuals will be ineffectual to advance secularist ideas where most needed. Unless far greater numbers of ordinary folk are enlisted in our cause, through acquaintance with the objective reasoning that makes nonsense of the "Old, Old Story", it cannot become an effective force for the promotion of a rational society.

We must recapture the sense of urgency that animated the old campaigners; and come to grips with Unreason. Belief in a purely hypothetical divinity must be attacked to the full extent of our means. The virility of religion (Roman Catholics are increasing far more rapidly than humanists) must be recognised. We must work mightily to educate the plain person, lucidly and unacademically, as to the many intelligent reasons for its rejection.

Without the spirit to achieve this, the spread of rationalist ideas throughout our country and the world will be terribly slow; for longer than we dare visualise, tom-toms will beat to the rites of savage faiths; the eyes of eastern mystics will contemplate their navels; fanatics will prostrate themselves before a fiction, and religious bigotry will frustrate the birth of a global brotherhood.

100 YEARS OF FREETHOUGHT

By DAVID TRIBE

"The book contains very much interesting information culled from many sources and leaves the reader both with a sense of respect for the moral integrity and enthusiasm of the secularists and with a feeling that their excellencies bear no inevitable relation to the anti-religious dogma which they have espoused and which is the distinctive characteristic of their movement."

—*Contemporary Review.*

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THE HUMANISM OF HUMANISTS

Michael Gray

ALTHOUGH the attack on Humanists by R. Smith (December 8) has brought excellent replies in their defence by Joseph H. Hird (January 5) and A. J. Lowry (January 19), I feel that these writers have not in fact provided a complete vindication of Humanists themselves, but rather of the true spirit of Humanism. There is a distinct difference, just as there is between the Christianity that preaches "love thy neighbour" and the Christians of the Crusades and Inquisition. What we must judge a man by are his actions and not the label he puts on them, and it is a sad fact that there are some who call themselves Humanists whose actions provide some justification for R. Smith's accusations.

The purely negative Atheism into which I fell upon first abandoning Christianity was transformed into a positive philosophy by coming into contact with the Humanist movement through obtaining by chance a copy of the FREETHINKER (for which I shall be ever indebted to Mr George Woodcock, of the Manchester branch NSS). Having escaped the clutches of Roman Catholicism I possessed a hatred of authoritarianism that left me with almost an obsession about freedom, whether of speech, publication or expression—or freedom from persecution and intolerance. In short, I had become a Freethinker before ever even having heard the word and it seemed to me then that the philosophy of Humanism incorporated all that Freethought stands for as a necessary part of its programme for the advancement of physical, moral and intellectual well-being of mankind. I cannot see how any Humanist can deny this; obviously, however, there are some who do.

Humanism and Freethought preach tolerance and religious freedom, yet I have read in the pages of the FREETHINKER itself the outrageous suggestion from one contributor that Roman Catholics should be excluded from public office. Humanism recognises the importance of freedom of expression and publication, yet more than once the letters to the FREETHINKER'S editor have contained hysterical and libellous attacks on the art of Jean Straker, himself a distinguished contributor to this paper. His work has been labelled "Soho smut" and more than one letter to the editor of the *Humanist* has urged that his advertising be refused. Correspondents to the *Humanist* have also shamefully attacked Baroness Wootton because her conscience genuinely would not allow her to support the

general Humanist attitude to abortion. To the best of my knowledge all these attacks came from 'Humanists'. I ask myself—where is the Humanism in wishing to persecute one man for his religion, another for his art, and a woman for honestly following her conscience?

More recently in the FREETHINKER another 'Humanist'—self-styled "accredited bullfight critic"—has written in support of this cruel, sadistic and barbaric ritual murder. Believing we should put human beings first and animals merely second he apparently concludes that this justifies any atrocity against animals man cares to commit to satisfy his blood-lust.

I am prepared to believe that such people constitute a tiny minority, though why they claim to believe in Humanism at all is beyond my comprehension. But in the matter of legislation against "soft" drugs many Humanists have adopted a most unhumanistic attitude, preferring to persecute the drug takers as criminals rather than try to understand and help them. Many people are driven to drugs as the only refuge from the depression and despair that continually haunts them; are we to condemn them for this? They are called irresponsible escapists by people who have never known the meaning of despair. But could anybody who has never lived in that nightmare world where all sweetness is turned sour, all beauty disfigured to ugliness, happiness a forgotten dream blacked out by an all-pervading misery, possibly understand the desperate need for escape? Or, understanding, could he condemn? They are called "drop-outs"—are we then to think the less of them for refusing to accept the values of a society that uses napalm and "lazy dogs" to convince the world of the merits of democracy?

I do not share R. Smith's contempt for Humanism. I admire everything for which it stands; my criticism is not of Humanism itself but of those who take its name in vain, and I reserve the right to be cynical of 'Humanists' if by calling themselves this, men are merely mimicking the Christians in paying lip-service to a set of high-sounding ideals which they never seek to apply in practice. Humanism does not talk, it *acts*—not to persecute, to suppress, censor or condemn, but to help. We cannot be expected to love all our fellowmen, but where is the great merit in helping those we love? Would not the most vicious criminal do the same? The Humanist should seek to understand and to help, not just those he loves or who share his opinions, but *all* men simply because they need help.

I have found that many in the movement are no less bigoted (and no more concerned with alleviating suffering) than the Christians they condemn. I do not know if they are in a minority or not. I think they may be; I hope they are. Humanism will not be man's salvation, but it can make his life a little more bearable and his death a little less tragic. It will not as long as such people are within its ranks. Those outside the Humanist movement will judge us by our worst representatives, just as we have judged Christianity by its worst and the presence of such unhumanistic Humanists will always provide the R. Smith's of this world with plenty of ammunition and some justification to attack us. I hope that these people will think twice before the next time they rush to condemn, dragging Humanism down into the mud with them, but I doubt it.

The **AGNOSTICS ADOPTION SOCIETY** are holding their **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** on March 16, 1968, at 2.30 p.m. at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1. Chairman: Professor A. J. Ayer. Speaker: Miss Jane Rowe whose talk will be on "New Developments in Adoption". All those interested in the work of the Society are welcome.

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VEGETARIANISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Jack Walton

THE growing popularity of vegetarianism has brought many Christians in recent years to associate themselves with it, and to attempt to prove the association is logical. To do this they appeal to the authority of the Bible.

Two publications deserve to be noted: *The Bible and Vegetarianism*, published by the Vegetarian Society of Manchester, and *The British Vegetarian*, jointly published by the Manchester Society and the London Vegetarian Society. The latter contains a number of crude propaganda leaflets issued by one of the obscurantist religious bodies of West London.

The *Bible and Vegetarianism* has two articles, one by the Secretary of the Vegetarian Society and the other by a priest. It would appear that both writers have a highly-developed sense of selectivity in their choice of quotations from the Bible, besides sharing a religious determination to substantiate their case by the principle of reiteration. The danger of this mischievous form of propaganda is that it may, as was indubitably intended, deceive the nicer type of Christian who accepts his religion in the same unreflecting manner in which he takes his breakfast.

Perhaps another selection of verses from the Bible might help to redress the balance of desirable objectivity. And, if justification is needed for another look at the Bible, then let it be on the grounds that the Bible itself is often the most fertile field for the refutation of Christian claims.

Genesis 8 : 20-21

The Lord, in a mood of contrition, and with his nature softened by the smell of burning animals, solemnly undertakes to mend his ways and vows never again to smite every living thing.

Genesis 18 : 7-10

The Lord, pleased with a meal of freshly killed veal, expresses his delight by promising that a poor old woman of ninety will become pregnant. And she did!

Exodus 12 : 3-11

The Lord promulgates shocking and revolting recipes for the cooking of young lambs and goats.

Leviticus 3 : 8-11

Here are disclosed unashamedly, the more disgusting rites proper to the religious slaughter of animals. Further disclosures may be found in chapters 4, 8 and 9 of *Leviticus* also.

It is probably true to say at this point that humanitarian ideals have driven these religious practices into the limbo of obsolescence, but if any clergyman should be discovered performing such rites then he should be reported immediately to the police.

Leviticus, chapter 11, has a transcendental silliness that surely must be unique even for the Bible. From it may be learned that great owls and little owls should not be eaten but that it is permissible to eat flying, creeping things that have legs above their feet!

Leviticus 14 : 49-52

Modern detergents cannot be compared with the efficacy of the sanguinary religious disinfectants prescribed in these verses.

Leviticus 14 : 21

The Lord forbids his children to eat animals that have died a natural death, and orders that they should be given as food to strangers or, more canny perhaps, they should be sold to an 'alien'.

Judges 15 : 4-5

Samson, with the spirit of the Lord upon him, fastens three hundred animals tail to tail and burns them alive.

* * *

There are, of course, many more instances of cruelty to animals being commended in the Bible, but perhaps it would suffice now to show from the New Testament that the passage of years did nothing to diminish the cruel and immoral standards of the Lord's chosen peoples.

Matthew 14 : 17-21 and Matthew 15 : 34-38

The mathematics of this disciple are rather weak but there clearly emerges the fact of a dinner where a great many people gorged themselves on dead fish at a meal where the menu was arranged by Jesus.

Mark 5 : 13

Jesus drowns two thousand pigs. Wantonly, deliberately and stupidly.

Luke 24 : 41-43

Jesus enjoys broiled fish.

John 21 : 11-13

Simon Peter catches 153 fish and Jesus arranges another party.

* * *

With these few examples, from the many of the Bible, of the cruelty to animals being condoned and commended by the Bible, it is difficult for ordinary people like secularists to comprehend the degree of naivete which enables the Secretary of the Vegetarian Society to write: "It can be stated that the Old Testament is predominantly inclined towards vegetarianism".

Perhaps the priest, co-author of the pamphlet, subconsciously expressed an unexpected truth in his concluding paragraph: "... if the Gospels teach such things, then the sooner people stop taking them literally the better".

Should it be deduced that this unconscious evaluation of the worth of the Christian creed is the *proper measure* of its worth?

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MAINLÄNDER ON SUICIDE

MAN is the only animal that contemplates suicide. He is the only animal that needs to. If this is a sign of insanity, then very many must be classed as being insane. But who is sane and who is insane in this world? Literature and life abounds with cases of suicide, and this is a sure sign that all is not well with human existence in this world. Albert Camus wrote in his *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*: "There is but one truly philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is *not* worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy". Mainländer, a young German philosopher of the late nineteenth century, dealt with this question of suicide very profoundly in his chief work *Die Philosophie der Erlösung* which ran into about eight editions.

Mainländer fully shared Schopenhauer's views as to the misery of human life, but opposed his doctrine of resignation and nirvana as the solution to the general problem of life. According to Schopenhauer, life is signalised at its very beginning by tears, its course is fundamentally tragic, and still more tragic is its end. "It is therefore impossible to ignore that all this is *meant* to be. Death is the real goal of life, all the rest of the so-called goals of life are illusions! That being so," says Mainländer, "the the quicker we reach this goal the better."

Mainländer also accepted the three stages of human illusion as expounded by Hartmann in his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, but attacked vigorously the view of facilitating the cosmic process by acquiescence in the will to live.

"Indeed," he cried, "your advice is that we should sacrifice ourselves to the cosmos; we are to choose a career, to learn a trade, acquire money, property, fame, power and so forth; we are to marry and to beget offspring; by such advice you are merely undoing with your own hands the sole merit of your work, the analysis of illusion. You suddenly advise the very man who has got behind all these illusions, although it has been recognised, could still deceive and exercise its power".

Mainländer takes an entirely different view of the problem. Like Schopenhauer and Hartmann, he is convinced of the futility of happiness, but he has achieved an original view of the cosmic process. He holds that an unaccountable and divine Being existed before the creation of the world. Before disappearing, "this divinity gave birth to the universe". By this means, complete annihilation was made possible. "The world," says Mainländer, "is but the means for bringing about a condition of non-existence, and is the only possible means by which that end could be attained." This unaccountable Being knew that only by creating a real world could we pass from existence into non-existence.

Mainländer regards as certain "that the universe tends towards universal non-existence". This tendency is characterised by the weakening of the total energy, so that "every individual at the close of the weakening process to which his energy is submitted, is led in the course of his development to the point at which his desire for annihilation may be fulfilled".

"Life on our planet," he says, "ought to be regarded as a halting-place on the road to death."

In order to appreciate fully the happiness brought by death, it is necessary first to taste of life, and that is why

the instinct of self-preservation is so well developed in animals. Man passes first through a phase of development in which he is like any other animal. "As with them the will to live is stronger than the will to die. Life is clung to with extreme pertinacity, and death is proportionately execrated."

"At first, not only the fear of death increases, but equally so the love of life becomes more acute. Animals knowing nothing of death, only fear it instinctively through their perception of approaching danger. Man, on the contrary, knows of the existence of death, and what it means. He looks back on his past life and wonders what the future may hold in store, and realises, infinitely more than animals realise it, the dangers that threaten him."

During this phase, man does all in his power to keep death at bay, and to make his life as happy as possible. He usually turns to religion, or lives and fights for some great ideal society in which the brotherhood of man will be realised. But the thinking man soon comes to the conclusion that a craving for life is not the true aim of the universe; it is only the means of attaining knowledge of the real aim of existence which is the cessation of life.

Philosophy soon shows that perfect happiness is not possible, and that only death is desirable.

In summing up the cosmic process, the conclusion arrived at is "that throughout the universe the desire of death exists in a form more or less marked, but that in the organic world this assumes the form of a will to live". In the end, however, the desire of death becomes more plain, until the philosopher can see "in the whole universe nothing but a longing for absolute extinction, and fancies that he can hear the cry rolling from star to star 'Deliverance, deliverance, death to our life' and the echoing cry of consolation 'Extinction, and deliverance await you all'".

In order to explain in a clearer way the progress of this evolution, Mainländer describes the state of mind of a man who develops the will to die, and commits suicide. "At first, he glances anxiously and from afar at death, and shrinks from it with horror. Later, he draws nearer and walks round it in wide circles. Day by day, however, these circles become smaller, until finally he embraces death with weary arms and looks it straight in the face. Then peace comes; gentle peace". The only real peace man will ever have in this world.

It is absurd to expect anything to follow death but absolute annihilation, and the ordinary man faces this prospect with terror.

"In relinquishing Schopenhauer's will to live", concludes Mainländer, "I have finally arrived at the will to die. I have raised myself upon the shoulders of Schopenhauer, until I have attained a point of view such as others have never accomplished. At present I am alone, but behind me all humanity is pressing on to freedom; and before me is the translucent vista of the future."

Mainländer, true to his philosophy, committed suicide while still quite a young man.

Albert Camus did not advocate suicide in his *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, although he took a rather dim view of life. He

Ron Smith

imagined his hero Sisyphus as being very happy in his task of rolling a stone up a hill from which it always rolls down again. One wonders if anyone could be happy with such a task. Surely only a mythical hero could be happy thus engaged; not a real man of flesh and blood. A real man would give up, were he able, seeing that there can be no future in it. Mainländer, on such issues, was far more realistic than Camus, and far more profound in his answers to questions regarding suicide.

The real tragedy as I see it is endeavouring to give false purpose to a life which essentially has no purpose. The

religious man thinks he has an answer to human existence because he believes he has found its purpose; but to many thinking men such answers are unverifiable and highly questionable. Billions have walked this earth; where are they now? It seems that all they lived for came to nothing in the end. As with them, so with us. Drink, drugs and religious delusions demonstrate quite clearly how anxiously so many try to escape the real facts of life. Camus, no doubt, was right in regarding suicide as the only really serious philosophical problem, but his attempt to answer the problem by proposing 'the happiness of Sisyphus' bears no comparison with the realism of Mainländer.

PARADOXES OF CHRISTIAN DETERMINISM

A. J. Lowry

THOUGH often anathematised for their intolerable view of the universe, it is quite indisputable that, scripturally, the Calvinists have a good point. No one impartially examining Rom. 8 : 29, 30, Rom. 11 : 7-10, Eph. 1 : 4, 5, 11, Rev. 17 : 8 and Rev. 20 : 15 could fail to conclude that God has ordained 'from the foundation of the world' which of His creation are to be blessed and which damned. Further, it even appears that on occasions God and Jesus go to considerable lengths to prevent their plans being thwarted by the wrong person being saved (2 Thess. 2 : 11, 12, Mark 4 : 11, 12). Also, of course, the argument is perfectly valid that God (assuming His existence), must possess omniscience, and must hence be aware of what man will do, even before he does it. Under these circumstances, therefore, it is surely impossible to effect a reconciliation between the scriptural interpretation of God and any belief, however vague, in free will.

But if we do take this belief seriously, it at once becomes apparent that the traditional belief in divine justice can no longer stand. To begin at the beginning, when God created the Garden of Eden, he must already have known the result of such an action would be the Fall of man. The blame for this, therefore, must be placed, not on Adam, who had no choice in the matter, but on the omniscient God who submitted him to a temptation which he knew he would fail. Even ignoring the objections to the questionable process whereby the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, it is obviously unjust to punish Adam's descendants for a crime for which he was not responsible. But if we are to believe the Bible, that is precisely what God intends to do with the greatest severity and gusto, pre-ordaining to eternal torment the majority of the world's population as a consequence. The whole concept of divine justice therefore becomes utterly untenable, and it is thus extremely difficult to see how anyone could credit God with any form of goodness whatsoever.

To answer such objections, the Calvinists attempt to transmute the proposition of divine benevolence from an *a posteriori* to an *a priori* statement. God, they inform us, is not good because he performs actions which we regard as morally upright—indeed, such a theology would presuppose the blasphemy of man judging God—instead, God is simply good by definition. In other words we re-define good to mean "whatever God does", and thus, however sanguinary and sadistic His acts appear by our poor, feeble and desperately wicked standards, they are really, by definition, 'good'.

Such word-magic and logical acrobatics leave themselves

immediately open to a number of objections. To begin with, they reduce all statements concerning the ethical nature of God to tautologies. To say, for example, 'God does good', means only 'God does what God does', and hence tells us nothing. Also, 'good', like any other word, was invented by we poor, feeble, wicked creatures to represent an idea which we wished to express, and that idea most certainly does not include the notion of meting out eternal torment to millions of people as punishment for a crime which they didn't commit. And if we must take such a cavalier attitude to our definitions, why should we not, with equal validity, define the acts of God as 'bad'?

Such defences, whilst maintaining a superficial correlation between God and 'good', in no way solve the real nature of the paradox. Indeed, the problem appears to be totally insoluble, as the Calvinists, by taking the Biblical God seriously, can never convincingly prove that He is anything else but spiteful, capricious and evil. The reason for this is, of course, that this is precisely the way the Biblical God appears; and two thousand years of the most ingenious theology and logic-chopping have failed to produce a satisfactory refutation to an argument which any intelligent layman could perceive and appreciate within the space of five minutes.

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Letters to the Editor

Keep clear

TODAY I have been made happy. I have read the FREETHINKER for many years but only understood half of it. I first bought it from my first week's pocket-money 54 years ago. I was 14 years of age, and had heard dedicated men speak on atheism in Newcastle's Bigg Market. These men used words of not more than three syllables which were easily understood (words such as were used by Paine, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, Shakespeare and Burns) and the talks gave me much mental stimulation and happiness. The sole reason I consistently bought the FREETHINKER was that I wanted to help its circulation. To my recollection, I haven't missed a single issue, nor have I kept one.

Now, after all these years, I have read one through from cover to cover without having to retrace my steps or reach for my dictionary. I feel sure this is the right approach. Give us material easy to digest.

If you check your records, I am sure you will find your sale of literature was higher around 1936 than it is today. The present position could be improved, I feel sure, not by lowering the tone of the material, but by making it clearer to minds such as mine; minds which, after all, may be just as receptive and productive as those of some trained thinkers. By adopting this method, the minds of the masses could be reached—as they were 54 years ago.

Thank you again. I hope the vicar accepts your invitation to debate but, for "God's" sake, keep the words short and the meaning clear.

JOE BENNETT.

Concern of Christ?

MISS Violet Mitchell may well ask (February 2) "what Christian organisation unanimsously condemns blood-sports, vivisection, circus training of animals", etc.

A friend of mine very opposed to the circus abuse of animals once wrote to one of our well-known bishops of the Church of England on the subject, and was told in reply that "performing animals are not the concern of the Church". My friend retorted, "with respect", that they would have been the concern of Christ.

In the bishop's words lies the explanation of the indifferent attitude of the Christian Church towards the problem of animal exploitation. The Church is so occupied with the souls of us sacrosanct humans that it has neither time nor thought for the persecuted bodies of the non-human population with which we share this planet.

Whether animals have souls or not seems to me beside the point. If they are bodies only, does not the treatment meted out to them while alive become thereby of greater importance?

I think that the Old Testament "dominion" of man over the animals is in large measure responsible for man's irresponsible attitude towards the "lower" creation. He has mistaken 'dominion' for *domination* over the animals. 'Dominion' involves stewardship and responsibility.

KATHLEEN MITCHELL.

Thy will be done

IN the February 16 issue, you quote Dr Cicely Saunders speaking at the NSS forum on euthanasia (February 1) at Conway Hall: "The main reason why we say 'no' to euthanasia is that to do otherwise would be to say 'no' to God". You then add "Presumably because it is the antithesis of 'Thy will be done'". On the basis of this argument, using any medical or surgical skills to save the life of a dying person—or even using them to ease an ache or pain, or to help heal a cut finger—would also be saying 'no' to God, and interfering with His will. God must have intended the death, the ache, the cut finger, or it would not have happened. However, I doubt whether Dr Saunders, as a logical corollary to her original argument, would consider resigning her position as Medical Director of St Christopher's Hospice.

A. COMINO-JONES (Mrs).

Joe Naseby's 'Catholic Infiltration'

IT came as a great joy to me to read Joe Naseby's contribution (February 9) which was concise and to the point.

When he says that "without political power" the Church (of whatever denomination) "would have no power", it answers E. G. Macfarlane's article "Government or Religion", where he claims "we must go into politics". It underlines that the idea of 'God' is itself politics and, therefore, any militant campaign against any religion must face the political issues.

It's no use complaining now that we have Harold the Unready and his team of 'Fiddlers on the Roof' at the top, who as a body refuse to be too closely identified with the movement's reforms (such as Divorce, Abortion, Sunday Observance) all of which had to be brought in as Private Members' Bills.

It is all very well to claim—as Mr Macfarlane does—that we should have our own political party; it is not enough to know that the majority of today's town dwellers are at least agnostic; it is also necessary to organise them into a mass following. It would be ludicrous to measure up to the churches before we are rich enough to fight on even ground with these enormously rich and influential mass organisations. If we were on even ground, the FREETHINKER would at the same price be an illustrated daily with 32 pages and many advertisements.

OTTO WOLFGANG.

Racialism

RACIALISM is always bad. When it appears in the FREETHINKER, written by a secularist, then despair cannot be far off.

W. E. Edwards (USA) writes: "The scriptures may have been a satisfactory test for guiding and controlling an ignorant and superstitious first-century Asiatic and Semitic population (Palestine is in Asia). They are no longer satisfactory for 20th century Caucasians".

We must all be grateful to Mr Edwards for telling us where Palestine is. Let us by return quickly ask him—who put it there? 'Asia' is a cartographers invention. The Caucasus could be put in Asia theoretically if international geographers agree to do so.

First century Judea (though not Samaria) no longer, if they had ever, adhered to a rigid interpretation of the scriptures. Commentators, Talmudic and Pharisaic, had made Judaism into a very liberal religion. Superstition was minimal. Education was virtually universal—indeed Judea under the Hasmonian Queen Alexandra was possibly the first country to introduce universal education. Graves and Podro in *The Nazarene Gospel Restored* point out that the education of the son of an artisan (Jesus) would have been higher than any available in the world at the time including Greece. To a first century Judean the step from Pharisaic Judaism into Humanism would have been a natural evolutionary step.

Unfortunately, a deviant sect, unable to take root in an enlightened Asia, was driven to look elsewhere for support. Christianity found its place among the ignorant and superstitious first century Greeks. (Greece, Mr Edwards, is in Europe.)

GERALD SAMUEL.

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