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Friday,
March 29, 1968**BLACKHAM RETIRES**

AFTER more than forty years in the movement, H. J. Blackham retired on March 28 this year; this date coinciding exactly with the publication date of his latest book "Humanism". He sees his retirement only as a change in roles, being determined to concentrate in the future on writing.

Harold Blackham was born in 1903. His parents were strong Congregationalists, and his father and grandfather both local preachers. He entered the honours school of English at the University of Birmingham but, as a post-graduate, his interests led him to the study of philosophy. He is married and has one son. After a varied career (farm-labourer, soldier, schoolmaster, tutor, lecturer, fireman and liaison officer with the Port of London Authority), in 1945 he became Secretary of the Ethical Union which he had joined in the 1920's. In 1952 he became secretary of the International Humanist and Ethical Union also and, since its inauguration in 1963 to the present day, he has been Director of the British Humanist Association.

He was Editor of the EU journal *The Plain View* and of the IHEU journal *The International Humanist*. Among writings published in connection with the EU may be mentioned *The Humanist Himself*, *The Standard of Reason*, *A Guide to Humanist Books in English* and contributions to *Practical Humanism* and *Living as a Humanist*. He also made numerous contributions to IHEU and BHA publications.

Other published works were *Six Existential Thinkers* (1952) a revision of J. B. Bury's *History of Freethought* (1952), *The Human Tradition* (1953), a revision of Sir Julian Huxley's *Religion Without Revelation* (1956), a contribution to *The Humanist Frame* (1961), *Political Discipline in a Free Society* (1961) a contribution to *Objections to Humanism* (1963) and a contribution to *Reality, Man and Existence* (1965). With Sir Julian Huxley, he has also edited a volume on *The Growth of Ideas* in an encyclopaedic series published by Macdonald.

Although very active in numerous spheres of humanist work, his special

BHA concern was the Counselling Service which he organised and convened, and with which he may retain association.

It is hoped a special social occasion may be organised at Conway Hall in June as a 'farewell' from BHA members and humanist friends; arrangements are still in progress. At the BHA Annual Dinner on November 9, when the BHA President, Professor A. J. Ayer, will be speaking, Harold Blackham will be Guest of Honour.

His place at the BHA will be taken—if that is not saying too much—by Michael Lines the General Secretary. But, as Michael Lines is the first to admit, it is saying too much; Harold Blackham cannot be replaced. There is no doubt he has contributed more than any other to the rebirth of humanism in this country in this century.

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**BERTRAND RUSSELL AND
Question**

THE success of the first issue of *Question* should almost certainly assure the equal success of any subsequent numbers which approach its excellent quality. Published by Pemberton Publishing Company and edited by Hector Hawton, it takes the place of *The Rationalist Annual* though it is expected to appear more than once a year. The first number appeared February 29 and immediately drew a welcome from Lord Russell who wrote from his home in Penrhyndeudraeth, Wales:—

"I am pleased to see the appearance of *Question* One. The publication of rationalist viewpoints and attitudes will remain necessary as long as superstition retains an important place in our national life. I welcome this publication and hope that it will be widely read."—Bertrand Russell.

—nor is there any visible reason why his hopes should be dashed, the first number having gained such a good reception.

AMNESTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

AS part of its contribution to Human Rights Year, Amnesty International is sponsoring a special campaign to secure the release of political and religious prisoners. The week November 17-23, 1968, has been designated "Prisoner of Conscience Week", during which there will be an intensive drive all over the world to arouse public opinion and to persuade governments to grant amnesties to those imprisoned for their opinions or beliefs.

Torture

Treatment of prisoners of conscience and the use of torture in prisons, will be studied at an Amnesty Human Rights Conference scheduled to open in Stockholm on August 23, 1968. The conference will examine the possibility of laying down international standards relating to Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This states that "no one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

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**FREETHINKERS RED,
FREETHINKERS BLUE**

COLLECTORS of literary oddities may be interested to learn that the *FREETHINKER* for March 1 (Vol. 88, No. 9) was printed some with the current blue banner and some with the earlier red banner. It is probably the first time since 1881 when copies of the same issue were not identical.

Our first notification of this oddity was the arrival of the *FREETHINKERS* themselves. It turned out that our thoughtful printer, with our economy in mind, had made a last-minute decision to use up the surplus paper occasioned by the colour change last December.

We were able to meet the inland circulation with blue banner copies, hence all with a red banner were used for circulation abroad. Plainly, the colour of the rare copies depends on where you live.

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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 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

Lincolnshire Humanist Group, Cardinal's Hat, Lincoln, Friday, April 5, 7.30 p.m.: Geoffrey Robson (Juvenile Magistrate), 'Penal Reform'.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, March 31, 11 a.m.: Dr H. W. TURNER, 'Phenomenology'; Tuesday, April 2, 6.45 p.m.: V. CHUBAROV, 'Soviet Life and Culture'.

South Place Sunday Concerts, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, March 31, 6.30 p.m.: Arriaga String Quartet. Webern, Mozart, Brahms.

NSS: West Kent Branch, The Public Library, The Drive, Sevenoaks, Wednesday, April 3, 8 p.m.: BENEDICT BIRNBERG, 'Human Rights and Wrongs in Britain'.

Worthing Humanist Group, Morelands Hotel (opposite the pier), Worthing, Sunday, March 31, 5.30 p.m.: Lord SORENSON, 'Which Humanism?'

NSS NEWS

ANNUAL DINNER

Peter Jackson, MP, will be abroad next month and, consequently, will be unable to attend the Human Rights Dinner as previously announced. His place will be taken by William Hamling, MP, who will propose a toast to the Guest of Honour, Renee Short, MP.

NEXT FORUM

Divorce is the subject of the next public forum which will be held at Conway Hall, London, on April 18. Speakers will include Marjorie Proops the well-known journalist, Baroness Summerskill and William Wilson, MP.

BRADLAUGH

1968 is the centenary of Charles Bradlaugh's first parliamentary contest at Northampton, and the NSS have approached the Chief Librarian and local organisations in Northampton with a view to arranging a commemorative exhibition later this year in honour of their Founder.

COHEN

A centenary tribute to Chapman Cohen (former NSS President and Editor of the FREETHINKER) will be held at Conway Hall, Sunday, June 30, 10 a.m.—5.30 p.m.

AFFILIATIONS

Belfast Humanist Group and Cardiff Humanist Group have recently affiliated to the NSS. Other Humanist Groups affiliated to the NSS include Brighton and Hove, Cambridge, Ealing Grammar School, Havering, Lincolnshire, Luton, Merseyside, Northamptonshire, the University of London and Oxford University.

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RELIGIOUS HEAD OF THE US ARMY?

BEFORE he resigned from the Roman Curia in January, Cardinal Ottaviani defended the late Cardinal Spellman's 1966 Christmas statement calling for "total victory" for the United States in Vietnam. He said that Cardinal Spellman was speaking as "the religious head of the American Army. . . . He had instructions from his government. . . . At that moment he had to talk as the army bishop".

But, of course, Cardinal Spellman had no such official status at all.

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HUMANISM AND THE SUPREME COURT

THE United States Supreme Court has refused to hear the conscientious-objector pleas of Air Force Captain Dale E. Noyd who insists that his humanism will not allow him to fulfil his orders to train men in the use of airplanes employed in bombing civilian targets in North Vietnam.

* * *

LSD AND THE VATICAN

THE moral issue associated with the taking of LSD has now been perfectly clarified by the Vatican publication *L'Osservatore*. If use of LSD is excessive and habitual, this is a "grave sin", but if it is taken in small and infrequent doses, then this constitutes only a "minor sin". Student Humanist Federation please note.

APARTHEID

A REPORT was published last year by Unesco on the effects of Apartheid on education, science, culture and information. It throws a valuable light on the situation, and the figures and statistics given are shattering in their implications.

The population of South Africa consists of some 11,000,000 Africans, some 3,000,000 Whites and some 2,000,000 Coloureds and Asians. This classification into three main groups was essential for the carrying out of the policy of 'separateness', and its creation of so-called 'Bantu' homelands. Racism is enforced through the system of Reference Books, which all Africans are forced to carry, which contain detailed information about the holder, and failure to produce which is a criminal offence. Acts have been passed to regulate the movements of Africans, e.g. the presence of an African in a prescribed area (white area of towns) for more than 72 hours, is severely restricted, and the 'declarations' setting aside certain areas for the exclusive occupation of one or another of the groups has led to widespread evictions. In October 1963, in Durban alone, nearly 10,000 families (mostly Indian) were evicted. A coloured population of over 20,000 was forcibly uprooted from District 6, one of the oldest sections of Cape Town which had been peopled by coloured residents for over 300 years, to make it a 'white' area. Nevertheless it is impossible to get complete segregation, in spite of all the efforts of the government.

Intermarriage is forbidden by law, but even the family life of Africans themselves is made in many cases almost impossible. Although an African can qualify to work and therefore to live for a time in a 'white' area, his wife and family are not allowed to live with him unless they have resided there permanently before. If an African woman marries a man with a work permit in her area, she has to leave with him if he loses his job. In certain areas the number of women allowed at all is limited, because they build flats for bachelors only, and in Langa, a suburb of Cape Town, there was a preponderance of men to women of 8:1, which naturally resulted in unrest and disorder. The effect of racial laws on family life is disintegrating.

The different population groups are educated independently. The admitted aim is to train the Africans for occupations as unskilled labourers. The Institute of Christian Education produced the concept of Christian National Education, that is, separate education, which they claimed had been ordained by God. This scheme has nothing to do with equality of opportunity! For the year 1966-1967, the amount spent on the education of the Africans (11,000,000) was 39,000,000 Rand; on that of Whites (3,000,000) was 54,000,000 R. The unit cost per African pupil was 12.11 R., for a white pupil 146.65 R. Education for Whites is compulsory between the ages of 7-16 and free. For African children in the Lower Primary, admissions are voluntary but attendance compulsory. After that stage there is an increasing drop-out, only about 40 per cent of those starting Lower Primary entering Higher Primary (11-14). One reason may be that there is a voluntary contribution levied from the Lower Primary which increases and becomes compulsory in the post-primary schools. A consideration of the difference in wages will show how difficult this will make things for African families. An African miner earns 152 R., a white miner 2,562 R. An African's

pension is 44 R., that of a white man 360 R. Yet it is the Africans who have to pay for their children's education. Other points of interest are the pupil-teacher ratio; in 1946, for Whites, 1 teacher for 24 pupils; for Africans, 1 teacher for 45 pupils. In 1963 the ratio was: 1 teacher for 23 White pupils, and 1 teacher for 58 African pupils. With regard to the provision of schools, the government policy is to increase the number of senior secondary classes in the reserves rather than in the urban areas, with the result that in the latter the provision is grossly inadequate. Only four high schools in 'Bantu' townships under the Johannesburg authority provided higher secondary education for a total school-going population of more than 74,000. With respect to teachers' salaries and qualifications, similar inequalities obtain, an African teacher earning less than a third of the salary of the White teacher with similar qualifications.

The apartheid system seeks to create a lower inferior nation and to guarantee White supremacy in all fields. Education is geared to this end. Although there has been a certain development of primary education, in all other fields there is not only limitation, but regression. The African has no voice in the scientific or political development of the country. Tribalism is forced upon him, and his family life, with poor pay, ignominious restrictions, difficulties in educating and even in feeding, is made a heart-ache and a misery. We have all heard about the powers of the police, the house arrests, the banishments, the trials and the imprisonments. The plight of the African children under such a system should arouse the conscience of the world. This Unesco report, which condemns the whole situation of apartheid, concludes that it constitutes a "world danger of the first magnitude". The report deserves to be read and studied far and wide. It can be obtained through Government bookshops.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

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CENSORSHIP

Jean Straker

GEORGE STRAUSS'S Theatres Bill proposes to abolish the office of the Lord Chamberlain. In this it seeks to carry out the recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Committee on Censorship of the Theatre.

What it also does is to transfer the present censorship powers held by the Lord Chamberlain to the Courts and Police, with stiffer penalties than ever before.

This is what the Bill says:

'A performance of a play shall be deemed to be obscene if, taken as a whole, its effect was such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who were likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to attend it.

(2) Subject to sections 3 and 7 of this Act, if an obscene performance of a play is given, whether in public or private, any person who (whether for gain or not) presented or directed that performance shall be liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding £400 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months;

(b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, or both."

This provision will create a multiplicity of censors in place of one, and, as I and others have found, with the working of the Obscene Publications Acts which have been adopted for the Theatre, there will be little opportunity for defence, except for the very rich.

There is trickery here. It was not intended that the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain should kill creativity in the English theatre. How many playwrights, producers and managers are going to risk prosecution and mount defences? Very few, I say. The measure will snuffle creativity at source, even more effectively than in the other arts, for few people will be willing to back a play at risk. To take a Victorian (or pre-Victorian) concept of authoritarian control and reinforce it with the full weight of the Criminal Law is not progress. The Criminal Law is the wrong tool to mould moral attitudes. Freedom in artistic expression is a necessary liberty in a democratic society to stimulate ideas, challenge attitudes and enlarge concepts of freedom. At present people are buying books and photographs abroad because of the obscenity laws here; soon they will be going across the Channel to see plays.

The use of the word 'obscene' to describe a crime is too vague; it is used generally to impose religious moral attitudes which many people neither understand nor accept. What does the word mean? To "deprave and corrupt", says the 1959 Act. What does this mean? To Reginald Seaton it meant that photographs of the vulva should not be shown to medical students because the 60-years old textbook drawings are good enough for them. To the 'reasonable men' who composed the *Last Exit* jury, it meant that they found the book offensive.

So with the word 'obscene', uncertainty will be written into theatre law, and no one will know where he is. If it is necessary to restrict some things by law, let the law define what it is it wants to restrict. Is it nudity on the stage? Or sexual intercourse? Or smoking? Or sadism or masochism? Is it blasphemy? Or, perhaps, political satire?

The Race Relations Act is a prescribed and explicit rule; you know where you are. Obscenity is undefined in any terms that give it a universal meaning. There is no logic in extending a bad existing law if you are intending to abolish a bad archaic law.

I say: Free the theatre from the obscenity complex. Let would-be censors say what it is they wish to prohibit. Define the crimes. I ask George Strauss to delete section 2, parts (1), and (2) (a) and (b), quoted above, from his Bill.

RI IN A GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Report from The Humanist Society, Ealing Grammar School for Boys.

AT this school, as in most other non-denominational state secondary schools, one period a week is devoted to Religious Instruction in order to fulfil the requirements of the 1944 Act. The syllabus followed is an adaptation of the old Middlesex Agreed Syllabus. In the first and second years (11-13) this syllabus is almost invariably followed with few discussions taking place, but with the occasional "free period" when the teacher has a lot of marking to do. These two years are also marked by great pressure from the Christian Union on the pupils, in the hope of gaining early converts. Much of this proselytizing is carried out during these periods.

After the second year things begin to change. What actually happens, however, depends to a great extent on the teacher taking the lesson. The RI period may be converted into a period during which pupils air their views on topical social and moral problems; or the syllabus may be rigidly followed. These are the two extremes, but more usually some attempt is made to follow the syllabus, with discussions on matters arising from this and also on current affairs, the teacher putting the Christian point of view.

At the beginning of the fourth year (at 14), boys are given a choice for the next two years: they can continue with RI as before, or they can study for the Religious Knowledge examination at Ordinary Level. The year-group is divided into three sets. One set is made up of those who wish to take the OL examination (usually because it is regarded as a 'soft' OL). In this set the syllabus is naturally dictated by the requirements of the University examining board, and pupils are required to attend one extra period during morning Assembly time. The two non-OL sets continue much as before, but there is a tendency for most RI periods to become "free periods" by the time pupils have reached the fifth form, since they tend to react negatively to any more of the old routine.

In the sixth form there is no time-tabled RI. Although it is possible to take Religious Knowledge at Advanced Level, no one ever does. On one occasion an attempt was made to introduce a (compulsory) course in comparative religion for those sixth-formers who were retaking some of their OLs previously failed. This consisted of one period a week of lectures in which various major religions were compared with Christianity with the object of demonstrating Christianity's superiority. Humanism, if mentioned by boys, was dismissed in a couple of sentences.

Arrangements for opting out of RI periods are as follows: at the beginning of each year the teacher merely invites any boys who do not go into Assembly to sit at the back of the class. This applies of course mainly to a handful of Catholics and Jews.

Apart from those taken by religious enthusiasts, RI lessons are remarkable only for the apathy which both pupils and staff display during them. Even during discussions the majority seem to opt themselves out by talking to their neighbour or surreptitiously doing some homework. It is perhaps one of the worst aspects of the whole RI system that it tends to produce this appalling apathy by producing boredom in face of long-term attempts at indoctrination; in rejecting religious imposition, many pupils are given no other opportunity for consideration of vital moral and social matters.

'ADAM AND EVE' OR EVOLUTION

Gonzalo Quiogue

Christianity v. Evolution by Pacifico E. Pantas (Philippines Free Press, January 27) is an imposing array of scientific quotations intended to debunk evolution. The question remains: has Mr Pantas enough knowledge of palaeontology and anthropology that he rejects evolution? Let us analyse his article sentence by sentence to bring out its sense and nonsense.

Firstly, he put a wrong question by asking at the start: "Is evolution true or false?" He likened evolution to a coin which is either 'heads' or 'tails' in appearance. The question should be rewritten thus: Is evolution true, probable, or false?

Let us take the beginning of the third paragraph which said among other things:

"But Charles Darwin himself was not so sure about his pet theory."

Correct. Darwin could not have been sure about his pet theory. Because if he were sure, said theory would no longer be theory, but fact.

In the fourth paragraph Mr Pantas quoted the book, *Biology for Today*, 1964, thus:

"Living things probably began as single-celled organisms. . . . These progressed until they became complex organisms."

Mr Pantas commented on the above quotation: "These words do not ring with sincerity and conviction".

True and false. The words of *Biology for Today* carry sincerity, but no conviction. Because theories are only probabilities; hypotheses, mere possibilities. Convictions ride on feelings of certainty! Modern scientists investigate for facts in the various aspects of nature. Sometimes they get the facts, but at other times they get only near-facts or theories; but they are sincere and honest enough in admitting these probabilities, unlike the "divine certainties" and "sacrosanct truths" claimed for religious myths and dogmas.

The fifth paragraph began with:

"Evolutionists speak of progress for all living things, from the simple to the complex. But progress requires conscious effort and intelligent direction."

It is not true that evolution makes progress for all living things. Evolution makes very slow changes among most living things through mutations, dominant genes, recessive genes and variants. This is the kind of "progress" meant by evolutionists. It is not human progress which "requires conscious effort and intelligent direction" as Mr Pantas said. Today intelligent humans are exerting efforts to shape their own destinies. Nature did not favour the continuous development of the extinct dinosaurs. Nobody knows why. But nature did favour the evolution of some varieties of tarsiers and lemurs into monkeys, proconsuls, apes, hominoids and men. What explains the seeming partiality of nature? It has no mind, although some aspects of it show wonder and order that balance its chaos from time to time.

In the sixth paragraph Mr. Pantas began harping on the complexities of the human cell with its DNA, the human

blood with its haemoglobin, and the human neurons; that all these are too complex to have evolved from lower animals. Mr Pantas under-estimated the power of nature to make slow changes among some living things through evolution. If tarsiers and lemurs could evolve from protozoa (single-celled animals) why not humans from varieties of lemurs or tarsiers?

Scientific theories, unlike religious dogmas, doctrines and postulates, are presumed probable, unless proven otherwise by better theories.

In the twentieth paragraph Mr. Pantas said:

"If evolution is true, then the earliest forms of life were the smallest, gradually becoming bigger as time passed. But palaeontology has proven that the earliest animals were gigantic."

Presumably he meant dinosaurs, the protoceratops, the camarasaurus, the triceratops, etc.

Palaeontologists make no attempt to prove that the earliest animals were the reptilian monsters called dinosaurs, etc. They know that the earliest animals were soft-bodied creatures, including the protozoa (one-celled), which left no traces in the rocks of the oldest periods of geological time, the archaean era and the proterozoic era.

In the twenty-fourth paragraph Mr Pantas said:

"Christianity is at odds with evolution all the way down the line. But Christianity is in complete harmony with true science."

After a devout Christian has loved and revered throughout his life the Creation Story of the Bible, can he let any theory or facts dislodge such a holy and beloved story? I doubt it. What he is likely to do is try his best to find faults in or debunk the theory. He tells himself that the Adam and Eve story was a revelation of God to men who were divinely inspired when they wrote the Bible. He does not believe that the Bible writers were charlatans who put their thoughts into the mouth of God.

Is Christianity really in complete harmony with true science? Let us see. Physics is a true science. And the basic principle of physics is that matter can neither come from nothing, nor can it be reduced to nothing. Now, how can a universe of matter come from nothing? That is implied in the 'Creation' story of the Bible.

The best we can say about the "Mystery of the Holy Trinity", is that the Christian God has three personalities, namely: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Since there is only one Christian God, reason and commonsense dictate that each personality cannot be one complete God; one-third God, yes. And if we insist that that each personality must be a complete God, then we must also insist that Christianity has three Gods! When something cannot be reconciled even with plain commonsense, it must be nonsense. And for obvious reasons this nonsense had to be disguised as a "mystery". How can Christianity be in harmony with true science, when it cannot be in harmony with plain commonsense?

Let us be aware of the possibility that we may be fighting enlightenment, without knowing it, in our excessive reverence for our beloved religion!

REVIEW

Karl Hyde

H. J. Blackham: "Humanism". A Penguin-Pelican Original (A930); 5/-. Publication date: March 28, 1968.

"When young I got into sad disfavour for making a critical examination of what a person said, as though it were a disembodied statement, or indeed a dead body for dissection and learning. I did learn. I learned that total disregard of the author of a statement in preoccupation with the merits of a statement, however admirably impartial, was not a happy way of conducting intellectual business."

With these kindly and winning words (p. 35) Mr Blackham might have cut short much of what I am going to say; I shall proceed, however, not "with total disregard of the author", but in spite of my regard for the author. I have three objections to this book which may be expressed at the beginning.

I believe it is possible, and essential in a work such as this, to define or describe humanism concisely, objectively and systematically; to formulate the parts or aspects of humanism; to set limits to the use of the term, and to support the description by authority (history, tradition, current consensus, etc.) other than personal interpretation. Either 'humanism' has a meaning or it has not; if it has (and I discount the alternative), this meaning can be stated, and, I believe, should be stated clearly near the opening of any descriptive work. **Only by reference to such a definition can the relevance and validity of any statement about humanism be recognised or challenged.** Without such a definition, setting limits (however broad) within which the term may correctly be used, we cannot avoid the prospect (currently noticeable) whereby individuals may ascribe any personal views to humanism (however inane), and in which groups of humanists declare mutual agreement on unspecified notions—upon which subsequent wrangles expose the superficiality of the "agreement". Mr Blackham could have come to grips with this problem; he could have clearly defined his terms; he did not. Instead, in the Preface, he explained the book's unsuitability for "the hasty non-reader looking for humanism on a postcard" and expressed his hope "that the book as a whole shows why any potted version is without flavour". I contend that the many hundreds of points he makes (plentifully garnished and spiced) would have made a better feast if seen in relation to the table on which they rest. Readers may be uncertain how much is humanism and how much Mr Blackham.

Those sufficiently qualified to assess the literary merits of Mr Blackham's writings would, I suspect, praise them highly. Having carefully read the book twice, I am forced to admit there are still largish sections from which I gathered little or nothing, and this I attribute to parts too closely argued and parts too tediously worded for my limited abilities and patience.

"The difference between a responsive and creative self and an indulgent and acquisitive self is a difference in the use of the self which soon becomes a difference in the self, and this kind of difference rooted in the nature of selfhood has to be borne in mind when thinking of independence and a life of one's own outside the bounds and bonds of public morality."

Because this demanded re-reading, I finally saw its meaning; but much was simply passed over that was less startling. There is an awareness in the humanist movement of the need to interest "the masses" in humanism, a need of which Mr Blackham is more aware than most; it is to be hoped that any future literary attempt to reach the masses will omit all such passages as this.

Secularists who read this book, may come to ponder the part secularism has played in the humanist movement. In a chapter which traces recent developments in the movement's "Organisations and Activities", and which carries the sub-headings "The Ethical Movement", "The Rationalist Press Association", "The International" (WUFT, IEU and IHEU), "British Humanist Association" and "Humanist Groups", we may have expected to find a section devoted to "The National Secular Society"—but it wasn't there. The NSS is mentioned twice; "Charles Bradlaugh who founded the National Secular Society in 1866 was a vigorous anti-socialist, but an ardent radical politician" and ". . . Charles Bradlaugh, who had founded the National Secular Society in 1866 . . ." constitute the sum of NSS mention. Charles Bradlaugh, alone, qualifies the NSS for inclusion. Is secularism part of humanism? Has the NSS given its allegiance to humanism? Has it played any part in the development of humanism? The answer will vary it seems according to the books one reads. I would have thought a dispassionate account of humanism over the past ten decades (all right, *Hundred Years*) would have mentioned the Humanist Council which was initiated by Hector Hawton in 1950 and which, by 1953, comprised the EU, RPA, SPES and NSS. Perhaps it was also of some significance that Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, grandson of the NSS Founder, speaking as President of the World Union of Freethinkers in 1950, should formally declare that: "The principles and activities of the Humanist Associations deserve the complete approval of all Freethinkers in so far as those principles and activities are implied in the definition of freethought principles and aims". But it may be possible to define humanism as something which excludes all secularist interests, activities and principles; if so, it would be a lean and mean thing, but I don't think this is the case, nor is such a humanism to be perceived anywhere in H. J. Blackham's book. And this concludes my third and final objection.

Having dealt at such length with personal objections, leaving so little space for favourable comments, it may be assumed that I disapprove of this book. Nothing could be further from the truth. This book is good, and because it is so good I feared these defects would pass unnoticed. Few readers, however worried by such defects as those mentioned, could close the book unimpressed by its quality and value. Profound observations, keen intellectual perception, worthy and realistic sentiments, sincere concern for people and for humanism to help people—all emerge from every page. This is humanism as it is, as we wish non-humanists to understand it, and, being this, why we are proud of it, and wish to share it. As a humanist, and as a secularist, I implore everyone to buy a copy, to read it through, to make allowances for Blackham even at his Blackhamest, and to periodically nourish themselves with draughts of humanism at its richest.

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CHILD POVERTY

A report from the Child Poverty Action Group.

At a Forum on Poverty organised jointly by the Human Rights Committee of the Students Union, Nottingham University, and the Nottingham Child Poverty Action Group (Thursday, March 14), Peter Townsend, Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, said that the Government was, by its inadequate action on poverty and its illiberal postures on social issues ranging from race-relations to provisions for the unemployed, forcing many former Labour supporters to consider new kinds of political action.

"While traditional procedures—lobbying MP's, passing resolutions at ward meetings and submitting resolutions to the Party Conference remain important, it is easy to understand why people find them insufficient. There is widespread political frustration—more so among former Labour Party activists than at any time I can remember. Views that are powerfully represented seem to have no influence or effect. Agreements that appear to have been reached are not honoured. The greatest problem is not so much that commitments entered into are not honoured in punctilious detail as that commitments in principle seem to play little or no part in guiding existing policies."

"The outstanding fact about poverty in Britain in 1968 is that the poorest families in the country are being made still poorer by the deliberate actions of the Government. Devaluation was bound to mean higher prices, which inevitably hit the poor hardest. But the Prime Minister gave a solemn undertaking to the nation that those liable to be hardest hit would be protected from the burdens resulting from devaluation. That pledge has been cynically ignored."

"Instead of taking positive measures to protect the poor from price increases by ensuring that their incomes went up in line with prices, the Government has deliberately imposed still further burdens on them. For the first time, National Insurance contributions have been increased with no corresponding rise in benefits, and the Health Service contribution is also going up. These flat-rate increases, only six months after the last increase, will hit the low-paid worker particularly hard. The loss of school milk will inevitably affect the health of his children at a time when the family income is stretched beyond the possibility of providing an adequate balanced diet for them."

"The poor will in theory be exempted from the higher charges for school meals and welfare milk, and they will be able to claim refunds of prescription charges. But all the evidence we have about exemptions and refunds for the poor shows that many (in many cases the majority) of those entitled do not claim them. The Government admits this. Indeed, Judith Hart has said that she hopes to launch a campaign in the summer to encourage poor families to claim their rights. But the increased charges will operate from the spring and, even if the campaign succeeds, it will not produce results overnight."

"One quite unforgivable statement in the white paper issued when cuts were made in public expenditure was that pensions and other National Insurance benefits would not be increased until at least the autumn of 1969. Since the

effects of devaluation upon living standards during 1968 could not be known in January and are hazardous to estimate even now, this was an inflammatory statement. At the very least the Government could have said that it would be prepared to reconsider the situation depending on the movement of prices during the first half of 1968."

"I shall be told, no doubt, that I am being unfair. After all, the Government is putting up supplementary benefits and raising the income limits for rates rebates—though neither of these changes will take effect until the autumn. But these measures will do nothing at all to help the poorest families in the country—the 160,000 families (to use the Government's own out-of-date estimate—the numbers are almost certainly higher now) with incomes below supplementary benefit level. Higher supplementary benefits will not help them because they are not eligible for them when the father is working, and, when he is not, their benefits are reduced by the 'wage stop'. And more generous limits for rate rebates won't help them because they already qualify for rebates (though most do not claim them) under the existing limits."

"The one measure which will bring some meagre relief to the low-paid worker and his family is the increase in family allowances. But this was announced long before devaluation and, on the Prime Minister's own admission, is 'entirely separate' from his pledge to protect the poor from the consequences of devaluation."

"The Government can begin to show that its word is not entirely valueless at the time of the Budget. If Mr Jenkins concludes his Budget speech without announcing effective measures to restore the position of poor families at least to what it was before devaluation, the disillusion of those who voted Labour because they believed in social justice—to say nothing of socialism—will be complete."

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Letters to the Editor

NOTE: Letters exceeding 200 words may be cut, abbreviated, digested or rewritten.

St Patrick

WHAT is the truth about the patron saint of Ireland? English, Welsh and Irish claim him as a native of their respective countries, but the latest news is that he was a Briton born in Dumbarton, Scotland.

It is said that forgeries discovered in ancient Irish manuscripts have destroyed many of the legends. It appears St Patrick had no connection with the shamrock nor did he drive the snakes from Ireland. He was never in Armagh, never herded swine in County Down, nor is he buried in Downpatrick. W. MOFFAT.

Pure non-existence

IN Mr Quiogue's excellent reply to Mr Crommelin (February 23) there is an unfortunate inaccuracy which adds to the nonsense he is describing. Surely the opposite to 'impure existence' is 'pure non-existence' which, we may postulate, is what God is!

R. MATTHEWSON.

Jews are a distinct race

I WOULD suggest that your contributor, Tom Hill, should consult some authoritative book on the history of the Jews, which might show him that the statement that he makes in his article in the issue of March 8 (*European Jews are not Semites*) are, in parts, without foundation.

What is absolutely certain, beyond all dispute, is that the Jews are not only a religious community, but a people, a distinct race, who originally settled in Judea—hence their name. If they intermarry with Gentiles, be they British, French, Italian, etc., their children or their grandchildren will begin to lose those facial and other characteristics which make Jews so easily identifiable. But then extremely few Jews do marry with Gentiles, as the opposition against any of them doing this is, and always has been, very strong indeed amongst their own community, apart from any prejudices Gentiles may have. So the "facial characteristics", as Mr Hill calls them, their outlook, their beliefs, their accents, and their mode of living are perpetuated through the centuries since the Dispersion.

The ancestors of the vast majority of the Jews in the world today have been for many centuries European Jews, for a great number of them migrated to Spain during the early centuries of the Moslem Occupation from the Middle East, and others went to France, Bohemia, England (before their expulsion from England and France) and other countries.

After being expelled from Spain in 1492, they spread over all Europe. Of course, they have adapted themselves partially to the civilisations in which they lived, but nevertheless, remained Jews, easily identifiable, often persecuted, hated, treated as second-class citizens, and treated as an alien race. E. M. KINGSTON.

The SPGB

MR MACFARLANE replies and says—exactly nothing! If he would acquire political erudition, he should obtain the *Socialist Standard*, from the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4, for a modest 8/6 per year! Far better to know your subject. (I deplore the USSR administration.)

HORACE FAIRHURST.

An incestuous possibility?

REGARDING the article 'God's Truth' (February 23) by F. H. Snow, if the learned gentleman had read his Bible properly he would have found that Adam had other children besides those mentioned (see Genesis 5:4). Therefore Cain would have taken one of his sisters as a wife. S. V. JARVIS.

[The verse reads: "and the days of Adam after he begat Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters."—Ed.]

Zeal: mercenary, or patriotic and liberating?

I DID not intend to reply to Mr O'Carroll's letter (March 8) because I felt his opinions answered themselves.

But what I think he should know—and readers should know—is that I only wish that I had some "mercenary zeal"; it might not then have been necessary for my wife to sell two small inherited properties to help pay the losses which the battle for Freedom of Vision incurred. Then again, my work is sold only to members of my private academy on a hand-production basis; there is no mass distribution. Yet still my bank has certified that I have brought into this country, in just over twelve months, \$3,600.00. But I can't do this anymore because the courts have put 1,479 of my negatives in prison.

Perhaps some freethinkers may feel that my "mercenary zeal" and Freedom of Vision campaign should be encouraged.

JEAN STRAKER.

Straker on the right lines

I FAIL to understand why M. J. O'Carroll (March 8) should get so excitedly critical of Jean Straker unless it is personal jealousy—because what Mr Straker wrote about freethought made sense to me—just as Mr O'Carroll's statement about "logical control over emotion" does not make sense. If Mr O'Carroll had said "WILL control over emotion" or "PURPOSIVE control over emotion" I would have concurred, but I always think that 'logic' has to do with the mechanics of reasoning rather than with a substitute for the dynamism supplied in lower-quality minds by emotional drives.

By the way, I don't know Mr Straker, or Mr O'Carroll either, but I think Mr Straker is on the right lines with his nude photographs being presented without fig-leaves or hazy areas which are obviously introduced to please the prudish who have not mentally matured sufficiently to approach viewing of sex organs with the same detachment associated with doctors.

Why don't you publish the addresses of correspondents so that one may write to individuals (such as Mr Straker) whose attitude one finds inspiring? Top marks to F. H. Snow too (again no address!) for his closing remark that the sequence of popes will persist "maybe for centuries, if humanism remains undynamic". I say *three cheers* for the dynamic boys like Mr Straker and Mr Snow, and for Mr Tribe—for his remarks favouring world government!

E. G. MACFARLANE.

[It was found, in the past, many correspondents did not wish their addresses to be disclosed; for consistency's sake, therefore, none are published. However, we shall be pleased to forward private correspondence providing the envelope bears an unfranked stamp.—Ed.]

CAN'T SUE GOD & CO.

JUDGE HEWITT has thrown out of court the lawsuit filed by George Albrecht (Florida, USA) against "God & Co." which specifically named 32 churches and synagogues in and around Lake Worth.

Because an earlier \$25,000 damage suit was turned down by a jury which attributed an injury he suffered to "an act of God", Mr Albrecht decided to file a second lawsuit against "God & Co." and, to overcome the difficulty of serving the papers, he named the local churches as co-defenders.

Rev. Zilch, pastor of the local Bethel Pentecostal Temple, said he would be glad to testify if the "principal defendant" was brought into court. You've got to hand it to them.

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