

Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 14

Saturday, April 5, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

EUTHANASIA

LORD RAGLAN'S Voluntary Euthanasia Bill which was defeated at its second reading in the House of Lords by 61 votes to 40 has raised a moral issue which could without exaggeration be said to be the most far-reaching of our time. Enlightened opinion is sharply divided on this question, which any thinking person will find far harder to resolve than any of the other social reforms which have recently struggled their way through parliament. For the first time we are faced with the legalisation of killing—something far more difficult to swallow and rationalise than the abolition of capital punishment. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that if an individual in his right mind wishes to die he should be permitted to do so. This has already been acknowledged by the repeal of the law which treated attempted suicide as a crime.

However, to put this principle into practice is already proving very tricky indeed, and looking at the way in which the Abortion Bill is being put into effect one is forced to the conclusion that it is a good thing that Lord Raglan's Bill did not get through. Until the medical profession as a whole is brought closer to seeing that euthanasia is in fact humane and that their acquiescence will enhance rather than reduce their standing in the public eye it would be a foolhardy legislature which passed the law. Time will now be available for working out the details of how the law will work in practice, a quality which the abortion law, despite the time it took to get through parliament, has been shown to lack.

Various objections were made against Lord Raglan's Bill. There is the point that a man suffering from an incurable disease might be goaded by his family into asking for euthanasia—that once the Bill has been passed some incurables may feel guilty at continuing to live. A second objection is that once this Bill has been passed we will start on a 'slippery slope' and that in time euthanasia will be sanctioned for deformed children, the senile, and ultimately all misfits. Both these objections and many others are valid and point to improvements which must be made in the next Voluntary Euthanasia Bill. Unlike the abolition of capital punishment the public is in favour of euthanasia in principle. Thus it would surely be better to present them with a law which can be seen to be proof against abuse, than to alienate public opinion by pushing through a deficient Bill the virtue of which is hidden by a number of loose ends. The objections, awkward as they are, can be overcome and must not be allowed to override the basic humane object of enabling people who so desire to order an end to their own suffering.

The enormous amount of discussion which the Bill has engendered in the past fortnight is itself a valuable contribution to the ultimate formation of an acceptable Bill. And this is a debate in which freethinkers should play a large part since euthanasia will obviously primarily affect non-religious people, the religious being unwilling to take death out of God's hands. Nobody is to be forced to undergo euthanasia and what the religious don't ask for they won't get. Despite this Mr Norman St John Stevas has formed a society whose chief object is to fight the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia. Inappropriately named the Human Rights Society, it is seeking to impose the views of a minority religious group on the whole of society. That this

is totally unethical will be as evident to those who are against euthanasia as to those who are in favour of it. The mere fact that a Bill which by its very nature is a Bill for non-religious people can get forty votes in its favour while only sixty-one are cast against it, is indication enough of the lack of justification for any religious group presuming to know what is best for the whole nation, particularly when it is realised that a great many of those who voted against the bill did so on moral and not religious grounds.

SQUATTERS

THE RECENT ARRIVAL on the scene of the 'Squatters' is likely to have caused amongst the general public a mixture of admiration and horror. Admiration for people brave enough to act on this conviction that while houses are empty no one should be homeless, and horror at their flagrant disregard for the misconceived but revered law that a man can own property and do what he likes with it. Many people sympathetic but shy of becoming involved in legal arguments with property owners and local authorities, have awaited with fascination the outcome of the fast growing squatters campaign, which now has twelve local groups, most of which are in London.

The news that the campaign has already succeeded to a totally unexpected degree cannot but jerk the public into a realisation that the written law is not always sacrosanct. For in two separate places the squatters have already achieved their ultimate aim.

On January 18 the Notting Hill Squatters took over a house and subsequently installed a single woman and a married couple. At first the GLC declared that they would take all necessary steps to evict them, but faced with a militant direct action group and the solidarity of an entire neighbourhood they reconsidered this decision and on March 3 conceded that the house was better than the accommodation that the families had moved from, that they were not in any sense jumping the housing list and agreed to let them have rent books.

On February 9 the London Squatters started work in Ilford and some days later had taken over five houses in which seven families were installed. They withstood several attempts by the police and Redbridge council to evict them. The council in order to prevent any more buildings

(Continued overleaf)

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Published by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.

Editor: David Reynolds

The views expressed by the contributors to FREETHINKER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

(Continued from front page)

being occupied began to make every empty house in Ilford uninhabitable by ripping out its floorboards. However, confronted by massive sympathy for the squatters, increasingly adverse publicity and evidence of the squatters flexibility and determination, Redbridge council announced on March 19 that they were writing to all the other London Boroughs offering them the use of empty houses in Ilford as temporary accommodation for homeless families.

The Squatters describe the Notting Hill triumph as a 'tremendous breakthrough' and the success in Ilford as 'an almost unbelievable victory'. These successes cannot fail to justify the squatters actions in the eyes of the public and turn any feeling of horror on to the local authorities. For though the GLC and Redbridge Council have had the good grace to admit that initially they were wrong, one is bound to ask why these situations should arise and why also the squatters campaign should even have to exist? Why should these people have to break the law in order to get a local authority to admit that they have empty accommodation at their disposal which could be of benefit to the homeless or those living in squalor? Why should individuals have to fight authority for a fundamental human right? In this case it is shelter for which they have fought and are fighting. But might not a time come when one has to fight to obtain even more basic needs, such as clothing and food? We are supposed to be living in a 'welfare state' yet a certain property millionaire has already made £11,000,000

COMING EVENTS

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.

Mercerside 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

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group: Regency House, Oriental Place, Brighton: Sunday, April 6, 5.30 p.m.: "Censorship". William Hamling, MP.

Havering Humanist Society: Harold Wood Social Centre: Tuesday, April 8, 8 p.m.: "Society and the Role of the NSS", David Tribe (President NSS).

Luton Humanist Group: Carnegie Room, Central Library, Luton: Thursday, April 10, 8 p.m.: "Crime and the Community", Iain Scarlet.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Tuesday, April 8, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion, "Japan and Culture". Admission 2s (including refreshments). Members free.

by building an enormous skyscraper office block in St Giles' Circus, London, and keeping it empty while rents rise and empty buildings pay low rates.

It is time for radical new legislation to prevent this absurd type of exploitation, and to rationalise the attitude of local authorities to the empty buildings in their areas.

EXPEDIENCY?

THE REV COLIN SLOUGH is the head of religious education at Lea Mason Church of England school, Lee Bank, Birmingham. The twenty-eight year old teacher believes that the traditional methods of giving religious instruction are no longer any use, and with two helpers is working out new methods. The *Birmingham Evening Mail* reported him as saying: "You cannot teach young people to believe. I hope to create a situation where the children will be more interested in religion, go more deeply into it, and take an active part in it. If not, they may be better and more thoughtful citizens for the experience".

To put this into practice Mr Slough has created a syllabus based on the modern educational theory that to teach children by giving them an active interest in what they are learning is more effective than to try to make them learn parrot fashion in the classroom. Thus, Mr Slough has replaced Bible classes with various kinds of community social work. The children run a coffee-bar, the profits from which are used to finance a playgroup where the older pupils look after toddlers. The pupils also help old people in the district, cleaning their homes and doing their shopping. And the senior pupils take jobs in offices, factories or shops for a month at a time and return to discuss their experiences.

Mr Slough is in fact running the risk of committing a technical breach of the law, and if his school was completely state-owned there would be no doubt that he was breaking the law—the law, which says that religious instruction must be undertaken along the lines of the syllabus agreed by the churches in any given area. Mr Slough argues that the Birmingham agreed syllabus is based on the concept that children come from homes with a religious bias and therefore need religious instruction in the Bible. "This is no longer true", he says. "A change is overdue."

He is to be applauded for his acceptance of the fact that this country is becoming increasingly secular and for his inventiveness and efforts to keep pace with the times. In fact his ideas appear to be an excellent experiment in the teaching of morality without religion. It is thus disheartening to learn that this man, who is undeniably many times more enlightened than the average teacher of religious education, opposes the change in the law which would make religious instruction a voluntary subject in state schools. "If you throw away moral teaching based on Christ, you throw away the thing our civilisation has been built on." Our civilisation was also built on the feudal system and has seen a lot of bloodshed.

It would seem however, that in practice Mr Slough's pupils are to be relatively free of indoctrination and thus be permitted to make up their own minds. It is therefore perhaps a good thing that Mr Slough does not accept that children should be taught facts as facts and fables as fables. His admirable efforts would probably be brought to a standstill for it is safe to criticise the law if you are not breaking it, but dangerous to attack it and thus draw attention to yourself if you are outside it.

EASTER ENIGMA

ERIC WILLOUGHBY

ONCE AGAIN we are at a time of year when pagan ritual becomes translated into modern theological anniversary. The Easter story has evolved from the Sun-worship festival of the vernal (Spring) equinox, that is to say the advent of warmer weather, and fresh breezes heralding the return of the most high God Sun. In pagan terms, the sun worshippers' prayers and sacrifices at the autumn equinox, typified by dying flora and falling leaves, signs of the displeasure and ultimate departure of the Sun, had been to no avail, as the arrival of winter proved. The winter festivals, in honour of the Sun had, however, persuaded the great God to return in due course and bring warm weather.

The name Easter is derived from the Anglo-Saxon name for the goddess of spring, Estre. As an ecclesiastical event, Easter Day was, until 1928, celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon following Spring equinox. In that year, a law was passed fixing Easter Day as the first Sunday after the second Saturday in April. It is noteworthy that it was a League of Nations committee investigating the calendar generally, which recommended the change.

For Christians of course, Easter is a most important event, but it is also one which presents perhaps the greatest paradox. In the Christian calendar, Easter is the anniversary of the execution of the man Jesus, and, we are asked to believe, his resurrection from the dead. His death is supposed to embody the spiritual salvation of mankind past, present and future, and the sin we all inherited from Adam and Eve (*sic*) was punished by proxy as it were, God in Jesus. This would lead us to believe that our "sins", committed some 1,936 years after the "event" would be of no consequence, as penance has been made. But no. Sinners must be saved. To go further into detail on this point would, I feel, be digressing somewhat, besides begging the question. But there is the paradox. Jesus died to "wash our sins away" yet we are still guilty of them.

As with other episodes in Jesus's life, there is little actual historical evidence to support the Easter story. Instead, Christians try to substantiate the myth by bending symbolic utterances in the old testament books to fit what they themselves would like to believe were fulfilled prophecies.

Let us then examine the so-called prophecies that Jesus was supposed to fulfill during and after his execution. But first it ought to be mentioned that one part of the tale—perhaps the most important to believers—was not prophesied at all. I refer to the claimed resurrection. There is no prophecy of this to be found anywhere in the old testament and evidently even Christians cannot muster the impertinence to take an irrelevant passage sufficiently out of context to fabricate one.

First there is the betrayal. The old testament reference for this is Zechariah 11 : 12. Verses 7 to 14 in this chapter comprise a symbolic poem, the meaning of which is uncertain. But it is plain that the passage can have little to do with Jesus. Now verse 12, the claimed prophetic verse, mentions "thirty shekels of silver". Matthew 26 : 15 describes the betrayal negotiations and speaks of "thirty pieces of silver" not at all the same thing, particularly considering the long period of time between the two writings. Apart from this, there is no other "prophecy" of betrayal.

Characteristically, it was the chief priests who seized the money after Judas had discarded it and hanged himself. This brings us to the second supposed prophecy, concern-

ing the use to which the money was put. In the old testament, Zech. 11 : 13, "I took the thirty shekels of silver and cast them into the treasury in the house of the Lord". In the new testament, Matthew 27 : 6, "The chief priests said . . . it is not lawful to put them (pieces of silver) into the treasury since they are blood money". Matthew goes on to tell how a potter's field was purchased with the money, and in doing this he attempts to connect it with a passage in Jeremiah, as he prefixes the ensuing quotation by saying "Thus was fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah . . .". The "quotation" however, is nowhere to be found in that book, although a similar passage appears in Jeremiah 32, where the author recounts how he himself bought a field from his cousin for seventeen shekels of silver. Hardly convincing prophecy.

The next point concerns the mode of execution. It is claimed that Psalm 22 : 16, which reads "They have pierced my hands and feet" prophecies Jesus's crucifixion. Needless to say there is no mention of execution in the whole passage. But the most important consideration concerning this verse is the fact that the word "pierce" has been interpolated, and is no better than a guess as to the meaning of the corresponding word in the original text. A footnote to the Revised Version reveals that in the original manuscript the word was illegible, but that the Syriac version translated it into the phrase "like a lion". This is, of course, most unsatisfactory grammar, but it clearly indicates how wrongly used is the word "pierced".

A chief source of Easter prophecy, according to believers, is chapter 53 of Isaiah. The phrase in verse 12 ". . . he was numbered with the transgressors" is supposed to be the forerunner of Matthew 27 : 38, "Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the left and one on the right". If both verses refer to the same individual, how did Jesus "pour out his soul" and "divide his spoil with the strong" as Isaiah foretold? And this explanation of the matter of the two robbers, was clearly considered to be unsatisfactory by Bible scholars at some time in history, as an attempt was made to fabricate a verse of Mark. In chapter 28 of that book, verse 28 is absent in the Revised Version. A footnote tells us "Some ancient authorities add as verse 28: 'And thus the scripture was fulfilled which says "He was reckoned with the transgressors"'".

Still dealing with Isaiah 53 : 12, the last part of this verse says: ". . . he made intercession for the transgressors". The fulfilment of this is reckoned to be Luke 23 : 34: "And Jesus said 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do'". Again, however, an RSV footnote gives the game away. "Other ancient authorities", it says, "omit this verse". Could this have been another attempt to contrive a fulfilled prophecy?

For Matthew 27 : 34: "And they gave him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but he would not drink it", the RSV gives as a cross-reference Psalm 69 : 21: This reads. "They gave him vinegar for food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink". Nothing need be added to this.

And so we come to the question of the resurrection. Bible mythology would, perhaps, be more convincing if the several versions of topics like the resurrection were consistent. In the so-called synoptic gospels, the resurrection stories are by no means synoptic. In Matthew, Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" were supposed actually to have witnessed an angel rolling back the stone which

(Continued on back page)

THE MEANING OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

G. L. SIMONS

FIFTH OF FIVE ARTICLES

IN THE FOURTH ARTICLE of this series I considered the Cultural Revolution in general terms. It is worth while to look at it in more detail since its implications for mankind are profound. A convenient place to start is with a Chinese pamphlet called *On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism and its Historical Lessons for the World* (14/7/64). This pamphlet is a comment on an "open letter" of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and it was produced by the editorial departments of *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) and *Hongqi* (*Red Flag*).

The pamphlet begins with a restatement of the importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the initial stages of socialist society, immediately after the assumption of power by the working classes. At this stage society is still inevitably stamped with the birthmarks of capitalist society. Marx is quoted (*Critique of the Gotha Programme*):

"What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect economically, morally and intellectually, still swamped with the birth marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges." (Italics in the original.)

Lenin also stressed that in the first phase of communism, it cannot "as yet be fully ripe economically and entirely free from traditions or traces of capitalism". (Quote from *The State and Revolution*.)

Thus after a left-wing revolution, superficially often completely successful, there are many powerful forces, both within the society and without, that would return the country to the old order if they could. In *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* Lenin said:

"The transition from capitalism to Communism represents an entire historical epoch. Until this epoch has terminated, the exploiters inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this hope is converted into attempts at restoration." (Italics in the original.)

Nor are the post-revolutionary class divisions confined to the social organs outside the Communist Party that guided the revolution. The Communist Party itself is not immune to the lingering effects of the old bourgeois ideology, and if the Communist Party is allowed to degenerate into a revisionist body the bourgeois forces are on the way to victory. It is for this reason that the stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat is essential for the consolidation and development of the revolution. In his *Foreword to the Speech 'On Deception of the People with Slogans of Freedom and Equality'* Lenin summarised the position well:

"The dictatorship of the proletariat is not the end of class struggle but its continuation in new forms. The dictatorship of the proletariat is class struggle waged by a proletariat which has been victorious and has taken political power against a bourgeoisie that has not vanished, not ceased to offer resistance, but that intensified its resistance."

If the phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat is abandoned too soon then the residual bourgeois elements, operating in an atmosphere that is still culturally bourgeois, can easily get the upper hand and start the steady drift back to capitalism. There is considerable evidence that this is happening in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as a whole. There are frequent accounts in the Soviet press of managers of factories illegally operating to acquire considerable personal wealth; such men have been punished

under Soviet law—but this is not the main point. The important fact is that responsible people in influential positions can wish to operate in such a way on such a scale; the total absence of a "socialist consciousness" is clear in these cases, and it is apparent that *the people* do not permeate the social organisations to the point that such activity would be impossible. In the Chinese pamphlet I have referred to, detailed cases of personal enrichment (or attempts at it) are quoted from a range of Soviet publications. Clearly a number of such activities are not detected—and for the government to relax the spirit of revolutionary communism in such an atmosphere is clearly against the interests of Soviet communism and the international socialist movement.

The extent of anti-communist activity in the Soviet Union is so great that the Soviet press has even coined words to describe the people in question: "Soviet capitalists", "new-born entrepreneurs", "newly-emerged kulaks", "private entrepreneurs", "speculators", "exploiters", etc. In such circumstances there is an overwhelming case for pursuing the communist revolution with even greater energy and concern. But Khrushchev explicitly, not even obliquely, stated that the phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat was over, and that the Soviet Union was welcoming in the state "of the entire people". To liberal ears this sounds good, but what it means in fact is that the main bulwark against the resurgence of a capitalist society is being broken down. In view of the nature of modern Soviet society it is clear that classes still exist in all the country's social organs; to relax socialist commitment in such an atmosphere is clearly not in the interests of communism.

The Soviet backsliding can be seen in both domestic and foreign policy. At home the economists are concerned to create a framework of material incentive, completely at odds with the theoretical notion of socialist commitment and selfless dedication; in addition expensive consumer goods are produced for the managerial elite and other select categories; and at the same time, a powerful bureaucratic class is allowed to emerge. In foreign policy, the Soviet Union is eager to seek a rapport with the United States. This again sounds fine to the Western liberal, but what it means is that the struggling Vietnamese are continually encouraged by the Soviet Union to negotiate a compromise peace; the Soviet Union has already sponsored the admission of two Vietnams to the United Nations. It means that the guerrillas of Latin America receive no support from the Soviet Union; quite the contrary, the Soviet Union has entered into extensive programmes of trade and aid with the Latin American military dictators. The Soviet Union is revisionist.

Mao Tse-tung clearly saw the dangers that a newly-made revolution had to face. To him the seizure of political power by the working class is "only the first step in a 10,000-li march". Force will often be tried to overthrow the people's revolution: cases are the suppression of the Paris commune, the war of intervention in the Soviet Union, and the counter-revolution in Hungary. In such instances the intentions of the bourgeoisie are obvious. Peaceful attempts to subvert the revolution are, however, more insidious and more dangerous. Modern Russia could not be quelled by military capitalism, but it is being subverted—and this is the danger that the clear-headed Chinese leaders are trying to prevent in their own country. This is why the Cultural Revolution was set in motion.

On the 8th August, 1966, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued a 16-point statement defining the principles that should govern the Cultural Revolution. The points included a definition of the significance of the Cultural Revolution, the importance of self-education of the masses, the role of the press, economic aspects, and important psychological attitudes. The Chinese people were called upon to scrutinise the conduct of their leaders and to evaluate from the socialist standpoint national customs and culture. What other country would dare to involve the people in political responsibility to this extent? Some Chinese writers have predicted that the process may take decades or even centuries to work itself out, but if communism is to be attained such a process is essential. An editorial in *People's Daily* (3/11/66) states:

"The new world needs a new Man to create it. In a certain sense, communism is absence of a private concept, it is for the public. We must foster and form a new communist man, wholeheartedly for the commonweal. This kind of man is the style of Chang Su-tch, Dr Bethune, Liu Hu-Lan, Lei Feng, whom Chairman Mao has called upon us to emulate. This kind of man is a noble man, a pure man, a man of moral integrity, a man who left coarse tastes behind, a man of use to the people. He is a man with no selfish interests, heart and soul for the people. Only if we have large numbers of new communist men, can we victoriously carry on the socialist revolution and socialist construction, can we gradually attain communism."

To the jaded Western mind such sentiments may sound naive or odd. Imagine if we found them in a *Guardian* editorial! But in the context of modern China the words are profoundly significant. If exploiting, materialistic, selfish, unjust societies are to be supplanted by a more

humane and more rational alternative then the hearts of men must be given a socialist character, incentives must be communal rather than private, "spiritual" rather than acquisitive. There is nothing in human nature that makes such a transformation impossible: human nature is almost infinitely malleable. In a brutal evolution it has been moulded for short-term self-interest in a largely uncontrollable environment; today man can take social evolution in his own hands and mould it purposefully. Such a concept can unite even Julian Huxley and Mao Tse-tung, though their concepts of the just society would differ.

It is fashionable to laugh at the rows of eager Chinese chanting the "Thoughts of Chairman Mao". *But they don't only chant*—they discuss them, with more enthusiasm and insight than the unpolitical Westerner can know. And have you read the "Little Red Book"? Try it sometime, and without the preconceptions generously provided by the capitalist press and broadcasting with their perennial obsessions with squalid private profit. The Chinese have a virile, secular ethic that is transforming their social consciousness and the face of their society; I wish that Britain had as much. Before we laugh, upon instruction from the capitalist we should remember this.

[Detailed information on the progress of the Cultural Revolution and on other aspects of Chinese policy can be found in the Broadsheet of the China Policy Study Group, sponsored by Professor Joseph Needham, F.R.S., Professor Cyril Offord, F.R.S., Professor Joun Robinson, and Professor George Thomson, and available on subscription from 62 Parliament Hill, London, N.W.3.]

IS THE CONCEPT "GOD" INCONSISTENT?

NICHOLAS GRIFFIN

IT IS A LONG TIME now since Christian theologians sought to prove that God exists. Nowadays, the most they have to say for their belief is that, although it cannot be proved, it cannot be disproved either. I have never been able to accept that any doctrine may be believed so long as it is not shown to be inconsistent, if only because this would lead to a vast ontological clutter of objects like candy-floss asteroids which, although there is nothing in favour of their existence, are not, presumably, logically inconsistent. It is usually assumed that God is rather like a candy-floss asteroid. But it seems as if insufficient attention has been given to the attempt to prove that the concept of God is, in fact, inconsistent rather than merely not proven. That is, with the attempt to prove that some of the propositions Christians assert of God are inconsistent with other propositions they assert. The famous problem of evil is such an example, whereby it is demonstrated that the assertion "God is benevolent" is inconsistent with the assertion "God is omnipotent". Although, so far as I am aware, this problem still lacks an adequate Christian reply, it seems worthwhile to try and construct other arguments of this kind.

This article requires that Christians are prepared to assert two propositions about God: (1) "God is the creator of the universe", (2) "God can and does intervene in the universe and at least some of these interventions can be known (or, and at least some of these interventions can be known (or, at least, believed with good grounds) to be interventions by God". I take it that the second proposition is not necessarily asserting that God intervenes directly (although it may mean this) but that God intervenes either through the laws of nature or through human beings. I do not wish to prejudge the answer to this intricate theological question. Subject to this proviso I think that it is clear that most (if not all) Christians are prepared to assert both propositions.

By the "universe" I mean, quite simply, the object with which cosmologists are concerned; or, more explicitly, the whole space-time continuum of which we are aware or could, in principle, be aware. My argument is independent of whether the universe contains matter only or minds only or both together, although it does depend upon the assumption that something in the universe exists. If the Christian asserts that God created the universe, it follows that he has to accept the existence of something God created. Apart from this I do not wish to prejudice our enquiry by assumptions about the nature of the universe.

If God exists then he must exist either within the universe, or outside it or both inside and outside it. Of course, it may turn out that the universe is infinite in which case the second and third possibilities will be closed. Or, we may wish (tendentiously) to define the universe as everything that exists, in which case only the first possibility is left open because the second would entail the denial of God's existence and the third collapse into the second.

Let us now consider each of the three possibilities:

(1) *God exists within the universe.* I do not necessarily wish to give this the rather naive interpretation that God is spatially inside the universe, for few modern Christians would regard God as existing in space at all. What I mean is that if a list is made of all the constituents of the universe then God would be on that list. This would include the spatial interpretation but it will also include any other interpretation of something being inside something else. Put more technically, it means God is a member of the class of all constituents of the universe. This view can be immediately rejected as being inconsistent with the asser-

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tion that God created the universe, which would entail that he created himself as one of the constituents of the universe.

(2) *God exists outside the Universe.* Just as we interpret "God exists within the universe" as meaning that God is a member of the class of constituents of the universe, so we interpret this as meaning that God is a member of the class of all things that do not constitute the universe. Now we have defined the universe as the space-time continuum of which we are, or could in principle be, aware. Consequently, if God exists outside this continuum we must be completely unaware of him. We would therefore be wise not to construct hypotheses about him. As yet this argument is only an argument—albeit a powerful one—for agnosticism. God might exist and yet be in principle unknowable. The dilemma is sharpened by the fact that such a God contradicts the second of the propositions Christians wish to assert of God. If we are totally unaware of God how can we be aware of his intervention? If we know that on certain occasions he intervenes we must know at least two things about him. Firstly, we must know some proposition about him to give a meaning to the subject in "He intervenes" and secondly we must know *that* he intervenes. The possibility of knowing either of these propositions is denied if God is unknowable.

(3) *God exists both within and outside the universe.* In view of the interpretations given to the first and second possibilities this third possibility becomes a contradiction in terms. It means: "God is a member of the class of all entities which are constituents of the universe and a member of the class of all entities which are *not* constituents of the universe". The two classes are seen to be mutually exclusive: being a member of the second precludes being a member of the first. Some further discussion will be required in order to demonstrate that the interpretation of the second possibility is the right one. Clearly the second possibility requires that we define God as being a member of some class. The trouble is, which class? The class must satisfy two requirements: Firstly, that together with the class of all objects which are constituents of the universe it must contain every actual or possible entity. This can only formally be achieved if we define the second class as the class of all the entities that are not members of the first. Secondly, the class should be delimited by what we can say about all its members. The only thing that we can say about all the entities which are not in the universe is that they are not in the universe. This also leads us to call them members of the class of all entities which are not members of the first class. Thus our interpretation of the second possibility is forced upon us and is not merely invented for the purpose of closing the third possibility.

What, then, have we demonstrated? We have shown that the concept of a God who created the universe and who intervenes in the universe (and who can be known to intervene in it) is inconsistent. This particular inconsistency can be overcome in two ways. Firstly, the Christian can deny either of the two propositions which we began by saying he would want to assert of God. Clearly the proposition that God created the universe is the most likely candidate for this reduction, it would then be consistent to maintain that God exists in the universe. However, on this view there may well still be trouble for the proposition "God is omnipotent", but this problem is outside the scope of the present article. If the Christian denies the second proposition then he will be compelled either to deny God's existence or to accept the existence of a God of which he can

know nothing. In this case the theology of a prudent Christian will not differ significantly from agnosticism.

The second escape route is altogether more dubious. The Christian may well say that God—being incomprehensible—does not necessarily conform to even the simplest of logical rules. After all, they may say, you have only demonstrated that the *concept* of God is inconsistent, but perhaps nevertheless God exists even though any propositions we wish to assert about him will contradict each other. In this case God has become unthinkable and cannot be the subject of any propositions. "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent", wrote the wisest mystic of the century. There is as yet no evidence that the Christians are prepared to follow his sage advice and to consign to the flames the numerous volumes of theology which, by their own admission, can contain "nothing but sophistry and illusion".

BOOK REVIEW

D. T. HARRIS

THE SECULAR CITY: Harvey Cox (Pelican 6s).

PROFESSOR COX'S main thesis is that secularisation is an epochal opportunity we should not miss. All supernatural myths and sacred symbols must be broken down in what he sees as an historically irreversible, process, and secular man, the pragmatist, provided with a non-religious interpretation of the Gospel. Affirming that the "God out there" has long been laid to rest, he carpingly concludes that this in itself is enough to render many of Bertrand Russell's books "quaint rather than daring".

The roots of the secular city are to be found in the Stone-age; but they have undergone "de-tribalisation"—there is no longer "Jew" or "Greek" or the tension between their respective spatial and temporal outlooks. The Kafka-like anonymity of city living has preserved the privacy essential to human life, enabling the citizen to avoid the subjection of neighbourliness. Urban man thus treats all people as persons, but not intimates. This self-inflicted isolationism is again reflected in modern man's (rational?) approach to problems by isolating them from irrelevant considerations. John Kennedy and Albert Camus are cited as two comforting examples of "secular men", focusing on the issues which torment terrestrial society. Urban secular-man is more "biblical" than "Greek" and the distance between him and the Bible far from impassable!

In some respects this is a penetrating analysis of modern urban life within the "man-made Kingdom of God"—the secular city. The decentralisation of authority and the powerlessness of oppressed peoples within the city are seen as major problems which must be dealt with on a society-wide basis. The supernatural myths and sacred symbols have gone. The encyclopaedic conflict is between the traditional and experimental. Secularism is a closed -ism, which the author feels must be kept under constant surveillance lest it become the ideology of a new establishment. With the onset of cybernetics, jobs become fewer and no-one need live in poverty or degradation—and we are supposed, by now, to have rid ourselves of "animal fables!"

This is a lofty, irritatingly pompous book, with occasional illuminating segments, e.g. the scathing appraisal of "Playboy" and "Miss Universe". The author takes as his ground a hunger for certainty and in his enthusiasm candidly side-steps reasoned thought. He finds relief from the uncertainties of a changing world in his cosy, arbitrary doctrines compounded with vague historical allusions which might sway the casual reader if he forgot the empirical view of the Dark Ages, when a millenium of religious doctrines showed just what kind of world they could make. The Professor seeks disenchantment, with traditional religion undermined, for "We face new realities armed with little more than immensely dangerous and costly myths". This one feels is the inevitable penalty of closing the avenue of mirrors at the frontier of the Absolute.

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E. M. FORSTER

MERLE TOLFEE

MR E. M. FORSTER was born on January 1, 1879, which makes him, if my arithmetic is correct, 90. It is hard to realise that his last and greatest novel—*A Passage to India*—was published nearly forty-five years ago. This was certainly a seminal work and had a profound influence, in more ways than one. It was not revolutionary in a political sense; the Indian national movement is never mentioned, and the English are only urged to get out in the last few pages by the Indian doctor, Aziz, driven nearly distraught by his failure to make any real friendship with an Englishman. Nevertheless the book spread a new feeling about India, affected the national consciousness and thus played its part in the liberation process.

Forster's internationalism gives him a dimension that not even the greatest of the 19th century novelists attained. His view of the Anglo-Indian set-up, detached and ironic as it was, was more effective than any diatribe. Having traced, through several books, the barriers of different kinds that impede human relationships, here in his deepest book it is the problem of racialism. The immediate impression left by the book however is pessimistic. The attempt at friendship, has failed; India is a muddle; neither the English nor the Indians seem particularly capable of getting order out of chaos. And deeper than all this, at the heart of the book there seems to be a metaphysical void. Mrs Moore, in her visit to the Marabar caves, hears the meaningless echo, Boum, Boum, and feels in a panic that this is all there is of life. In the face of an indifferent universe, the life of man and all his efforts mean nothing.

Nevertheless, on a more practical level the situation, since 1948, has improved in relation to India, not least for the English. Personal relationships have overcome one hurdle, and Mr Forster has contributed in no small way to the struggle for a better society.

The Italian novels, *A Room with a View* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, are in lighter vein, but are not less polished. The snobberies and reserves of the English middle classes, whose education seems to have deprived them of a normal power of response, are subjected to delicate but astringent mockery. But even across these books there come sudden streaks of horror, which shatter the urbane surface. The violence that suddenly takes over, the insane cruelty of certain characters, the terror of certain scenes, show Forster's sense of the power of the unconscious within man, and his relationship with a universe that does not always seem indifferent, but, as sometimes happens in Shakespeare, dark and threatening.

In *Howards End*, the tensions are those within English society itself, and within one particular class—the one Forster knows best—the middle class. The Wilcox family, powerful in business, efficient in practical affairs, philistine in all artistic matters, but considered by themselves and others to be the backbone of England, become involved with the Schegels, also rich, but intellectual, theoretically progressive, free, musical and artistic. At the other end of the scale is Leonard Bast, edging his way up, anxious to imbibe culture, but doomed to be crushed. The book is a study in compromise, the meeting of opposites, and their acceptance of one another. This is a Liberal masterpiece. The characters are real people, but finally the backbone—Wilcox—is crushed, as he has tried to crush others, and the future of England seems to be placed in the hands of a small child—the child of Helen and Bast—who will inherit the fortune of both houses.

The book which Forster tells us he is most glad to have written is however *The Longest Journey*. His affection for it is probably due to the fact that it is reminiscent of his Cambridge days, but also because in it he managed to get nearer than anywhere else towards what was in his mind—"or rather towards that juncture of mind with heart where the creative impulse sparks". The story of the moral deterioration of Rickie as a master in a public school shows Forster's hatred of the authoritarian system which often governs such institutions.



What is above all valuable in E. M. Forster is his intellectual honesty. He believes in the individual—in the rights and liberties of individual man, and has at all times spoken and written in this cause. He recognises the need for planning so that all may have enough to eat and somewhere to live, but bureaucracy of any sort—State, Church or School—is anathema to him. He sees that free intercourse between men and women is disastrously impeded by the barriers set up by national and racial prejudice, by religions, by the class system and the educational system. And above all perhaps he hates hypocrisy. He has no sympathy with Christianity. His books are not without their touches of mysticism, but the anthropomorphism of the Christian religion, with its rags, chains and nails, repels him. Faith, he thinks, is not a good thing anyway. In *What I Believe* he says:

"I do not believe in Belief . . . Faith, to my mind is a stiffening process, a sort of mental starch, which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible. I dislike the stuff. I do not believe in it for its own sake, at all. Herein I probably differ from most people, who believe in Belief, and are only sorry they cannot swallow more than they do."

But having castigated Faith, he then tells us what he, as an unbeliever, believes in—personal relationships, and democracy, because it admits variety and criticism. He believes in Art and civilisation. And though he recognises the overpowering troubles of the world (this was written

(Continued overleaf)

LETTERS

Causality

IN HIS ARTICLE "Causes and Morals" (March 8), Mr A. J. Lowry suggests that there must be a cause of things.

That this is not so, was demonstrated by the great philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, in his essay "On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason".

He said: "The law (of Causality) has to do with the changes of objects of external experience rather than with things themselves, a circumstance which is fatal to the validity of the cosmological proof of the existence of God . . . It follows from the essential connection of causality with succession, that the notion of reciprocity, with its contemporaneous existence of cause and effect, is a delusion".

JOHN SUTHERLAND.

Bigots

I HAVE JUST READ your leader entitled "End of the Union" in the March 8 FREETHINKER. You call Paisley, and I don't know the man, a bigot; and you call the anti-O'Neill Unionists primitive and barbarian. Primitive and barbarian as they may be, and I don't accept that of course, they are not as primitive and barbarian as the people they are opposed to, viz. the Roman Catholics, who believe that a wafer is turned into Christ's "actual" body, and then they worship it, and swallow it.

Similarly, bigoted as Paisley may be, what he is fighting, viz. Roman Catholicism, is the most bigoted, savage and tyrannical thing the world has ever known. Paisley has committed no crimes like "St" Dominic, Torquemada, the murderers of the Huguenots, the Bloody Mary, Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich, Franco, Pilsudski, Pavelik (the mass-murderer of Greek Orthodox Serbs), Kaltenbrunner, etc., all born and brought up Roman Catholics.

I hope you will be prepared to publish that: and when you are at it you may let me add that Diem was also a Roman Catholic, ditto Thieu and Ky, and Ojukwu.

It seems to be a case therefore of very minor bigots, the Paisleyites, versus super-major bigots, the Roman Catholics. If the Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland are being badly treated!—in the war against the filthy Nazis, military conscription did not apply in Northern Ireland, to please the Roman Catholics there—then how can this be explained? That you never hear of Roman Catholics in "bigoted" Ulster, or hated "Calvinist" Scotland, or detested "Anglo-Saxon" England, emigrating from Ulster, or Scotland, or England to Eire. No, the traffic is all one way, from Eire to England and Scotland, and from Eire to Ulster.

You know, of course, that Sean O'Casey had to flee from "Free" Eire to England? Eire was one of the few countries where Mussolini's death was mourned and this Fascist thug was "received" into the Roman Catholic Church, worse than a thug, the murderer by proxy of Matteotti, Amendola, Pilati, Gramsci, etc.

This is the point of view of the anti-O'Neill Unionists, they have the same opinion of O'Neill as the writer had of Macdonald in 1929 and Chamberlain in 1935. They believe that O'Neill wants a "united" Ireland. Very, very nice talk. But they know who rules Eire, the Pope, and they don't want to be ruled by the Pope. In Eire the politicians (i.e., "the State") rule the employers and workers, and the priests rule the politicians. When Eire got Home Rule it exchanged rule from Westminster for rule from Rome. For 400 years as you know the Pope has been an Italian, so no wonder the Ulster Protestants are bigoted (though not as bigoted as the Roman Catholics), they don't want an Italian to rule them.

Events will sort themselves out in Ulster, but this should be clearly understood by you: that so long as there are bigoted Roman Catholics in the world, with barbarian manners and primitive ideas, then we need bigoted Protestants, bigoted Jews, bigoted Freethinkers, bigoted Buddhists (like some in Saigon), and bigoted Mohammedans (like many in Nigeria), because softness with Roman Catholics is synonymous with suicide. It is a pity, but that is how it is.

JOE NASEBY.

Herbert Cutner

I WISH to endorse Mr Griffiths' appreciation of the late Mr Cutner. Herbert, as I familiarly knew him, was one of the veteran workers for Freethought which comprised Chapman Cohen, Rosetti, F. A. Ridley, Len and Eva Ebury and others once active for the NSS.

Very erudite, he was more than a useful campaigner for secularism, and an utter atheist, and sacrificed much money and position in his dedicated service for it.

We shall need a lot of his calibre yet.

F. H. SNOW.

Ah!

I PRESUME A. Pach (March 15) is writing with his tongue in his cheek, as (1) the Arabs are a Semitic race; (2) Jesus Christ (if he existed) was a Jew; (3) so was Karl Marx. CHRISTINE HYATT.

Criticism

I TOO FIND freethinkers not so careful as they ought to be when criticising. Mr Snow should have noticed that I included his qualifying word "mainly", when describing his views on the FREETHINKER'S quota of religious articles.

The point is that Mr Snow is being hypocritical; he wants to see FREETHINKER to propagate his views on any subject of his choice, but he does not wish this privilege to be extended to any other freethinkers.

Mr Snow accuses me of pluralising his article in support of racialism. I feel that the fault is the printer's rather than mine. (?)

The meaning of the last few lines of Mr Snow's letter is rather obscure. I have attempted to decode his rather tortuous and tautological syntax, and it seems he is saying that not only must white not suffer more than blacks, they must not even suffer equally with blacks.

This 'Britain for the British' argument (propagated by Colin Jordan, the British Nationalist Party, Enoch Powell, the National Front, and now F. H. Snow) not only takes absolutely no account of social and economic factors, it is also racialist.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES.

EASTER ENIGMA

(Continued from page 107)

sealed Jesus's tomb. But in Mark, the women (same two) arrived at the tomb and were "amazed" to find the stone rolled back and an angel sitting on a nearby rock. Luke agrees with Mark insofar as the stone was moved prior to the arrival of the women, but in his version there are two seated angels.

Space does not permit the examination of all the other contrived and misquoted "prophecies" surrounding Easter: the more disastrous ones—from the Christian point of view—have been outlined here. There is, however, an additional small detail which provides food for thought. This is merely that the first name of Barabbas was Jesus. Readers may draw their own conclusions.

E. M. FORSTER

(Continued from page 111)

in 1939), he says we need not despair. Though violence remains and is indeed the major part in this muddled establishment, I believe that creativeness remains too." "The dictator hero can grind down his citizens till they are all alike but he cannot melt them into a single man." "New techniques are needed to organise the distribution of goods, so that people will no longer starve; a similar change is needed in the sphere of morals and politics. Then man will be able to shut up force in its box and so gain time to explore the universe and set his mark upon it worthily. But it is through the efforts of men, rather than through Christianity, that these changes are likely to take place."

These are the words of a distinguished Humanist and a fine artist. Let us salute both him and them.

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