



The Enlightenment



A Mini-Journal of the
Humanist Association of London and Area

Visit Our Web Site at www.humanists-london.org

Volume 11

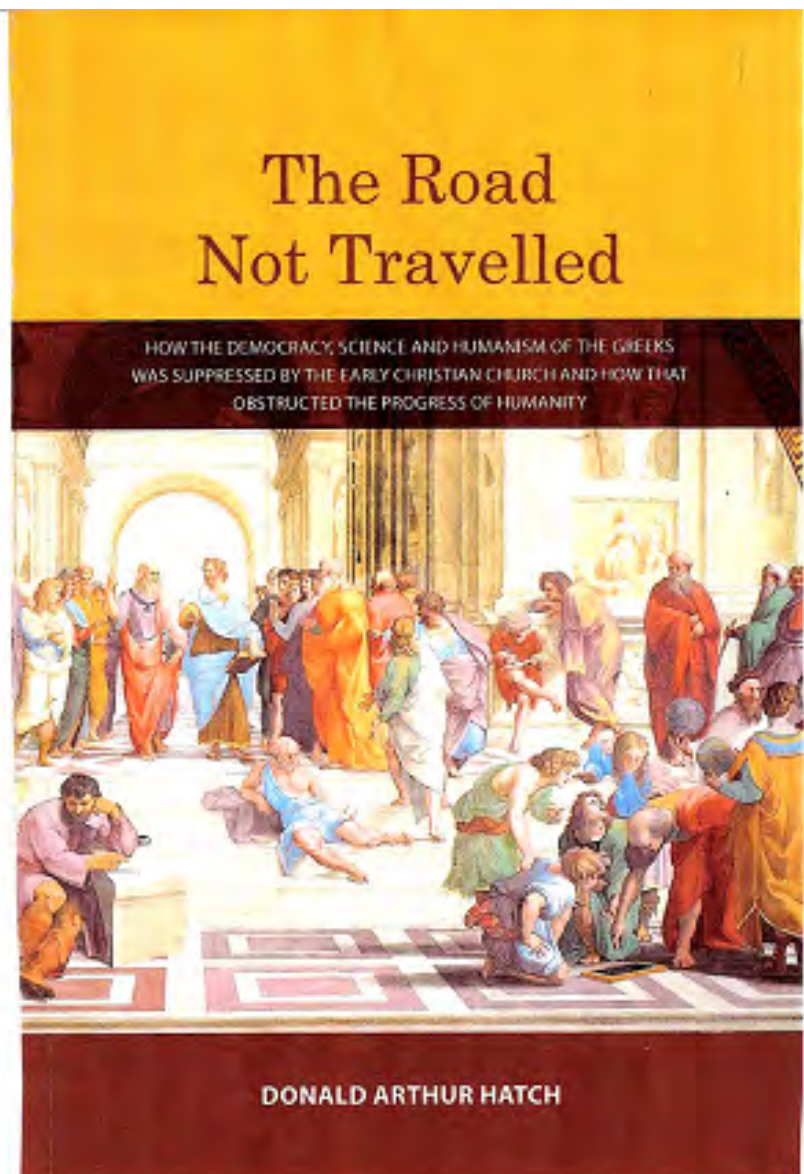
Number 2

Special Issue

January 2015

How I Became a Humanist and Wrote *The Road Not Travelled*

I had the misfortune of being raised in the Baptist Church where there was a lot of talk about sin. Over and over I heard that I was a sinner and had to be saved or born again. And there were many sins. Dancing, going to Hollywood movies and drinking alcoholic beverages were all sins. It seemed that Baptists were just not supposed to have any fun. Nevertheless, I went along with all this to please my mother, became baptized and joined the Church. But all along I sensed that there was something not quite right about what I was being asked to believe, and I continued to have nagging doubts. After leaving university in 1953, I took a job as a chemist at a small Ontario company. My future wife, a professional musician and high school teacher, was the organist at the local United Church so I became a member of this church where there was no talk of sin and the need to be born again. This was a relief. Nevertheless, I could not stop feeling that there was something about Christianity that just did not add up, but I could not put my finger on it. In 1956, the small company I worked for was purchased by a larger chemical company. In 1961 I was transferred to head office in Montreal and moved there with my wife (PTO)



and two children. We joined the local United Church where I became an elder. In 1964 I was transferred to England for two years. While there, the only churches we darkened were famous cathedrals including York, Durham, Winchester, Salisbury, Coventry, St. Paul's and of course Westminster Abbey.

We returned to Montreal for a few years and then in succession moved to London Ontario, Vancouver BC, and back to London in 1979. In each location my wife played the organ in a United or Presbyterian Church, where I sporadically attended, still harbouring doubts.

Not long after retiring in 1990, I picked up a copy of *Time* magazine in the waiting room of my dentist's office that had a picture of Jesus on the cover. Inside was an article on the Jesus Seminar, a group of liberal clergy and biblical scholars based in California. This group was attempting to determine which words in the gospels were authentic and actually spoken by Jesus, as opposed to those that were put into his mouth by the gospel writers. For me, the startling revelation in the article was the suggestion that Jesus was not supernatural, not born of a virgin and not resurrected. He was fully human. Wow! All of a sudden I realized that my doubts were valid. What a relief. But what was this human Jesus really like? It took twenty years of reading for me to arrive at a satisfying answer, at least one satisfying to me.

There were two events that aided in my quest for the real historical Jesus. One was becoming a humanist and joining Humanist Canada and also the Humanist Association of London and Area (HALA) where I served in various executive positions. At present, I am the editor and publisher of the HALA mini-journal, *The Enlightenment*. The other event was joining a small group that meets monthly to discuss books on philosophy. Consequently I began to learn something about humanism and secularism, as well as the origin of philosophy in ancient Greece. I also studied middle-east history and the origins of Christianity. But despite all the reading, I was unable to arrive at a convincing portrait of the human Jesus of Nazareth, until I read Jean Meslier's *Testament*. In this treatise, Meslier, asserts that Jesus was an imposter.

The findings of my quest are documented in *The Road Not Travelled*, the gist of which is that the positive attributes of ancient Greek philosophy, democracy, science and humanism were suppressed by the early Christian Church, and it is now time for the establishment of truly secular societies free from the influence of monotheistic religions. A general indication of what the book is about can be gleaned from the Forward, written by Goldwin Emerson.

The Road Not Travelled is a concise informative book. The author, Donald Hatch, has packed each page with knowledge, and thoughtful comments about our past and the emerging of a hopeful future as we proceed from the path of religious superstition and supernaturalism into a more enlightened time. Hatch describes the road not travelled as one that will re-emerge from the early Greek philosophers which had powerful influences in Renaissance thought and later in the Enlightenment of the seventeenth century. As the powerful grip of religious domination lessens in our time, humanists can look forward with hope to renewed enlightenment led by science and reason. This is a book that should be read by secular thinkers, but it will also help religious thinkers understand and question their present practices. I hope it will be read by both. - Goldwin Emerson PhD.

Goldwin Emerson is a University of Western Ontario professor emeritus of education, with an interest in philosophy and the moral development of children. He is a life member of Humanist Canada.

The Road Not Travelled is available at all regular monthly meetings of the Humanist Association of London and Area for \$15.00. To receive a copy in the mail, send a cheque or money order for \$17.00 to Don Hatch, 14 Kingspark Crescent, London ON. N6H 4C4. Please include your mailing address.