

FREE THINKER

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SUBMISSIONS TO THE ARCHBISHOPS' COMMISSION ON CHURCH AND THE STATE

The National Secular Society

UP TILL the Reformation in Britain the Roman Catholic Church was effectively established and endowed. The Archbishop of Canterbury crowned and anointed the Sovereign and was frequently Chancellor or Chief Minister. Land and building grants were awarded by Crown and Parliament, and the Church controlled matters relating to birth, marriage and death and whatever education and social services existed. It was estimated that in the year 1,000 it owned half the land in the country, obtained as a gift from the State or by forging title deeds (most bureaucrats were clerics) or by frightening wealthy landowners on their deathbeds. Eventually Parliament had to pass mortmain legislation to save the entire land of the country from falling into the hands of the Church, where normally it would remain in perpetuity. Much of this wealth was channelled off to the Pope in the form of Peter's Pence, and appeals lay to him from English courts. In 1213, threatened by a Rome-inspired invasion, King John actually handed over Britain and Ireland to the Pope ostensibly for 'remission of sins' though the transaction was later repudiated.

The Reformation was more complicated than a device to aid Henry VIII's marital adventures, and was widely welcomed in England as a release from suzerainty of the Pope, financial stranglehold of the monastic orders and stagnation caused by the medieval Catholic hostility to usury. By sundry acts of Supremacy, Uniformity and Settlement the Church of England explicitly took over the established position (and many of the endowments) of the Church of Rome. So elastic were the Thirty-Nine articles that, so long as Christianity was acceptable to the mass of the people, they were by and large able to live inside them with minimal trauma to their consciences. Roman Catho-

lics persisted however, and down the years other Protestant communities sprang up. At last they became so numerous that civic rights had to be extended in turn to Quakers, Moravians, Nonconformists, Roman Catholics and Jews. As far as the official oaths position was concerned, unbelievers were emancipated in 1888, though there are many subtle ways in which they remain second-class citizens. With Commonwealth immigration and a certain amount of Anglo-Saxon 'conversion', these isles now contain appreciable numbers of Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsees, Mormons and other non-Christian adherents. Only a tiny percentage—just over two million—of those who describe themselves on official forms as 'C. of E.' bother going even to Easter Communion. Yet throughout all these vicissitudes the Church of England in England (and to a lesser extent the Church of Scotland in Scotland) has remained established and endowed.

This has many consequences. The Sovereign is officially obliged to be an Anglican in England and a Presbyterian in Scotland, while the Lord Chancellor cannot be a Roman Catholic. In the House of Lords is a Bench of Bishops consisting of the two Archbishops and twenty-four senior Bishops. Joseph Clayton's *The Bishops as Legislators*, with a Foreword by the Rev. Stewart Headlam, shows the deplorable way in which this position has been abused to obstruct reforms and social progress. Conversely, Anglican clergymen are unable to sit in the House of Commons, even if elected, and if they are also barristers they lose their right of audition in secular courts. The Church of England conducts most national, civic and legal ceremonies, whatever the private beliefs of those taking part, and contributes chaplains—paid for by the State—to State institutions like prisons, hospitals and the armed forces, whether or not there is any request for them. The Archbishop of Canterbury is high in the order of precedence and has many offices, like that of Trustee of the British Museum, where he can influence the lives of non-Anglicans. It should be pointed out that these officers and officials of state can never, because of doctrinal provisions, be women.

Anglican courts have the same powers as ordinary secular courts and may subpoena, apply to the High Court for committal for contempt of court, and enjoy absolute privilege. They do not have a proper jury system or access to State Legal Aid, and their standard of justice was well

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illustrated by the 1961 Southwark Consistory Court trial of Dr Bryn Thomas, former vicar of the Ascension, Balham Hill. Soon afterwards it was brought to light how some artists at Digswell accepted an invitation to protest at extensions to its twelfth century church, and found themselves cited as plaintiffs in a consistory court action and mulcted of £137 costs when they lost. The 1963 Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure removed some anomalies, but gained for the Church what the Bishops had sought for over a hundred years, abolition of the right of appeal to the Privy Council. More recent cases at Southwark and Exeter have not allayed anxieties about the functioning of these courts.

The Church Commissioners are among the biggest land-owners in the country, particularly in the metropolitan area, and their *modus operandi* was one of the things which induced the present Government to bring in the Leasehold Bill. Compulsory church rates were abolished in 1868, but there is still the right to submit a voluntary rate notice, whose official-looking form may deceive the unwary. The rundown of tithes began in 1936, when Parliament handed over 3% redemption stock to produce the same income. Later the Church was given the right to convert this stock into equities, and by judicious investment now enjoys an immeasurably greater income than before without incurring the odium of annual tithe collection or expensive litigation. Down the years the Church has also managed to acquire various educational and charitable trusts which it was the only body capable of 'administering'.

There are many sincere churchmen who recognise that

the Church of England today has no rights to these powers and privileges. A further cause of irritation to them has been the system of appointing Church dignitaries like deans and bishops by the Sovereign on the advice of the Prime Minister, who may be of any or no religion and motivated by political considerations. Up till 1965 the Church was also obliged to get parliamentary approval for minor changes in its forms of worship, and it is still not free to change its formularies by its own decision.

Clearly there are direct abuses in this position which need remedying. A major indirect result is that establishment is the main thing which lends credence to the view—devoid of proper legal or sociological basis—that England is a Christian country and that Christian indoctrination in schools and broadcasting and influence in the welfare services are therefore justified. Whatever their views on theology, all libertarians should demand the immediate disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England. This would entail legislation to give religious freedom to the Sovereign and Lord Chancellor, secularise the Coronation (performed, perhaps, by the Lord Chancellor) and all official national, civic and legal ceremonies, remove the Bench of Bishops from the House of Lords and civil disabilities from Anglican clergymen, abolish the statutory position of church courts so that they may become simply internal disciplinary bodies, restrict the appointment of Anglican chaplains to the voluntary provision of those where there is a definite need, abolish the right of Parliament to control the worship or personnel of the Church, and disendow (perhaps by nationalising the Church Commissioners, many of whom are already officers of state).

RECENT RESEARCH IN EVOLUTION

R. W. Morrell

NOT too many years ago bitter controversy raged between scientist and theologian with regard to evolution and special creation. Now the theologians have with odd exceptions capitulated. A few of the exceptions are mentioned by the Jesuit, Karl Rahner, in a recent work, *Hominisation, The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem*. He quotes one Papist theologian as suggesting (in 1955) that a thesis hostile to evolution was at least more common (*saltem communius*). His own opinion, however, is the reverse for he remarks, "Only very exhaustive examination of the whole theological literature of the subject could determine whether the remark was correct. It is quite possible to question it, all the more so as the change of view has taken place more rapidly in the oral teaching of lectures (which are more numerous and livelier than printed textbooks), than in printed books, which are few and always voice the views of only a small number of theologians."

Such opinions as that quoted above and the recent comment on TV by the Archbishop of Canterbury: "we are all evolutionists today" are in marked contrast with the climate of "informed" opinion when Darwin first published *The Origin of Species*. Darwin was aware of the hostility his theory would provoke, at the same time he was conscious of the gaps in the evidence supporting the theory, in particular with regard to paleontological evidence. "The geological record", wrote Darwin, "viewed as a whole, is extremely imperfect" (6th London Edn., 1891, p. 258). He went on to express the hope that this gap would eventually be filled, though his hope was not expressed without certain reservations. To what extent

modern research has provided evidence to fill the gaps in evolutionary theory is a question any reader of *The Origin of Species* must at times ask.

Continuity exists at all taxonomic levels in the fossil record. However, where discontinuity was found it was almost always at points of critical importance to the establishment of evolution as a valid theory. One of the major breaks or gaps is between the Cambrian and Precambrian. In the geological record, life quite literally explodes into being in rocks of the Lower Cambrian. These rocks have produced almost 900 species representative of nine phyla and many of these creatures are highly complex, often more so than similar types existing today. The Precambrian on the other hand, an immense period in terms of geological time, has produced a mere handful in comparison. However, in the past few years there has been a marked increase in the number of species described and the development of new extraction techniques coupled with new and highly complex equipment promises the possibility of many more being discovered. It is not without significance that microfossils which are more resistant to metamorphic change, a very important factor when dealing with Precambrian material, are beginning to play an increasingly influential part in evolutionary studies and Precambrian microfossils of the Acritarcha group have been used successfully to establish stratigraphic correlations.

Until a few years ago critics of evolution used to claim that there existed no "indisputable Precambrian fossils", a claim which appears to have disconcerted the late Professor J. B. S. Haldane in his written debate with Davies

and Dewar published under the title, *Is Evolution a Myth?* in 1949. Since 1949 workers in various parts of the world have described a great many "indisputable" Precambrian fossils. In 1964 micro-organisms dated to about 2,700 million years ago were described from the Precambrian Shield of Western Australian and calcareous algae of about the same date was discovered in Rhodesia (specimens of this recently formed part of an exchange with the United States for books). Organic amino acids have been described from Precambrian rocks and plant fossils are known from the Huronian Gunflint Formation of Canada. More recently spores and spore-like bodies have been described from Russia, Poland and other places.

Australia has already been mentioned in connection with Precambrian material and it is there that one of the largest and most promising sources of fossils has been discovered. At Ediacara in South Australia, a large and distinctive Precambrian fauna has come to light. This has produced, to date, some 25 species which include sea pens, annelids and medusoid coelenterates. Writing recently in *Palaeontology* (Vol. 9, Part 4, 1966, pp. 599-628) Professor M. F. Glaessner, who has done much of the work on the fauna, held that the site is likely to produce much more valuable material. A side aspect of recent discoveries has been to focus attention once more on the disputed Precambrian fossil, *Xenusion auerswaldae*. This fossil discovered many years ago in an erratic boulder thought to be Precambrian is now known to bear a marked resemblance to forms found at Ediacara which in turn closely resemble specimens found in Britain and South West Africa, also from Precambrian strata. This similarity has caused Tarlo to reject the theory that *Xenusion* is an onychophoran and thus possibly a connecting link between the two major phyla Arthropoda and Annelida and "on balance" place it as some type of colonial coelenterate (*Mercian Geologist*, 2, 1, 1967, pp. 97-99).

It will be seen from the above that the Precambrian is no longer the major difficulty it was but a few years ago and the type of material from it on which the palaeontologist works is the type one would expect to find if evolution be true.

Another gap in the evidence for evolution which Darwin drew attention to was that of transitional forms. Without these only a limited theory of evolution would be tenable, for each class would have to be treated as unrelated. Evolution in postulating the development of living forms from very simple organisms right up to man implies a connection between the various classes. Darwin hoped such links would turn up and his hopes have been upheld through a number of interesting discoveries. Transitional forms are known between the fish and amphibia, *Elpistostege*; between the amphibia and reptiles, the seymouriamorphs, and between reptiles and mammals, the therapsids. On a lower level we find well supported lines of continuity among the invertebrates, examples of which are the *Gryphaea*, a genus on which the late Professor H. H. Swinnerton did so much important work, and the echinoderms. In both cases a mass of transitional forms are known.

It would be as dishonest as it is unscientific to make light of the fact that while many gaps have been filled a great many more still remain. It may be that some will never be filled due to the inadequate nature of the fossil record brought about by the process of fossilisation which tends to produce a bias in favour of certain creatures. Hence animals living in aquatic conditions have a better chance

of preservation than those living on the land. Another aspect of this could be brought about by what Professor F. H. T. Rhodes has recently termed "the result of inadequate collecting and study" (*Proc. Geol. Ass.*, 77, 1, 1966, p. 32). However, while gaps remain, the evidence favourable to evolution as a valid theory to account for life as we now find it goes a long way towards establishing evolution as a fact and certainly bears out the hopes expressed so frequently by Darwin.

Reflection on the theory of evolution shows it to give a far more profound view of life than any religious hypothesis, though this should not be taken to mean it is in some way a substitute to be utilised by theologians in place of their inadequate theories. It demonstrates the close inter-relationship of various forms of life. Systematics may give us a seemingly complicated method of classification in which the connections between groups may appear vague, yet at certain levels research has shown the inter-relationship very clearly. Micro-organisms known as dinoflagellates are on the boundary between the plant and animal kingdoms. However, to which one they are to be ascribed is not clear for they show characteristics which make them animals, plants, animals becoming plants or vice-versa and thus, to quote Sarjeant (*Endeavour*, 24, No. 91, 1965, p. 34) are "accordingly difficult (to classify); to the zoologist they are animals and are classed in the Order Dinoflagellata, but to the botanist they are plants and to be placed in the Order Dinophyceae". What the supporter of the Genesis "kinds" makes of this I am yet to discover.

As mentioned earlier most theologians are now evolutionists, and while it may be the modern idea to hold that the writers of Genesis did not themselves believe in a literal creation, as John Wren-Lewis seems to think if a recent article in *The British Weekly* (26/1/67) is anything to go on, it is difficult to see how evolution can be reconciled with Christianity if the latter is to make sense. The Roman Catholic position of accepting a literal Adam and Eve is at least theologically logical though not sound from the standpoint of evolution—as the efforts of some Catholic biologists in trying to square one with the other demonstrate. It may be that someone more at home in the dark labyrinth of theological speculation can demonstrate a reconciliation between the two. Whatever be the case if Darwin lived today he would be highly amused by the theologians' discomfort.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

THE 61st ANNUAL DINNER

will now take place at

THE HANOVER-GRAND
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SATURDAY, 8th APRIL

RECEPTION 6 P.M. DINNER 6.30 P.M.

Speakers:

BARONESS WOOTTON MILES MALLESON

MARGARET KNIGHT LORD WILLIS

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

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NEWS AND NOTES

LAST WEEK we gave news of the first ever joint pastoral issued by New York's eight Roman Catholic bishops. The bishops achieved their aim. By a majority of five to one a committee of the New York State Legislature has thrown out the Bill which would have made it legal for a woman to have an abortion if she were likely to suffer physical or mental injury, if she had been raped, or if there were reason to expect that she would give birth to a physically or mentally defective child.

In this country there is a distinct danger of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill being talked out of existence. Those who wish to see the Bill become law must intensify the campaign against its opponents.

CTF pressure

AT the March 4th meeting of the Executive of the National Union of Teachers, the General Secretary (Sir Ronald Gould) reported that he had received a letter from the Durham County Association protesting at the action of the Catholic Teachers' Federation in bringing pressure to bear on NUT members when voting for Union officers.

Catholic clergy crisis

THE CATHOLIC POPULATION of England and Wales is outstripping the clergy at an alarming rate. According to the *Catholic Directory* the population increased by nearly 48,000 last year, but the number of priests dropped by 76. There are now 7,811 priests listed, compared with 7,887 in 1966.

Heresies in Dutch Catholicism

THE DUTCH CATHOLIC traditionalist movement, *Confrontation*, has been using espionage methods to obtain information about answers being given by young priests on controversial questions. A woman who belongs to *Confrontation* tape-recorded the advice a young priest gave her early this month. After she had asked him questions for more than an hour she showed him the pocket tape recorder under her coat. The priest refused to continue. He reported the story to a journalist friend and it was published in Dutch newspapers.

Last October several members of *Confrontation* were among those who sent a petition to Pope Paul claiming that the new Dutch Catholicism, which had been prepared at the request of Holland's Bishops, contained seven heresies. The alleged heresies, as reported in the *Catholic*

Herald (March 10th), were:

1. Failure to assert Our Lady's virginity and by ambiguous language seeming to deny it.
2. Denying that original sin, "being one in origin and transmitted by procreation", is present in mankind.
3. Saying the consecration merely gives the bread and wine a new significance and a new purpose, thus opposing the Council of Trent and the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*.
4. Declaring the Catholic Church teaches everything that is in Protestantism but that the converse is not true.
5. Departing from the teaching on birth regulation of the encyclical *Casti Connubii* and the statement by Pope Paul on October 29th, 1966.
6. Making no mention of the creation of the human soul in the section on the origin of man and later seeming to deny that man has an immortal soul from matter. Surviving death is said to be "something like the resurrection of a new body".
7. Questioning the existence of angels.

Heresies must be popular. The book containing them sold over 250,000 copies last year and was the number one best seller in the country.

Quite a difference

THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT has decided to pretend that the Vatican is just a minor shareholder in the Italian market—holding about 1 per cent of the national total—and that, since its earnings are used for good works, it can be exempted from paying the mere £500,000 it would owe on the basis of the Finance Minister's estimate of Vatican wealth on cash and stocks received from Mussolini in the 1929 concordat.

However, financial experts consulted by *L'Espresso* magazine estimate that the shares controlled by the Vatican in reality amount to between 5 and 6 per cent of the market and that the taxes, which would be owed on dividends from these, would amount to about £6 millions a year.

Bullet-proof magic

ON March 5th a faith healer, Mbah Suro, who claimed his magic powers could make men bullet-proof, led some of his 5,000 supporters in an attack on a military post at the oil town of Blora in Central Java. Despite his faith and despite his protective magic powers he and eighty of his followers lost their life.

Faith a poor substitute for blood

A JEHOVAH'S WITNESS was told on March 12th at an inquest in Bury that his wife bled to death after he forbade on religious grounds a blood transfusion which could have saved her.

Mrs Irene Gerrard, 47, also a Jehovah's Witness, died from anaemia and shock after an operation.

Dr M. Dinakidis, house surgeon at Bury General Hospital, said that Mr Gerrard signed a statement in which he said he had been told that a blood transfusion was essential but because of religious objections he did not give consent for a blood transfusion.

Said Mr Gerrard, who became a Jehovah's Witness with his wife eight years ago: "We believe in the law as it was given to Moses and handed down".

Thus speaks the voice of wisdom in 1967.

HUMANIST FILM SOCIETY
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JAN HUS

(Colour—English sub-titles)

THE ASQUITH ROOM,
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SUNDAY, APRIL 16th, 7 p.m.

ADMISSION FREE

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BARONESS WOOTTON

Kit Mouat

IN A WORLD I NEVER MADE (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967. 40s) is in two parts; the first is generally autobiographical, and the second Baroness Wootton's particular comments as "Woman", "Agnostic and Socialist", "Academic and Social Scientist", "Magistrate", "Public Servant and Peer".

Barbara Adam was born in Cambridge in 1897, the third child of two classical scholars. Her devout Baptist nanny had once 'nannied' Maynard Keynes, and it is from the remembered fear of losing that nanny that Baroness Wootton now finds so much understanding for deprived children. She was educated at home until she was thirteen, and her favourite book as a teenager was G. D. H. Cole's *World of Labour*. By the time she was 17 she had decided that 'metaphysical enquiries can be nothing more than verbal exercises'.

In 1915 Barbara Adam put away her books on economics and went to Girton to study Greek and Latin. Two years later she married John Wesley Wootton, and they were together for forty-eight hours. Two weeks later he was killed in action. Before she was twenty-one she had 'learned little about life but much about death'. Today she believes that it is important that young people should not dwell on the past, but realise that they are 'masters of their fates'.

Baroness Wootton was a religious child, and she did not part easily with her belief in a divinely managed universe; but part she did. She learned early on that to be a woman is to live as a second-class citizen. Although she got a first class degree at Cambridge, just because she was a woman she was not entitled to write B.A. after her name.

Before she was thirty Professor Barbara Wootton was Principal of Morley College and had begun a long career of academic distinction. In 1934 she married George Wright, a Councillor (and later an Alderman) of the London County Council, and (for all the press would have us believe) only briefly a taxi driver. Their marriage was an exercise in male polygamy and female independence, and, in spite of everything, "an indestructable bond". George Wright 'set his face resolutely' against their having any children, and his wife knew that the price of persuasion would prove too high. He died of cancer in 1964 "after a magnificent fight which lasted nearly two years".

Anyone who writes professionally must envy Baroness Wootton's command of English. She writes with insight, humour and humility. Her many anxieties and priorities in pain are endearing.

During the 1939-45 war the Woottons were both conscientious objectors. Now she thinks it might be an idea if we had a special "Year in Which No one was Killed on Purpose . . ."

There are factual accounts of travel, committees, conferences and commissions, and I could have done with more about everything.

Barbara Wootton, let it be clear (and let me apologise for past sins) is not a 'Peeress' (which is the wife of a Peer) but a Woman Peer; she should be addressed as "Baroness" in her own right and not as 'Lady' (wife). The Press is loth to accept these differences. Could there be a moral

for us, I wonder, in her views about gardening:

"Instead of clearing the weeds out first," she writes, "I have planted shrubs right among them in the hope that in the ensuing battle, with intermittent support from myself, the right side will eventually win."

About women she writes that we may have come a long way, but "we still have far to go". It is a sad reflection on our society that her readers will probably need reminding that, "The rights and responsibilities normally taken for granted by men become privileges to be 'accorded to' women—and," she goes on, "accorded, one may well ask, by whom?" But she believes "Our problems can be solved in a community that wishes to solve them". No doubt she often wonders (with many of us) if the community does. She compares anti-feminism with race prejudice, pointing out that although it is no longer considered in good taste publicly to make fun of coloured people, the same canons of civilised behaviour do not yet apply to women. She has tackled some of the practical problems of sexual inequality herself in the House, only to get 'a dusty answer' from her own party. On the other hand, when she sees "women lusting after corporal and capital punishment" she wonders if there is very much to choose between us! It was she who introduced into the House of Lords the Bill which finally abolished capital punishment in this country.

Her remarks about agnostics ought to be broadcast daily at Ten-to-Everything over the radio: "those who have nothing to lose by their frankness are under a definite obligation to let their opinions be freely known", and her condemnation of Cotton-Woolwichisms as "purely semantic exercises, and devoid of all meaning" is typical of her own frankness and Secular-Humanist attitude of mind. I am not at all sure that we can't provide some sort of logical argument that misery is not to be preferred to happiness, but she might not agree. As regards morality, she writes: ". . . trying to revive discredited beliefs in the hope that they will serve as sanctions for morality is indeed a counsel of despair".

As a child Baroness Wootton said that when she was grown up she would be 'an organising female with a briefcase' and, to the good fortune of all of us, this is what she has been. (No, there is no need whatsoever to add that 'In spite of this she has retained this or that . . .') She had not even the right to vote when she began her eminent career, which, we may hope, is by no means ended yet. Those of us who count her as 'one of us' are proud to do so. Her optimism is based on hard experience. "The limits of the possible constantly shift", she writes, "and those who ignore them are apt to win in the end . . . it is from the champions of the impossible rather than the slaves of the possible that evolution draws its creative force."

I cannot imagine anyone not enjoying this book. Even if you cannot buy it, let us hope that it will be found in all our libraries.

NSS Annual Dinner

READERS should note that the 61st Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society will now take place at the Hanover-Grand, Hanover Street, London, W1. The day, Saturday, 8th April and time, 6 for 6.30 p.m., remain unchanged.

THEISTIC CONUNDRUMS

S. A. Josephs

[Mr Josephs, who is thirty-three years old, has taught philosophy at Cambridge University (where he was also a student), as well as lecturing extensively for the Extra-Mural departments of Cambridge, Oxford, and London universities; he is a life-long atheist, and currently works as an educational publisher for a leading academic publishing house.

The following is an extract from a projected book.]

THE ONLY ARGUMENT the theist can produce that appears to carry any weight is his claim that the atheist cannot prove that God does not exist, therefore there is the possibility that He might exist. (This argument fools a lot of otherwise intelligent people who thus call themselves agnostics rather than atheists.) This, however, is to misunderstand the nature of proof. We establish the existence of objects independent of ourselves by observation and experience; if they fail to satisfy this criteria (eg, unicorns, dragons, etc) then we are justified in saying that they do not exist. Consequently, as the concept of God does not satisfy this criteria, we are justified in saying that God does not exist. To the assertion 'God exists' we simply reply that the assertion is false since it does not satisfy the conditions of proof appropriate to this type of statement, ie, it does not satisfy the criteria for 'existence'. If we are then told—as we usually are—that sense-experience, observation, etc., are not relevant to the existence of God, then clearly the word 'existence' is now being used in a *completely* different way from its normal usage, and the onus is thus on the theist to explain this new usage and to elaborate the criteria by which 'existence', in this new sense, is to be judged. This, of course, he cannot do without giving the game away; for if observations and experience are *not* to be relevant to the proving of 'existence' in this new sense then *anything* can exist if we care to say so or believe so—gnomes, elves, fairies, and anything else

AFRAID TO KNOW THE TRUTH!

"THIS WORLD without God? What a horrible thing to contemplate!" says a Christian Filipino. "Firstly, there will be chaos—no peace and order in the community. People will rob and kill one another. The men will rape the women. Because there is no God to be afraid of!"

"Baloney!" I replied. "People have a conscience and they know, too, that there are government agencies which enforce civil and criminal laws!"

"Conscience and the law are not enough. There must also be fear of God—the fear that transcends all fears!"

"Yes, it is the fear that transcends all fears, because priests and ministers live on it!"

"Yes, they live on it, but they save souls!"

"Yes, they save their *soles* by reading silly religious literature in their homes!"

"Evidently, you do not know what a soul is. It is something given by God to you—something that makes you alive and human. Animals have no souls."

"You cannot disprove that animals have no souls and have no God, in much the same way that you cannot prove you have a soul and a God. Because you are talking about nonsensical inventions of primitive men.

our imagination cares to dream up. Clearly a *reducio ad absurdum!*

The trouble arises from the fact that in religion—unlike science—the *conclusions* are established first, and the premises then have to be made to support the conclusions: the theist begins with his belief in God, then has to manufacture evidence to substantiate his claim. This is the very opposite of science which begins by observation and then seeks a generalisation to explain the observations. The unscientific approach of the theist leads him into any number of contradictions: the existence of evil would be logically impossible if the universe had been created by a 'perfect' being of infinite goodness; freewill is logically incompatible with an omniscient God; omnipotence is self-contradictory since it would have to imply the power for God to divest himself of his divine attributes—yet theists will accept all these contradictions, and many others. It is not, therefore, surprising that organised religion has always opposed the logical, empirical approach of science and scientific method; for as scientific knowledge increases so ignorance and fear (the twin foundations of religion) decrease.

The belief in God, and all the contradictions and prohibitions that go with such a belief, would be comparatively unimportant if believers were prepared to allow non-believers to act in accordance with *their* beliefs: in that case religion would simply be an intellectual joke like belief in a flat earth. Unfortunately, however, this is just what theists refuse to do. It is part of their belief (just as it is part of the belief of communists) that they must spread their ideas by any means necessary, including force. Consequently, because religion is opposed to freedom, opposed to *authenticity*, opposed to man choosing his own way of life, his own solution to the human predicament, it must be fought and destroyed.

Gonzalo Quiogue (Manila)

"In primitive times", I continued, "the ignorance of priests and their followers, and the desire of priests to make a living, kept religion going. Today, although priests and ministers have the true knowledge of the sciences, they also have the pseudo-quasi-knowledge of religion which they cannot discard. Because, habitually, they have learned to live and to amass wealth by instilling and propagating silly religious fears; by assuming the rôles of dispenser of true morals and saver of souls. Indeed, for priests and ministers, religion and belief in a God keep their bodies and *soles* together!"

"You would not say that if you had a religious education in your younger days."

"I'm glad I didn't get such nonsense which works like a barnacle in the brain, hindering humanity's progress to better living. Why don't you read freethought articles to be enlightened and to know the truth?"

"I don't want to be convinced that there is no God—it will hurt me no end—it frightens me!"

He had the last words. Incurable ignorance and fear, instilled into young minds by religious leaders, expose themselves in adult years.

THEATRE

David Tribe

SOME OF THE BEST—and, it must be faced, some of the worst—of Robert Lowell and Jonathan Miller may be found in *Benito Cereno* (Mermaid). Happily the best wins out in the end. Lowell is of American WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant) origin and probably the greatest living writer of English verse, though there is only fleeting evidence in this play. Shakespeare's *Tempest*, with its slow prelude, unconvincing nautical background, atmosphere of symbolic charade, conflict between savagery and civilisation, decadence and innocence, internal masques and intrusive lyricism, is an obvious predecessor. Lowell tries to make his parable yet more significant, with overtones of civil rights and Vietnam, and Miller adds the curiously kinky yet haunting blend of realism and phantasy that made his *Alice* so famous. Though tension does build up nicely in the closing minutes, it cannot be said that all these ambitious elements really fuse into either a drama of suspense or a poetical allegory. Herman Melville's original story is far too slight and unconvincing for all the superstructure Lowell and Miller have heaped on to it, and while *The Tempest* remains a great play of poetic beauty, *Benito Cereno* is an interesting experiment with purple passages. Even the basic political point, that Americans love to be loved—or in other words, explosively hate to be unloved—is lost by the backdating. How do radicals think *anyone* would have dealt with mutinous negroes in 1800?

There are excellent sound effects and fine acting by Alan Dobie as the Yankee captain, Peter Eyre as a distintegrating hidalgo and Rudolph Walker as the negro leader.

LETTERS

Humanist or Humorist?

IF I may be less serious for a moment I should like to agree with K. Unsworth when he states that little or no reaction is forthcoming when wearing the BHA tie, but I have had much more success with the lapel-badge. Many people have reacted to it, even strangers, one amusingly enquiring if I was a member of the "Batman Fan-Club", whilst another when I told him thought I said "Humorist". My only other form of publicity is in leaving all finished literature from the BHA and NSS on public transport seats. Well, why not?

Unlike Mr Unsworth, I thought the BHA Christmas cards not so much a puzzle as dreary, dull and almost pointless.

H. V. HUMPHREYS.

Cathy Controversy

REGARDING the toothless editorial and subsequent correspondence about 'Cathy', it would seem to me that there are perhaps three or four things to be learned from the television production and public reaction to it.

(1) The nation's economy is not being budgeted sufficiently well to provide for houses at rents or prices people can afford.

(2) Even though the situation is *desperate* and has been desperate for a very long time, both in this country and abroad (affecting fewer people in Britain than it used to), the magnitude of this problem seems to be inadequately understood, particularly by those who fall foul of it. Our educational system is so lacking as to turn out such hopeless, helpless, ignorant victims of both themselves and the economy as we saw in Cathy. From Cathy's heart-rending story and the naïve reaction of many well-wishers and do-gooders to it, there is no doubt in my mind that people are very poorly educated in respect of the desperate nature of life in Britain and the world today.

(3) That the majority of people who are using all their energy and wit to escape the thin edge of the economic wedge in this country are loathe to admit that Cathy is any business of theirs or that there is any urgent need for improvement in a social system in which her sort of tragedy can exist; whilst, of those who take the opposite view that something ought to be done, as I imagine the *FREETHINKER* editorial did, precious few have anything intelligent to contribute but embarrass us, instead, with the tedious details of their own consciences. Like Cathy, they seem to be very ill-informed and ill-advised.

(4) That even people in Cathy's situation, who feel that life has treated them cruelly and unfairly, are nonetheless cruel and unfair themselves in their own treatment and condemnation of other social victims, such as coloured people, whom they enjoy victimising for less reason or justification than that by which they complain they are victimised. I refer to the colour prejudice depicted in the homeless institution in 'Cathy Come Home' and the widespread

evidence of the colour prejudice exercised by the Cathies of this world.

I put it to readers that, on the whole, people—all people—are not very nice in point of detail, and that the *FREETHINKER* editorial will have to take a much more constructive line than it did on this occasion if it is going to earn respect for efforts beyond the merely sectarian spheres of life.

The worst thing that I find about the 'Cathy' controversy is that nobody—either the 'cares' or the 'don't cares'—seem to have anything intelligent to say for themselves. I am not sure that "Cathy Get Wise" wouldn't be an equally significant title as "Cathy Come Home" since "home", in this context, surely represents a great deal of what is wrong with our society. Armchair theorists have managed to get the living conditions and children they deserve and now they seem to me to be belly-aching. I'm belly-aching too, of course, but not because I think that the television production was wrong (I think it did a very good job) or for the reasons implied in the *FREETHINKER* editorial. I'm belly-aching because it seems to me that most people still haven't drawn the right conclusions and that the *FREETHINKER*, of all publications, should be among them.

BOB CREW.

PETER STODDARD is right. We should not be duped by the kind of sentimental and misleading nonsense which appeared on the front page of the *FREETHINKER* on January 27th.

Like all married women, Cathy could have gone to her local Family Planning Clinic for contraceptive advice and as she was portrayed as a woman of average intelligence one would have expected her to do so. Instead, having three children under the age of five was, in the circumstances, sheer irresponsibility.

While nobody would wish the unfortunate children to suffer in any way, the fact remains that in these days of scientific birth-control most of these cases should never occur.

(Mrs) CYNTHIA BLEZARD.

Cathy and Peter Stoddard

P.S. states that the Cathy type are not to be found in the ranks of thinking atheists, etc. The former according to him are the inferior section of the masses. He needs another think.

Our present system of society with its economic insecurity assures us of defaulting tenants, and must be put into the dock and judged, and sentenced.

Landlordism is a disease which should be abolished. A sane system will certainly accomplish this, and guarantee the 'Right to Live' to each and all. Rent collectors and all the other trimmings now appended to the housing problem will become redundant. The land for the people must be our demand, and the "Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof", must be made to read "The Earth belongs to its inhabitants for ever".

Municipal authorities could provide the housing needs of the populace, as they do in the matters of cleansing, baths, libraries, lighting, etc. Science and technology are with us and we have the enlightenment to use them for our requirements and needs. All that is required is planning for use and not for private gain or profit. In this sense democracy would have real meaning.

Humanism applied to revolutionary change will alter our mode of life. The brotherhood of man will triumph and the world will become worthy of habitation.

Let the powers that be take warning that while they are in the superior position of making war and enslaving their peoples to homelessness and uncertainties we, the growing minority, refuse to accept their insolence and insults as though we were their licensed puppies.

MARK CYMBALIST.

WHAT A LOT Peter Stoddard has yet to learn about the cursed human race.

The space left that week in my *FREETHINKER* made me think of the too many Cathys.

And of rotten aged homes. And of the money that is taken from me to help blow this world to bits.

Uncle Tom Cobby, Peter Stoddard, Arthur Francis, and all
ARTHUR FRANCIS.

EVEN biologically superior people like Peter Stoddard cannot make several pounds do the work of £25. Obviously he has never been in the position, as some of us lesser folk have, of having to suffer a drastic reduction in income as a result of unemployment (sometimes the sack because of atheistic or left wing views).

One supposes that landlords *have* to live. But must they be allowed to charge excessive rents for stinking and insanitary buildings as they have been doing in my native city for hundreds of years?

Stoddard's attitude is almost Christian. He should note that atheists, agnostics and Freethinkers are just as weak as their Christian fellow-beings.

PETER KEARNEY.

FREETHINKER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries
regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained
from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London,
S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made
payable to the NSS.

Humanist Holidays. Burton-in-the-Wirral, Cheshire: Painting
Holiday, July 29th to August 12th. Details from Mrs M.
Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone,
8796.

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

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch NSS, Platts Fields, Car Park, Victoria Street,
Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.: Messrs COLLINS, DUIGNAN, MILLS and
WOOD.

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

Havering Humanist Society (affiliated to the National Secular
Society), The Social Centre, Gubbins Lane, Harold Wood,
Tuesday, March 28th, 8 p.m.: Dr A. WEISMANN, "Work,
Friendship and Love".

The Richmond Humanists (affiliated to the National Secular
Society), Richmond Community Centre, Sheen Road, Richmond,
Surrey, Thursday, March 30th, 8 p.m.: A meeting.

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

LETTERS

Roman Catholic sanctity of life

FOR Mr St John-Stevas, RCMP (not MPRC) to speak about
"the sanctity of life" illustrates the boundless nerve of a typical
Roman Catholic! What concern had his Church for "the sanctity
of life" when it was slaughtering the Albigenians, murdering the
Waldensians, going through the Baltic States (the Teutonic
Knights) with fire and sword, massacring the Huguenots, etc?
Roman Catholicism was spread over Europe not by preaching
but by bloodshed and history proves that the Roman Catholic
Church is easily the most bloodthirsty society in human history.

To come up-to-date, what about the non-Roman Catholics
murdered in Colombia? What about the 250,000 Greek Catholics
massacred by the RC Ustachi in Yugoslavia during the last war?
What was Hitler if not just another Torquemada on a vaster
scale? Is there no significance in the fact that every Fascist Dic-
tator—and was there one of them interested in "the sanctity of
life?"—had a Concordat with the Vatican? Does it mean nothing
that Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich, Goebbels, von Papen, von
Neurath, Kaltenbrunner and Frank, the latter the "Butcher of
Poland", were all by baptism and upbringing Roman Catholics?
(To catch the whale, Russia, Pius XII willingly approved, while
pretending not to, the sacrifice of the sprat, RC Poland.)

I. S. Low, writer of "John Brown's Soul", may not touch on
this, so let me mention it. The Papacy had a finger in the American
Civil War. The Pope was the only "sovereign" to "recognise" the
Confederate Republic, the rebels, as a *bona fide* State. To the
Southerners slavery was the issue. To men like Grant and Jackson
the "cause" was to get rid of "Yankee" rule. To the Pope it was
the disruption of the unity of a then anti-Roman Catholic State,
and the creation of a Southern Republic, with Old French RC
traditions.

The first shot in the Civil War was fired by a Southern RC
General, Beauregard. When Booth, Lincoln's assassin, and Lincoln
knew who he was fighting, lay dying, he clutched a Virgin Mary
medallion to his chest. The barn where he was in hiding belonged
to a Roman Catholic, and the doctor who tended to his injury
after the assassination was a Roman Catholic. Every person tried
and executed for Lincoln's assassination was a Roman Catholic,
but one wanted man escaped. His name, John Surratt, and years
later he was discovered serving in the Papal Guard in Rome! To
get back to "the sanctity of life"—let's recall that other priest-
blessed RC glorifier of life's sanctity, Trujillo: and finally if the
Roman Catholic Church has a sanctified view of life it fails
miserably to impart this to its followers, because in a pamphlet
written by a former RC priest, Joseph Zachello, well-known in
the United States, this appears:—

"Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley were assassinated by Roman
Catholics, educated in parochial schools. Theodore Roosevelt was
shot and wounded by a Roman Catholic in Millwaukee while
giving a speech there. In Florida, a Roman Catholic with a faulty
aim at Franklin D. Roosevelt missed him and killed the Mayor
of Chicago instead. A Roman Catholic tried to kill Harry Truman
at the Blair House while he was President, and killed his guard.
(Truman had complained to Spain about treatment of Protestants
in that country.) Catholics shot up the House of Representatives and
wounded five Congressmen—Mr Alvin H. Bentley, very seriously."

One reason why the RC hierarchy is opposing the Abortion Bill
is to arrive at an assessment of their political power in the coun-
try today and they may get an unpleasant shock. AJAX NO. 2.

Influence on Scottish nationalism

ALTHOUGH my home was in Scotland for over 50 years I never
had a nationalist candidate to vote for, but I am often highly
amused by one particular consideration as I read the FREE-
THINKER. Having been born in the ancient Angle town of
Edinburgh and brought up on Calvinist Hellfire, I am neither
anti-English nor anti-Catholic, but I doubt very much whether
English Freethinkers realise just how much history plays into the
hands of Scottish nationalists who are both anti-Catholic and anti-
English. It was English influence, as at the "Synod of Whitby" in
664, and in the person of the sainted Queen Margaret, wife of the
man who killed Macbeth with English help, that was largely
responsible for destroying Scotland's gentle, nature-loving, Celtic
Christianity and establishing Roman Christianity in its place.

After watching "Columba's Folk" on TV recently, I commented
that Macbeth seems to have been buried in Iona, the last resting-
place of Scottish Kings, which indicates that he was an accepted,
rightful monarch and not the murderous usurper of Shakespeare's
fanciful drama.

J. A. S. NISBET.