

Ethical Record

The Proceedings of the Conway Hall Ethical Society

Vol. 119 No. 8

£1.50

August/September 2014

EDITORIAL – WE SAY ‘GOODBYE’ TO THAT RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT

Those of you who joined the South Place Ethical Society over thirty years ago will know that its official charitable Object has been ‘The study and dissemination of ethical principles and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment.’ This formulation was conceived over 100 years ago, when it represented the last trace – the grin – of the disappearing Cheshire cat of religion in this Society. After all, it had been back in 1869 that Moncure Conway suggested to the Committee the futility of praying for divine intervention in a world governed by physical law. The Committee agreed, so praying ceased and Sunday meetings steadily morphed into the modern lecture format.

In 1980, Judge Dillon ruled in the High Court that SPES could not claim to be a *religious* charity – instead it could be, what in fact the majority of its members desired, an *educational* charity. The opportunity to drop the obligation to cultivate an unwanted and obscure ‘religious sentiment’ and adopt a specifically humanist objective occurred when the Society changed its status to the relatively novel ‘Charitable Incorporated Organisation’ on 1st August 2014. The new Object is simply ‘The advancement of study, research and education in humanist ethical principles.’

Since the Dillon judgment, persons joining the Society have not been required to assent to its impossible Object but instead to its ‘aims’ (see page 14). These aims can continue alongside the new Object, containing as they do the injunction to ‘cultivate a rational and humane way of life.’ The condescension that everyone’s highest ideals constitute their ‘religious sentiment’ has been finally laid to rest by this Ethical Society.

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| WHY I AM NOT A BELIEVER | <i>Elliot George</i> | 3 |
| A DREADFUL DISCOVERY: BIG DATA PROVES WALLACE AND DARWIN COUNTERFEIT DISCOVERERS | <i>Mike Sutton</i> | 7 |
| LETTER REGARDING THE STRATEGIC PLAN | <i>Jim Walsh</i> | 15 |
| VIEWPOINTS | <i>D Simmonds, I Armitage, B Smoker, C Purnell</i> | 18 |
| LETTER FROM CHES TO THE PM | <i>Jim Walsh</i> | 21 |
| WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR A ‘JUST’ WAR? | <i>Norman Bacrac</i> | 21 |
| EX-MUSLIM ATHEISTS TO BE DEPORTED | <i>Chris Street</i> | 22 |
| Obituary - ALLAN ST JOHN DIXON | <i>Jim Walsh</i> | 22 |
| FORTHCOMING EVENTS | | 24 |

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY
Conway Hall Humanist Centre
25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.
www.conwayhall.org.uk

Trustee Chairman: Liz Lutgendorff; *Vice-Chair:* Giles Enders
Treasurer: Carl Harrison; *Editor:* Norman Bacrac

Please email texts and viewpoints for the Editor to: bacrac@fsmail.net

Staff

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| <i>Chief Executive Officer:</i> | Jim Walsh | Tel: 020 7061 6745 | Jim@ethicalsoc.org.uk |
| <i>Administrator:</i> | Martha Lee | Tel: 020 7061 6741 | admin@ethicalsoc.org.uk |
| <i>Finance Officer:</i> | Linda Lamnica | Tel: 020 7061 6740 | finance@ethicalsoc.org.uk |
| <i>Library:</i> | | Tel: 020 7061 6747 | library@ethicalsoc.org.uk |
| <i>Hon. Archivist:</i> | Carl Harrison | | carl@ethicalsoc.org.uk |
| <i>Programme:</i> | Sid Rodrigues | Tel: 020 7061 6744 | sid@ethicalsoc.org.uk |
| <i>Lettings Officer:</i> | Carina Dvorak | Tel: 020 7061 6750 | lettings@ethicalsoc.org.uk |
| <i>Caretakers:</i> | Eva Aubrechtova (i/c) | Tel: 020 7061 6743 | Eva@ethicalsoc.org.uk |
| <i>together with:</i> | Brian Biagioni, Sean Foley, Tony Fraser, Rogerio Retuerma | | |
| <i>Maintenance:</i> | Zia Hameed / Chey Green | Tel: 020 7061 6742 | Zia@ethicalsoc.org.uk |

New members

We welcome the following to the Society:
Hathal Al-Qassab, London SW1; Christopher Blohm, London N1;
William Briarley, London E9; Jason Crimp, London SE24;
Celia Cronin, London SE5; Amy Crosthwaite, London W6;
Andrew Doughty, London N1; Catherine Hodgson, Somerset;
Anthony Howard, London NW2; Dean Ismail, London N1;
Chris King, London W6; D M J Stephenson, London SE13;
John Taylor, Eastbourne.

Obituary

Allan St John Dixon (1922-2014) see page 22

NOTICE: THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARIAN

Following an intense review of the working arrangements within the Library by the Strategic Working Group, the General Committee decided that the role of Librarian should be a part-time one from the start of the new financial year (1st August 2014). So, over the past few months Cathy Broad and I have met to discuss what kind of job description should be drafted for such a part-time role with the hope that she might take up this role from 1st August.

After drawing up the job description with me, Cathy declined accepting the position and as a consequence left Conway Hall in late June this year. We have recruited to replace this vacancy but also adjusted slightly the job title to Library and Collections Manager to better describe the role as it will be. We are hopeful of an appointee taking on the new duties from September/October.

In the meantime, the Library and Archives are still open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at a reduced level of service for Society members and members of the public to come in and browse. I am particularly grateful to Sid and Martha for assisting in this interim period.

Dr. Jim Walsh FRSA Chief Executive Officer

The views expressed in this Journal are not necessarily those of the Society.

WHY I AM NOT A BELIEVER

Elliot George

Lecture to the Ethical Society, 13 July 2014

To start with a confession, ‘Elliot George’ is my pen name. I am a retired science teacher who writes books and I don’t want my anti-religious books mixed up with my other books – it might damage sales!

In April 2014, I debated an evangelical pastor in his own church. Church people are usually good people, but I contend that being good is not a prerogative of believers. After all, there are over 2 and a quarter million convicts in American jails, 98% of whom identify themselves as Christians.

I have no disagreement with moderate believers other than to disapprove of their practice of inducting their children into their faith before they are old enough to make informed decisions for themselves. As recent news shows, moderate parents may find, to their dismay, that their children can sometimes become radicalized and go off to get killed in Syria. We will never stop fundamentalism until we stop pushing youngsters into religions.

The Impossibility of Being ‘Militantly Atheist’

Some may perceive me as a ‘militant atheist’. I don’t see myself in that way; as far as I am concerned I am just doing my job – being a science teacher. I like what A C Grayling said in his recent speaking tour about that accusation; he said ‘Theism is to atheism like stamp collecting is to not stamp collecting and it’s quite hard to not collect stamps militantly!’ A belief is a sensitive thing, because the implication of criticism is that believers are fools for believing what they believe. Even if the insult is not actually voiced, people will assume that it’s intended. However much we try to be inoffensive, believers will find ways to take offence.

One problem we have in the god debate is that non-believers like me make the case that no deity is worth believing in, not Horus, not Mithras, not Zeus, and not Jesus, while believers only support their particular belief. This means we are often arguing from different premises...

Individual believers only show allegiance to one faith – they are non-believers in respect to all the others. Consider this: many supporters of each faith believe that their loyalty earns them a key to the door of an afterlife. The Jews believe they have the right key, the Muslims believe it’s their key and the Christians believe it’s theirs. They each believe that the others’ keys won’t fit the lock and that their owners are condemned to burn in hell for eternity!

So believers of all faiths seem to be willing to believe that thousands of beliefs are fallacious, with the single exception of their own. Every believer is partisan and from mankind’s viewpoint that is divisive. We need to ask: Why are believers so certain that theirs is the only correct belief? Why do millions of other people practice beliefs that are wrong, according to majority opinion? And why does the, supposedly omnipotent, one true god leave the door open for thousands of fraudulent gods?

The ‘Nones’ i.e. No Religion

Naturally, with my background in science, I am an example of what is, in the USA, the fastest growing belief sector – the ‘nones’ (no, not the ladies in wimples!) I mean people who tick the box for no religion. At the debate in the church there was a nun in the audience and at the end, she came up and told me she’d pray for me! I resisted the temptation to say, “Thanks, I’ll weave a spell for you!”

In the USA, the ‘nones’ have grown by 25% in the last five years. It is particularly fast-growing amongst the young – it’s a third of 18-29 year olds. Why is this happening? I contend that it is happening because of education, particularly science education. There is plenty of evidence that, where there is access to good education, religiosity is much lower than in poorly educated parts of the world. Yes, I know there are also those who contend that there is no conflict between science and religion. I disagree. Both science and religion offer explanations for our origins. Their explanations are very different. They can’t both be correct. That is a source of disagreement, which leads to conflict.

Faiths, those bastions promising absolutism, have been fighting a rearguard action against scientific progress for centuries and have had to concede much of their old doctrine. Three hundred years after the event, Pope John Paul II conceded that the RC church had been mistaken to imprison Galileo. In 2008, the Anglican Church apologised for the way they treated Charles Darwin. Recently, Pope Benedict abandoned the idea of Limbo, saying, “It was just a theological concept anyway”. In other words, he admitted that priests had made it up! You may ask, “How much else have they made up?”

It seems that the unchanging ‘word of god’ is not as unchangeable as many believers might wish. Meanwhile, scientific method has been steadily eroding ignorance and, although the job is far from finished, it has made some impressive achievements to confirm its effectiveness. There is a flag on the moon, for example!

A belief can be a powerful thing – people live for it, people die for it, people do kind things for it and people kill for it. Some believers imagine they have a right to impose their views on the science community – telling us that we shouldn’t be offering abortions, shouldn’t be using embryonic stem cells to research for cures for disease and should be teaching creationism in science lessons! Some believers deny their children life-saving blood transfusions, some recommend AIDS victims to abandon their medication in favour of prayer, and some cut bits off their children’s genitalia. Some deny girls an education and some even shot Malala Yousafzai in the face as she bravely defied them and went to school.

The Moral High Ground: Non-belief

Naturally, I don’t want to be associated with any of that. In those scenarios, non-belief has the moral high ground, as I think you must agree. Meanwhile those who speak out against religious beliefs sometimes get called cold, hopeless, immoral, unhappy and purposeless. Those are insults. We are even called fools in the form of a quote: Psalm 14:1 states, “The fool says in his heart, there is no

God.” That’s biblically offensive, but it’s OK for believers to insult non-believers apparently.

So, apart from not wanting to support those antisocial activities, why don’t I believe? Well, I don’t value belief – after all, we can change it on a whim. Mohammed Ali was baptised Cassius Clay; he converted to Islam later, which meant he had to change his name. Tony Blair converted from protestant to Catholic. Thousands of gods are already dead from the loss of belief. I could spend all day listing dead gods – even believers would agree with me about the falseness of all those dead gods.

So, at best, religious beliefs are just personal choices while, at worst, they are ideas that someone else has put into our heads – abdicated choices. There are some comedy gods: Ixcacao was a goddess of chocolate and fertility – you’ve got to like her haven’t you! Cloacina was responsible for keeping the main sewer in Rome flowing! There is a village on the island of Tanna in Vanuatu, where the people believe Prince Philip is a god!

According to the bible, Jesus was crucified; according to the Qu’ran, he wasn’t. Which should we believe? How should we choose? How can a faith be the only true belief if you can leave it for another faith, which also claims to be the one true belief?

Some faiths regard quitting to be an offence. Men have been killed for ‘apostasy’ and, as recently as 1994, the Bishop of Chichester, Eric Kemp, fired parish vicar Antony Freeman for ‘heresy’! In other words for ‘wrong thinking’ – how Orwellian! Don’t you wonder about the validity of belief systems that need such harsh punishments just to retain membership?

We should remember that each one of us is a single person in a total population of the billions of humans that have existed. Each of us is numerically insignificant; also, our lives are very short compared to the age of the planet or the age of the universe. So each of us is insignificant both in terms of number and durability. We are ants, short-lived ants, but we are ants with delusions of grandeur. The fact that we don’t recognise this delusion after thousands of years is an indication of our boastful conceit, our egocentric vanity.

We even used to believe that our world was the centre of the universe, which had been made, in its entirety, specifically for us! So, I contend that belief is a grossly overrated concept; it’s monumentally unimportant because we are unimportant, and it’s not even an indication of truth. So, if belief is unimportant, what about faith?

Believers are like Body-builders

One way to think of faith is like a belief on steroids – weapons grade belief – an attempt to persuade oneself that the unimportant has value. Another way to think about faith is like a cheap Easter egg: it’s protected in a box, there’s gold wrapping and it has a shell, but inside – nothing. If it had evidential content, faith would not need constantly reasserting.

Believers need to worship every week in the same way that a body builder has to keep going to the gym because, without regular reinforcement, muscles and beliefs simply wither away. Weekly preaching helps to keep the doubts at bay. Did you ever hear a scientist repeatedly asserting that gravity obeys the inverse square law? Of course not. Faith is only necessary in situations where there is no evidence. Scientists have facts and, therefore, no need for dogma.

A scientist uses the word ‘belief’ to indicate that we’re not sure, whereas a believer uses it to mean certain knowledge! These are opposite concepts – how can they occupy the same brain at the same time? So, I contend that belief is not important because:

Beliefs are just ideas inside men’s heads: Those heads belong to unimportant individuals: Beliefs are just choices that can be unchosen or forgotten: Beliefs die when the men holding the beliefs die: Thousands of gods are already dead through loss of belief: Furthermore, belief is not even synonymous with truth!

My keynote presentation (called “Creationism Debunked”) goes on to explain exactly what constitutes evidence and how valuable a commodity it is. You can read more on this subject in *Godbuster – exorcises all known gods*, available from Amazon and all good bookstores.

Yes, I would like to see the downgrading of religious beliefs – to the level of superstition or astrology would be good, but that puts a negative slant on my intentions. I do not wish to actively restrict faiths. That has been tried and has failed in the former Soviet Union and in China. I see my role as continuing to teach science; evidence indicates that, where good science education is available, people abandon religious belief of their own volition.



The cover of Elliot George’s book

A DREADFUL DISCOVERY: BIG DATA PROVES WALLACE AND DARWIN COUNTERFEIT DISCOVERERS'

Mike Sutton

Lecture to the Ethical society, 27 July 2014

Few outside of expert circles in the history of scientific discovery know that – contrary to what is written in thousands of textbooks and scientific papers – neither Darwin nor Wallace were first to discover the theory of natural selection. Patrick Matthew is acknowledged by experts in the field as the first to discover the complete theory of natural selection (e.g.: Clarke, 1984, Dempster 1996, 1996, Hallpike 2008; Wainwright, 2008, 2011, Dawkins 2010). The published literature proves that Matthew, who owned a fruit orchard in Scotland, deduced the process, and then fully articulated and disseminated it in his 1831 book: *On Naval Timber and Arboriculture* with major Edinburgh and London publishers.

In that book, Matthew called upon others to find evidence to test his hypothesis of ‘the natural process of selection’ fully 27 years before Charles Darwin’s and Alfred Wallace’s papers, which did just that, were famously read before the Linnean Society (Darwin and Wallace 1858), and 28 years before Darwin (1859) principally reproduced Matthew’s entire hypothesis, albeit supported by a great and unique synthesis of confirming evidence, in the *Origin of Species*.

If you study the literature in order to discover more about Matthew you will read almost everywhere on the topic (e.g. Dawkins 2010; Bowler 2014), that Matthew merely buried his ideas in an appendix of an inappropriately titled and obscure book, that he just hinted at the theory, that he never knew the importance of what he discovered, that he failed to take his ideas forward in any other work and that he failed to influence anyone with his discovery. Yet, according to the enlightenment scientific motto of the Royal Society, *nullius in verba*, we should not merely believe and then simply parrot what others have said. Rather, that in absence of evidence it is imperative not to take the word alone of any authority that something is true. Instead, we should find out for ourselves. Quite so, since evidence in the published but previously ‘hidden’ literature, newly discovered with big data analysis (Sutton 2014), disconfirms all those stories about Matthew’s work. It seems unlikely to be mere coincidence, therefore, that all these disconfirmed stories originated in Darwin’s and Wallace’s self-servingly published excuses for not having read Mathew’s book.

Science Myths

Evidence proves that Darwin’s and Wallace’s excuses became explanatory science myths from being perpetuated by biased Darwinists in order to necessarily fill the knowledge gap and solve the problem of how on earth Darwin and Wallace never read the one book in the world that both really needed to read. Darwin and Wallace needed to read it because miraculously it contained the exact same theory which both replicated, the same four words to name it and many of the same terms and highly idiosyncratic explanatory examples they duplicated to explain it (see Sutton 2014).

In 1858 Charles Darwin’s and Alfred Wallace’s papers were read before the Linnean Society. In 1859 Darwin published the *Origin of Species*. Both Darwin

and Wallace claimed to have discovered natural selection independently of one another and independently of Matthew's prior publication. Hence, when Matthew confronted Darwin in the press in 1860 to claim priority as the original discoverer of the theory, Darwin conceded that Matthew's prior publication of 1831 did fully express 'his' theory! But Darwin claimed that neither he nor any other naturalist was aware of Matthew's ideas. After 1860, Wallace continued to maintain that *he* discovered the theory independently of anyone else. Moreover, Wallace, who famously believed in spiritualism, ludicrously claimed that his Eureka moment arrived in his fevered brain during a – unique in the history of discovery – consciousness enhancing bout of malaria! More wisely in hindsight, Darwin claimed no Eureka moment but said instead that the discovery dawned upon him gradually over a number of years.

For his part, Matthew, an Edinburgh University educated award winning hybridizing fruit grower, botanist and agriculturalist with an international reputation in England, Scotland, France and the USA, explained that the theory came to him by deductive reasoning as a self-evident natural law (Matthew 1860a), albeit no doubt based upon two decades of prior observation and experience – literally 'in the field'.

In reply to Matthew's (1860a) effective complaint in the press that Darwin had replicated his theory without citation, Darwin (1860) wrote back:

'I think that no one will feel surprised that neither I, nor apparently any other naturalist, had heard of Mr. Matthew's views, considering how briefly they are given, and that they appeared in the appendix to a work on Naval Timber and Arboriculture.'

Not to be so easily silenced, Matthew replied (Matthew 1860b), informing Darwin that his heretical book, for which the world – dominated by the church – was not then ready, had been reviewed by the famous naturalist, engineer and publisher John Loudon. Something that Matthew was too polite to inform the public of at the time, or at any time thereafter, was that Loudon's 1832 review deployed the term "origin of species" when he wrote:

'One of the subjects discussed in this appendix is the puzzling one, of the origin of species and varieties; and if the author has hereon originated no original views (and of this we are far from certain), he has certainly exhibited his own in an original manner.'

Unable now to stick with his first tale that no naturalist had heard of Matthew's views, Darwin left the term naturalist out when in 1861, in the third edition of the *Origin of Species*, he once again made his excuses. This time he wrote:

'In 1831 Mr Patrick Matthew published his work on Naval Timber and Arboriculture in which he gives precisely the same view on the origin of species as that (presently to be alluded to) propounded by Mr Wallace and myself in the Linnean Journal and as that enlarged on in the present volume. Unfortunately the view was given by Mr Matthew very briefly in scattered passages in an Appendix to a work on a different subject, so that it remained unnoticed until Mr Matthew himself drew attention to it in the 'Gardener's Chronicle' on April 7th, 1860.'

By so doing, Darwin left it wide open to interpretation that 'remained unnoticed'

might just, mean remained unnoticed by himself and Wallace – as opposed to meaning that the book was unnoticed by anyone at all who had any influence or standing in the field.

Previous Citations of Matthew's Work

To date, there has been no hard evidence that Darwin's or Wallace's work was influenced by Matthew. Today, however, big data analysis in Google's Library Project of 30 million plus books and other publications allowed me to uniquely discover and then create a list of published authors, from all walks of life, who did cite Matthew's (1831) book before 1858 (see Sutton 2014). Seven of those authors were naturalists. But most importantly, three of those naturalists played key pre-1858 roles facilitating and influencing Darwin's and Wallace's published ideas on natural selection. Those three are: Loudon (1832) – who we have met with already, but whom none appear to have noticed soon after edited and published Blyth's (1835 and 1836) acknowledged influential articles on evolution; Chambers (1832), anonymous author of the bestselling *Vestiges of Creation* – which both Darwin and Wallace, in print and private correspondence acknowledged greatly influenced their pre-1859 thinking on the subject of organic evolution – and Selby (1842) who later both edited and published Wallace's (1855) famous Sarawak paper on organic evolution.

Hence, it is a bombshell discovery in the history of science that Matthew's book was read by seven naturalists. More so that three of the seven were at the very epicentre of influence and facilitation of Darwin's and Wallace's pre-1859 publications on organic evolution and natural selection.

That three out of the total number of just seven naturalists newly discovered to have cited Matthew's book pre-1858 played such pivotal roles at the epicentre of influence and facilitation of Darwin's and Wallace's published work on the exact same unique scientific discovery would alone count as a mere tri-coincidence amazing beyond rational belief. But in light of what we additionally know about those three naturalists, I would argue that anyone claiming mere coincidence would have to be barking mad. Because Darwin actually knew, met, and conducted correspondence with Chambers pre-1858 and fully admitted (Darwin 1861) that Chambers's *Vestiges* had been a great influence on preparing the general public and scientific community to accept the theory of natural selection. Darwin (1861) admitted also that Blyth was his most prolific informant, and a regular correspondent on the subject of species and varieties. Furthermore, Blyth's 1835 and 1836 papers are widely acknowledged to be major papers on the topic of natural selection that greatly influenced Darwin (e.g. Eiseley and Grote 1959; Davies 2008).

Wallace made no reference to Blyth or Chambers in either his 1855 Selby-assisted Sarawak paper or in his Linnean paper three years later (Darwin and Wallace 1858). Similarly, Darwin failed to cite either Blyth or Chambers in his 1858 Linnean society paper – although from the third edition onwards he later cited both in the *Origin of Species* (Darwin 1861).

Having established that it is now fully 100 per cent proven that the history of science needs re-writing to accord Matthew absolute scientific priority as the

only possible independent discoverer of the theory of natural selection, in the rest of this article I move on to present just some of the findings from a textual, concept, and ‘unique explanatory examples’ analysis (Sutton 2014) to present evidence to argue that Darwin and Wallace lied when they each claimed to have discovered natural selection independently of Matthew’s prior-publication.

Can we tell apart the most important parts of Darwin’s and Wallace’s scholarly works from Matthew’s earlier publication? In order to discover whether Darwin’s, and also Wallace’s, versions of natural selection are essentially not Matthew’s, in 2013 I set about looking for key Matthewian concepts, heuristic examples and phraseology in the published and unpublished works that comprise Darwin’s and Wallace’s papers.

In weighing evidence of guilt or innocence, the premise of this particular analysis is that if on more than one occasion Darwin’s and Wallace’s key concepts and prose appear too similar to Matthew’s to have possibly occurred by chance, then that evidence, combined with the proof presented above that Darwin and Wallace are definitely not independent discoverers, is sufficient to judge, on a balance of reasonable probability, that both Darwin and Wallace deliberately and dishonestly plagiarised Matthew’s hypothesis and committed science fraud by claiming to be independent discoverers.

Moreover, besides naturalists, the number of other authors who read Matthew’s book before 1859, who were also in Darwin’s and Wallace’s social circles, exponentially increases the likelihood that Darwin and Wallace were aware, before that date, of the one book in the world they each really needed to read above all others. Whilst *Nullius in verba* (Sutton 2014) presents and discusses the results of that particular and lengthier analysis, the word limit imposed upon this article prevents the presentation of all but one or two examples of plagiarism from many newly detected examples. Stating with just some of that evidence for Darwin’s plagiarism, Matthew (1831 p. 383) wrote:

‘...diverging ramifications of life, which from the connected sexual system of vegetables, and the natural instincts of animals to herd and combine with their own kind, would fall into specific groups, these remnants in the course of time moulding and accommodating their being anew to the change of circumstances, and to every possible means of subsistence, and the millions of ages of regularity which appear to have followed between the epochs, probably after this accommodation was completed affording fossil deposit of regular specific character.’

Twenty eight years later, Darwin (1859 – respectively p.383; p. 129 and p.331) followed:

‘...as before remarked, one order; and this order, from the continued effects of extinction and divergence of character, has become divided into several sub-families and families, some of which are supposed to have perished at different periods, and some to have endured to the present day.’

‘...ramifying branches may well represent the classification of all extinct and living species in groups subordinate to groups...’
‘Hence we can understand the rule that the most ancient fossils differ

most from existing forms. We must not, however, assume that divergence of character is a necessary contingency; it depends solely on the descendants from a species being thus enabled to seize on many and different places in the economy of nature.'

From these three snippets of text alone we can see that using Matthew's book as a secret template for gleaned unique key ideas, examples and text, Darwin bloated, disperses and re-phrases Matthew's earlier published work in an apparent effort to hide its provenance. Yet, seemingly unable to resist Matthew's term 'ramifying' he replicates the Originator's unique understanding about new divergent species branching from a common ancestor. He also replicates Matthew's explanation for strangely extinct species in the fossil record being a product of their descendant's evolutionary favoured adaptation to their immediate environment which is subjected to changes in their circumstances over great epochs – described by Darwin instead as 'periods' of time. Matthew wrote of fossil deposits being of '*regular specific character*', which appears to mean that older fossils, which are those lower down in the strata, are less like modern species than those nearer the top. Darwin's replication of that exact same observation is clearer: '*...the most ancient fossils differ most from existing forms.*'

Matthew's 'Natural Process of Selection'

It seems Darwin sought to make other improvements to Matthew's unique prose. In the main body of his book, notably not in its appendix where Darwin falsely claimed Matthew buried his ideas, Matthew coined the term; '*natural process of selection.*' to name his discovery. The only grammatically correct re-ordering of those same four words is 'process of natural selection', which is the very term that Darwin coined 28 years later in the *Origin of Species*. As if that is not extraordinary coincidence enough in one book supposedly independently replicating the unique discovery inside another, it is most improbably a fantastical double coincidence that big data analysis reveals the second person to go into print with the exact original Matthew-coined version of that term was Chambers (1859) in his review of Darwin's *Origin*!

Turning now to Wallace's plagiarism, Matthew (1831) wrote first:

'... we have felt considerable inconvenience from the adopted dogmatical classification of plants and have all along been floundering between species and variety which certainly under culture soften into each other'.

'In endeavouring to trace in the former way, the principle of these changes of fashion which have taken place in the domiciles of life, the following questions occur: Do they arise from admixture of species nearly allied producing intermediate species? Are they the diverging ramifications of the living principle under modification of circumstance.'

Twenty four year later Wallace (1855) replicated:

'We are also made aware of the difficulty of arriving at a true classification, even in a small and perfect group;- in the actual state of nature it is almost impossible, the species being so numerous and the modifications of form and structure so varied.' [And] '*Many more of*

these modifications should we behold, and more complete series of them, had we a view of all the forms which have ceased to live. The great gaps that exist between fishes, reptiles, birds and mammals would then, no doubt, be softened down by intermediate groups...'

'It has now been shown, though most briefly and imperfectly, how the law that "Every species has come into existence coincident both in time and space with a pre-existing closely allied species," connects together and renders intelligible a vast number of independent and hitherto unexplained facts. The natural system of arrangement of organic beings, their geographical distribution, their geological sequence, the phenomena of representative and substituted groups in all their modification.'

In those two paragraphs, Wallace padded and dispersed Matthew's unique ideas, explanatory examples and his prose to duplicate (a) the need to veraciously classify species (b) the diversity of species arrived at by means of natural selection in nature, as opposed to under the artificial selection of human culture (c) the use of the word 'soften' regarding the hypothetical notion of intermediate species in nature (d) the hypothesis that new species arise by branching (ramifying) from a closely allied species (common ancestor) (e) the likelihood that such new species emerge due to adaptation to their immediate environmental conditions.

Matthew's discovery was necessarily preceded by that of another Scot born also in the age of the Scottish Enlightenment. James Hutton proved the Earth to be unimaginably older than previously believed. And it was his discovery that allowed Matthew to understand the great length of time involved for new species to emerge by way of natural selection. However, as Alexander Broadie (2012) explains: *'...it is one thing to be right (or largely right) and another thing to persuade people that you are right.'* It was Darwin's geological mentor, the Scot Charles Lyell, who popularised his fellow Scot's, Hutton's, discovery. And it was Darwin who popularised Matthew's. While Matthew was right, we now know that all the books are wrong to claim that Matthew, though right, failed to influence anyone. We know also now that Darwin and Wallace were wrong not admit that fact.

Matthew was right on Geological Catastrophes

Matthew was also right and both Lyell and Darwin wrong on the subject of geological catastrophes causing extinction events. Darwin (1861) subtly ridiculed Matthew as biblical 'catastrophist' from the third edition of the *Origin* onwards. Today, we know the *Originator* Matthew was correct although his discovery and explanation is confined to a derisory footnote in what has been written about Punctuated Equilibrium. Dempster's (1996. p.202) criticism of what he sees as Richard Dawkins' misreading of Darwin on this issue is particularly enlightening. Contrary to modern day Darwinist spin, Punctuated Equilibrium Theory is in fact Matthewism and not Darwinism. Rampino (2011) provides the full explanation of this point.

In the final analysis, my dreadful discovery that Matthew's book was cited by renowned Victorian naturalists who influenced and facilitated the pre-1859 work

of both Darwin and Wallace means that Matthew now has full scientific priority for the theory of natural selection. Worse, new discoveries about extinction events prove that Matthew's version was better than Darwin's! Incredibly, therefore, Darwin and Wallace, celebrated respectively on the back of the English £10 note, and a Royal Society commemorative postage stamp, are both counterfeit and second-rate discoverers. Moreover, there is a wealth of additional evidence that Darwin and Wallace lied and committed science fraud by claiming no prior knowledge of the discovery of natural selection.

The failure of the international scientific community to treat Darwin's and Wallace's remarkable claims of immaculate conception of Matthew's prior and prominently published theory, as an intriguing science problem in need of a solution raises serious ethical questions about the professional integrity and intellectual capabilities of recognised 'experts' in the field of evolutionary biology and the history of science. However, neither science nor history as enterprise suffers from the discovery of Darwin's and Wallace's great science fraud. On the contrary, it was the application of sceptically curious objective thinking and the application of hi-technology facilitated research that led to its discovery.

If we do not desire knowingly to celebrate science swindlers as heroes, it is essential to put a great injustice right. Moreover, we must recognise Matthew's immortal greatness if we choose evidence-led veracity over myths to inform explanations of how great discoveries are made. The United Kingdom and Scotland in particular has a new science hero in Matthew. Perhaps the National Records of Scotland in Edinburgh will at last take Matthew's papers out from the box in its archives, upload them to a website and provide the public with a Patrick Matthew online collection? Maybe Scone Palace, from where the English famously stole the great coronation Stone of Scone – and in whose grounds Matthew was born on a farm called Rome - could plant seeds from the same locally growing Giant Californian redwoods that Matthew planted in the 19th Century. Might now the Museum of Natural History in London commission a statue of Matthew to take the place of honour currently accorded to the world's greatest science fraudster Charles Darwin?

References

- Blyth, E. (1835) An attempt to classify the "varieties" of animals. *The Magazine of Natural History*. (8) (1), Parts 1-2.
- Broadie, A. (2012) *The Scottish Enlightenment*. Edinburgh, Birlinn Ltd.
- Blyth, E. (1836) Observations on the various seasonal and other external Changes which regularly take place in Birds more particularly in those which occur in Britain; with Remarks on their great Importance in indicating the true Affinities of Species; and upon the Natural System of Arrangement. *The Magazine of Natural History*: Volume 9. p. 393 – 409.
- Bowler, P. J. (2014) *Darwin Deleted: Imagining a World without Darwin*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press.
- Chambers, R. (1859) Charles Darwin on The Origin of Species. *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature Science and Arts*. Saturday December 17. No. 311. pp. 388-391
- Clarke, R. W. (1984) *The Survival of Charles Darwin: A Biography of a man and an idea*. New York. Random House.
- Darwin, C. R. and Wallace, A. R. (1858) On the tendency of species to form varieties; and on the perpetuation of varieties and species by natural means of selection. *Journal of the Proceedings of the Linnaean Society of London*.
- Darwin, C. R. (1861) *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection. Or the Ethical Record*, August/September 2014

Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life. (Third Edition) London. John Murray.

Davies, R. (2008) *The Darwin Conspiracy: Origins of a Scientific Crime.* London. Golden Square Books.

Dawkins, R. (2010) Darwin's Five Bridges: The Way to Natural Selection. In Bryson, B. (ed.) *Seeing Further: The Story of Science and the Royal Society.* London Harper Collins.

Dempster, W. J. (1996) *Evolutionary Concepts in the Nineteenth Century.* Edinburgh. The Pentland Press.

Eiseley, L. C. and Grote, A (1959) *Charles Darwin, Edward Blyth, and the Theory of Natural Selection.* Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society Vol. 103, No. 1 (Feb. 28,) pp. 94-158.

Hallpike, C. R. (2008) *How We Got Here: From Bows and Arrows to the Space Age.* Milton Keynes. Author House Ltd.

Loudon, J.C. (1832) Matthew Patrick On Naval Timber and Arboriculture with Critical Notes on Authors who have recently treated the Subject of Planting. *Gardener's Magazine.* Vol. VIII. p.703.

Matthew, P. (1860a) Letter to the Gardeners Chronicle. Nature's law of selection. *Gardeners' Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette* (7 April): 312-13.

Matthew, P. (1860b) Letter to the Gardeners Chronicle. Nature's law of selection. *Gardeners' Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette* (12 May) p. 433.

Rampino, M. R. (2011) Darwin's error? Patrick Matthew and the catastrophic nature of the geologic record. *Historical Biology: An International Journal of Paleobiology.* Volume 23, Issue 2-3.

Selby, P. J. 1842. *A history of British forest-trees: indigenous and introduced.* London. Van Voorst

Sutton, M. (2014) *Nullius in Verba: Darwin's Greatest Secret.* Thinker Books. Cary NC. USA.

Wainwright, M. (2008) Natural Selection: It's Not Darwin's (Or Wallace's) Theory. *Saudi Journal of Biological Sciences.* 15 (1) 1-8 June, 2008.

Wainwright, M. (2011) Charles Darwin: Mycologist and Refuter of His Own Myth. *Fungi.* Volume 4:1 Winter. pp.13-20.

Chambers, R. (1832) in Chambers, W. and Chambers, R.(Eds) Chambers's Edinburgh Journal. William Orr. Saturday 24 March. p. 63.

Darwin. C. R. (1859). *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection. Or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life.* London. John Murray.

Matthew, P (1831) *On Naval Timber and Arboriculture; With a critical note on authors who have recently treated the subject of planting.* Edinburgh. Adam Black. London: Longmans and co.

Wallace, A. R. (1855) *On the law which has regulated the introduction of new species.* The Annals and Magazine of Natural History. Series 2. 16. 184-196

¹Some of the text and ideas in this talk were earlier published in 2014, in various posts and articles in my blog: 'Dysology and Criminology: The Blog of Mike Sutton'. Other content is taken from my 2014 book *Nullius in verba: Darwin's greatest secret.*

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY

Reg. Charity No. 1156033

Founded in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement whose aims are:

**the study and dissemination of ethical principles based on humanism and freethought
the cultivation of a rational and humane way of life, and
the advancement of research and education in relevant fields.**

We invite to membership those who reject supernatural creeds and are in sympathy with our aims. At Conway Hall the programme includes Sunday lectures, discussions, evening courses and the Conway Hall Sunday Concerts of chamber music. The Society maintains a Humanist Library and Archives. The Society's journal, *Ethical Record*, is issued monthly. Memorial meetings may be arranged.

The annual subscription is £35 (£25 if a full-time student, unwaged or over 65)

LETTER TO THE MEMBERS REGARDING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Jim Walsh (CEO) and the CHES Trustees

Following on from the SGM decision in November 2013, for the Society to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), the General Committee has spent a great deal of its time constructing a five year Strategic Plan. In order to develop this plan the Chief Executive Officer and six designated General Committee members met periodically, as a Strategic Working Group, over a period of months early in 2014. In developing the Strategic Plan three guiding principles were adhered to:

- a) Step in-line with the new CIO Object
- b) Develop a distinctive role that has wide appeal across the capital
- c) Become financially sustainable

a) Step in-line with the new CIO Object

In order to step in line with the new Object of the CIO (*The Object of the Society is the advancement of study, research and education in humanist ethical principles*), several procedural steps were first required in order to effect the CIO: Registration of the CIO with the Charity Commission (Registered Charity Number 1156033); notification of banks, tenants and staff; legal advice as to how to transfer the assets such as Conway Hall, finances and membership were all sought, as was the auditor's advice as to when such a transfer should actually take place. Everything, though, was duly processed and the date of transfer set for 31st July / 1st August 2014, in order to neatly complete our Charity accounts for our existing Charity (251396) in 2013-2014 and start afresh with our CIO (1156033) for 2014-2015.

However, in order to actually 'step in-line' with the CIO Object for our new Society, the Strategic Working Group recognised that there needed to be a new departmental structure set in place with an equally new associated system of reporting. So, governance and management operation will have to adjust to enable the enhancement of existing programme strands and also the introduction of new ones as well. The four new departments will be:

Commercial, to provide focus on how we sustain ourselves financially

The Arts, to provide a rich programme of concerts, theatre performance, exhibitions and occasionally film

Learning, to directly address the study and research elements of our Objects by more effectively using our Library and Archives resource, plus *Ethical Record* and course delivery

London Thinks, a brand new signature programme strand

b) Develop a distinctive role that has wide appeal across the capital

London Thinks will spearhead this distinctive role and initially start as a series of monthly mid-week evening talks, with discussion, in the Main Hall, chaired by Samira Ahmed. The series will tackle a range of topical and relevant contemporary ethical and humanist issues by having key speakers present ideas to an engaged audience and later facilitated in discussion by Samira. The aspiration in 2015 and onwards is to develop *London Thinks* by having more frequent events such as these signature mid-week talks, but also a range of other

ways to engage with contemporary topics and themes, possibly as Think Tanks, forums, or courses. The idea being to develop something that individual audience members or Society members can actively participate in and contribute to, as well as become informed by, courtesy of the speaker or facilitator. In order to lift this project off the ground there will be a new brand, *London Thinks*, that will draw audiences across the capital and hopefully beyond as well by its quality and distinctive appeal.

As well as producing *London Thinks*, the work of the Society needs to be promoted far more effectively, through better marketing and also improving the visitor experience physically at Conway Hall and online. To this end the Strategic Working Group identified the need for more powerful marketing, but also an investment in the foyer of Conway Hall, to freshen and brighten its look whilst also being committed to the plans for a café to occupy the existing Lobby and ground floor kitchen area, amongst many other reinvestment items. The power of online media is one that has been particularly identified as a method for communicating the work of the Society and also providing appeal to potential audiences and Society members. An example, of how this ‘new look’ and attraction will manifest itself is in the recent videos that have been commissioned. One detailing the history of the Society can be found in the ‘About’ section of our website: conwayhall.org.uk/about-us and another more directed at generating Lettings interest can be seen in the ‘Venue Hire’ section: conwayhall.org.uk/venue-hire.

c) Become financially sustainable

Over the past six years our income against expenditure rates have struggled and we on average are facing a hefty deficit each year that eats into our ‘nest egg’: a non-sustainable situation – the money will eventually run out if we continue as we are. This is not new information and for the past three years we have been endeavouring to stem the flow and by small initiatives here and there we have reduced the deficit figures. However, the reduction is not enough and we need, actually, to eliminate it. Consequently, one of the key tasks that focused the minds of those of the Strategic Working Group was how we could go about this task without having to lose any parts of our existing activity. The principle income provider, as we know, is the daily hire of our rooms (Venue Hire) to our many clients. When looked at in detail it is apparent that the use of our rooms can be increased and the occupancy capacity enlarged to generate more revenue. The issue at stake, of course, is how to do this. By taking a long-term view of the Society’s finances it became apparent that if we invested around 36% of our ‘nest egg’ over five years, we could eliminate the deficit and, indeed, return a modest surplus year on year - the secret being to invest in those areas that our potential hirers will notice and be enticed by. Consequently, over the next five years the following infrastructural projects will be undertaken:

- Four high definition recording cameras to be installed in the Main Hall
- A zoned speaker system of eight speakers to be installed in the Main Hall
- A secondary ‘pop-up’ technical control position for the back of the Main Hall
- Wifi Access Points installed throughout the building with 100Mb bandwidth
- Café / bar installed in the lobby and kitchen area on the ground floor
- Foyer refurbishment to lighten and brighten the welcoming entrance.

Outside infrastructural projects, strategic investment will be applied towards better marketing, digitisation projects such as the *Ethical Record*, educational resources and fundraising initiatives. All of which are designed to build better communication and relationship with those who might enter into financial transactions with us, from venue hire to programme or course attendance to legacy funding.

Two other exciting strategic projects

As well as adhering to, and developing ideas around the three guiding principles of the Strategic Plan, the Working Group also discussed and incorporated changes to enhance and develop two existing programme strands. Since 1895, the *Ethical Record* has been sent out to members' home addresses on a monthly basis. Not wishing to alter this much appreciated practice, we will be launching a tandem approach to the *Ethical Record* by taking it online as well and incorporating a brand new section within our website that details all the current information, articles, book reviews and notices currently found in the *Ethical Record* with the added facility of being able to comment on articles in order for discussion to continue 'outside the room' but also with a much wider audience. The launch of the digital version of the *Ethical Record* will take place in the autumn.

The other project that came under scrutiny was the Sunday lecture programme, which has hitherto been procured by members of staff. The challenge for the Strategic Working Group was how to release the staff member from the programming of the Sunday Lecture, to enable *London Thinks* programming, whilst continuing and enhancing it as a programme strand from our Society. The solution is that four committed members (some current Trustees) will work as a committee to procure speakers on a wide range of topics for the Sunday morning events, to be called 'Thinking on Sunday'. The added feature of these will be a far greater emphasis on discussion of the subject matter of the talks after guest speakers have presented them. The idea being that because the Sunday morning programme slot is a much-loved community based endeavour it should have a more discussion focus to the talks to enrich and enable that community to grow. The added benefit of being able to comment on the content of the talks on the digital version of the *Ethical Record* should also enable continuation of that discussion.

For more information on the Strategic Plan please visit the Members' Area of the website and view the presentation given to the Society on 27 July 2014.

CHES SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING, 3 AUGUST 2014

This meeting was called by over 12 members (in accordance with Rule 22) to consider the following motion: 'That the Chairperson and General Committee ensure the continuation and enhancement of Sunday morning lectures.' This was proposed by member Terry Henderson and seconded by member Chris Purnell. After some debate, the motion was passed, the voting being: in favour 27, against 9, abstention 1.

Note: Sunday events, now called **Thinking on Sunday**, start on 21 September (see p 24).

VIEWPOINTS

Is Progress Possible?

I enjoyed Barbara Smoker's look back at the life of Jacob Bronowski (*ER* July). As usual her reminiscences have much historical and philosophical insight. I disagree, however, with her subjective view of progress. She writes that "...the real meaning of 'progress' [is] surely nothing more than 'change that I approve of'."

In biblical and even more recent times, to give just a few examples, burning at the stake for having the wrong beliefs, the execution of homosexuals, slavery and rape were all considered acceptable. Such things are no longer acceptable in most societies, and surely this represents progress in a real and more absolute sense?

Barbara writes that "Experience over the past 60 years only confirms my rejection of the idea of perpetual progress." I agree that progress is not perpetual or inevitable. Who knows what we may one day do to our planet? But surely as a humanist she would agree that our species has at least the *capacity* for making progress, through the use of reason and a scientific approach, and that we ought to be striving to do so. Or else why would we bother to campaign for a more rational world?

I would argue, moreover, that over the last 60 years there has indeed been progress. Should we return to a time in Britain, 60 years ago, when the great mathematician and code-breaker Alan Turing, whom Churchill suggested helped to shorten the war by as much as two years, had to choose between prison and chemical castration for his homosexuality? Or, in the same decade, when top scientist Rosalind Franklin, whose revolutionary X-ray photography helped reveal the DNA molecule, had to eat her sandwiches in the kitchen at Cambridge University, since the common rooms were for men only?

Barbara has lived through some atrocious aberrations over the last 60 or 70 years such as Nazism, Stalinism, Pol Pot and the Ruandan genocide, and I can understand her pessimistic view of 'progress'. Germany had after all produced the likes of Beethoven, Bach, Schiller and Einstein, before its fall into Nazism. However, it could be argued that in none of these countries had the Enlightenment values of secular democracy, pluralism and freedom of expression taken root. In Russia there was no democratic tradition at all, while in Germany the Weimar Republic introduced its Bill of Rights, and universal franchise only in 1919. This did not give it enough time to take root, before the Nazis were able to sweep it all away. Taking a longer view, however, if we compare Germany today with any other period of its history, considerable progress is undeniable.

As a humanist in Western Europe I also draw some optimism from the not inconsiderable inroads made into the powerful and reactionary grip of religion over the past 300 years.

David Simmonds - Woking

Couldn't agree more! – **Barbara Smoker**

Perpetual Progress

From the poor reasoning and use of language displayed in Barbara Smoker's item against 'perpetual progress' (*ER* July 2014), I am not surprised that she got nowhere in trying to persuade Dr Bronowski of his 'errors' – I am only surprised that she chose to reveal it to us.

Her objections to the use of 'ascent' and 'man' in the title of Bronowski's TV series and book, *The Ascent of Man*, and her assertion that the notion of perpetual progress is "outmoded", are surprising in so distinguished a member of our Society. Since when have we, as supposed rationalists, been concerned with what is in or out of the mode, or allowed our attempts at rational utterance to be circumscribed by 'feminist extremism' – or any other PC fashion? We can perfectly well distinguish between the use of 'man' as a generic term for mankind (as used by Bronowski – and Darwin), and 'man' as distinct from woman. He could have clumsily entitled his series *The Ascent of Mankind*, but *Ascent of Man* is a neat allusion to Darwin's *Descent of Man*.

Darwin did not consider that 'the whole of evolution represents progress towards *Homo sapiens*', and Bronowski, a century later, made no such claim either. But in a general sense, of course, the whole of evolution *does* represent *progress* towards *all* the various species that exist on earth today – and those that will exist in the future. This does not imply superiority – merely movement (forward in time), characterised by adaptability arising from variation plus environmental selection.

Did Bronowski's use of the term 'ascent' imply a belief in 'human superiority' – if so, in what sense? Smoker's claim that "geneticists had [by 1954] already repudiated the notion of human superiority" indicates a poor grasp of genetics, and what 'geneticists' (whoever they may be) can and cannot do. But in any case, the term 'human superiority' is meaningless in the absence of a reference criterion – superior in what respect? Obviously, humans are not superior to other creatures in all respects (e.g. the ability to dive to great depths and for long periods), and Bronowski made no such ridiculous general claim.

But we are not being 'speciesist' – absurd term! – to call our species 'sapiens': our evolved intellectual capacity is what most clearly characterises us, and therefore distinguishes us from (other) apes. *Homo sapiens* is not 'just one of [the] branches' of 'apedom', but is intellectually at its 'top edge' by a staggering margin. The fact that our genome is 95% or so homologous to that of the chimpanzee is irrelevant: it is the *effect* of that few percent of difference that underlies our *intellectual* 'ascent'. That does not mean that in many respects we might not be compared unfavourably with chimpanzees or other apes (although the sight of chimpanzees excitedly tearing a live monkey to pieces may give you pause), but our intellectual *ascent*, through Darwinian evolution, from a far *lower* mental capacity is what enables us to be here, thinking about – and disputing – these matters.

However, while alluding to Darwin's famous book in his choice of title, Bronowski used 'ascent' in the sense of *cultural* evolution, not Darwinian evolution. Although *The Ascent of Man* starts with an outline of the Darwinian

evolution of man to its modern form, probably about 400,000 years ago, the rest of the series deals with what modern man has *done* since, using the intellectual capacity that had *already* been evolved by that time. His viewpoint was primarily the contribution that science made to this process (Kenneth Clark, in *Civilisation*, viewed the contribution to cultural progress made by art). In science in particular, once a contribution has been made, the knowledge cannot be unlearned (a scientific ‘fact’ may be disproved – by experiment – but that in itself is a step in the relentless advance of scientific knowledge): hence the quite legitimate use of the term ‘progress’ in that context; and there is no obvious reason to suppose that ‘progress’ is not ‘perpetual’, since every new idea and discovery leads to another, and if anything the pace of such progress is increasing, with no obvious limit. The ease and speed with which we do this is what makes *Homo sapiens*.

Tom Rubens, in his stimulating paper in the same issue of *ER*, refers (page 12) to “the course of human progress” – also talking about cultural progress, but here in particular the contribution of liberalism to “Western culture”. Some people – Muslim extremists, for example – might dispute that this represents progress, and a lively debate can be had as to where it is leading, and whether it is a good thing. But it is likewise a product of intellectual activity, of the kind which only humans can engage in as a result of their evolved intellectual capacity; and while its exercise may be temporarily suppressed by religious or other authoritarian forces, the knowledge is out there, and will be built on in due course. Such cultural progress has survived many dark ages throughout our history, but continues nonetheless, leading to a reasonable supposition that such progress is, for practical purposes, ‘perpetual’.

Ian Armitage - London

When I challenged Bronowski about his belief in perpetual progress, he agreed that he did hold it.

Barbara Smoker

Cathy Broad, Librarian

When CHES appoints a new Librarian, I hope that he or she will be as conscientious and helpful as Cathy Broad has been.

Barbara Smoker – Bromley, Kent

Is the Bombing of Gaza a Case for the International Criminal Court (ICC)?

Article 8 (2) (b) (iv) of the Rome Statute of the ICC, 1998, defines a war crime as, in part:

“Intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians...which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated...”
The Israelis attacked Gaza in Dec2008/Jan2009, so they must have known that their attack would cause civilian deaths. Will the ICC accept jurisdiction for the present attacks?

Chris Purnell – Orpington, Kent

[I believe neither Israel nor Hamas have so far signed up to the ICC. {Ed.}]

Extract from a letter from CHES to the PM...

CONWAY HALL ETHICAL SOCIETY

The Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

4 August 2014

Dear Mr Cameron,

Following a Special General Meeting of our Society on 3 August 2014, my members requested that I write to you asking that you make representations to the Israeli government to cease their use of force against Gaza forthwith.

The point being that this use of force has resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths, with many of them being war crimes due to the grossly excessive force being employed without regard to any legitimate military objective. Indeed, such war crimes committed are contrary to Article 8 .2 [b] iv of the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Yours faithfully,
Dr Jim Walsh, Chief Executive Officer

WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR A 'JUST' WAR?

Norman Bacrac

Dresden, Hamburg, Tokyo, Hiroshima ... to name a few cities where it was the case that the victims of their aerial bombing were mainly civilians and the strictly military damage was minimal. Even in the midst of the 'total war' of WWII, there were voices (eg the opponents of 'Bomber' Harris, A-bomb opposer Joseph Rotblat) questioning the justice of those bombing strategies. Is 'Gaza 2014' to be added to that infamous list?

What, though, is the proportionate military response to rockets launched from within or very near heavily populated civilian buildings? Yes, wise statesmen would never have allowed such a situation to develop (see my Editorial for Jan 2014 where I criticised Ariel Sharon's insulting treatment of Gaza in 2005, nor would they in effect declare war following the killing of three youths – " Hamas will pay"); and yes, why not just shoot down those you can and take cover from the rest? After all, pinpricks can't destroy an elephant – they just serve to enrage the population and intensify its anti-Palestinian impulses – hardly the 'defence' Hamas boasts. No, that probably wouldn't mollify Hamas.

However, we can look at the rules of engagement governing the IDF today. Since 2006, 'legitimate' targets have included, besides Hamas bases and weapons, non-military targets – government offices, police HQs, the parliament, *houses* of Hamas commanders & operatives and entire urban areas. The means used – air strikes, shells from artillery, tanks and ships – have their margin of error and radius of destruction. Israel needs to rethink these rules drastically.

EX-MUSLIM ATHEISTS TO BE DEPORTED TO PAKISTAN WILL FACE TORTURE AND DEATH'

Chris Street – President, Atheism UK

Two atheist ex-Muslims, Sher Shah Jogezeai (CID: 8823402) & Syed Muhammad Tabish (CID: 5711967) currently held in detention at the Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre in London are facing deportation to Pakistan. In Pakistan they will probably face death or torture by their family and other Muslims who consider them to be 'kafirs' or apostates under Sharia Law. Both are atheists who no longer believe in Muhammad, Allah or the Koran. They ask to be given asylum in Britain on the grounds that they are non-religious.

Chris Street said 'Both atheist ex-Muslims have been students and have worked in Britain for five years. I can certify that, having interviewed Sher Shah Jogezeai & Syed Muhammad Tabish this week, I am satisfied that they are genuine atheists and I will be writing to the Home Office to this effect. Both men believe there is no evidence for Allah, God or gods. Both will be now be deported to face persecution, torture and possibly a death sentence in Pakistan. I welcome that the Home Office cancelled yesterday Tabish's 5th August deportation pending a fresh asylum trial. I fear Jogezeai will be deported by the Home Office on 5th August 2014. I call on the Home Office to give both men a fresh asylum trial and grant both atheists asylum in Britain as non-religious refugees. Atheists should be entitled to protection from persecution on the grounds of their belief in the same way as a religious person is protected.'

In a previous case reported in 2014 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25715736> an atheist Afghan was granted religious asylum in UK. This was the first time a person had been granted asylum in the UK on the basis of their atheism. Lawyers successfully lodged a submission to the Home Office under the 1951 Refugee Convention which aims to protect people from persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. This decision represented an important recognition that a lack of religious belief is in itself a thoughtful and seriously-held philosophical position.

For up-to-date information contact Chris Street, Atheism UK President president@atheismuk.com Our mailing address is:
BM Atheism UK, Atheism UK, London, WC1N 3XX

OBITUARY ALLAN ST JOHN DIXON (1922 – 2014)

Jim Walsh writes:

We regret to announce the death of Allan St John Dixon OBE MD FRCP in his 92nd year at his home in Cornwall on 19 June 2014. He had been a member of the Society for over 60 years. He married Shelia Brown in the Library of Conway Hall on 24 March 1951: the Humanist wedding ceremony was performed by Hector Hawton.

Allan was a third generation Society member with many cousins, uncles and aunts listed in the membership records over the course of the 20th Century. His father

was Percival St John Dixon who joined the Society in 1899 and became a Trustee in 1933. His mother was Florence Dixon (née Lidstone). Both the Dixons and Lidstones were prominent members of the Society. Thomas Dixon, Allan's paternal grandfather, was a member of the Society before 1850 and once he had returned from South Africa in 1885 he resumed his membership. In the intervening years Thomas built a series of hotels in South Africa, most notably the 'Dixon Hotel' which became, Baden-Powell's HQ during the siege of Mafeking.

Nicholas and Annie Lidstone, Allan's maternal grandparents, married in 1875 and swiftly became members of the Society. Nicholas spent many years maintaining the then rather decrepit South Place Chapel, courtesy of his knowledge of the building trade. In the 1920s though Nicholas turned his hand to being the Treasurer of the Building Fund, which called upon members to raise the last £15,000 out of £45,000 to build F. Herbert Mansford's design for Conway Hall. All five of Nicholas's children and respective spouses were also inducted into the Society with many sitting on the General Committee and various sub-committees. In the archives there is still the original invitation to one of the five, Miss Ada Lidstone, to attend a 'conversazione' with Moncure Conway in 1905.

When I visited Allan and Sheila at their home in Cornwall in 2011, Allan recollected several personal Society memories, the first of which was getting lost at the age of five on a Society ramble on the Isle of Wight. A policeman looked after him until his parents found him once more. Then at the age of 13, Allan produced a play at Conway Hall called 'Mr Hackett's Alibi' with his cousins enlisted as actors. In 1938 Allan attended Lord Horder's Conway Memorial Lecture entitled 'Obscurantism' and remembers being deeply impressed by the views and opinions put forward.

Aside from his marriage to Sheila in the Library, Allan's connection to the Society would come in and out of focus over the years depending on his own professional career path and geographic location but also on his perception of the Society at any one time. In the early 1960s, after a swathe of letters and articles appeared in *The Ethical Record*, Allan felt obliged to resign on the grounds that he couldn't abide the Society 'publishing internal rancour' where the then General Secretary and other Trustees were being traduced: personages, as he explained, whom he both knew and respected.

Professionally, Allan's career as medical doctor took him all over the world. In 1947 he went from China to New Zealand following in the globe-trotting footsteps of his grandfather and father, an international mining engineer. However, eventually Allan returned to the UK to train as a rheumatologist and finally settled in Bath both to raise his family and become a Consultant Physician at the Royal United Hospital and Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases. Whilst there he founded 8 self-help medical charities, notably among them NOS (National Osteoporosis Society), NASS (National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society), Remedi and RICE (Research Institute for the Care of the Elderly), for which he was awarded the OBE.

Allan is survived by his wife, Sheila, their two children and four grandchildren.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Conway Hall Ethical Society, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, WC1R 4RL.

Tel: 020 7405 1818 Registered Charity No. 1156033

For programme updates, email: programme@ethicalsoc.org.uk

Website: www.conwayhall.org.uk

Admission to Thinking on Sunday events is free for members of CHES and £3 (£2 conc) for non-members. For other events, no charge unless stated.

AUGUST 2014

Friday 29 BHA AND THE CENTRAL LONDON HUMANIST GROUP:
1900 **THE ANCESTORS' TRAIL**

Lectures by **Armand Leroi**, Prof. Evolutionary Biology, Imperial College

Dr Yan Wong, author of *The Ancestors' Tale*

£17 / £12 BHA members & concs.

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 9 RHINEGOLD LIVE

1815 **Charles Owen - NICO MUHLY'S SHORT STUFF**

Free Entry

Saturday 20 / Sunday 21 **OPEN HOUSE FOR CONWAY HALL**

THINKING ON SUNDAY EVENTS

Sunday 21 "NOTHING TO BE FRIGHTENED OF"

1100 Julian Barnes' 2008 book on the subject of death will be critiqued by CHES member **Chris Bratcher** and Zen Buddhist monk **Manu Bazzano**

Sunday 28 **A NEW DAWN IN SECONDARY EDUCATION**

1100 **Evan Parker**, CHES member, physics professor (Warwick) offers a radical new approach to Secondary education

CHES's SUNDAY CONCERTS, AUTUMN 2014 from 21 Sept

Artistic Director: **Simon Callaghan**

Doors open at 1730 Concerts start at 1830 Tickets £9; students £4; under 16 free

Full details on: www.conwayhallsundayconcerts.org.uk

CHES, The FREETHOUGHT HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP

and the SOCIALIST HISTORY SOCIETY

STOP THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Oppositions to the Great War

A series of talks and discussions every Tuesday evening at 7 pm
from 30 September to 11 November 2014.

Curated by Deborah Lavin.

Week 1: **Norman Angell** - liberal, radical, socialist, pacifist or patriot?
by **Martin Ceadel**, Professor of Politics, U. Oxford

LONDON THINKS EVENTS

These major monthly weekday CHES events will be launched on line on 15 September.

The first event will take place on Thursday 9 October 2014.

Full details will appear in the October *Ethical Record*.

If you have any suggestions for speakers (their contact details are required) or event ideas, or would like to convene a Sunday afternoon informal, get in touch with Evan Parker at evan.parker@warwick.ac.uk Tel nos 07403 607 046 (mob) or 0202 565 5016.