

An Atheist's answer to God and religion

BY JOHN KEKES — QUEEN'S JOURNAL

My thesis is that (1) the ultimate concern i.e. the basic assumption of Christianity is self-contradictory, (2) the system built on the ultimate concern does not correspond to facts.

"We believe", says the Editor of the Theology Journal, "that the only ultimate concern which will not eventually prove to be an illusive idol is the God who created the whole." I intend to prove that it is an illusive idol.

In Christian theology God was attributed the qualities of eternal being and perfection. Perfection presumably includes omniscience, benevolence and omnipotence. I shall show that these qualities are contraries, i.e. they can not be true together though they may be false together.

I am aware of the Thomist objection claiming that no adequate statement can be made about the nature of God. The term "God" however was introduced into the vocabulary and if it is to have any meaning then we have to define it. The definition that I adopted is a Christian one and it is either acceptable or we do not know what we are talking about.

Omniscience, benevolence and omnipotence are contraries. In order to show this I shall use some arguments which by no means are new but which are so emphatically over-looked.

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If God is benevolent and omnipotent then how can he allow evil? How can he allow the suffering of the innocent? How could he allow the Inquisition; how could he allow the cruel puritanism of Calvin; how can he allow concentration camps; and how can he allow capital punishment?

It might be objected that for God evil is different than for Man. Now if there is a being who has the power to prevent the above atrocities and does not because he does not consider them wicked then I wish no communion with him.

If God is both omniscient and benevolent then either Man is not responsible for his actions or God not what, according to the Christians, he is. For God EITHER knows prior to my action what my action will be, in which case I am determined to act in a certain way and thus have no choice and consequently no responsibility, so I can do evil, OR God does not know my future choice, in which case he is not omniscient. In either case, God is imperfect for he either allows evil or he does not know the future.

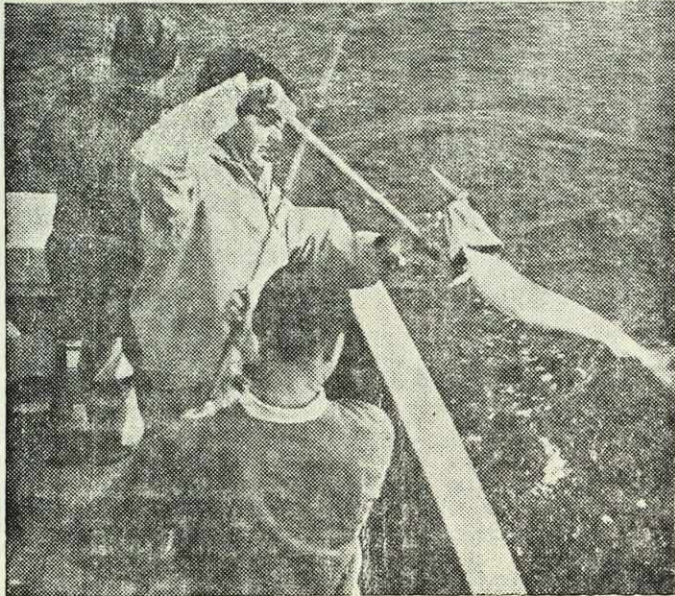
A number of similar predicaments are inherent in Christian theology but I think these two will suffice. Of course it is easy to evade the issue by saying that there are certain things that we can not comprehend, or all evil is brought about by Man, or that I should study theology prior to criticizing it. These points may all be true but unfortunately they are not convincing.

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I hope to show that Christian dogma is self-contradictory. My next step is to ask for a justification for making moral judgments on the basis of a self-contradictory dogma. I am questioning the right of any Church to make moral judgments, as Churches, about birth control, about other religions, about sexual life etc. What justification does any Church have to send missionaries to primitive and allegedly pagan tribes?

I reject Christianity and all other religions because they fail to give a convincing argument for their acceptance. I sincerely believe that all human beings ought to be ultimately concerned. Ultimate concern however does not mean adaption or irrationality or unquestioning acceptance. Ultimate concern is the acceptance of our responsibility as human beings. We are rational human beings free to act, free to choose. Our ultimate concern ought to be to make the right choice and to accept the respon-

sibility for it. We ought not to look neither for praise nor for encouragement to a super-human being. We are responsible for ourselves and there is nobody who will relieve this responsibility. We are free, let us live up to our potentialities.



FISH ABOARD—Three members of the Dalhousie University team are shown in action during the sixth Inter-collegiate Game Fish Seminar held recently in Wedgeport, N.S.

The cure of a softened heart

I gazed into her wide-set eyes

That sadly begged expressively

And seemed to say, "Oh, please don't go . . .

Oh please do not abandon me."

I faltered — softened by her gaze,

My thoughts were twisted in dismay

It happens every time, I thought,

That I decide to go away.

I must be firm — I'll go at once . . .

But no — those eyes destroy my will.

"Oh please, don't stare at me like that.

Why must you use such utter skill?"

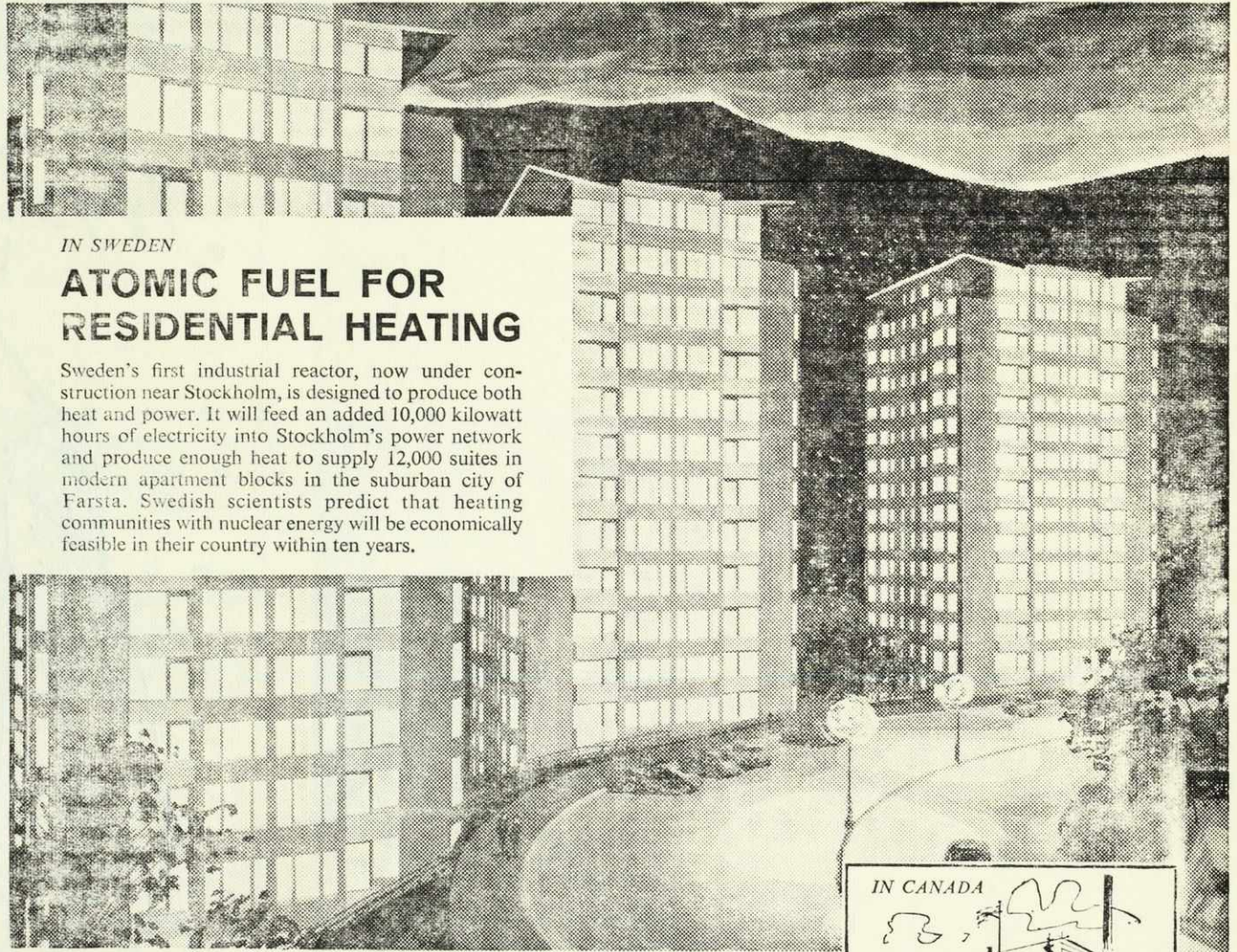
I turned from her to leave, but then,

Again I was compelled to pause . . .

"Oh, all right then . . . come on along,

And so she came — on all four paws.

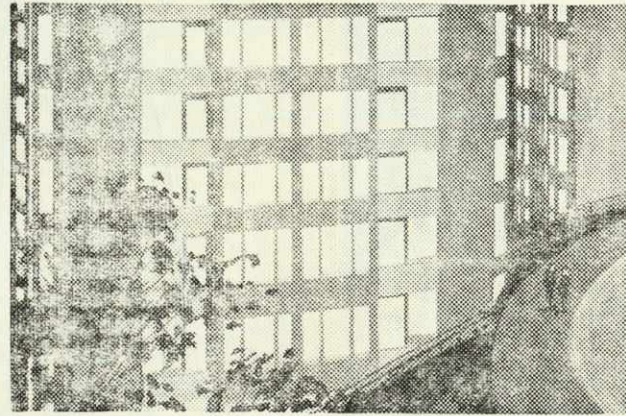
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