

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 125, No. 15, April 14, 1984

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Subscription Department
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43302

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$27.50; 2 yrs., \$47.50;
3 yrs., \$67.00. (Foreign postage \$5.00 additional per
year.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is
required. Please state exactly how magazine is to be
addressed. Include zip code. For new subscriptions
only call (1) 800-247-2160. Printed in U.S.A. Second
class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Title
registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent
Offices. Published every Saturday by SCIENCE
SERVICE, Inc. 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C.
20036. (202-785-2255)
ISSN 0036-8423

Letters

Religious thoughts

When the clergy undertake to interfere with the progress of science — as discussed in your recent article, "The Clergy Ponder the New Genetics" (SN: 3/24/81, p. 188) — they find themselves in a classical paradox.

If there is an omnipotent, omniscient God, He has obviously allowed the scientists to discover these techniques and to apply them.

If there is no such God, the clergy have no more standing than the corner bartender.

Dean Fraser
Bloomington, Ind.

After reading the article, it occurred to me that we may be on the verge of witnessing the initiation of a major branch on the evolutionary tree of life: the emergence of organisms that perceive their environment, then actively change their genetics to conform to that environment. Certainly this evolutionary "development" of DNA reproduction is at least as significant as the development of sexual recombination of eukaryotes, as compared to binary fission in prokaryotes.

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The question that puzzles me is should such organisms just be placed in a new phylum, or would the classification of a new kingdom be more appropriate?

Jeffrey L. Peterson
Stillwater, Minn.

In regard to your article, it seems that once again scientific progress for all humanity is being questioned by an anachronistic status quo with no positive contribution to offer. If religious leaders had reported on the invention of fire, they probably would have said it was an invention of the devil and that we would all get burned. Since when have ignorance and superstition ever offered mankind any benefits?

J. Robert Hines
Chicago, Ill.

The article is headed with a Biblical quotation "... What are human beings that Thou art mindful of them ... Yet Thou hast given humanity dominion over the works of Thy hands ..." It is stated as being from Psalm 8. I am unable to find any reference in Psalm 8 to human beings or to humanity. The first complete Bible in English printed in this country, approved by Con-

gress in 1782, says "What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? ... Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ..." And [similarly for] the Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible.

I am by no means a Biblical scholar, but it strikes me as contrary to scholarship to change the clear statement of a document, much though some readers may dislike the phrasing or choice of words. What is next? Will someone rewrite some paper in a research journal because the original writer used "man" or "him"? Quite a large industry could be based on such activity, as we may note in "1984."

Rinehart S. Potts
Glassboro, N.J.

We chose the version of the psalm used by the National Council of Churches of Christ in its study report of the panel on bioethical concerns.
—J. A. Miller

Correction: Lucy's fossil remains are not kept at the National Museum of Kenya (SN: 3/31/84, p. 198). They reside in the Ethiopian National Museum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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