

who by his suffering and cross built up the steps which lead us to his kingdom. Why do you fear to be redeemed? Why shrink to be free from sin? Do what Christ wills in union with me. Cast out this fleshly fear, arm yourselves with steadfast courage, for it is unworthy to have fear at the time of Christ's passion, when even about your own end you should, through his gift, have no anxiety.'

All this was said, dearly beloved, not to be of value only to those who heard it. The whole Church learned whatever those three apostles saw or heard. Let the faith of all be strengthened, then, by the gospel preaching, and may none be ashamed of Christ's cross by which he redeemed the world. Let no one fear to suffer for justice's sake or hesitate about the promised reward, for by labour we come to rest and by death to life. For he took on himself the whole of our poor wretchedness; and if we stay firm in acknowledgment and love of him, we too will conquer as he conquered and will receive his promises. Whether in obeying his commands or in bearing hardships, may the Father's words be always sounding in our ears: this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear him, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.



GAMALIEL

(Questions should be addressed to *Gamaliel*, c/o the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, *Hawkesyard Priory, Rugeley, Staffs.*)

GAM. But the fact is they are not. I find that little preliminary parenthesis of yours rather touching, Ed. 'Questions should be addressed . . .'. Why should they? Especially if there aren't any.

ED. I must admit, I *am* rather disappointed. I thought in my innocence, when we started this questions and answers section, that you would be overwhelmed with questions.

GAM. The faithful multitudes, greedy for knowledge, flocking to the oracle.

ED. Perhaps that is part of the trouble. The only answers people want are oracular answers, and they find they don't get them from you.

GAM. You think, maybe, my answers are too painstakingly qualified, too prosy and boring?

ED. Well, the few comments I have had on your little column have all been appreciative. But then I never seem to get rude comments from readers.

GAM. How charming of them. I suppose the unappreciative ones just stop reading. At least they don't ask questions, not even silly ones. How long is it since you sent me on a genuine question?

ED. You mean one I didn't make up myself, or cull from conversation in the common-room?

GAM. Yes, a real question from a reader.

ED. Well, the last one you answered wasn't faked. I haven't published it yet. I must have received it about the end of April.

GAM. And there hasn't been one since then, otherwise I wouldn't be twiddling my thumbs with you now.

ED. Here are your statistics. Since I engaged your services in April '59, you have answered eighteen questions, of which seven have been concocted in my office.

GAM. I like that 'office'.

ED. One of these seven provoked a correspondence; one called forth a further question from a reader.

GAM. So in fifteen months eleven of your readers have had questions to ask, or rather ten, since one of them, if I remember rightly, asked two.

ED. Do you suppose the rest know all the answers?

GAM. Or else they know I don't.

ED. If they thought that, they would *throw* questions at you, in order to catch you out.

GAM. Or else they think that as well-instructed Catholics they ought to know all the answers, and are ashamed to show they don't by asking questions.

ED. But their anonymity is preserved.

GAM. People hate being anonymous.

ED. They can always say if they don't want to be.

GAM. Perhaps they think it is vulgar, asking questions.

ED. But the *Clergy Review* is always stacked with questions.

GAM. Yes. And on canon law and rubrics. Trivial subjects always stir up questions.

ED. Oh, come, that's being gratuitously offensive. The questions and answers in the *Clergy Review* are always the first thing I look at.

GAM. Trivial isn't a rude word. Triviality plays an important part in the life of the Church, as of any society, and it can be most entertaining.

ED. But canon law simply isn't trivial. It has the essential grandeur of any great system of law.

GAM. True. But law is even more prone to trivialization than philosophy. And as for rubrics, they could almost be defined as the reduction of the sacred to the trivial. Again, I don't deny it has to be done, but I am glad it is not my job to help people do it.

ED. Now you are being oracular. But would you like to have just one go at what you call trivialization?

GAM. I reserve the right to remain dumb.

ED. Well, here is a rubrical question that has always puzzled me. What is a sacrarium?

GAM. I will answer with pleasure. I haven't the slightest idea.

ED. Never seen one?

GAM. Not that I know of. Have you?

ED. No, nor has anyone I have ever met. Yet it seems almost indispensable for the decent administration of certain sacraments—any in which holy oils are used, for example. The cotton-wool on which the minister wipes his thumb has to be put in the sacrarium. But as a second best, if there isn't a sacrarium handy, the cotton-wool should be burnt; and I gather that that in fact is what is always done.

GAM. Oh. Well, it is definitely a question for the *Clergy Review*. From the context, though, it rather sounds, doesn't it, as if it were a sort of 'sacred refuse pit'?

ED. Come to think of it, one does sometimes see a sacristy that looks as if it might be a sacrarium.

GAM. It must have an ancestry of hoary antiquity, lost in the mists of prehistory. I should think the Temple at Jerusalem must have needed an enormous sacrarium.

ED. I wonder if St Peter's has a proper sacrarium?

GAM. As well as a sacristy? I should think so. But I have just thought of how I would begin the answer, if I knew what the answer was. *Sacrarium dicitur quasi sacra area*; sacrarium means, so to say, a sacred area. Do you think that would qualify for the *Clergy Review*?

ED. No. The wrong approach to rubrics altogether. But here is

another topic which should be more congenial to your *a priori* habits of thought. It's on science and God.

GAM. Not Sir Julian Huxley last month in *The Observer*?

ED. That's right. How would you answer his case?

GAM. I remember being irritated to find as I read it that he didn't even begin to make out a case. It's about all I do remember about it.

ED. Oh, surely; at least he stated a case—that science and theology are in conflict, 'theology being based on a combination of an elaborate god-theory with a subsidiary but equally elaborate soul-theory', theories which science, in the form of evolution, has demolished by showing them to be unnecessary hypotheses and ultimately self-contradictory ones.

GAM. God an unnecessary hypothesis? I seem to have heard that one before. Why does Sir Julian say he is also a contradictory one?

ED. Evil.

GAM. Good gracious, not really? How splendidly traditional! But his arguments against the god-theory are as venerable as the god-theory itself. It's the lion and the unicorn over again. Can't we reply with the unicorn's time-hallowed *ripostes*?

ED. You can try.

GAM. Well, let's quote St Thomas—I should call him Aquinas, shouldn't I?—at length.

To the question whether there is such a thing as God; it seems that there is not. (1) Because if one of two contradictories is infinite, it will wholly destroy the other. But such an infinite is implied by this name 'God', namely an infinite good of some sort. So if there were such a thing as God there would be no evil to be found at all. But there is evil to be found in the universe. Therefore there is no God.

(2) Furthermore, whatever can be completed by few principles, is not better done by many. But it seems that all phenomena in the universe can be completed by other principles, even supposing that there is no God; for things that happen naturally can be reduced to nature as their principle; and things that are done on purpose can be reduced to human reason or will as their principle. So there is no need to suppose that there is a God.

There—do you think Sir Julian would accept that as a statement of his arguments?

ED. It is rather terse, of course, and I think he would want to bring in evolution. You see, I don't think he would appreciate

your saying his arguments are venerable. He thinks that the progress of science in the last hundred years, particularly the discovery of evolution, has produced new and conclusive arguments against the god-theory.

GAM. Well, I am sure St Thomas—sorry, Aquinas—wouldn't mind if we substituted 'evolution' for 'nature' in the argument to show that God is an unnecessary hypothesis.

ED. But could you substitute it for 'nature' in his answer?

GAM. I don't see why not. Let's try. First of all, though, his answer to the objection that it is a wicked world, inconsistent with a good God. But surely Sir Julian doesn't imagine we had to wait for evolution to bring us face to face with that little problem?

ED. No, I don't think he does. But I suspect that he regards the god-theory as part of the evil in the world. He calls it 'a burden to the human spirit, a cloud heavy with frightening incomprehensibility'.

GAM. I see. He seems to be what you could call a hypothetical Manichee; if a god did exist, it would have to be a bad one.

ED. Yes—while you Christians insist on saying that one does exist and is a good one.

GAM. Still, the problem for us is to account for evil on our premises, not on Huxley's hypotheses.

ED. While he, I suppose we could say, is faced with the problem of good, or rather of the difference between good and evil.

GAM. But that's metaphysics, and I am sure he doesn't believe in metaphysics, so he wouldn't acknowledge the problem. However, attention, please, for Aquinas once more.

To the first objection it can be said, that as Augustine says in the Enchiridion—my goodness me, it is a hoary old argument—'God, since he is supremely good, would not allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works, unless he were so omnipotent and good that he even made good use of evil'. So it precisely belongs to the infinite goodness of God that he should permit evils to exist in order to bring good out of them.

ED. Sir Julian didn't seem to envisage quite that response. He armed himself against a reply that would appeal to the fall to explain evil—'a mythical event for which, I would remind my readers, there is no evidence whatever'—and to God's permitting wickedness in order to preserve human freedom—'a wholly gratuitous assumption'.

GAM. Mm. Well, it certainly squares with my recollection that the potted extracts of theology which the knowledgeable knight set up as Aunt Sallies in order to shoot down in flames—

ED. My God, Gamaliel, if you mix such a metaphor again, I'll fire you.

GAM. But it's *contemporary*. Don't you ever read other papers than your own?—that the said potted extracts were potted with such crude ineptitude, that one could feel nothing but relief when they were duly shot down in flames, one by one.

ED. Go on to the unnecessary hypothesis before I faint.

GAM. *To the second objection it can be said, that since nature (evolution) works for some definite end as a result of being aimed, or given direction, by some higher agent, it is necessary to reduce things which happen naturally (by evolution) back to God as their first cause (as well as to evolution as their immediate or secondary cause). Likewise things which happen on purpose—*

ED. All right, I don't think we need bother with the second part of his answer.

GAM. It's hypermetaphysical, certainly.

ED. But Sir Julian has parried the first part already. For it seems to assume the argument from design—nature working for some definite end as a result of being given direction by some higher agent; and he says that 'with the acceptance of evolution as an automatic regulating and directive agency . . ., Paley's old argument from design drops dead'.

GAM. Whatever Paley's argument from design may have been, and whatever its fate, I don't see how you can accuse Aquinas of assuming it. I would prefer to call *his* argument an argument from direction. But show me where Huxley drops Paley dead.

ED. These two paragraphs here.

GAM. 'For the two and a half billion years of biological evolution scientists have provided a highly satisfactory picture.' Yes, I remember now. ' . . . struggle for existence. . . . The result is natural selection. . . . This, far from being a matter of chance, is an orderly process . . . it inevitably leads to the improvement of organisms . . . an automatic regulating and directive agency.' But it's wonderful; order, harmony, growth, improvement, direction. Huxley's universe seems to be as teleological as Aristotle's—nature working for some definite end. I am tempted to quote Augustine myself, and say that such a universe 'cries out

that it was made'. Do you know if all biologists accept this satisfactory picture? I hope so.

ED. I really couldn't say, being scientifically quite illiterate myself. I have been told that some of them have highly technical doubts based on all sorts of minute particularities.

GAM. How boring of them not to stick to generalities where the general public can follow them. I must say, I find this picture highly satisfactory, too. It seems to stress the premises of Aquinas' argument from direction so powerfully.

ED. Go on to the next paragraph.

GAM. 'With the acceptance of this, Paley's old argument from design drops dead'—Was it an inadequate design he argued from, do you suppose? 'Adaptation is no proof of conscious design (if it were, its finger would sometimes point to a stupid, a Rabelaisian, or a cruel designer).' Well! My head spins. He zigs-zags too quickly for me to keep up with him, I'm afraid.

ED. There does seem to be one law for the scientists and another for the theologians, doesn't there? When scientists look at the evolutionary world, they are permitted to see a highly satisfactory picture, an orderly process, an automatic regulating and directive agency. But when theologians look at the same thing and say, 'Marvellous! All that surely implies the direction of an intelligence', the scientists stop admiring the satisfactory picture, and sneer: 'If an intelligence is responsible for *that*, and *that* (ugh!) and *that* (pointing out various details of the highly satisfactory picture), it must be stupid, Rabelaisian, and cruel'.

GAM. I don't know that Sir Julian is being all that illogical. While there is nothing necessarily disconcerting in scientists taking satisfaction in Rabelaisian situations, it must be highly shocking to suppose that God does.

ED. I can't say it shocks me. If sex is a good thing, what's wrong with God designing it, even down to its more ludicrous manifestations, and being pleased with his design?

GAM. You, as a mere Christian who has never thought of God as a hypothesis, can have no idea what a high standard the serious non-believer like Huxley expects from his unnecessary hypothesis. Only the most perfect conformity to the highest human standards of morality will serve to verify the hypothesis. And what poor deity has the chance of achieving that? The hypothesis of evolution doesn't have to pass so stiff a test before being admitted

to the order of fact, because of course it isn't bound by the rules of human morality. How can you pass moral judgments on a concept, or a blind force, or whatever they say evolution is?

ED. He says it is an automatic regulating and directive agency.

GAM. Well, no one is expected to apply moral categories to an agency. But a personal god is an agent, and you can certainly apply moral categories to him. The agent is cruel, where the agency, by means of the struggle for survival, is directing an orderly process. The agent is Rabelaisian or lascivious, where the agency, by sexual differentiation, is securing the survival of the species. The agent is stupid, where the agency proceeds by an interesting process of trial and error, and produces occasional evolutionary oddities.

ED. It does seem as if Sir Julian's attack on the god-theory involves some elementary category mistakes.

GAM. It does indeed. He twits us with not containing our unruly divinity within the categories of human morals—as if we ever thought of trying to. I suppose he cannot see the difference between a personal God—but then we profess belief in a tri-personal God, so that peculiarity ought to have put him on his guard—and a human God, to be called good and bad, cruel and kind, etc., in just the same sort of way as human men.

ED. And then he rules theology out of court, because it does not conform to the categories of scientific method, of which there seem to be three, viz. hypothesis, theory, and fact.

GAM. That's right; and God started as a hypothesis, and by dint of hard cerebral work on the part of the theologians was worked into an elaborate theory, but has never graduated to the rank of being a fact.

ED. Correct. Here is the exact text: 'First of all let us remember that God is a hypothesis. This comes as a shock to many, but it is true.'

GAM. I wonder if it will shock Sir Julian to be told that it is not true, because when we are talking about God, or god, we are not moving in the circumscribed field of natural science at all. No theologian would dream of being so impertinent as to intrude the god-hypothesis into the scientific arena, in order to explain things. We talk and think about God in two other fields of thought: the field of faith, and there he is not a hypothesis but a revelation; and the field of metaphysics, and there he is not a

hypothesis, not even a necessary one, but the ultimate inference, and an inference made without any preconceived ideas at all about the nature of the thing inferred.

ED. So there cannot really be any conflict between science and Christian theology, because they are moving in different fields of thought?

GAM. That's one reason, at least.

ED. But you can scarcely deny that there is a conflict between Huxley's science and Christian theology.

GAM. It's a false conflict—shadow-boxing. On the one hand he blandly identifies science with his own system of what he calls 'unitary naturalism', which, whatever it is, philosophy, metaphysics, religion, is not science. There is not really a single word of science in the whole of that article, now is there?

ED. There are some wonderful scientific words, like psycho-metabolism.

GAM. All part of the same effrontery. And on the other hand there are the potted extracts of inaccurate theology we have seen, squeezed into improper categories.

ED. Now, now, mind those metaphors.

GAM. On his very own premises he shouldn't be conflicting with us at all, but scientifically investigating our beliefs. Whoever heard of a scientist arguing with his subject-matter?

ED. I remember Professor Evans-Pritchard asking the same question.

GAM. And I bet he didn't expect an answer, either. All phenomena, so Sir Julian says, are grist to the mill of humanism (=unitary naturalism), including therefore, I suppose, the phenomenon of Christian theology. The reliance of this mill on scientific method makes it automatically self-correcting, we are told. Well, all I can say is, that if Sir Julian feeds his mill with phenomena concocted through so distorting a microscope as that which he turns on Christian theology, then the resultant grist is going to bring his mill to a standstill that no amount of self-correction can cure.

ED. Gamaliel, you're fired.

