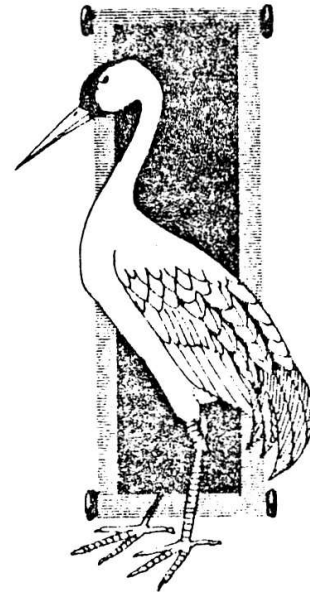


FROM THE EDITOR



We have chosen Atheism for our special topic in this issue of Tripod. While atheism, in one or other of its many forms, is probably as old as theism, it is only with the advent of modern times that it has gained a popular following. What once might have been dismissed as the parlour pose of a few aesthete philosophers, has now become a force of significant energy and insistence so as to pose a new challenge to believers and the traditional institutions in which their values are grounded. Clearly, this modern phenomenon demands "closer scrutiny" by believers and unbelievers alike, who, in the words of Pope John Paul II, must work together to "help to establish right order in the world in which all of us live." The pope's call to dialogue opens our issue, and we follow this with two pieces by Fr. Angelo Lazzarotto, who is Tripod's Guest Editor for this issue, introducing the work of the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-believers which was founded in 1965 in the wake of Vatican II's call for dialogue with the world.

For examples of the kinds of reports the Secretariat deals with, we bring you two papers delivered at its last plenary session. The first is by William McNaughton, Catholic Bishop of Inchon, Korea. Bishop McNaughton has lived in his adopted country these past thirty years, and his love and respect for his people shines through his report on the state of religious belief and non-belief among them. Our second report comes from Howard Hubbard, Catholic Bishop

of Albany, New York, who is the former chairman of the Secretariat for Non-believers of the National Conference of American Bishops. For a look at the problem there, we refer you to Atheism, Non-belief, and Religious Indifference in the United States.

You might want to read Richard McBrien's Belief and Unbelief Today first, as it is one of clearest and most concise theological expositions of the nature of the problem that we have come across. Fr. McBrien is the chairman of the department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame and past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America. He has kindly allowed us to use this excerpt from his award winning book Catholicism.

Our topic has proved to be too rich for one issue, so it will overflow into the next number of Tripod, in which traditional Chinese atheism and the contemplative response to the problem of human existence will be featured.

We are happy to announce at this time that on May 31 our Centre signed an agreement of affiliation with Seton Hall University of New Jersey. Msgr. John Petillo, University Chancellor, and Fr. John Tong of the Centre did the honours. We look forward to a future of mutual cooperation and fruitful exchange in our China research programmes.



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