

fied, and our ruling class is not going to offer a frontal challenge to that.

Keith Bell
Wrexham

LIFE, THE UNIVERSE

NOT to disagree with Barbara Smoker (*Freethinker*, February), but perhaps to add a couple of points.

As Bertrand Russell points out in *An Outline of Philosophy*, if God exists, then by definition, God is part of existence. Therefore to explain the physical universe as God's creation is not to explain existence as a whole, but only to explain part of existence in terms of another (hypothetical) part.

Besides Voltaire's fly in the Palace of Versailles thinking "All this has been created just for me", another metaphor for hubristic self-deception is Aesop's fly on the wheel of a chariot thinking "What a dust I am making".

There are mundane beliefs like "There was a battle in 1066" and "Barbara Smoker wrote this article", and religious beliefs like "Christ died for our sins" and "The Koran is infallible", which may seem similar as long as they are accepted without question. The difference becomes apparent in cases of doubt. A mundane belief may be confirmed, modified, or refuted by reference to available data, while a religious belief may be enforced by threats of punishment, in this world and/or after death.

Donald Room
London

'PATRONISING' LETTER

I WOULD like to tell the patronising Diesel Balaam – is that really his name? – that I am 53. What does he mean by "being round the block"?

I am also a supporter of legalising soft drugs but not the other things he mentions. I would rather close our borders than open them. However, I do basically favour a "free for all" society. People have the right to do whatever they choose as long as they don't violate the valid rights of others.

They do not have the right to force themselves where they're not wanted – that's no better than bullying. Yes, I do support the right to put up "No Blacks" signs or turn away gays. The only minority whose rights matter is the smallest one of all – the individual.

Nor do I care for Diesel's claim that people have the right to speak out or campaign "within reason". That reminds me of the "no platform for racists/fascists/sexists/homophobes/whatever" witchhunt by politically correct hypocrites against anyone who

can be said to fit any of these descriptions, even hounding them from jobs totally irrelevant to their beliefs. The rights of Rabbi Ralbag, the jailed Muslim homophobes (I am an Islamophobe and proud of it), and the football fan facing sentence for expressing a racist opinion on Twitter do not seem to have been respected.

I would have the US First Amendment apply throughout the world. All laws restricting free expression relating to such issues as obscenity, blasphemy, racism, religion, xenophobia or homophobia should be repealed.

I agree that married Christian couples should have more sex. So should we all! A new commandment – thou shalt not have a headache. And freethinkers like Jessica Ahlquist are too intolerant and prone to antagonise people. If people are satisfied with having a religious symbol, why not just leave them to it? Are we to be like the Americans who apparently can't sing Christmas carols at school because some nitpicker uses a minority interpretation of the law to stop them? Being a freethinker should not mean being a killjoy – let's leave that to the Bible and Koran brigade.

Mark Taha
London

'AFFECT' AND 'EFFECT'

THERE were two long words in medieval Christian theology concerning the nature of the Trinity, spelt the same ex-

cept for a single letter. After a long, bitter dispute, one came out eventually on the side of orthodoxy, the other heresy – but now I cannot remember details of the conflict, and I doubt if many *Freethinker* readers can.

I am reminded of it, however, by my conformist feeling of annoyance whenever "affect" appears in your pages though "effect" is the word intended. This howler has occurred several times in recent issues. Unfortunately, computers are not yet reliable grammarians

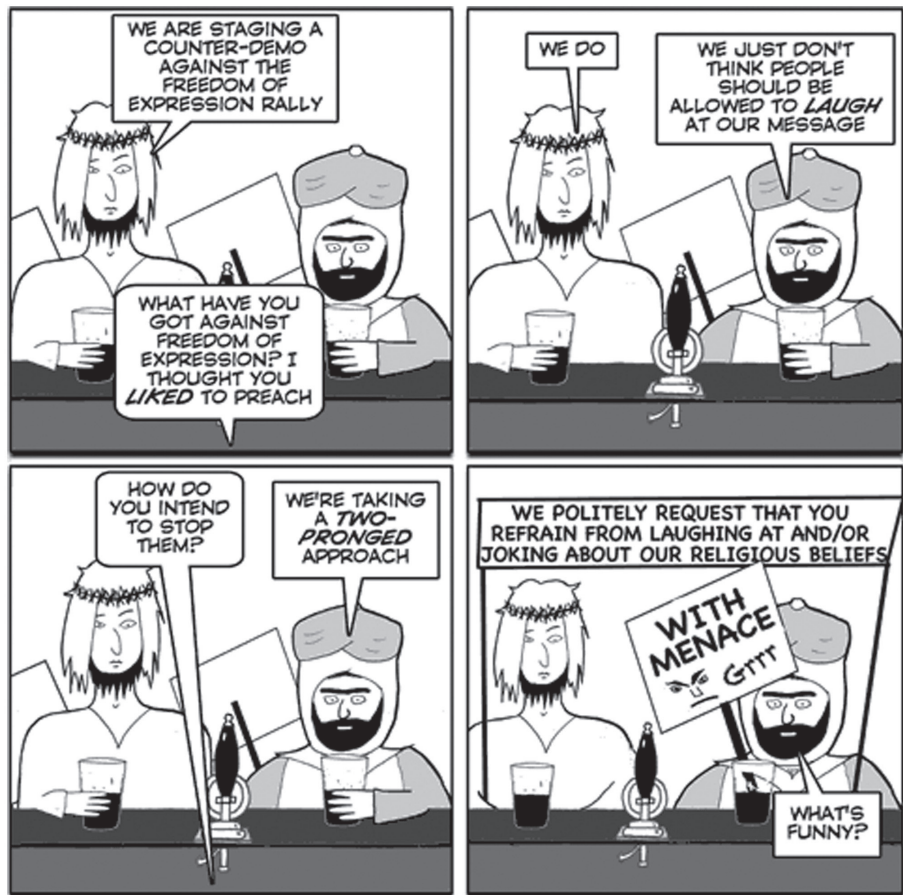
Barbara Smoker
Bromley

CELIBACY

READING letters to *Point of View* I find Denis Watkins, (*Points of View*, February) misses the point. When celibacy was belatedly imposed on Catholic clergy in 385 (by the Directa Decretal of Pope Siricius), its motive was not to create sexual frustration. It was to prevent the emergence of a hereditary feudal class in possession of Church wealth (including land).

Ted Goodman
Redhill

Jesus & Mo



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