

God on Trial – A Hypothetical

**Based on the Book written by
Robert Colquhoun KHS
Sydney Barrister, Author and Philosopher**

Presented as part of the Program of the St. Thomas More Forum

27 October 2005

About 300 “Jurors” (audience members) packed into the St Thomas More Forum on the evening of 27 October 2005 for *God on Trial*, a combination of hypothetical and interactive debate. The Forum was transformed with help of digital presentations and other props into a “Cosmic Court” to hear Sydney barrister and member of the St Thomas More Society, Robert Colquhoun, as “Mr Socrates” defending God in a setting outside space and time. The show incorporated philosophical characters from Robert’s book *God on Trial*, spoken for in the flesh by a Panel of local academic and legal identities.

Those of the Panel leading the prosecution included Chief Justice Terry Higgins (reading for Lord Alfred Denning), Richard Refshauge SC (reading for Karl Marx and Jean-Paul Sartre), and Canberra barrister Christopher Erskine (reading for David Hume). Others in the Panel, appearing for the defence of God, included Rev Dr Graeme Garrett of St Mark’s Theological College (reading for Pythagoras), Associate Professor Raymond Canning from Australian Catholic University (reading for St Thomas Aquinas), and Dr Michael Jarvis (reading for Plato). Caricatures of the characters also appeared simultaneously as part of the digital presentation.

The Trial was presented in three parts. The first part, signs and superstition, pitted claims that religious and metaphysical speculation is a superstition against arguments from design, with a special emphasis on the new cosmology. The second part dealt with chance and necessity, and the claim by sceptics that everything occurs by blind chance. The third part, entitled *Is anybody there?*, dealt with the possibility of a proof of God’s non-existence or a proof that something else other than God is the reason behind it all. There were opportunities after each segment for the audience to throw questions at Mr Socrates, and to ask questions of the Panel.

A highlight of part three was a startling performance by Rev Nikolai Blaskow, chaplain at Radford College, as Friedrich Nietzsche leading an intellectual assault against “Mr Socrates”. Blaskow’s performance was assisted by a “Will to Power” digital light show demonstrating Nietzsche’s visions. All digital animations presented during the show were designed by Canberra graphic designer (now schoolteacher), Nathan Ahearne.

At the end of the evening, the audience was able to vote as the Cosmic Jury. God’s defence was sustained by a clear but modest majority. “Friedrich Nietzsche” brought the house down by claiming that “Mr Socrates” was “spending too much time in the casino”

with his arguments on the probabilities of the universe being designed from the evidence of cosmological numbers. “Mr Socrates” appeared to have lost some substantial support by adopting *ad hominem* arguments, particular against “Friedrich Nietzsche”. It was perhaps a case of the prosecution not proving its case, rather than a positive defence being sustained.

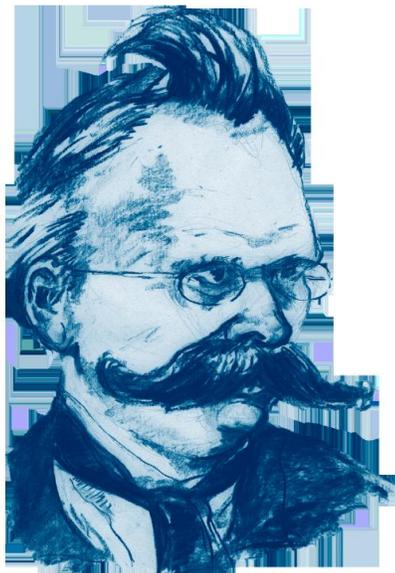
Some \$1500 was raised for charity, shared equally between the St Vincent de Paul Society and Anglicare Canberra. Mini Vinnies at St Thomas More’s Primary School received \$400 from the St Vincent de Paul Society share. Stephen Utick, Chairman of the St. Vincent de Paul Society Literature Committee was congratulated on his role as Coordinator of the *God on Trial Hypothetical*.

Copies of the book *God on Trial* are available from the Catholic Bookshop, Favier House, Braddon for \$25.00.

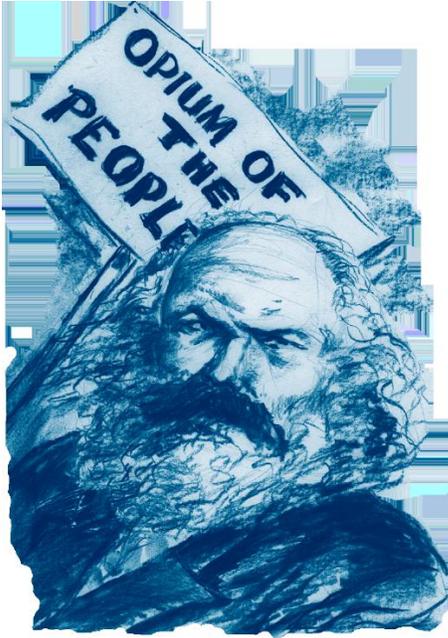
Some *God on Trial* Characters...or caricatures



LORD ALFRED DENNING



FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE



KARL MARX



JACKET COVER *God on Trial*