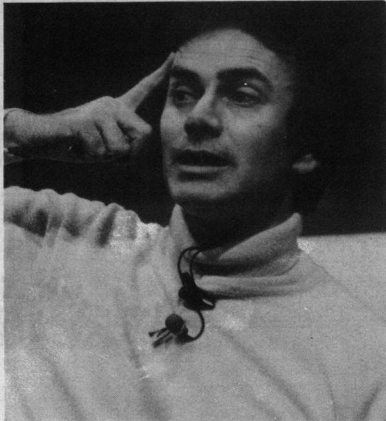


Christian rationalization

## Baloney, but it's tasty



Winkie Pratney gesticulates to make a point.

Winkie Pratney, on: The Validity of the Christian Faith Tuesday, Sept. 28 Education Rm. 2-115

commentary by Jens Andersen

Since the historic day in 1978 when I witnessed Elizabeth Clare Prophet's levitation of the Jubilee Auditorium, one of my favorite amusements has been attending the sermons of religious evangelists who bring their good news to campus, and watching the good shepherds as they gather in the sheep.

There is no danger, of course, that I myself will get roped in, because long ago Satan lured me from the straight and narrow path with the diabolic teachings of T.H. Huxley, Nietzsche and Mencken. No, I attend merely to sit and snicker to myself while some good Christian like Duane Gish (known in some circles as Gish the Fish) explains how Jehovah violated the inviolable Second Law of Thermodynamics by creating the universe (much as he violated his own Seventh Commandment by snuggling up with Mary), or "proves" that the well-documented transformation of *Eohippus* into the modern horse is not really evidence of evolution at all.

Such intellectual acrobatics require a high degree of lingual dexterity, and I am happy to report that Winkie Pratney has abundant talents in this direction. I was especially impressed by his revitalization of the hoary old "argument by design", wherein it is proposed that every design must have a designer.

The argument by design is not necessarily disproved, since the orderliness of the universe seems to suggest some sort of cosmic will. From the Christian point of view, however, it has some weaknesses: for one thing the cosmic will might be the will of Zeus, Amon-ra, Wotan or Buddha just as well as Jehovah; for another, it raises the infinitely expanding question of who designed the designer.

Winkie Pratney avoided these problems with breath-taking finesse. What he did was to take the standard Christian analogy of "a watch implies a watchmaker, and in the same way a human implies a human-maker," and embellish it with all manner of anecdotes and clever phrases. For instance, instead of just having an average Joe eyeing a watch, Pratney does a splendid imitation of a medieval peasant gaping in astonishment at an electronic calculator. After such

endering antics one completely forgets that the universe may have been created by a committee of Gods as quarrelsome and blundering as our Students' Union.

Pratney's little jokes, witticisms, anecdotes and impersonations are the soul of his show. He described John the Baptist by saying, "he dressed like a jerk and ate crunchy insects" and Peter with the comment that he had "a foot-shaped mouth." My favorite joke was the one about the hip, blasé fellow who was always saying, "Yes, I know" in a bored and knowing manner whenever any topic was brought up (and how he got his comeuppance). Nor should one sneeze at his brilliant impersonation of a scientist with a million volts of electrostatic energy pouring from his fingers in a torrent of purple lightning.

Under all this froth there is nothing of intellectual substance worth mentioning, but Pratney delivers his load of nothing with charm, flair, humor, and even a genuine touch of pathos here and there.


He is doing a final lecture on "The biblical view of sexuality" at 3:00 p.m. today, at the same place. If you have the time I highly recommend going to it.

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