

FAITH & THOUGHT

BULLETIN

DAVID PORTER
user's guide to
THE Media

- SOAPS
- NEWS
- ADVERTISING
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FRUITWORKS

The Open Mind
and other essays

by J. Houghton

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A look at the
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EDITORIAL

It is good to be able to publish a second issue of the Bulletin this year. We hope that this will be a regular practice from now on. However, we do depend on letters and comments from readers, because these make the Bulletin more lively and relevant. Please remember this, and send in contributions. As mentioned in the last issue of the Bulletin, we shall continue to publish book reviews of wider interest than those in the parent journal, *Science and Christian Belief*. If any reader has suggestions regarding books that should be reviewed, or offers to serve as reviewer, please notify the Editor.

The articles this time are by our Chairman, Terence Mitchell, 'Interpreting the Early Chapters of Genesis', and by Michael Jinkins, 'What's the Use of Divinity?' Mr. Jinkins is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, and undertaking doctoral research at the University of Aberdeen. His article is reproduced with the permission of *The Times Higher Education Supplement*.

The last page of the Bulletin sets out the officers of the Victoria Institute, and also contains an application form for membership. Copies of the brochure describing the VI and its aims are available from the Administration address.

Annual General Meeting, 1989

The AGM of the Victoria Institute was held on Tuesday, May 16, at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, St Peter's Church,

Vere Street, London. About twenty members were present. The Chairman, Terence Mitchell presided, and the minutes of the 1988 AGM were approved by the meeting. These are printed in Faith and Thought, 1988, 114, 104. The Council had nominated officers for further terms of office, namely, the Revd. M. J. Collis, Mr. T. C. Mitchell, and Mr. M. W. Poole, all of whom were eligible for re-election. These nominations were approved, and the appointment of Mr. David S. Williams to the Council was ratified. The President, Vice-President and Hon. Treasurer were also re-elected for further terms of service.

The Treasurer presented the accounts up to September 1988, which had not been available previously, but which were now audited. These were accepted, and the firm of Benson, Catt and Co. Ltd was proposed and approved for the coming year to serve as Auditors.

Members had been notified of certain proposed changes to the Constitution, and these were now discussed. The Constitution is given in full in Faith and Thought, 1982, 109, 88, and the clauses below refer to the original numbering.

Clause 2a reference to Fellows and Associates is deleted, since only 'Members' are now recognised.

Clause 3a to read 'the government of the Society shall be invested in a Council, the members of which shall be elected from Members of the Society, and who sign, if elected, a Basis of Faith approved by the Council'.

Clause 3b The Council shall consist of the President, Hon. Treasurer and not more than ten others.

Clause 4 to substitute 'in the month of May' in place of 'on the Saturday nearest to the 24th May'.

Clause 5 to incorporate procedure for a postal ballot amongst members in good standing when there are more nominations than vacancies on the Council.

Clause 6 to delete reference to 'Fellow', and to provide for Council to determine whether or not a candidate shall be enrolled.

Clause 7 to substitute 'four' in place of 'five' as the Council quorum.

Clause 11 to add '(or Honorary Auditor, not a serving member of the Council)'.

These changes were proposed by Dr. Robson, seconded by Dr. Collis and carried by the meeting.

The Chairman then welcomed the speaker for the evening, Tony Lane, Lecturer In Christian Doctrine at London Bible College, who spoke on the subject 'The Christian and Modern Western Liberalism'.

Mr. Lane traced the liberalist trend from the time of the Enlightenment, and showed how our outlook was so largely shaped by it. Positive and negative aspects of liberalism were outlined, and Christians were warned to be aware of views which were often adopted unthinkingly as part of our culture, but not necessarily Christian in emphasis. The speaker recommended for reading Leslie Newbiggin's 'The Other Side of 1984', which illustrated much of his argument. A fuller report of this lecture will be contained in the next issue of the Bulletin. The talk led to a lively discussion.

INTERPRETING THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF GENESIS

General Background

The text of the book of Genesis has come down to us in the Hebrew language, as well as in a number of other Versions such as Aramaic, Greek, Latin and so forth which are agreed by nearly all scholars to be secondary. It is necessary to ask, however, whether Hebrew was the original language of composition. To assess this it is appropriate to consider the early history of man as it has now been revealed by archaeology.

Very roughly between about 9000 and 6000 B.C. there was a move in the Near East to agriculture with settlement and such technologies as weaving, pottery making, and building. During (most of) this time men communicated by speech, but there is no evidence of writing until about 3000 B.C.

In Mesopotamia the earliest writing at about this time was largely pictographic and also logographic, that is to say the signs were pictures representing words (logograms), which means that for the early stages it is not possible to be sure what language is represented. A series of pictures can just as well be read as English. The significant stage in which signs began to be used to represent sounds (phonograms) came in the earlier part of the third millennium B.C. and at this point it is first possible to identify the language involved as Sumerian. By about 2500 B.C. the Semitic language Akkadian can be recognized in the cuneiform sources. In the other great area of ancient civilization, Egypt, written records also survive from about 3000 B.C., and in these the language can already be recognized as Egyptian, the language of the later hieroglyphic inscriptions.

The fact that written records do not appear until about 3000 B.C.,

shows that for several millennia languages were spoken without any record of them, so there is no evidence to suggest what they were. Moreover it is clear that a language changes over the centuries; Old English, for instance, is virtually unintelligible to the modern English speaker.

There are clues to what languages were spoken before the earliest inscriptions. Recognizable relationships between existing languages suggest an earlier time when related examples were one, the differences having arisen after the earlier speakers divided and went their various ways. This is a phenomenon which is well observed in the example of the Romance languages, French, Italian, Spanish and so forth, which go back to Latin, the development having taken place over a period of something over 2000 years.

A parallel case is found in the Semitic languages, a group represented in modern times particularly by Arabic, Ethiopic and Hebrew. The ancient representatives, known from inscriptions and manuscripts are: Akkadian with its two dialects, Babylonian and Assyrian in the east; Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic and others in the north-west; and Epigraphic South Arabian and Ethiopic in the south-west. From these an earlier Proto-Semitic language can be postulated in the centuries before the first inscriptions. In view of the natural process of language change, already referred to, Proto-Semitic would presumably have been preceded by a series of earlier forms unlike any of those recorded later.

Another consideration, borne out by glimpses of evidence in the surviving inscriptions, is that even in the area of the ancient Near East many other languages were spoken. These tended to be displaced and replaced by the languages of dominant peoples who came to control the main areas.

The placing in time of the first eleven chapters of Genesis is much debated, but Abraham, who first appears in Chapter 11 is probably to be dated around 2000 B.C., so it is worth looking at the probable linguistic situation at that time. In Mesopotamia the main language was Akkadian, with other less widespread languages such as Amorite and Semitic present. This is clear from the cuneiform texts. In Syria-Palestine the evidence is more limited, but it seems that the forerunner(s) of the later West Semitic languages Phoenician, Hebrew and others, conveniently designated the Canaanite group, were already being spoken there by the late third millennium.

In this context Abraham, who is described as originating in southern Mesopotamia, began in an Akkadian speaking area. In Deuteronomy 26:5 he is referred to as a 'wandering Aramaean' (*ārammī 'ōbēd*; cf. also Gen. 25:20; 28:5 etc.). It is possible, therefore,

that, since he had great flocks and herds, he was not a city dweller in Babylonia, but a herder living in the hinterland of the city of Ur. The Aramaeans spread over much of the Near East in this sort of role, so Abraham might have been an Aramaic speaker in Babylonia. This is highly speculative however, and is not supported by present evidence. The Aramaeans are not mentioned in the sources until near the end of the 2nd millennium B.C., but in the absence of evidence about the forerunner of the Aramaic language division it cannot be ruled out that it was spoken much earlier than this without being recorded. Whatever the reality of this situation, Abraham would presumably have spoken Akkadian in the Babylonian dialect of the period.

It is clear, therefore, that when the Patriarchs came to Syria and Palestine they were not Hebrew speakers. Hebrew, as has been mentioned, belongs to the language group usually designated Canaanite, and this is indeed an appropriate designation since the Old Testament refers to it (Hebrew) as the 'lip of Canaan' (*šēpat kēna'an*; Is 19:18).

The question therefore arises, When was Hebrew adopted by the Israelites as their language? The earliest Hebrew inscription, the Gezer Calendar, dates from the 10th century B.C. so it must have been before that. The two main possibilities are either that the Patriarchs adopted the language of Canaan in the early second millennium in Syria-Palestine and took it with them into Egypt, or that the Israelites adopted it when they arrived in Palestine at the time of the Conquest, this latter possibility being the most likely.

It is thus clear that Hebrew cannot have been the original language of the early chapters of Genesis, which could have been brought out of Babylonia by Abraham written in Babylonian cuneiform. In turn, this is unlikely to have been the original language of this material. This is significant for interpretation because, assuming the existence of the same phenomena in transmission and translation, which have been recognized to have operated in the field of New Testament manuscripts and versions, the possibilities of confusion in translation and errors in copying since the composition of the original text cannot be ruled out.

Since it is clear that the Hebrew language was an existing one adopted by the Israelites, it is appropriate to ask how much was borrowed. That is to say, since language consists of words (vocabulary), modifications of words (inflections), combinations of words (syntax) and idioms (combinations of words which do not necessarily have their literal meaning), different degrees of borrowing are possible. The simplest kind is that of single words (loanwords),

without inflections or syntax, but it is clear that in the case of the adoption of Hebrew by the Israelites, it was a complete borrowing, even including some idioms. Idioms are well understood by native speakers of a language, and since they are so well known they are not normally explained in the texts which use them. The English slang expression 'toffy-nosed', or the Americanism 'to take a rain check', would puzzle anyone not thoroughly familiar with the cultures involved, and locutions of this kind would certainly present difficulties to someone in the distant future trying to interpret written records containing them.

In the context of borrowed idioms, it is relevant to refer to the body of literature in Northwest Semitic from Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit. Various idiomatic expressions have been found to be common to Ugaritic and Hebrew, showing clearly, as mentioned above, that in adopting the language which they encountered in Canaan, the Israelites took over many idioms with it. Since idioms are not to be understood in their literal sense, it is necessary to recognize that not everything in a text is to be understood literally.

The Text

The text of Genesis as it has been preserved to us consists of a consonantal base with dots and other marks to indicate the vowels. These vowel marks—the Massoretic points—were only added to the consonantal text in the Christian Era. No ancient Hebrew inscriptions have them, and they are not found in the Biblical manuscripts from Qumran (the Dead Sea Scrolls), which date from the centuries around the beginning of the Christian Era. The use of consonants to represent vowels (*matres lectionis*), ' and *h* for *a*, *y* for *i*, *w* for *o* etc., came in during the first millennium B.C., and these were used extensively at Qumran. Though continual reading aloud of the Biblical texts would have preserved traditions of vowel pronunciation over the centuries, the vowels in the text need not be regarded as sacrosanct by the interpreter. One consideration that makes this clear is the fact that, though the books of the Old Testament span many centuries in their dates of composition, the language in which they are couched has been given a greater degree of uniformity by the ancient scholars who transmitted it than it can have had originally.

Genesis 1-2

In the light of the above mentioned considerations, some individual

observations may be made on selected passages in the first two chapters of Genesis.

Genesis 1:1. The first word in the Bible is written with the consonants *br'syt*, which are vocalized *bērē'sīt* in the standard Massoretic text (that printed in all modern editions). This should be rendered 'in beginning' not 'in the beginning', which would be *bāre'sīt*. Both vocalizations are possible, but there is a subtle difference in interpretation between them. This difference would be increased considerably by an alternative vocalization of the second word *br'* which appears as *bārā'*, 'he created' in the Massoretic text. Thus *bērē'sīt bārā' 'ēlōhīm* gives 'In beginning God created . . .', while *bāre'sīt bēro' 'ēlōhīm* would be rendered 'In the beginning of God's creating . . .', or something of the kind, which alters the meaning to 'When God created', the remainder of verses 1 and 2 then forming a subordinate clause. Both interpretations are possible, with a considerable difference in meaning.

It is possible that the remainder of verse 1 is an example of an idiom. It has been pointed out that in Semitic literature pairs of antonyms can be a way of expressing 'everything'. 'The heavens and the earth' could therefore be an example of this, indicating that God had created 'everything'.

Genesis 1:6. In this verse one of the words much discussed is *raqiā'*, traditionally translated 'firmament'. An etymological approach would observe that the verb *rāqa'* means 'to stamp, to hammer, to beat' or the like, and conclude that *raqiā'* means something like 'that which has been hammered out' or 'flattened', for which cf. Ps. 19:2 and Job 37:18. In view of the use of idiomatic language, however, it would be unwise to assume that the Hebrews necessarily thought of the heavens as a solid dome. Our word 'sky', judging from its usage in some cognate languages, goes back to an Indo-European meaning 'cover, cloud' or something of the kind, but our use of it today does not mean that that is the meaning we attach to it.

Genesis 1:21. The word translated 'great whales' in the Authorized Version, *tannin*, is used in the Old Testament in two main senses. It sometimes refers, as in this verse, to an actual large aquatic creature, not necessarily a single type.

In Ezekiel 32:2 it is something with feet, living in Egypt, and is therefore presumably a crocodile, while in Psalm 148:7 the creature is undefined. In another group of contexts the word is used metaphorically of great political powers of the time. In Isaiah 51:9 and 10 and also in Ezekiel 32:2 it refers to Egypt, as also in Psalm 74:12-15 where Leviathan is also used metaphorically in the same sense. It is

unnecessary, therefore, to accept that *tannin* in this verse is an indication of a mythological forerunner.

One minor point of interpretation serves to show how a translation can be gratuitously misleading. The simple conjunction *wē-*, 'and, but', has been given a tendentious rendering in some instances in the Revised Standard Version:

	2:7	'then'
	2:18	'then'
	2:19	'so'
	2:21	'so'

implying a chronological or causal sequence which is not inherent in the text.

Poetry

Another consideration in interpretation is whether a text aims to be factual or to have some other purpose. Most recorded languages have forms which can be recognized as prose or poetry, and it is a possible assumption that in most cases, while prose will usually be the vehicle of factual, or what is intended to be factual, communication, poetry may not necessarily have this aim.

There are some indications that Genesis 1 has a poetic form. First of all the recurring phrase *wayēhi-'ereb wayēhi- bōqer yôm*, 'and it was evening and it was morning day' followed by 'one' (1:5), 'second' (1:8), 'third' (1:13), 'fourth' (1:19), 'fifth' (1:23), and 'sixth' (1:31), which could be a poetic refrain. This might justify the taking of the whole of Genesis 1 as poetry, and therefore not intended to be taken as a literal account. The repetition of a refrain in this way is not a normal mark of Hebrew poetry as known from the Old Testament, but as has been suggested above, it has to be assumed that the text, certainly of early Genesis, was translated into Hebrew, perhaps by way of Akkadian, from a quite different language, now unknown, in which poetic forms might have been quite different.

There are further hints of poetic patterns in individual passages of Genesis 1.

Genesis 1:5:

yqr' l'wr ywm 'he called light day'
wlhšk qr' lylyh 'and darkness he called night'

in which the word pairs '*wr//hšk*' ('light//darkness') and '*ywm//lylyh*' ('day//night') are used in a way beyond normal prose usage.

Genesis 1:10:

yqr' *lybšh 'rs* 'he called dry land earth'

wlmqwh hmym qr' ymym 'and the gathering of waters he called seas'

shows the same characteristic with alternation of genders, *ybšh(f)//mqwh hmym(m)* and *'rs(f)//mym(m)*, known as gender-matched parallelism.

Genesis 1:16: If the final phrase 'and the stars' is omitted from this verse, the remainder,

'God made the two great lights,
the larger light to rule the day,
and the smaller light to rule the night'

forms a balanced tricolon.

Genesis 1:20:

yšrsw . . . šrs 'let swarm . . . swarming things'

w'wp . . . y'wpp 'and flying things . . . let fly',

making use of word pairs based on the verbal roots *šrs*, 'to swarm', and *'wp* 'to fly'.

In each of these instances it would be necessary to assume, taking it that the text is translated from another language, that the translator had recognized a poetic intention in the original (possibly oral), and had tried to reflect this in his own version.

There is, of course, much uncertainty and speculation in all this, but I hope I have shown that it is unreasonable to be dogmatic over the correct interpretation of the account of creation in Genesis.

Bibliography

For Hebrew poetry see W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A Guide to its Techniques* (Sheffield, 1984), and for the passages mentioned above pp. 45 and n. 87 (1:16), 46 (1:20), 51 (1:5), 53 (1:10).

WHAT'S THE USE OF DIVINITY?

Each age has its dominant *zeitgeist*. Our age certainly is no exception to the rule, though ours, unhappily, appears to be a bit more noisy than some others have been, a sort of *polterzeitgeist*, a clanging brass of a spirit of the time, a spirit which thrives on and engenders a materialistic utilitarianism all-the-more apparent for its rather disingenuous endorsement of what it chooses to call 'traditional values'.

This is most striking in the manner in which the academic community in many western countries puzzles over the status of divinity in the modern university. The question arises repeatedly, 'what is the use of divinity?' The question betrays the philosophical assumptions of those who ask it. And so we must reflect, and reflect

seriously, upon the place of theological work in the context of an academic environment profoundly influenced by cultural materialism and utilitarianism.

The study of divinity comprehends a varied array of disciplines: systematic theology, historical theology, biblical and philosophical theology, biblical studies, ancient languages, Church history, moral philosophy, missiology, hermeneutics, homiletics, pastoral care and counselling, religious studies, philosophy of religion and comparative religion. At one time this amalgam of disciplines was considered the 'queen of the sciences'. Now she must satisfy herself with a humbler station, sort of a metaphysical 'lady who does'. In the upstairs-downstairs world of academic society, divinity has moved to the smaller rooms in the attic leaving the modern technologies to renovate the drawing room.

The shift in quarters heralds a prior shift in attitude. Divinity clings tenaciously to the worn notion that the most important things in life cannot be seen or measured. Certainly this is not a popular perspective in a climate where the most valued disciplines are those that produce quantifiable 'stuff'. Divinity is, for this reason, among others, often pictured as the discipline of the dusty tomes, the angels-dancing-on-pin-heads school, the *divina commedia* of unscientific science.

And, indeed, there is a lot to be said for the disciplines of 'stuff': medicine, engineering, chemistry, physics, economics, psychology, computer sciences, political and military sciences and others. There is much of great value in these sciences; sciences both soft and hard.

But there is more to humanity than the skull beneath the skin, more even than the mind, more certainly than the accumulation and the protection of the things which give us a measure of control over this world. Yet we do tend to fall into intellectual traps which force us then to evaluate reality according to preset criteria that do not hold up well in the face of new and different events.

The traps of modern culture are such wholesome traps, they hardly seem traps at all. One trap into which we so easily fall is the trap of judging the value of something by asking its 'use'. Actually this is the second trap of the modern era; the first being a bit older, namely, determining the value of something by determining if it is a sensible material something. Let us look at both of these traps before we go on to ask about the value of divinity, realizing that before we can inquire into the value of anything, we must agree on criteria by which to determine its value.

The first trap to which we turn our attention is the trap of evaluating something by determining if it is a material thing. Once upon a time,

Greek thinkers made a rather far-reaching assumption which many people have taken up as though it were the most fundamental verity of common wisdom.

The assumption was that there is an unbreachable boundary between the world of matter or existence, the sensible world, and the world of ideas, or the intelligible world. A wedge was driven between the concrete and mutable physical world and the absolute and perfect world of ideals.

But not only was there a dichotomy between these worlds, there was opposition and conflict as well. The world of spirit was opposed to the world of matter, and the sensible to the intelligible. This philosophical assumption underlay many of the earliest and most threatening heresies in the early Christian church. Arguably this assumption has proven the most potent philosophical assumption ever made.

The idea received a new breath of life following upon the age of rationalism when a number of philosophers took the inevitable step of saying that since one cannot see the invisible—a matter of course—all one can talk about with clarity is the visible—a leaping conclusion.

Others went on a bit further to conclude that the invisible world, which we cannot even speak about with clarity (according to their assumptions), is not really very important anyway, and so we might as well get on with the really significant stuff of life (which 'we can all see'). In time the rather benign dichotomy between visible and invisible, sensible and intelligible, grew up into the beautiful blue-eyed seductress materialism who beckons us to believe she is the only girl in town.

Perhaps by now T. S. Eliot's hollow men are so haunted by William Blake's prophetic realism of spiritual matter pressing them to see beyond the horizons of the 'dull round', that we are ready to break out of the boundaries set by our own materialist assumptions. Or, perhaps, for many of us, it takes the quantum shock of sub-nuclear physics to shake our faith in matter as matter and the inevitability of cause-effect, and to force us to confront the boundlessness of this universal continuum.

At whatever level we encounter it, it is becoming increasingly clear to many of us who used to be quite comfortable in our post-Enlightenment materialistic scepticism that the reality with which we are dealing is at once more complex and more simple, and infinitely more exciting, than we had previously dared to imagine.

The trap of determining the value of something on the basis of whether or not it can be seen, touched, felt or measured, is an intellectual trap of the first order. It forces us to decide before ever

we meet the knowable object or event whether or not we will allow that object a place in our epistemic system. Thus we are saying even before we start out on our voyage of discovery that we will not recognize those things which are so radically new that they call into question our assumptions about the way reality functions.

This sort of *a priori* defining of the frame of knowledge may make one comfortable in one's preconceptions, but it guarantees—by definition—that one will not meet reality in any other than what has been confirmed by one's own individual experience on previous occasions. It closes the door to any possibilities that are outside the boundaries of what we have already conceived. In other words, it is an extraordinary close-minded and unscientific way in which to do any kind of inquiry.

Such a system, which denies the legitimate inquiry into reality outside the boundaries of quantifiable matter, is based upon the dualism of the sensible against the intelligible. But, this system goes even further to say that matter is somehow more real than whatever else there may be, because matter is subject to quantification. Such a naive perspective not only represents inadequate philosophy. It represents an inadequate vision of science.

The second trap we will consider is newer. This is the trap of setting up utility as the ultimate criteria by which we evaluate all things. If we can use this or that thing in our present experience, we say, especially if we can use this or that thing for economic gain, then the thing is valuable. If the thing cannot be put to 'practical' use, it had no 'real' value. 'Practical', in this context, generally means 'immediate', and usually implies an industrial, business-management, or military application. 'Real' should most often be translated as 'material', 'visible' or 'economically profitable'.

The trap here is more subtle than in the previous case because often the test is very useful. Practical utility is a reliable criterion for determining the value of many things, an automobile, for instance. If I design an automobile which is beautiful, but which will not start, it is of no practical value. An automobile exists primarily in order to carry persons from point A to point B. One which does not is useless and practically valueless.

Suppose someone devises a fascinating new economic theory, a sort of grand unified theory that suddenly transforms the entire monetary landscape, but the first time the theory is put to the practical test it proves unreliable in predicting the rise or fall of interest rates, then the theory is proven vitually useless. It is of no practical value despite how fascinating it is or how many copies of the book announcing the new theory the author has sold.

In each case, in rather different ways, the test of utility is, itself, useful. Practical use is a good criterion for determining the value of many things around us. But there is a vast world of reality which does not uniformly submit itself to this test. There are relational and ontological contexts in which this test proves to be useless. The problem, however, is not the use of the test *per se*, but the indiscriminate and universal use of a test that has only specific application.

It is useless to ask what is the use of Monét's 'Water Lilies'. When one encounters them for the first time, dashing into the museum perhaps out of a Paris rain shower, shaking off the water in the foyer, waiting in a queue not knowing what to expect, then stepping into the presence of the artist's vision with an audible gasp, the question of utility is irrelevant.

The love, if it is love, of one person for another calls into question at its deepest level. For love to be love it must be, much of the time, useless in any terms that can be practically defined.

Being and becoming, understood as a gracious givenness from someone or something outside our horizon of vision, defies our attempts to categorize in terms of utility. We may or may not make use of what we have been given, may or may not become in a grateful and joyful manner. But use does little to evaluate the gift of being and becoming, the givenness of the gift, itself.

In specific cases in rather limited kinds of situations, the test of utility is appropriate and helpful. But in many more cases, it falls useless.

The test of materialism fails at the point of its fundamental assumption, which is false. The test of utilitarianism fails at the point of its universal application. A society, however, which makes the former assumptions about matter and spirit and which applies the test of utility indiscriminately and universally is bound to be on a collision course with the disciplines which make up divinity, because we utterly reject the assumptions behind materialism and the subject of our inquiry utterly transcends the merely useful.

God is the subject of divinity. To be more precise, God, as God has given himself to be known as triune God, God known as Father of the Son through the incarnation of the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. This God, who is beyond finding out has allowed himself to be found out in the divine-human person of Jesus Christ. The triune God, who created all things seen and unseen, out of his great love, and who sustains them even now by his creative will, graciously will bring all things to completion and reconciliation. This God who has given himself to be known in Christ by the Spirit engages us, his children, to

worship and adore and enjoy him, to reflect upon him and to live in his radiance.

Now all that has just been said involves an explicit rejection of any idea that spirit and matter are split apart into two opposing realms of existence. Christian theology, as it has defined itself in its Ecumenical definitions of faith, rejects such a dualism and affirms an understanding of reality that is radically (i.e. at its root) and essentially unified and dependent upon the triune God.

The very test of materialism is rejected as an invalid test because it is based on a false assumption concerning the nature of reality. Christian theology lives its life of reflection in the after-glow of a unique and continuing encounter with God that has forced it to find new ways to think and to speak. Rather than coming to the encounter of God in Christ with a grid of assumptions about God, creation and humanity, according to which our faith will categorize the divine-human encounter in terms that we have previously defined as valid, our faith chooses to come to this encounter asking God to be God according to his own criteria, allowing our walls of perceptual alienation to be broken down.

But there is the other test. It brings us back to our title, 'what is the use of divinity?' This is the utilitarian question taking stock of divinity. Finally we contend that the question is all wrong. It is like the popular preachers who spend a great deal of time demanding relevance of the gospel, when they do not discern that it is the gospel that is demanding relevance of them. Perhaps it is divinity—the Divinity—who is asking us 'what is the use of academics?'

But, this time, 'use' is defined not by economic utility or military and industrial and business application, but by God's peculiar notions of utility. And such strange notions of utility(!) God has: binding up the broken, feeding the hungry, setting captives at liberty, exhibiting gratuitous generosity to the under-achieving, throwing fancy dress banquets for hookers and layabouts, welcoming prodigals home even before they've repented, turning the world upside-down with a kingdom of God parables macking reality that 'will not work in the real world as anyone plainly can see!'

The value of divinity is not determined by its 'practical application' in economically profitable spheres of influence. The value of divinity is determined by the subject of its reflection: God. To ask what use is that cluster of academic disciplines under the heading 'divinity' is to ask what is the value of critical reflection on our faith? What is the value of worship? Ministry? Christian ethics? The asking of such questions reveals our culture's ambiguity in wanting to retain that misty cloud of ideals it calls 'traditional values' while wanting to pay

only formal allegiance to the concrete demands of Christian faith.

The fact is that divinity is of practical value. But often it is of practical value in ways that are hard for a materialistic and utilitarian society to accept. Divinity, as a discipline, is a loose cannon on the desk of the ship of state, a dangerous friend who may just as easily raise embarrassing questions about societal justice as about liturgical practice.

And this is, after all, the problem of divinity, not that its subject matter is obscure and meaningless, but that its subject matter is clear and meaningful, and unafraid of our best—and worst—societal efforts to hem in and 'use' God for its own purposes. Divinity does have a place in the university of today, if it does its job right. The trouble is, the better it does its job, the less welcome it is likely to feel.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Capra and Torrance

Dear Dr. Robins,

Readers of the article 'Capra on Eastern Mysticism and Modern Physics: A Critique', *Science and Christian Belief* (1989) 1, 53-74, may be interested in some correspondence between Capra and Torrance, as described in the latter's 'The Ground and Grammar of Theology'. Torrance writes: 'He (Capra) wrote to me one day after having read a paper of mine entitled "The Integration of Form in Natural and in Theological Science" to say that I had been engaged there with the same problem he had been working with in particle and quantum theory. He had found it so difficult to express the way in which he found particles containing one another, as it were, within the structure of language of the Western type, that he had been forced to take over relational ways of thought from Hindu and Buddhist thought and also from Taoist thought . . .

In my reply I pointed out that the relational thinking of Hindu and Buddhist thought is not correlated with the empirical realities of nature, and indeed cannot be; so that relational thinking of that kind would hardly be appropriate for physics. Then I drew his attention to the concept of *perichoresis* in the Christian tradition. If we are to talk about particles somehow containing and interpenetrating one another, then why not use this way of thinking, for that is precisely the

notion latent in *perichoresis* which Christian theology refined and developed to express the mutual co-inherence of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. This perichoretic connection is essentially an onto-relational one which is, as I understood him, what Dr. Capra was after.

Now granted that, as refined and exalted in the Holy Trinity, the perichoretic relation is not directly correlated with the physical world—how could it be?—nevertheless, it was reached through a movement of thought that took its rise from the empirico-theoretical ground of the incarnational activity of God within the spatio-temporal structures of our world, and it remains, indirectly through the level of the economic trinitarian relations, empirically correlated with that ground.

Hence it would not be surprising if a perichoretic relation, with appropriate and adequate changes in relation to the nature of the subject-matter in the field, could be applied to the problem of quantum theory or of particle theory. And in fact that has been done with real success by Professor Christopher B. Kaiser in a work that is as yet unpublished. Here, then, we have an instance where Christian theology in its rigorous, scientific form can be of real help even to natural science, where it is concerned with the almost inexpressible, intricate, intelligible exchange-relations in the micro-physical world.'

(The book from which I quote was published in 1980).

Can any reader supply details of the work by Professor Kaiser mentioned by Torrance?

Yours sincerely,
Frank J. Peachey.

Longevity

Dear Sir,

Your journal was suggested to me by Professor Howard Marshall of *Evangelical Quarterly* as possibly being interested in my newsletter *Longevity Report*.

You are no doubt aware of two recent events that are in some way interconnected. On the one hand we have the Bishop of Durham's pronouncements on the Resurrection, and on the other we have the rise of various movements that aim to extend human lifespan by scientific means.

Many of your readers will have seen, for example, the *Equinox* programme on the cryonic suspension of Dora Kent, and the *Kilroy* chat show with the Rt. Rev. Hugh Montefiore discussing cryonics. Cryonic suspension is the freezing of newly dead people in the hope of restoration, by future nanotechnology, to youth and health followed

by a restoration to consciousness. Nanotechnology is the science of manipulating matter an atom at a time using self replicating machines whose working parts are atoms and molecules.

I would be grateful for some space amongst your letters to bring your readers' attention to my private circulation newsletter *Longevity Report*. It currently has a circulation of just over 70, and gives its readers a chance to discuss matters relating to the use of science and technology to extend lifespan.

Unusually amongst such publications it gives both sides of the argument, and I do give readers every chance to get their views into print. In addition, a subscriber who gets a letter or article published receives the next six issues free of subscription.

Could cryonics be regarded as going against God's will, or is it an act of gratitude for the gift of life? Is the introduction of cryonics another act in a continuous process of creation? As *Longevity Report* is not run by a cryonics society, it can print views both for and against the procedure.

The subscription is £5 for six issues of 20–24 pages each, which just about covers production costs.

My address is West Towan House, Porthtowan, Truro, Cornwall TR4 8AX, and I would be happy to send any of your readers a sample copy, if they would be kind enough to mention this magazine when requesting it.

Sincerely,
John de Rivaz.

Sixth Dimension

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 3rd April and enclosures.

I serve God as a missionary working specifically with sixth formers (16–18 year olds) in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight region. Most of this work is in the form of debates and I am continually wanting to think through many issues. I hope being a member of the Victoria Institute will help.

I am also enclosing a copy of my recent paper on Science and Christianity, 'Has Science disproved Christianity?' (Editor has a copy). This is one of a series of 'Sixth Dimension' leaflets that I write for Scripture Union (one a term) on issues which provide stumbling blocks to sixth formers coming to faith—I have written one on the issue of Suffering, and I am now writing one called 'Isn't it all Psychological?'. The reason I tell you this is, I wonder whether you might have any back copies of your journal or other papers written by

your members which you think might be helpful to me in my work. If you do have any, I will be delighted to receive them.

Another area that I am beginning to study is the whole issue of the implications of atheism. Many students I meet tell me (often quite proudly) that they are atheists. However they have never thought through what this means in terms of the purpose of life, the basis for morality, the value of the individual, love, etc. etc. I will be spending two weeks with David Cook in Oxford this summer beginning to think through these issues with a view to writing a book. So again, if you have anything of interest in these areas, I would be very pleased to receive them.

Finally, I notice from your literature that you convene conferences on specific issues. If it were possible, I would be delighted to have the opportunity to present some of my work which is 'in progress'; it would help me a great deal to have greater brains than mine criticizing my efforts.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,
Nick Pollard.

BOOK REVIEWS

W. G. Pollard, **Transcendence and Providence**, Scottish Academic Press, 1987, 267pp, Hardback, £12.50

This book comprises a set of essays given as lectures or articles over the past 35 years. The dominant theme is that we can apprehend a reality which is independent of, but yet impinges on, space and time, and that the evolutionary processes are not totally the result of natural forces, but of some mind or purpose.

There is a very small amount of repetition in some chapters, but this in no way detracts from a fascinating and stimulating book, carefully researched and with a reasonable index.

This book is a good answer to those who would advocate the 'Death of God' and it is the thought of 'The Reflections of a Physicist and a Priest' which point to God's being alive and well.

It has always been felt by some that the natural world is a pointer to the existence of a mind or a creator, and whereas our forefathers used the argument from design, they could not have conceived of the intricate and delicate balances of nature, both on the cosmological and the world scale, which allowed the earth to support life. Pollard

argues for the uniqueness of the earth in the cosmos, and for the emergence of man as a creature, not dependent on blind chance, and he gives cogent and reasonable arguments to support his views.

In many essays, the author considers the idea of Transcendence i.e. the existence of a reality outside of space and time, but yet bearing on our own existence. He feels that ours is a 'Dark Age' because it has lost this apprehension of Transcendence. Furthermore, he would go so far as to say that, in spite of the attitudes to magic, credulity and superstition, men in the times prior to Galileo were closer to God than we. This is simply because their thought forms were nearer to the Judaeo-Christian influence, whereas we are more in tune with the rational, questioning ethos of the Graeco-Roman heritage. This seems to me to be very much of a half-truth, since language, its use and meaning is bound to change from age to age.

The author has something to say about his own conversion. From being a highly successful physicist, he became an ordained priest in the American Anglican church. Furthermore, he extols the virtues of the Anglican tradition as opposed to others. The concept of 'priest' and of tradition is, I think, rather overdone. For instance Jesus made no claim to be a priest, and 'went about doing good'.

Perhaps the most important chapter is that on 'Toward a Theology of Nature'. In this essay, Pollard rightly reminds us of the misuse of this unique and beautiful earth. He feels that were men to destroy themselves, and consequently the earth, the universe would cry out in anguish, and find it difficult to forgive such an act. This is the language of myth, but surely there seems to be something in it. In these excursions into the unthinkable, Pollard rightly hopes that the Church might become a focus of change for all mankind, in man's attitude and response to nature.

In general I liked this book; one is brought face-to-face with many aspects of the creation process. The author convinces us that this implies a purposeful, beneficial mind at work. This is positive and a great comfort in the present age when the prevailing outlook for the human race is the anxiety of non-being.

B. W. Cook

W. P. Carvin, **Creation and Scientific Explanation**, Scottish Academic Press, 1988, 103pp, Hardback, £10.50

This is quite a gem of a book. Within, one learns something of the physics of Aristotle, and how this influenced the thinking of Aquinas in his argument for the existence of God. We also study the mathematics

and physics of Leibniz, and how he, in conjunction with the thought of Descartes, tried to reason for a creator-God.

The author distinguishes between faith and science, and realizes that science has encroached on faith—more and more is explained by science. Yet he would stand by the basic postulate that science can say nothing about the ultimate origin of things, this being in the realm of faith. It has been said that the words of Scripture remain constant, their interpretation varying from age to age. In a similar sense, Carver points out that the reason for making the statement: 'I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth' varies with the science of the day, and with the currently-accepted model of cosmology. This will, of course, influence the answer to the question 'Why is there this "something"?'.

This book asserts that science cannot explain the ultimate origin of things, and greatly clarifies our thinking on the relationship between science and faith. It is a refreshing and readable book.

B. W. Cook

Richard Bergland, **The Fabric of Mind**, Viking, 1985, 202pp, Hardback, £12.95

On receiving this volume for review I wondered how difficult it would be for a layman, like myself, with little knowledge of brain research to read and understand. I need not have worried. The author, a prominent American neurosurgeon, writes with the enthusiasm of someone who has just received a revelation and wants to communicate it to as many people as possible. In a sense this is precisely what has happened. The thesis of the book is that the history of brain research has gone up a series of blind alleys because researchers have failed to see the brain for what it is, a gland releasing hormones which affect behaviour. This new understanding not only enables us to account for depression, anxiety, love etc, but also provides hope for the cure for senility, obesity and mental illness.

Bergland maintains that throughout history false paradigms about the workings of the brain (what he calls 'mismemes') have been perpetuated by institutions. Creative thinkers and geniuses like Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and John Hunter asked questions and used the right hemisphere of the brain and, interestingly, were probably all dyslexic. The scientific community, however, wanted answers—the sphere of the intellectual left hemisphere—not questions. To go against the mismeme could cost a person his life as happened when Servetus asserted, against the accepted view,

adopted from Plato, that blood circulates around the body. Even where it must have been obvious that the paradigm was incorrect still, the author insists, so pervasive was the paradigm that it had to be incorporated. He cites as an example Galen's discovery of arterial blood but his equal reluctance to drop the belief, adopted from Aristotle, that 'spirit' flowed through the arteries. He therefore compromised and proclaimed that the arteries carried both. Such mismemes are not just a thing of the past. The author insists he was a victim. He was so convinced that the brain was an electrically driven computer that he subjected patients to needless and ineffective surgery, which he now regrets.

The breakthrough came for the author when he reviewed cases, like that of Norman Cousins, who found relief from excruciating pain by laughter. Dr. Bergland now wants the authorities to allow experimentation that will enable hormones to be produced that will reverse processes like schizophrenia, dementia and the long-term effects of drug abuse.

'For millions who are ill,' he says, 'the realization that the brain is a hormonally modulated gland is revolutionary therapeutic good news.' His book is, he claims, '... a salute to scientists, a public call to action and a compendium of new knowledge about the treasury of hormones in the brain.' It is certainly a fascinating book and well worth reading, but as to whether the basic thesis is true or not how am I, as a layman, able to judge!

R. S. Luhman

Michael Green, **Baptism**, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987, 141pp, Paperback, £1.95

Alister McGrath, **The Enigma of the Cross**, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987, 192pp, Paperback, £6.95

Christina Baxter (ed.), **Stepping Stones**, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987, 210pp, £7.95

These three books not only all come from the same publisher; they also have in common that they are expressions of evangelical Anglican theology. Your reviewer is not an Anglican, and therefore he inevitably looks at them from the standpoint of an evangelical Christian in another tradition to see how far they are truly expressive of an evangelical position.

Michael Green writes in his usual clear and vigorous manner at a

popular level on the significance of baptism and tries to sort out the confusion that exists amid advocates of infant, believer's and second (Holy Spirit) baptism. He endeavours to balance what he calls the Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal strands, which emphasize respectively, entry into the family of God which has existed down the ages, the seal of personal faith, and the reception of the Spirit—all of which are necessary. He begins with, and makes much of, the OT antecedents to baptism—although perhaps it is better to begin with Christ and the NT. He regards baptism with water as 'instrumental'—provided that it is rightly received: 'Baptism puts you into Christ, if you let yourself be put.' Baptism is then not just a witness to conversion but an instrument of conversion. But it should be administered to the infant children of Christian parents on the analogy of circumcision and the admission of proselyte families in Judaism, on the basis of family baptism in the NT, and on the basis of Jesus' attitude to children. Objections put by a Baptist are considered and answered. Green recognizes the necessity for subsequent confirmation after infant baptism, but he runs into very heavy weather when he tries to justify the practice of confirming members of other denominations who transfer to the Anglican Church. He rejects the concept of a baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion and he is strongly against rebaptism with water, although he is strangely sympathetic to having some other kind of rite involving water to remind people of their earlier baptism.

The positive theology of baptism which is expounded is generally convincing, although I should want to probe into what exactly 'instrument' means in this connection. It is the extension of this theology to cover infants that raises most questions. When will paedobaptists learn that Acts 2:39ff. is not a promise to 'you and your infants' but to 'you and your descendants' and is meant to emphasize the universality of the gospel offer in terms of future time and extended space? Baptists have shown clearly enough that the baptism of households cannot be proved to have included infants, however likely it may be judged to be; in every case in Acts where persons are baptized, the gospel was preached to them and the implication is that they *all* heard and responded to it. Nor is the clear distinction between the old covenant made with a physical people, and the new covenant made with a spiritual people, adequately recognized. It is one thing for Jesus—and the church—to pray for God's blessing on children; it is another thing to baptize them. The idea of sponsors repenting and believing on behalf of the child is highly odd, and where is its biblical basis? Defenders of a Reformed doctrine of infant baptism make much of the covenant, but just where

is the NT evidence that the children of believers are 'in' the covenant and therefore entitled to baptism? Children were admitted to the OT Church, and therefore should not be excluded from the NT Church, we are told: but in what sense are they 'in' the Church by baptism if they are not yet Christians by their own faith. And why should infant baptism be restricted to the children of believers: what kind of God is it who (on Green's view) welcomes unbelieving children to baptism and the church because their parents believe but excludes other children until they come to personal faith? Paedobaptists will have to do much better than this!

Alister McGrath aims in his book to demonstrate both the centrality and the relevance of the cross in Christian theology and life. His book is therefore not a 'theory of the atonement' in the traditional sense, although occasional hints show that he has a thoroughly orthodox understanding of it. He is rather concerned to show that the whole of our theology and life must be cruciform, and that the centre of Christianity is the crucified God whom we see in Jesus. He wants to stress that it is the cross rather than the resurrection which is central: although Christ is indeed crucified and risen, the believer is crucified with Christ but not yet risen with him. One can see the need for this insistence over against a triumphalist, Corinthian type of theology which thinks that it has moved on beyond the cross to the next stage, but McGrath seems to be in some danger of ignoring the very clear NT teaching that Christians already enjoy newness of life and already are risen with Christ and seated in the heavenly places. The tension of 'already and not yet' must be preserved in a more balanced way than happens here.

But the basic point of the book is firmly established. If you want to find out what God is like, the place to start is the cross. McGrath insists that theology must be carried on from a standpoint of faith. He attacks the type of theology which is based on the Enlightenment and measures what can be believed by human logic. He takes us back to the deep insights of Luther as a better basis for theology. Yet all this raises the question of the truth of faith, and this issue is left undecided.

This is an excellent statement of the centrality of the cross, but I was left rather at a loss as to what the intended readership is; it seems to be for the general Christian reader, but it will need a fair degree of theological awareness to cope with its rich content.

When I took up the third book, its subtitle, 'Joint Essays on Anglican Catholic and Evangelical Unity', made me think of unity between Catholics and Protestants. It is in fact about unity between two groups in Anglicanism, and its distinctive feature is that the seven essays in it are each written by a pair of Catholic and Evangelical writers who set

out their common beliefs with occasional expressions of difference of opinion. The essays cover how to do theology; the incarnation; the ministry; Anglican identity; the church; the family; and mission. A very large amount of material is pretty non-controversial, not surprisingly since traditional Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals both tend to be fairly orthodox and biblically based in their theology. It is much to be welcomed that so much agreement is manifest.

The question that intrigues me is whether there has been any advance from the situation typified for me by an Evangelical Anglican friend over twenty years ago; he confessed to being first an Anglican and second an Evangelical, and I was (and still am) absolutely staggered by this statement of priorities. The same point emerged during discussions of schemes for Anglican-Methodist unity when it seemed to me that Anglican Evangelicals were far more concerned to discuss common ground with Anglo-Catholics—as witness the publication of that unfortunate volume *Growing into Union* which never even dreamed of asking whether the kind of scheme which pleased Anglicans, with its preservation of the historic episcopate and the threefold ministry, its denial of lay celebration of communion and its stress on infant baptism as normative, could possibly be acceptable to the other evangelical Christians in England who were expected to acquiesce in it. Are we any nearer to *evangelical* unity in this country?

On the evidence of this book there is a vast amount of theological territory where we can be at one. But there is still no self-criticism regarding the threefold ministry and the priestly character of the ministry, and I find myself asking what changes there are in Anglo-Catholicism in practice. An Anglo-Catholic communion service still involves a highly elaborate ritual which is far removed from New Testament simplicity and is in danger of obscuring the Gospel. There can be agreement on paper on the nature of the gospel and on the necessity of mission, but when one sees parishes where evangelism is a dead duck, what sort of real unity in mission is possible? I make this comment while only too conscious that the same can be said of many non-Anglican churches which have the form of evangelical godliness but lack the power thereof. The truth is perhaps that we ought to be more concerned, all of us, about the revival of the church than about the other matters which occupy our attention. Certainly if the building of bridges between Evangelicals and Catholics can lead to a renewed emphasis on evangelism, then we can be grateful, and it is to be hoped that this book of essays will contribute to that end. But I hope that we may also see some Stepping Stones between

Evangelicals in different denominations; we seem to be no nearer presenting a united front on what a united **evangelical** church would look like.

I. Howard Marshall

A. A. Hoekema, **Created in God's Image**, Paternoster, 1986, 264pp, Hardback, £12.95

This is the second volume in a series of studies in Biblical Theology by the Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. Not surprisingly it lies firmly in the Calvinistic evangelical tradition. The author has a particular liking for Dutch Reformed theologians whom he frequently quotes in his own translations. The book begins with a short historical survey of representative thinkers; Ireneaus, Aquinas, Calvin, Barth, Brunner and Berkouwer. All, except for Calvin and Berkouwer, are criticized for various shortcomings. Ireneaus for minimizing the fall by suggesting that the 'likeness' lost was an extra and not an essential part of man's nature. Aquinas is criticized for locating God's image in human intellect and for following the Greeks in devaluing the body and making it the chief source of sin. Barth and Brunner are praised for their dynamic understanding of 'imaging in relationship' but taken to task for rejecting the historicity of the Fall.

Hoekema gives an excellent theological summary showing how the 'image' in man mirrors God both in structure and function and originally enabled man to exercise a threefold relationship towards God, mankind and nature. The image was, however, perverted by the Fall which resulted in a redirection of worship towards idols, the manipulation of other people and a wasteful exploitation of the environment. The image can be restored by conversion and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and finds its complete perfection at the final glorification, when we will achieve what Adam failed to, namely being able not to sin and die.

The most contentious part of the book, and of particular interest to readers of 'Faith and Thought', is the central section dealing with the historicity of Adam and the universality and transmission of sin. Hoekema insists not only that Adam and Eve were real people but also that the talking serpent was a real snake. There is a certain inconsistency here. He is prepared to accept that many of the details of the Fall account are symbolic and that the snake was a tool of Satan and its offspring humans who share the devil's purpose, but yet still insists that there was a real talking snake. I am not convinced that the

parallelism between Adam and Christ demands any more than that Adam was a representative of humanity. Also, with Cranfield, I believe it is only necessary to maintain that both the actions of Adam and Christ had far-reaching effects rather than to accept a full-blown doctrine of original sin and total depravity. The author, it is true, carefully defines his terms and rejects certain more extreme views but nevertheless insists on direct imputation of sin, by which he means that everybody is born in a state of corruption transmitted by an unknown mechanism through the parents. He absolves infants from condemnation because either they are incapable of (bad) works or else are children of believers under covenant protection. He does not show how this doctrine applies to the incarnation. If Jesus was born in a state of corruption he could not be perfect, but if he were perfect how could he be truly man if he was not a participant in Adam's sin?

The rest of the book follows a generally-accepted consensus of modern opinion. Linguistic arguments are mounted to support a unitary view of the person and there are useful discussions of the unpardonable sin, the intermediate state and human freedom.

R. S. Luhman

Saul Friedländer, Gerald Holton, Leo Marx and Eugene Skolnikoff (editors), **Visions of Apocalypse. End or Rebirth?**, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985, 268pp, \$15.50

The peculiar style of writing known as *apocalyptic* originated among the Jews of Palestine and the Dispersion in the second century BC and covers the many apocalyptic writings produced at that time, from the book of Daniel in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes in 165 BC through to the book of Revelation at the turn of the first century AD.

For many years its relevance for our understanding of the Jewish tradition and the Christian message alike has been called in question. More recently, however, there has been a revival of interest, not least among biblical and systematic theologians (E. Käsemann, W. Pannenberg). This has probably been prompted by a fresh study of the texts and the questionings of New Testament scholarship. Yet there may be a deeper reason for this revitalized interest. Apocalyptic, like any other style of writing or religious thought, has to be understood within its historical framework, and it is not without significance that the period within which Jewish apocalyptic grew and flourished was at one and the same time one of the most heroic and one of the most tragic in Israel's history. It was a time of severe testing—of

persecution and suffering—when the hearts of the faithful longed passionately for the intervention of God in human affairs.

Hence the revival of apocalyptic in theological study during the past generation is perhaps not surprising; for between the two centuries or so preceding the Christian era and the greater part of the twentieth century there is a marked affinity which engenders sympathy and understanding. Each is an age of crisis—politically, socially and religiously—when long-established institutions and deeply held beliefs have come under severe attack. This generation's challenge to 'orthodox' faith and the assertion that 'God is dead' remind us of even more traumatic challenges levelled at the faithful in former times.

Apocalyptic is a language of crisis; in times of stress it lifts up its voice to give needed assurance to God's people. Often it has gone undetected, sometimes for centuries at a time, breaking surface every now and again. The hopes and fears are always there, just below the surface of religious thought and experience. They may find new expression and renewed interpretation but their essential message has a relevance in every age of crisis, not least our own.

Up to about a hundred years ago almost the whole of western civilized society accepted the Bible as the infallible authority for belief in the great Christian drama—Creation, Incarnation, Resurrection and Redemption—and its acceptance was general even among those who had rejected the church. But the security of this common heritage has been crumbling under the intellectual strain imposed by the advance of modern science and the growth of biblical criticism.

Problems are continually being raised by the way in which man is applying the scientific method to himself in the fields of psychology, sociology, biology and medicine. It is not at all clear how we are to use the knowledge we have gained and are still gaining about our own minds and bodies. If it is possible to improve human life by controlling genetic patterns, body structure, duration of life, mental functions and the like, then decisions must be made as to what form the 'improvements' should take.

And if man is to understand himself and attempt to monitor his future, he will be obliged to look for trends in order to make some sort of projection into the future. But where is he to look for such information?

Apart from looking inside himself and, by the process of introspection, trying to discover some pattern of development, it is also possible to look at literature to examine the way in which modern authors understand what man is. Perhaps there he can find some clue to his future role.

This interesting, nay thought-provoking volume attempts to do just that. It contains essays reflecting on hopes and fears for the future expressed by eleven prominent modern writers (historians, scientists and philosophers) who survey the apocalyptic theme in its widest historical context. The first group of essays (Harald Reiche, Amos Funkenstein, Saul Friedländer, and Frank Kermode) deals with apocalyptic beliefs, beliefs in end and renewal, including beliefs in a total end; the next group (Harvey Brooks, Robert Morison, and Robert Jay Lifton) assesses specific contemporary threats of catastrophe; while the third group (Matei Calinescu, André Reszler, and Richard Poirier) analyses modern thinking and writing about the end of 'Man'. The concluding essay, by Philip Morrison, considers the end of humanity from the scientific vantage point.

Each contribution explores a different way of contemplating the end, yet at the present time all such visions seem to be converging. The frightening prospect before us derives its credibility essentially from the existence of our new science-based military technology and the resurgence of apocalyptic beliefs. There is also an increasing rejection of traditional doctrines in all those branches of society in which the quality and meaning of life is of vital importance; for example, faith in 'Man' as a uniquely-endowed being has, in the past, militated strongly against humanity's self-destructive tendencies. Yet each contribution evinces a strong belief that humanity can overcome such threats and the over-all conclusion is that the human mind still offers the best chance of reasserting our commitment to life.

While the literature analysis adds necessary balance to the work, the second section may be of more immediate interest to the scientist.

Here Harvey Brooks discusses the possibility of technologically-related catastrophes, e.g. large-scale thermo-nuclear conflict, breakdown in civilian nuclear power, radioactive waste disposal, and the acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorists—the nuclear proliferation problem. One fear associated with the latter problem concerns the security measures required to prevent, say, the sabotage of nuclear reactors which would undoubtedly lead to the erosion of civil liberties and the subversion of demographic safeguards. He also touches on natural and biological disasters as well as environmental deterioration. All this is tied up with the growing symptoms of a deteriorating world society—rising crime rates, the erosion of family life, inflation, unemployment and the like, as well as difficulties in reaching political consensus on how to cope with these problems. Future prospects will depend not so much on the direct consequences of technology but on the complex interplay between technological development and the evolution of individual and social

character. The real issue is whether humanity can summon the collective wisdom and consensus to implement solutions without compromising social and moral values dear to us.

Robert Morison discusses the change in attitude to death and the present tendency to turn the craft of dying into a full-blown technology in conflict with other technologies designed to extend life as long as possible. The inevitable no longer happens by itself—something must be done to *let* or *make* the inevitable happen. But who is to decide how and when? Who will supply the rules and guidelines? Could it ever become, at least initially, a matter of 'anything goes'? Are life-and-death decisions to be taken out of the hands of doctors and passed over to—the courts? And the really frightening question—when is a life no longer worth living? Do the classical 'signs of life'—heartbeat and respiration—still serve the purposes of medicine or the law since they can be so easily 'supported' on machines? Surely all living organisms are programmed to value survival and there is a basic biological preference for life. And is it fair to tax healthy and contributing members of society to provide care to keep alive ailing members?

Progress in public health forces us to adopt measures of birth control; and developments in genetics raise difficult decisions regarding what kind of children we want or do not want while progress in genetics (reminiscences of Dobzhansky) makes it possible to avoid the birth of defect foetuses.

Robert Jay Lifton believes that notwithstanding the evergrowing danger of humanity's total self-annihilation, in fact, because of that very possibility, we may witness the rise of a new consciousness. It might take the form of a psychological mutation of humanity, in effect, a new stage in the development of the human species. He contends it is necessary to think about the End in order to prevent it. Could this be some form of 'psychological' servo-mechanism?

The book is well worth study, learned, and well-documented and it is to be hoped it will arouse sufficient collective anxiety among those who have access to influential ears in government and elsewhere. Mind you, for one with an active imagination, it is not difficult to follow through any survey of trends in society, allowing one's hopes and fears to influence the shape of future trends. But it must be emphasized that someone else could take the same material, put it through the same process, and come up with very different results, simply because their hopes and fears were different. In assessing the wide range of essays my position has been that of an interested layman rather than an expert in all the matters under discussion.

It is exciting to share in the agonies, the doubts, the speculations

and the fears; but so reassuring for the Christian to recall, whatever the outcome may be, the Master's words: 'and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

Allan B. Calder

Janet Martin Soskice, **Metaphor and Religious Language**, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, 191pp, Paperback, £9.95

'Whether they attack traditional theism as does Cupitt or attempt to defend it as do Ramsey and Feme, few contemporary English language writers on religious language are free from a residual empiricism which, whatever the intentions of its proponents, is fundamentally incompatible with traditional, transcendental Christianity.' (p. 142) This refreshing and trenchant point of view lies behind the exploration of metaphor and religious language in this brilliant and elegantly argued book.

Properly conducted discourse, especially that which purports to be clear, simple and accurate, will resolve to abjure expressions which could mislead or confuse: high in priority therefore many have thought will be the need to avoid metaphor, which by its very nature is confusing and even distorted. After all, if we take Soskice's definition (p. 14), 'metaphor is that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another', what could possibly result from such usage but confusion and misapprehension? Yet this is precisely the point which is questioned here. It is not simply that metaphor may be sensitively evocative, or even have evaluative significance, rather it is a necessary linguistic technique, which is not only capable of extending our knowledge, but is also reality-depicting.

Aristotle in the *Poetics* refers to metaphor as a means of filling lexical gaps but has his mind open to the likelihood that its use may also lead to the extension of our understanding. Quintilian, who discussed metaphor not in the context of literature, but of argument, regarded it as a technique for clarifying and presenting a point of view persuasively. In neither case was metaphor thought to be removable or devious: on the contrary, they seem to have seen that without the use of metaphor, understanding and enquiry would be impossible. Locke, on the contrary, clearly held that metaphor was likely to mislead and might even be used intentionally to do so; hence in his essay, 'The Abuse of Words', he stated that metaphor was a decorative but strictly expendable substitute for what can (and should, when doing philosophy) be plainly stated (p. 12).

The trouble with Locke's view is that it tends either towards imprisoning us within our present experience, or at the most to leave us groping in the dark after something which is necessarily out of sight and where therefore one metaphor may be no better than another. Yet, as Soskice says, it is a most interesting feature of the use of at least some metaphors that they are not used to redescribe, but to describe for the first time. Now I would not wish either to rule out redescription as a creative role for metaphor since seeing familiar matter in a new light is often much more than entertainment, or a felicitous use of language, it can facilitate disclosure. Nevertheless the point is clear, we do have new experiences which we want to refer to and metaphor is a linguistic tool which is frequently used. Later scrutiny may of course show that what we thought new is in fact adequately covered in ordinary language because we were mistaken about the new quality of the experiences, but that there are new experiences and that we use metaphor to refer to them is sure.

But Soskice's interest is not simply to emphasize the epistemological significance of metaphor (indeed its ontological importance), it is to use this claim to undergird religious language, so much of which is obviously metaphorical. For example, 'God is our father', or 'Jesus Christ is the Son of God'. And she does this by comparing the use of model and metaphor in science and religion. Both make use of the procedures, but frequently the use in religion is compared unfavourably with the use in science. Whereas the latter are structural and explanatory, the former are evocative and affective, and whereas in the case of science the metaphor is an aid to theory which can be replaced at any time by, say, a mathematical formulation, in the case of the latter substitution is only possible by another equally unsubstantial metaphor. But a religious model of God as father, she argues, only works evocatively because it is assumed that it really depicts our relationship with God. Furthermore, it is the suggestiveness of a theory which gives it its vital predictive possibilities, so that no theory is adequate if it merely fits the world as we know it and offers nothing new.

And this is where we see the essential conflict of both science and religion with a simple empiricism, as if the world of human experience could be reduced to an account of observables. It is the positivist's assumption that this might be the case that debars his position from serious attention as an adequate account of science. And the idealist fares little better, since, according to Roy Bhaskar, he assumes that the world is a construction of the human mind or in its modern versions, of the scientific community, and thus cannot account for the development in our understanding of the world through

scientific enquiry. Only a critical realism offers a sound basis for dealing with the question, 'What must the world be like for science to be possible?' And a critical realism depends upon the assumption, amongst others, that a theoretical term may refer. Discussion of the latter claim, drawing on the theories of reference of Kripke, Putnam and Donnellan is the key to understanding Soslke's thesis.

A traditional view would suggest that meaning must determine reference since the defined meaning of the word is the basis on which speakers use it to refer. But this is exactly what would be necessary if a strict empiricism were to be true. On the other hand, suppose we assume the view which Soslke takes from Boyd (Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought*, p. 392), that some general terms 'afford epistemic access to kinds which are "natural" in the sense of corresponding to important causal features of the world' and recognize the importance of the social and context-relative nature of our critical realism, then the sentences which are used to refer to the new experience will be both related to the world independent of our experience and also quite naturally open to continuous revision. The mistake has been to assume that realism must offer some privileged aspect on the world. It does not, but it has been equally a mistake to fail to recognize that our developing scientific knowledge does indeed involve an understanding of the world.

And religion? Here too, there is a concern with realism. If empiricism is insufficient as an account of science it is true also that it fails to do justice to religion. But by the same token it must therefore also be recognized that religion does not have to account for itself at the bar of empiricism. Religious language is not simply empiricism and neither could it be. On the other hand it does, and must, claim to be critically realist. Experiences are grasped at, put into words, which frequently involve the use of metaphor; they are tested, developed and explored in a social and context-relative environment. They are not, neither do they purport to be, exact descriptions. Indeed, if they were they would cease to be of interest as many believers who have tried to do this have discovered to their cost. Only if these theories and metaphors have possibilities, and tend to open up new areas of enquiry, or give rise to new linguistic conjunctions, do they remain interesting. Thus both religion and science are about the real world, while their realism is both alike critical.

This volume is of the greatest interest. Could it be that there is developing an approach to our human experience which does justice to our situation? For too long the only response to reductionism has been the assertion of literalism, or some other form of theological anti-

intellectualism. And it has been persuasive because it at least took the idea of religion seriously, and most of us know that life is more than slide rules or chips. But critical realism provides the opportunity to take all our experience seriously and to accept that although we do not know everything, we do know something, and could and will learn more. And what we know is quite intriguing, too. The question remains, 'Is it true?' But then that is the point. We do seem to live in a world where that is a possible, important and creative question. And what sort of a world is that? One which, since we are human, requires the use of metaphor; and one in which a sacramental theology may be explored with confident interest.

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