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PRESERVING GOD'S CREATION

JOHN D ZIZIOULAS

LECTURE THREE

INTRODUCTION

In our previous lecture we saw how the Christian Church through her main theological representatives in the early centuries viewed the world as God's creation. Against Gnosticism she stressed the view that God the Father Himself, through His own two hands, the Son and the Spirit, as St Irenaeus put it, created the material universe freely and out of love. Against the Platonists and pagan Greek thought in general she emphasized that the world was created out of 'nothing', in the absolute sense of the word, thus ruling out any natural affinity between God and creation and at the same time any view of the world as eternal, co-existing with the only eternal and immortal being which is God. This is another way of saying that the world is contingent, that it might not have existed at all, and that its existence is a *free gift*, not a necessity.

But the view that the world came out of nothing in this absolute sense and that it has no natural affinity with the eternal and ever-lasting God has its logical and existential consequence. It means that creation is under the constant threat of a return to nothingness, a threat which all particular beings which make it up experience as decay and death. The fear of death, so widespread in creation, implicit in every creature's attempt to survive at all costs, is not a fear of the *suffering* death can cause, but of the return to nothingness that it involves. Creation as a whole, too, taken in itself is subject to extinction. Natural scientists today seem to say this, as they also seem to be endorsing the view - or at least not excluding it - that the universe came out of nothing. Both logically and existentially the doctrine of the creation of the world out of nothing implies that the world *can* be extinguished, for it has no natural capacity for survival.

But Christian faith goes hand in hand with hope and love. If God created the world out of love - for what other motive can we attribute to Him, knowing what He has done for the world? - there must be hope for the world's survival. But how? A simple, perhaps simplistic, answer to this might be that since God is almighty He can simply order things to happen so that the world may survive in spite of its contingency. In other words, miracle working could save the world. Perhaps this is the answer given by most people in the face of apocalypse. But Christian faith does not believe in *Deus ex machina* solutions. We cannot, like the ancient Greeks, introduce divine intervention at the end of a tragedy in which everything moves with mathematical accuracy to destruction. God did not, in creating the world, leave it without the means for its survival. In creating it He provided also for its survival. What does this mean?

Towards the end of our previous lecture we insisted that we cannot introduce solutions to the problem of the survival of creation which are logically inconsistent with the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and all that this involves. Above all we cannot introduce into the world natural capacities for survival. We said before concluding that the solution of the problem lies in the creation of Man. Today we shall try to see how and why the human being is understood by the Christian faith to be capable of performing such a role. We shall thus arrive at some idea of what we intended when in our first lecture we called Man the 'priest of creation'. On the basis of this we shall then try to draw some final conclusions concerning the relation between theology and the ecological problem.

I. What is Man?

In our first lecture we referred to Darwinism as a helpful reaction against the view, widespread since the Middle Ages in particular and also long before that, that the human being is superior to the rest of creation because of the intellect it possesses. This had several consequences including the following. On the one hand it implied that, in the scale of beings, the highest ones after God - in a sense the link between God and creation - are the *angels*, owing to their spiritual and non-corporeal nature. On the other hand this view implies that it is in and through Man's *reason* that the world can be joined to God and thus survive. Even today the idea of Man as 'the priest of creation' is understood by some in terms of rationality. Man's task is understood as being 'to interpret the books of nature, to understand the universe in its wonderful structure and harmonies and to bring it all into orderly articulation... Theological and natural science each has its proper objective to pursue but their work inevitably overlaps, for both operate *through the rational* structures of space and time....'(T.F. Torrance).

Such a view of Man's distinctive identity and role in creation in terms of rationality has contributed a great deal to the creation of the ecological problem, as we noted in our first lecture. For rationality can be used in both directions: it can be used as a means of referring creation to the Creator in a doxological attitude - and it is apparently this that the above mentioned view of 'priest of creation' intends - but it can also be used as an argument for turning creation towards Man, which is the source of the ecological problem. In fact, in this culture of ours in which the rules of the game are set by the Enlightenment, the discussion of whether it is more 'rational' to refer creation to God or to Man can lead nowhere except to a reinforcement of the presupposition laid down by the Enlightenment that reason is all that matters. In any case, Darwinism dealt a blow to this presupposition with regard to the distinctive characteristic of the human being. Man's particular identity in relation to the rest of the animals does not lie in reason, since lower animals also possess reason and consciousness to a lower degree. If we wish to establish the specific characteristic of the human being which no animal possesses, we should look for it elsewhere, not in rationality.

Before we discuss what the Christian tradition has to say on this matter let us have a quick look at what the non-theological world seems to us to be saying today on the question of man's particular identity. Very briefly — our time is very limited in this last lecture - a consensus seems to emerge among philosophers today that the human being differs fundamentally from the animals in this particular respect: whereas the animal in facing the world in which it finds itself develops all its — why not call them so? - 'rational' capacities to adjust to it, the human being wishes to create its own world. The animal *discovers*, too, the laws of nature - sometimes even more successfully than the human being. It can also invent ways of tackling the problems raised for it by the environment, and can amaze us at its cleverness. All this man can do, too, even sometimes to a higher degree, as modern technology can show. But the human being alone can create a world of its own with culture, history, etc. Man, for example, can reproduce a tree as *another,*

his or her own personal creation, by painting. Man can create events, institutions, etc., not simply as means for survival or welfare, in the way birds build their nests or bees construct their hives, but as landmarks and points of reference for his own identity. When one says, for example, 'I am English', one does not mean by that simply that he or she lives in a certain geographical area, but a great deal more than that, which has to do with one's identity and creativity, with the emergence, that is, of identities other than what is given by the environment.

Now, all this can be perhaps explained by rationality. Man in his higher degree of rationality compared with that of the animals creates culture, history and civilization. But a lot can be said against this assumption, for the creation of culture involves a far more radical kind of difference between man and animal than what rationality would imply, there is something in man's creativity that we could hardly attribute to rationality, since in fact it is its opposite. Man, and only Man, in creating his own world can go very often against the inherent rationality of nature, of the world given to him: he can even destroy the given world. This is precisely because Man seems to be challenged and provoked by the *given*. In wishing to create his own world or simply to assert his own will he is disturbed by the already existing world. All great artists have experienced this. Michelangelo used to exclaim: when shall I finish with this marble so that I can start doing my own work? And Picasso is reported to have said similar things about forms, shapes and colours. Plato's creator, too, being conceived by the philosopher in *Timaeus*, as an artist, suffers because he has to create out of pre-existing matter and space which impose on him their conditions. No creator can be content with the given. If he succumbs to it, he is frustrated and uneasy as all creative artists in all ages seem to have been. If he does not succumb to it, he has to destroy it and create out of nothing. But as creating ex nihilo can only be the privilege of the uncreated creator, all attempts by man to create his own world, whether in art, history or other areas of civilization, are bound to lead to frustration. There have, of course, been forms of human 'creativity' in history which involved a copying of the world as it is. However, hardly anyone would call such things true art. Whatever involves succumbing to the given, this man has in common with the animals. Whatever is *free* from it, constitutes a sign of the presence of the human. This can lead as far as the *destruction of* the given by man. At this point the human phenomenon emerges even more clearly. For no animal would go against the inherent rationality of nature. Man can do that and in so doing he shows that his specific characteristic is not rationality but something else; it is *freedom*.

What is freedom? We normally use this word in order to indicate the capacity to choose between two or more possibilities. We are free to come or not to come to this lecture; we are free to vote for this or that party, etc. But this is a relative, not an absolute freedom. It is limited by the possibilities *given* to us. And it is this *givenness* that constitutes the greatest provocation to freedom. Why choose between what is given to me and not be free to create my own possibilities? You can see how the question of freedom and that of creation out of nothing are interdependent: if one creates out of something, one is presented by something given; if one creates out of nothing, one is free in the absolute sense of the term.

Now, we saw in our previous lecture that the Church insisted on the idea that God created out of absolute nothing. We can appreciate this fully only if we wish to attach to our

notion of God the absolute sense of freedom: to be God means to be absolutely free in the sense of not being bound or confronted by any situation or reality *given* to you. For if something, even in the form of a possibility, is *given* to you, this implies that someone or something else exists *besides* you, which would rule out any absolutely monotheistic view of God such as the one proclaimed by the Bible.

But what about the human being? Man is by definition a creature. This means that he is presented with a *given*. The fact that in the biblical account of man's creation he emerges at the *end* of the creative process makes the human being doubly restricted: the world is given to him, and God the creator is given to him, too. He can choose what he likes but he cannot avoid the fact of givenness. Is he, therefore, free in an absolute sense?

It is at this point that the idea of the *imago Dei* emerges. Christian anthropology since its earliest days insisted that Man was created 'in the image and likeness of God'. The idea, or rather the expression, appears for the first time in the Old Testament, in the Genesis account of the creation. It is taken up by the Fathers and Christian theology throughout history. Various meanings have been given to this experience, including the one we mentioned earlier which identifies the image of God in man with his reason. Whatever the case may be, one thing must be certain: if we speak of an 'image and likeness of God', we must refer inevitably to something which characterises God in an exclusive way. If the 'imago Dei' consists in something to be found outside God, it is not an image of God. We are talking, therefore, about a quality pertaining to God and not to creation.

This forces us to seek the *imago Dei* in freedom. Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century already defined this idea as the αὐτεξουσία (man's freedom to be the master of himself). If this freedom is taken in the way in which it is applied to God – which is what it ought to be if we are talking about an image *of God* – then, we are talking about absolute freedom in the sense of not being confronted with anything given. But this would be absurd. For man is a creature, and cannot but be confronted with a given.

It is at this point that another category, pertaining exclusively to the definition of the human, emerges: it is *tragedy*, the tragic. Tragedy is the impasse created by a freedom driving towards its fulfilment and being unable to reach it. The tragic applies only to the human condition, it is not applicable either to God or to the rest of creation. It is impossible to have a complete definition of Man without reference to the tragic element, and this is related directly to the subject of freedom. Dostoevsky, that great Christian prophet of modern times, put his finger on this crucial issue when he placed the following words in the mouth of Kirilov, one of the heroes in *The Possessed*:

'Every one who wants to attain complete freedom must be daring enough to kill himself... This is the final limit of freedom, that is all, there is nothing beyond it.. Who dares to kill himself becomes God. Everyone can do this and thus cause God to cease to exist, and then nothing will exist at all'.

If man wishes to be God, he has to cope with the givenness of his own being. As long as he is faced with the fact that he is 'created', which means that his being is given to him, he cannot

be said to be free in the absolute sense.

Yet man in so many ways manifests his desire to attain to such an absolute freedom; it is in fact precisely this that distinguishes him from the animals. Why did God give him such an unfulfillable drive? In fact many people would wish for themselves as well as for others that they were not free in this absolute sense. The Christian Church herself has produced throughout the centuries devices by the effect of which man, particularly the Christian, would be so tamed and so domesticated that he would give up all claims to absolute freedom, leaving such claims only to God. But certainly, if God gave such a drive to Man, if He made him in His own image, He must have had a purpose. We suggest that this purpose has to do precisely with the survival of creation, with Man's call to be 'the priest of creation'. But before we come to see how this can be envisaged let us see how in fact Man applied this drive and how creation has been affected by that.

II. Man's Failure

Christian anthropology speaks of the first Man, Adam, as having been placed in Paradise with the order to exercise dominion over creation. That he was supposed to do this in and through his *freedom* is implied by the fact that he was presented with a decision to obey or disobey a certain commandment by God (not to eat from a certain tree, etc.). This commandment involved the invitation to exercise the freedom implied in the *imago Dei*, i.e. to act as if man were God. This Adam did, and the result is well known. We call it, in theological language, the *Fall* of man.

At this point the question arises: why did Man fall by exercising what God Himself had given him, namely freedom? Would it have been better for him and for creation had he not exercised, but rather sacrificed and abolished this absolute kind of freedom? Would it not perhaps have been better for all of us if Adam had been content with a relative freedom as befits a creature? Did the tragedy of the Fall consist in the *excess* of the limits of human freedom?

The answer commonly given to these questions is a positive one: yes, Adam exceeded the limits of his freedom, and this is why he fell. It is for this reason that Adam's Fall is commonly associated with Adam's *fault*, a fault understood therefore forensically: Man should not exceed his limits, if he wishes to avoid punishment.

Now, this sort of attitude to the Fall of Man provokes immediately two reactions. The first is that it reminds one immediately of ancient Greek thought. We all know, I suppose, the Greek work ὕβρις, by which the ancient Greeks indicated that the human being 'falls', i.e. sins and is punished, every time he exceeds his limits and tries to be God. This of course does not prove in itself that the Christian view of things ought to be different from the that of the ancient Greeks. It simply warns us that something may be wrong with the above interpretation of the Fall. The real difficulty comes from the question; if Adam ought not to exercise an absolute freedom, why did God give him the drive towards it?

We have to seek ways of interpreting the fall other than the one involving a blame on Adam for having exceeded the limits of his freedom. We shall have, perhaps, to abandon forensic categories of guilt. It may be more logical, more consistent with our view of the *imago Dei*, if we followed not St Augustine but St Irenaeus in this respect.

St Irenaeus took a very 'philanthropic', a very compassionate view of Adam's Fall. He thought of him as a child placed in Paradise in order to grow to adulthood by exercising his freedom. But he was deceived and did the wrong thing. What does this mean? It means that it was not a question of exceeding the limits of freedom. It was rather a question of applying absolute freedom in the wrong way. That is very different from saying that Adam ought to adjust the drive of his freedom to his creaturely limitations. For had he adjusted his freedom this way, he would have lost the drive to absolute freedom, whereas now he can still have it but re-adjust and re-orientate it.

The implications of what we are saying here are far-reaching and cannot be properly discussed in the time available to us. They include all sorts of consequences for legalistic views of sin, which not by accident go hand in hand with cries for relativized freedom. But we shall limit ourselves to the implications that have to do directly with our subject, which is the survival of creation through man. Man was given the drive to absolute freedom, the *imago Dei*, not for himself but for creation. How are we to understand this?

III Man, the hope of all creation.

We have already noted that creation does not possess any natural means of survival. This means that if left to itself, it would die. The only way to avoid this would be communion with the eternal God. This, however, would require a movement of *transcendence* beyond the boundaries of creation. It would require, in other words, *freedom* in the absolute sense. If creation were to attempt its survival only by obedience to God, in sense of its realizing , so to say, its own limitations and not attempting to transcend them, its survival would require the miracle of the *Deus ex machina* intervention, of which we spoke earlier. This would have to result in a claim which would bear no logical relation to the rest of doctrine, as is precisely the case with all *Deus ex machina* solutions. If we accept the view that the world needs to transcend itself in order to survive (which is the logical consequence of having accepted that the world had a beginning), we need to find a way of achieving this transcendence. This is what the *imago Dei* was given for.

The transcendence of the limits of creation, which is, I repeat, the condition for its survival, requires on the part of creation a drive to absolute freedom. The fact that this drive was given to Man made the whole creation rejoice, in the words of St Paul 'awaiting with eager expectation the revelation of the glory of the children of God', i.e. of Man. Because Man, unlike the angels (who are also regarded as endowed with freedom) forms an organic part of the material world, being the highest point in its evolution, he is able to carry with him the whole creation to its transcendence. The fact that the human being is also an *animal*, as Darwin has reminded us, far from being an insult to the human race, constitutes - in spite, perhaps, of Darwin's intentions - the *sine qua non* condition for his glorious mission in creation. If man gave up his claim to absolute freedom, the whole creation would automatically lose its hope for survival. This allows us to say that it is better that Adam fell by retaining his claim to absolute freedom, than that he had remained unfallen by renouncing this claim, thus reducing himself to an animal. In this way of understanding the Fall it is not right to speak of 'total depravity' of the image of God. Man in his negative attitude to God still exercises the claim to absolute freedom, albeit against his own good and that of creation. For in fact only such a claim can cause a revolt against God.

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But how can Man liberate creation from its boundaries and lead it to survival through his freedom? At this point Christian theology has to rely on its doctrinal resources rather heavily, yet we shall try to do so in such a way as to avoid as far as possible making it a matter of an 'esoteric' language understood only by those who have access to it by virtue of their doctrinal commitment.

IV. Man's Priesthood.

We have already referred to man's tendency to create a new world. This tendency constitutes his specific characteristic compared with the animals and, in this sense, it is an essential expression of the image of God in him. If analysed deeply this means that man wishes to pass through his own hands everything that exists and make it his own. This can result in one of the following possibilities:

a) Making it 'his own' may mean that man can use creation for his own benefit, in which case by being placed in man's hands creation is not truly lifted to the level of the human, but subjected to it. This is one of the ways in which man can understand God's commandment to have dominion over the earth: it could be called the *utilitarian* way.

Now, an analysis of this situation yields the following implications:

(i) Theologically speaking man would become the ultimate point of reference in existence, i.e. become God.

(ii) Anthropologically speaking man would cut himself off from nature as if he did not belong to it himself. The utilitarian attitude to creation would then go hand in hand with the view that man differs from the rest of creation by way of his capacity to *dissociate* himself from it rather than to *associate* himself with it. It would also go together with the possibility of denying God and divinising man. Atheism and man's dissociation from nature would thus be shown to be inter-connected. They both spring from the *imago Dei* and confirm the view that the difference between man and creation relates to the question of freedom. Needless to say, the ecological problem has its philosophy rooted deeply in this kind of anthropology. An understanding of the world as man's *possession* – as a means of drawing from it self-satisfaction and pleasure – this is what taking the world in man's hands means in this case. Science and technology then signify the employment of man's intellectual superiority for the purpose of discovering ways and means by which man may draw the biggest possible profit from creation for his own purposes. In this case, a theology based on the assumption that the essence of man lies in his intellect would be co-responsible with science and technology for the ecological problem.

b) Making the world pass through the hands of man may mean something entirely different from what we have just described. In this second case the utilitarian element would not arise. Of course man would still use creation as a source from which he would draw the basic elements necessary for his creation as a source for his life, such as food, clothing, building of houses, etc. But to all this he would give a dimension which we could call *personal*. What does the personal dimension involve?

The person as distinct from the individual is marked by the following characteristics:

(i) He cannot be understood in isolation but only in relation to something or someone else. A personal approach to creation as distinct from an individualistic one would regard the human being as someone whose particular identity arises from his relation with what is not human. This could be both or either God and/or creation (We shall see in a minute what is involved in each of these possibilities.) It is not, therefore, in juxtaposition to nature but in association with it that man would find his specific identity. Man would be other than nature not by separating himself from it but by relating himself to it. This will become immediately evident in culture: the way man eats or is dressed or builds his houses would involve a close relationship with what is not human, with what is significantly called 'the environment'. A personal approach to creation would thus elevate the material world to the level of man's existence. The material creation would be in this way liberated from its own limitations and by being placed in the hands of man, it would itself acquire a personal dimension; it would be *humanised*.

(ii) The personal dimension, as distinct from the individual one, involves what we may call *hypostasisation* and *catholicity*. These terms are technical in theology but they can be easily translated into non-theological language. A *hypostasis* is an identity which embodies and expresses in itself the totality of nature. To take an example, killing someone could be regarded as a crime against the totality of human nature, whereas in fact it is only a crime against a particular individual. In this case it could be argued that murder would be more 'rationally' and perhaps more efficiently prevented in a society which does not appeal to the rationality of the 'rights of the individual', but which has a view of each human being as the hypostasis of the totality of human nature. (Trinitarian doctrine can be particularly meaningful and relevant in this case.) The personal approach makes every being unique and irreplaceable, whereas the individual approach makes of it a number in statistics. If man acts as a person rather than an individual in treating creation, he not only lifts it up to the level of the human, but he sees it as a totality, as a catholicity of interrelated entities. Creation is thus able to fulfil the unity which, as natural science observes today, is inherent in its very structure.

Now, all this the human being can do without needing God, or any reference to Him. Certainly, in the utilitarian, approach God is not needed except in the best of cases, and then only in order to be thanked for what He has given us to have dominion over and enjoy - a verbal and rationalistic or sentimental thanksgiving; like the one we find in so much of Christian tradition. But in the personal approach things cannot stop with man, they cry aloud for a reference to God. Why?

If we look at what the story of Adam's Fall implies for creation, we notice that the most serious consequence of this Fall was death. It is normally understood, ever since St Augustine influenced our thinking, that death came to creation as a punishment for Adam's disobedience. This. however, implies a great deal of unacceptable things. It would mean that God Himself introduced this horrible evil which He then tried through His Son to remove. Also, it would seem to imply that before the arrival of Man in creation, there was no death at all. This latter assumption would contradict the entire theory of evolution in creation, and would also make it cruel and absurd on the part of the Creator to punish all creatures for what one of them did.

These difficulties lead us to the conclusion that the view of

Irenaeus, Maximus the Confessor *et al.* is more reasonable on all counts, including the theory of evolution. This view sees creation as being from the beginning in a state of mortality - owing, as we argued last time, to its having had a beginning - and as awaiting the arrival of Man in order to overcome this predicament. Adam's Fall brought about death not as a new thing in creation but as the inability to overcome the mortality inherent in it.

If we take Adam's Fall to consist in his making man the ultimate point of reference in creation, we can easily see why death entered into it through his Fall: it was because Adam himself was a creature and creation, being subjected ultimately to Man, could not overcome its limitations, including that of mortality. But this could have been avoided, had Man acted as the Priest of Creation.

The personhood in Man demands constantly that creation be treated as something destined by God not only to survive but also to be "fulfilled" in and through Man's hands. There are two basic dimensions in personhood, both of which enable the human being to fulfil his role as the link between God and creation. One is what we may call its *hypostatic* aspect, through which the world is integrated and embodied into a unified reality. The other is what we can call its *ecstatic* aspect by virtue of which the world by being referred to God and offered to Him as 'His own' reaches itself to infinite possibilities. This constitutes the basis of what we can call Man's *priesthood*. By taking the world into his hands and creatively integrating it and by referring it to God, Man liberates creation from its limitations and lets it truly be. Thus, in being the Priest of creation man is also a creator, and, perhaps, we may say that in all of his truly creative activities there is hidden a para-priestly character. In speaking of 'priesthood', therefore, we speak of a broader existential attitude encompassing all human activities that involve a conscious or even unconscious manifestation of these two aspects of personhood: the *hypo-static* and the *ec-static*, as we have just described them.

To put all this in terms of Christian doctrine, we Christians believe that what Adam failed to do Christ did. We regard Christ as the embodiment or *anakephalaiosis* of all creation and, therefore, as the Man *par excellence* and the saviour of the world. We regard Him, because of this, as the true "image of God" and we associate Him with the final fate of the world. We, therefore, believe that in the person of Christ the world possesses its Priest of Creation, the model of Man's proper relation to the natural world.

On the basis of this belief, we form a community which takes from this creation certain elements (the bread and the wine) which we offer to God with the solemn declaration 'Thine own of thine own we offer unto Thee', thus recognizing that creation does not belong to us but to God, who is its only 'owner'. By so doing we believe that creation is brought into relation with God and not only is it treated with the reverence that befits what belongs to God, but it is also liberated from its natural limitations and is transformed into a bearer of life. We believe that in doing this 'in Christ' we, like Christ, act as priests of creation. When we receive these elements back, after having referred them to God, we believe that because of this reference to God we can take them back and consume them no longer as death but as life. Creation acquires for us in this way a sacredness which is not inherent in its nature but 'acquired' in and through Man's free exercise of his *imago Dei*, i.e. his personhood. This distinguishes our

attitude from all forms of paganism, and attaches to the human being an awesome responsibility for the survival of God's creation.

All of this is a belief and a practice which cannot be imposed on anyone else, and may easily be mistaken for sheer ritualism. Nevertheless we believe that all of this involves an *ethos* that the world needs badly in our time. Not an ethic, but an *ethos*. Not a programme, but an attitude and a mentality. Not a legislation, but a culture.

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It seems that the ecological crisis is a crisis of culture. It is a crisis that has to do with the loss of the *sacrality* of nature in our culture. I can see only two ways of overcoming this. One would be the way of *paganism*. The pagan regards the world as sacred because it is permeated by divine presence; he therefore respects it (to the point of worshipping it explicitly or implicitly) and does not do damage to it. But equally, he never worries about its fate: he believes in its eternity. He is also unaware of any need for transformation of nature or transcendence of its limitations: the world is good as it stands and possesses in its nature all that is necessary for its survival.

The other way is what we have tried to describe here as being the Christian way. The Christian regards the world as sacred because it stands in dialectical relationship with God; thus he respects it (without worshipping it, since it has no divine presence *in its nature*), but he regards the human being as the only possible link between God and creation, a link that can either bring nature to communion with God and thus sanctify it, or turn it ultimately towards Man - or nature itself - and condemn it to the state of a 'thing' the meaning and purpose of which are exhausted with the satisfaction of Man.

Of these two ways it is the second one that attaches to man a heavy responsibility for the fate of creation. The first one sees Man as *part* of the world; the second, by considering Man to be the crucial link between the world and God, sees him as the only *person* in creation, i.e. as the only one who would be so deeply respectful of the impersonal world as not simply to 'preserve' it but to cultivate and embody it in forms of culture which will elevate it to eternal survival. Unless we decide to return to paganism, this seems to be the only way to respect once again the sacrality of nature and face the ecological crisis. For it is now clear that the model of human domination over nature, such as we have it in our present day technological ethos, will no longer do for the survival of God's creation.

SPIRITUALITY AND THE STATUS QUO

GRACE M JANTZEN

'Academic theology has tended to emerge from the dominant groups of society and be entrenched on the side of the status quo in various situations throughout the world.'[1]

These words of Allan Boesak need to be deeply pondered by all of us engaged in academic theology, and nowhere more than by those of us who have a special interest in the study of spirituality. In this paper I propose to indicate some of the ways in which what is called spirituality is used, both at a popular and at an academic level, on the side of the status quo, and make some suggestions about how this has come about. I will then look at some of the issues in the history of Christian spirituality which show that such domestication of sanctity is at variance with the lives and writings of Christian mystics, even while purporting to derive from them. This can be done in no more than a programmatic way; but I hope that it will be enough to help us hear again something of their subversive and counter-cultural voice.

1. Consolation Spirituality

It is an obvious fact that there is resurgence of interest in spirituality and mysticism in academia and outside it, in the churches and in wider society. Devotional books, and volumes containing 'selected readings from the mystics' which can be read for a few minutes at the beginning or end of the day, sell thousands of copies and help keep religious publishers solvent. Retreat centres flourish; institutes of spirituality are set up in various locations around the country; and more of the writings of medieval mystics are available in English translation; theology faculties at universities are offering courses in mysticism or spirituality among their options (or feeling uncomfortable if they don't!).

It is very far from my intention to cast disparagement on all this; there is much that is good in it. Yet I suggest that for a phenomenon as widespread and religiously significant as the current resurgence of attention to spirituality, theologians have paid astonishingly little attention to it. We have not done much to identify or evaluate the need to which this resurgent interest gives evidence, nor have we asked many questions about whether or how spirituality either in its popular manifestations or in its academic study does much to meet those needs. Even less have we enquired whether involvement in spirituality actually suppresses important needs of insight. With regard to its popular manifestations on the whole we have been inclined either to assume an uncritical or paternalistic piousity and see the phenomena as evidences of the Spirit of God moving among the masses of our time, or we have been inclined to dismiss it as so much religious sentiment unrelated to serious theological pursuits. Often we shuffle uncomfortably between the two. But I have begun to doubt that either response takes the phenomenon of increasing popular interest in spirituality anything like seriously enough.

It hardly requires expertise in social psychology to see that a large growth of interest in something usually indicates some increase in a felt need or desire. If this is correct, then one question we need to be asking ourselves is this: what is the felt need or desire that underlines the growth of interest in spirituality? How is it hoped that spirituality will meet that need?

It would be pleasant for a Christian thelogian to be able to reply that what is desired is God, and that increased interest in spirituality is an expression of the increasing longing for God. Again, I do not wish to deny that this is partially true. But a closer look at the evidence gives me the uncomfortable feeling that there is also a great deal of wishful thinking about such a reply, and that the motivations surrounding the contemporary pursuit of spirituality are rather more complex.

If for instance we look at some of the most widely sold books on prayer and spirituality we find a huge emphasis on personal psychological well-being. Topics like anxiety, depression, and loneliness are regularly addressed, along with such matters as suffering, bereavement and sexuality, all of which are treated as essentially private psychological issues for the individual to work through. Prayer and spiritual exercises are seen as bringing an increase of peace and tranquillity, and courage for the hard things in life. Thus for example Robert Llewelyn's popular (and very good) book on the use of the rosary. *A Doorway to Silence* says that praying the rosary can 'offer a positive way in which our emotions can be handled. Here is a way of growth and integration which cannot but find its repercussions on those around us'[2]. In another place he speaks of the way in which such prayer can 'bring healing to every part of yourself, that body-soul-spirit complex which makes up each one of us.' He then says, 'Perhaps one half of the hospital beds in the country would be emptied if everyone were to spend fifteen minutes on this each day.'[3]

I agree with Llewelyn about this, and about the relationship between a steady discipline of prayer and psycho-physical well being. But my present point is twofold. First, the immense success of his book (measured in numbers of sales) shows how urgent is the felt need for psycho-physical well being, for inner resources to cope with the stresses of life. Second, while the book is a splendid gentle introduction to disciplined prayer and shows its healing value, it nowhere addresses the question of where the stresses in life originate, or whether there are structures in society which generate oppression and anxiety through injustice. Except insofar as the psycho-spiritual well being of the praying individual has an impact on her society (and this should not be minimized) there is no indication that prayer has anything to do with politics or social justice. Rather it provides a private religious way of coping with life, whatever the external circumstances.

It might well be protested that Llewelyn is writing a book about prayer, not about politics, and it is churlish to castigate him for failing to do the latter when he did the former with great skill and insight. What I am pointing out, however, is that to the extent that prayer actually does help us to cope with the distresses of life, to that very extent it may act as a sedative which keeps us from dismantling the structures that perpetuate the distresses, or even from recognizing that they need to be challenged. If books and practices of spirituality help us calm our jangled nerves and release our anxieties and give us courage to re-enter the world as it is, then whatever the good intentions of authors and practitioners, what is actually happening is that the status quo is being reinforced. People are learning through prayer to find the tranquillity to live with corrupt political and social structures, instead of channelling their distress and anxiety into energy for constructive change.

In this connection it is worth noticing the way in which the writings of the saints and mystics have been domesticated for a privatized spirituality. Take almost any book of daily readings from the mystics (e.g. the enormously popular *Enfolded in Love* series published by DLT), and it is obvious that the predomi-

nant themes are ones like the love of God, trust in God, submission to God's will, dependence on providence, peace, tranquillity, and the like. It is clear that while a person who uses these readings as a basis for daily meditation may well find herself calmed and encouraged, it is unlikely that they will provoke her to think hard about the social causes of her stress, let alone the way in which the structures of our society threaten the survival and well being of our brothers and sisters in the world, and even of the planet itself. As Margaret Miles has pointed out in *The Image and Practice of Holiness*[4], it was one thing to meditate trustingly on exhortations to submit to divine providence in a time when the plague might come at any moment and no one knew how to evade it; it is quite another to take those texts as blueprints for inactivity when the very survival of our planet depends on informed and concerted effort.

With some notable exceptions (like Gerard Hughes' *God of Surprises*) books of popular spirituality treat prayer and spiritual exercises as personal and private, having to do with the relationship between the individual and God. By this privatization of spirituality the relation between prayer and social and political activity is not addressed. The net result, whatever the intention of the authors or compilers, is the reinforcement of the status quo, as religious energy is poured into personal holiness rather than social justice. And this in turn has the effect not only of turning the attention of those seeking spiritual growth away from issues of justice, but also of leaving the efforts for justice to those who, in conventional terms, are not particularly concerned about spirituality – to the obvious detriment of both.

When we turn from the resurgence of popular interest in spirituality to its renewal in academic study it seems to me that we fare little better. There has been some excellent work in recent years in textual analysis of mystical writings, which has given us critical editions, translations, and studies of literary sources. Again, this splendid; but like the intensive textual criticism of the Bible such textual analysis of mystical writing has often tried to maintain the fiction of detached neutrality, and without consciously intending to do so has thereby played into the hands of the satatus quo. In the case of mystical writings, the importance of taking social implications seriously is not encouraged by work like that of Matthew Fox whose political fervour outstrips his scholarly competence. This only reinforces the more conventional scholarly approach of treating mystical writings as timeless wisdom, which must be submitted to careful textual analysis but whose social setting is not deemed particularly important: again there are parallels to some forms of Biblical scholarship, especially of the form-critical method popular before more recent sociological and narrative methodologies were taken very seriously.

Furthermore, as in any branch of study, the questions we bring to the study of spirituality will affect the answers we are likely to receive. If we are not asking questions about justice and the structuring of society, we may well fail to perceive how significant were the views of many of the paradigms of spirituality in Christian history, especially when this lack of questioning is coupled with a concentration on textual analysis which itself is conducted without much reference to social structure. Now since the time of Schleiermacher and Schelling, and much reinforced by the work of William James, one of the dominant sets of questions with which study of the mystics is approached concerns their subjective psychological state: whether their ecstasies and visions and reports of union with God are signs of psychic health or of psychic imbalance, whether they can be authenticated as experiences of God or whether they are merely human projections, whether from analysis of such experiences we could develop a doctrine of a mystical core of religions, and the like. The Romantic view of religion as based on private and ineffable feeling or emotion, in some direct apprehension of the divine that bypasses Kantian strictures of evidence or rationality, has been decisive particularly in the study of mysticism, where one scholar after another simply repeats William James' characterization of mystical experience and concentrates on the inwardness and subjectivity of the alleged occurrences. This concentration on the mystics' psychological states effectively distracts attention from the social implications of their lives and writings for their time or our own.

Thus for example there is endless discussion of what John of the Cross meant by the dark night of the soul: how it is the same as psychological depression and how it is different, how it should be recognized and how it should be dealt with, whether there is linear progression through the stages of the dark night or whether the experiences can be cyclic or recurrent, and so on. What is hardly discussed are the glaringly obvious implications of speaking of the growth of faith and love as darkness and obscurity *in sixteenth century Spain*, when the Inquisition was in full swing with triumphalist light and certainty, and the major religious counterweight to it was the sect of the Alhumbrados, the Illuminists, who as their name suggests also thought of spiritual growth in terms of increasing light and illumination. In such a context John of the Cross's emphasis on the *dark night* of the senses, the intellect, and the spirit is outrageously subversive of the certainties of ecclesiastical and socio-political structures. Yet scholars have been slow to investigate this while arguing finer points of the psychology implicit in his writing.

Along with the concentration on the psychology of mystical states has been a continuing concern about the doctrinal orthodoxy of the mystics. This is nowhere more clear than in Eckhartian studies, where article after book after article is written to show that he did (or did not) slide into pantheistic heresy. In this particular case , however, it is almost impossible to avoid some discussion of the heresy trial itself, which quickly reveals that whatever one's view of the orthodoxy of Eckhart's doctrine, the procedure of the trial left a good deal to be desired. What this ought to do is to lead scholars to ask why it was that emotions ran so high; and to look seriously at the social conditions in which Eckhart was preaching. Even if Matthew Fox's theories stand in need of more careful scholarship, it is at least worth considering his suggestion that Eckhart's preaching in the vernacular about the nobility of the soul was directly and influentially subversive of the collusion of the ecclesiastical and social hierarchy that was keeping the peasants firmly in their place. Yet apart from the work of Matthew Fox, it is rare to find discussions of Eckhart which take issues of social justice seriously: most concentrate on his ideas about God as the Abyss, and about the point or apex of the soul, and his use of language and paradox. As in the case of John of the Cross, Eckhart's views are implicitly presented as a privatized and psychologized spirituality that does not challenge the structures of society.

One of the glaring gaps in conventional theological study is the lack of interaction between the study of spirituality and the study of Christian doctrine, either in the sense that theologians have paid much attention to the ways in which their presentations of Christian doctrine foster (or fail to foster) holiness of life and society, or in the sense that those who study

spirituality have had much to say about how theology should be done. Again, there are important exceptions: one need only think of the integrating work of Hans Urs von Balthasar. But quite often spirituality is treated by 'serious' theologians as the soft and trendy side of the curriculum, while specialists in the study of spirituality in their turn suspect theologians of constructing (or deconstructing) ever more complex doctrinal edifices without really thinking through how anyone could actually live in them.

Surely it is not accidental that one of the major areas where this gap between the study of spirituality and the study of theology is bridged is in the various forms of liberation theology. Leonardo Boff, in his efforts to develop an ecclesiology that does justice to the Latin American context, has drawn strongly on the life and writings of Francis of Assisi, allowing his theological considerations to be informed by Franciscan spirituality. Feminist theologians like Rosemary Reuther have been reclaiming the spirituality of women in the early and medieval church in an effort to rethink concepts of power and patriarchy. In Germany ecotheologians have studied the life and work of Hildegard of Bingen to great profit.

These forms of liberation theology are often seen as 'marginal' rather than 'mainstream' within the world of academic theology. Yet when theologians do begin to ask questions about justice and liberation, then it becomes clear that the tradition of Christian spirituality has much to offer. And this, of course, is entirely consistent with what a saint is. As Karl Rahner has put it, saints are women and men who have shown what it is to be followers of Christ — that is, to *live* an incarnational theology — in their own unique places and times, and who thereby liberate our imaginations in an attempt to be followers in our turn, not by rigid imitation, but by living the gospel of liberty and justice in our own contexts.[6] Where the conventions of church and society are at odds with that Gospel it is inevitable that sanctity must be unconventional and countercultural, radical (i.e. from the root) both in the sense that it is rooted in the Gospel of a crucified failure, and in the sense that it challenges the roots of current assumptions and values.

My argument, therefore, is not only that the privatization of spirituality and the domestication of the saints is a failure of justice and a betrayal of the spiritual giants of Christian history, though both of these are true. My argument is that these failures constitute a theological failure as well. Insofar as our theology does not engage, in method and in content, with issues of justice and liberation, and see these as essential to personal and communal holiness, to that extent we are wittingly or unwittingly reinforcing attitudes and structures of oppression. To suppose that justice and compassion are not central to our theology, our words about God, is to ignore the incarnation and the heart of the Gospel message: arguably, it is to ignore the heart of God.

2. The Counter Culturalism of the Saints.

One of the things that can be done to begin to redress the balance is to reclaim the lives and writings of the giants of Christian spirituality, paying particular attention to the social contexts in which they lived in a way that shows how their spirituality challenged the conventions and stereotypes of their societies and ours. It is obviously impossible to do more in this paper than to indicate a few particularly striking instances in a sketchy and programmatic fashion, but even this will be enough to show that the privatization and domestication of

sanctity is very far from justifiable historically or theologically.

One of the most pervasive challenges of the tradition of Christian spirituality to the changing society in which it finds itself is in what constitutes security and success. This challenge was instantiated early in Christian history in the women and men of the Roman Empire who left the cities to live in the deserts of Egypt and Syria, and who were regularly the inspiration for subsequent movements of reform and renewal. It would be foolish to pretend that there was only one motivation for going to the desert: clearly there was a rich variety of both intention and lifestyle. Yet it seems clear that part of what was happening was an effort to keep hold of the ideals of martyrdom, an identification with Christ who gave his life for his people. If it was no longer likely, as persecution of Christians diminished, that they would be called upon to endure red martyrdom — the actual shedding of blood — they could still offer themselves for green martyrdom, the life of identification with Christ given for others. Thus women and men left the relative comfort and security of the cities to pray and do battle with demons on behalf of the church. This was not, I think, fundamentally a bid for a private holiness while the rest of the world could go to hell. Rather it was the recognition that holiness is self-giving, not in the sense of self-disparagement but in the sense that following the marginalized and crucified Christ entails living in the margins from which the 'demons' which had society in their grip could be discerned and fought.

Such recognition is far less possible from the centre, where concerns for material security and assumptions about what constitutes success and progress too easily blinker vision. Accordingly the women and men who left their society and went to the desert are renowned for their ascetical practices; and taken out of context many of the stories about them sound like body hatred gone wild. That there was some body hatred born of an overzealous and under Christianized Platonism can hardly be denied, but surely Benedicta Ward is right in her claim that asceticism was only a means. The end was God; and this end was to be reached by learning how to deal with the passions and learning how to practice ordinary Christian charity.[7] Now it is very easy to suppose that we already know what the passions are which must be dealt with, and on the other hand that we know what the Christian charity is that must be practiced: if this were the case, then asceticism could be seen as a means for helping us learn to do what we already *know*. I suggest however that part of the point of moving to the margins and practicing asceticism, both for the desert mothers and fathers and for the subsequent Christians in monasteries, anchorholds, and modern inner cities, is the realization that in large measure we do not know, and we need to be in a place where we can learn discernment. The values — even (or especially?) the ostensibly Christian values — of society need to be deconstructed and reevaluated, and there is no place like the desert, literal or metaphorical, for such a programme, and no substitute for ascetical discipline as a pedagogical method. Particularly when the society in question was overtly sympathetic to Christianity, as it was in the Roman Empire after the conversion of Constantine, it was necessary that there should be those who would move to the margins to discern and challenge societal values that had increasingly little to do with crucifixion.

'Abba, give us a word.' This was the regular plea of the ones who came out from the cities to learn from the wisdom of the desert dwellers. From the stories of the 'words' that were given in response to this request two things are clear. The first is that the ascetical life of the desert did indeed bring discernment.

Time after time, insight was offered, and all too often it was much nearer the bone than the inquirer expected: the stories of the sayings of the desert fathers are often tinged with the wry humour of very prosaic advice being offered to someone desirous of spiritual heroics. Secondly, the discernment was there for the benefit of those who came in need of it; it was not for the sole benefit of the desert dwellers, or for a singular pursuit of private holiness. For all the emphasis on solitude, there was also an emphasis on appropriate availability. In this way genuine alternatives to the norms of society were offered, by precept and example, to those who were willing to go to the desert and learn from the women and men who lived there how their society might be revisioned.

Central to such revisioning was a different perspective on wealth and possessions than was normal in society: it is no accident that poverty has been part of the monastic vow for most of the history of Christian monasticism. The irony was that although individual women and men renounced personal possessions, the structures of the monastic system from time to time became very wealthy indeed, with abbeys owning vast estates and having enormous political and economic control. Yet these structures were frequently called into question and brought to reform from within: sometimes, as with the Cistercian reform, the new movement to the margins quickly became wealthy and powerful in its turn. This is not the place to recount the ups and downs of the ideal of poverty: the point is that however sadly it often failed in practice, it was an ideal, which directly challenged the norms of acquisitiveness. It was taken as given through many centuries that the pursuit of holiness required renunciation not necessarily of wealth but certainly of greed: and in practice that frequently meant renunciation of wealth as well. Far from being a purely private matter, this was again of direct social concern. The renunciation of wealth was intended to free people from the preoccupations of possessions, to enable them to give to the poor and to challenge the structures of society based on greed which engendered that poverty. Again, it requires only modest acquaintance with Christian history to know how far short of these ideals the reality frequently fell. Yet those who are honoured as saints are those whose attitudes to possessions were patterned after the poor man from Galilee rather than after the personal and institutional greed around them.

How outrageous this could be in the eyes of society is vividly illustrated in the life of Francis of Assisi. Where other young men composed lyrics to their loves. Francis became a troubadour singing to his Lady Poverty, Everyone knows the story of the fury of his father at Francis' identification with the poor, even to the point of himself going round the town with a begging bowl: what is not so often registered is that what so infuriated Pietro Bernardone was the implied criticism of his wealthy lifestyle: was he not a good Christian? The insistence by the early Franciscans on total poverty, institutional as well as personal, and their theological understanding of this as identification with Christ and his poor, was strongly subversive of the institutionalized and often rapacious wealth of the church, including the monastic orders of his time. Again, at its best this voluntary poverty was not merely a private bid for holiness, as though it were a bankrupting payment on earth for the sake of enormous heavenly treasure. Rather it was a deconstruction of the whole myth of wealth and success, not least in its theological implications. It was not the wealthy Pope but the little poor man that the masses honoured as so Christlike that they believed he shared even the wounds of his crucified God.

Again with respect to power, those whose theology forced them to measure omnipotence against the arms of the cross, seeing in Christ crucified the wisdom and power of God, were forced to deconstruct prevailing ideas of power with its built in recourse to violence. Elaine Pagels has recently argued that the stand of the early Christian martyrs against the demand to offer a religious sacrifice to the empire has for too long been seen as simply standing by their private religious convictions, rather than as the political challenge that it was. She points out that in their questioning of who these emperors and these gods were in whose name atrocities were being carried out, Christians like Justin were implicitly challenging the whole basis and structure of Roman imperial power, and offering the beginnings of a radically different structuring of society.[8]

Some of them, at least, looked for a restructuring that would give equality to women and slaves, but that was not to be. Though there was a sense in which society was Christianized in the centuries after the conversion of Constantine, the hierarchies of power remained firmly in place, with women on the whole excluded. Although a few women came to hold positions of authority as heads of religious houses, for the most part they were excluded through the middle ages from education and from the places of power in ecclesiastical and secular institutions. Perhaps it is hardly surprising that those women who did become able to express their spirituality in writing displayed an understanding of power strongly at variance with the status quo. We find this in individual cases: when for instance we read Julian of Norwich's comments on the courtesy and generosity of the God, who serves us in our humblest physical needs, against the background of the haughty and pompous powermongering of the Bishop of Norwich, Henry Despenser, we are invited to a theology of power very different indeed from conventional ideas of power as force. Again, the personal moral authority of Catherine of Siena, born of refusal to submit to conventional patterns of womanly behaviour and giving herself instead to solitary prayer and service to the sick and outcast, in the end effectively challenged the power structures of church and society and the collusion between them.

But beyond these individual examples and others like them, we find that the spiritual writings of women overall are differently structured from those of their male counterparts, in a way which seems to me to be directly antithetical to norms of power and authority. In the writings of male mystics we find as a regular feature metaphors of climbing. We have *The Scale (or Ladder) of Perfection, The Twelve Steps of Humility and Pride, The Ladder of Monks, The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (this one has thirty steps!) and so on: the image was enormously popular. Yet I know of no instance in which it is employed by a woman mystic. Their works are more likely to be entitled *Dialogues or Revelations* or *Book of the Divine Works*. Perhaps the nearest we come to the metaphor of steps in the case of a woman writer is with Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*; yet even here although there are stages the image is of concentric circles requiring ever deeper exploration and integration of layers of the self, not one of climbing up successive steps like spiritual upwardly mobile professionals. I doubt whether this difference between women and men in choice of metaphor is accidental. It seems to me that women , who were barred from climbing the ladder of the ecclesiastical or educational hierarchies, had a quite different understanding also of wherein *spiritual* advance consists. Nor was this private sour grapes piousity. As we have seen in the cases of Julian and Catherine, when we consider their lives and writings against their varying societal contexts with the question of their view of power in mind, we find on offer important alternatives to the prevailing ideas.

Again, it is at least arguable that there was a strong and deliberate social comment discernable in the choices women and men made about the expression of their sexuality. Our culture has such a romanticized and privatized view of sexuality that (unless we have taken feminist writings very seriously) we can hardly bring ourselves to think about sexual choices as political or social or indeed anything but deeply private. But Peter Brown has argued that at least in the era of the early church, the termination of virginity was seen as a *social* act, and marriage implied solidarity with a whole interwoven fabric of social convention. If one chose not to marry and procreate, this was perceived as abnormal and asocial, as disavowal of participation in the normal structure of society, and sometimes as deeply threatening to it. When Christians asserted their right to remain virgins, and to live together in freely chosen communities rather than in the procreative relationships prescribed and often arranged by society, this was far more than a private choice about sexuality, it was a declaration of independence that resonated with subversive overtones.

Brown argues that we have read the exaltations of virginity in early Christian writers too much in terms of a Platonic suspicion of the body and too little with an eye to the social implications of sexual choices. He does not deny that Platonic anthropology played an important part, both at the time and in the later asceticism that sometimes amounted to hatred of the body and especially of sexuality. But along with the psychology it is important to recognize that sexual choices were choices about the sort of society that was being chosen: in that sense they were not merely personal choices about virtue, where what counts as virtuous is already fixed, but about how new patterns of sexual choices provide an alternative understanding of liberation and justice and integrity.[9]

Brown develops his theory that the choice of virginity was a choice for freedom and for an alternative structure of social life only with reference to the early centuries of Christianity; sexual choices might have very different social implications in medieval and modern times. But though the implications might be *different*, it does not follow that they would not exist or that sexual choices are merely private. When we look at the lives of some of the medieval saints we easily see how their spirituality and their sexual choices interconnected to challenge social conventions. For instance, there are plenty of examples in which stereotypes of what was considered proper for the sexes were dispensed with. Catherine of Siena refused both marriage and convent — the respectable choices open to women — and gave herself to service to the sick and outcast, which in her time was considered utterly disreputable for a woman of 'good birth'. Hildegard of Bingen became an influential preacher, and Julian of Norwich a writer of theology of great subtlety and depth: neither of those were 'normal' roles for women.

Men, too, refused conventional sex roles. When Francis of Assisi and his followers took it upon themselves to care for lepers, they were effectively accepting to do the work of lower class women: I suspect that this was one of the reasons why they were treated with such suspicion and scorn by much of 'respectable' society. In the erotic poetry of John of the Cross, God is portrayed as the (male) lover: the fact that this either placed John in the role of beloved woman, or saw the relationship between them in metaphors of homosexuality, bothers my students a very great deal more than it seems ever to have bothered John. It is of course true that it was conventional to use female pronouns for the soul: but that only raises the further question of why, in a strongly patriarchal

society, that should have been so. The old answer that it was because the soul was seen as passive before God (as the woman is passive before the man (!)) needs to look again at the mystical literature and see, contra William James, exactly how unpassive the soul is encouraged to be in her longing and her loving. *Whatever* one says here, it is impossible to rescue the conventions.

But above all, the giants of Christian spirituality are subversive of that spirituality itself. More than they challenge conventions of security and wealth and power, more even than that they challenge norms of sexuality they stand as a challenge to what constitutes holiness. Time after time they reject the notion that sanctity has to do with private consolations and religious experiences: John of the Cross exhorts his readers to treat all visions as though they came from the devil; the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* says that those who desire consolations behave 'like sheep with a brain disease.' There is much more emphasis on yearning for God, on the expansion of desire, than on its gratification; and gratification when it does come is to be seen *never* as an end in itself but as a 'spiritual sweetmeat' which will lead to ever deeper longing for God, as an interim treat can be used to encourage children to press ahead with a task which they have not yet learned to value for its own sake.

As the longing for God matures, its satisfaction is seen less and less in terms of subjective sensations of peace and joy and ecstasy, and more and more in terms of being united with God in God's own attributes: compassion, justice, righteousness. Modern writers about mystical union often treat it in terms of unusual and intense psychological experiences, like spiritual orgasms leaving the soul and gasping and inarticulate. It would be silly to deny that Christian mystics speak of intense experiences; of course they do. But out of comparison more important is what Teresa of Avila refers to as *habitual* union: that union with God which is not intensity of emotion but a conjoining of wills, so that the will of God for justice and liberty and compassion becomes the whole motivation of the lover. The desire *for* God engenders in the lover the desires *of* God: the development in the soul and the behaviour of the same longings that God has — longing for deliverance of God's people from tyranny and injustice.

This is not a private spirituality, or a spirituality without social and political consequences. It is certainly not an academically neutral spirituality, 'emerging from the dominant groups of society ... and entrenched on the side of the status quo.' It is rather a spirituality which challenges conventions and stereotypes in the name of a God of mercy and anger and justice. It gets its hands dirty with the grime of poverty, and walks among the marginal with the barefoot Galilean. It is a spirituality that takes the Incarnation seriously.

FOOTNOTES

1. Allan Boesak 'Preface' on Charles Villa-Vicencio, ed. *On Reading Karl Barth in South Africa* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988) p. vii.
2. Robert Llewelyn *A Doorway to Silence: The Contemplative Use of the Rosary* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1986) p. 67.
3. p. 36.
4. SCM Press, London, 1988.
5. DLT, London, 1985.
6. 'The Church of the Saints' in Theological Investigations Vol 3 (DLT, London, 1967).
7. *The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers*. Fairacres Publications No. 48 (SLG Press, Oxford, 1975) pp. xvi–xvii.
8. Elaine Pagels *Adam, Eve and the Serpent* ch. 2 (Harper and Row, New York, 1988).
9. Peter Brown 'The Notion Of Virginity in the Early Church' in Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, eds., *Christian Spirituality Vol. I* (Crossroads, New York, 1987) pp. 427–443; cf his *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (Faber and Faber, London, 1989).

ON CALLING ISLAM 'MEDIEVAL'

DAVID MARTIN

I place this letter by Francis Bennion at the beginning to illustrate the way in which the word 'medieval' can be used.

"Sir: Your report (16 December) of the Day of Muslim Solidarity reminds us that the death sentence against Salman Rushdie is for apostasy (change or denial of faith) rather than blasphemy.

Christian England once executed people for apostasy. The historian F.W. Maitland researched a case where in 1222 a church council at Oxford degraded and excommunicated a young deacon who had fallen in love with a Jewess. To please her he had circumcised himself, renounced the Christian faith, and become a Jew.

Like the Ayatollah, this medieval tribunal left it to others to execute the death sentence. The lovestruck deacon was delivered to the Sheriff of Oxfordshire, Fawkes de Breaute, whose men promptly burnt him alive.

Either of two conflicting conclusions can be drawn from all this. One is that the Muslims are still living in the Middle Ages, whereas Christians have become enlightened and liberal. The other is that the Muslims still care so deeply about their faith that they regard apostasy with genuine horror, while Christians have grown indifferent.

Either way, the civil law must be obeyed. Incitement to murder remains a grave criminal offence."

The Independent, December 19, 1989

The topic is difficult, even when conceived mainly in the framework of sociology. It is not made easier by my very partial acquaintance with Islam. However, I intend to proceed by offering my comments in the 'Notes towards' genre, and I intend to take risks rather than covering myself with the usual disciplines, back-door exits, and the academic 'maybe' and 'perhaps'.

In the recent controversy over Salmon Rushdies's *Satanic Verses* some liberals described Islam in general and Bradford Muslims in particular as 'medieval'. The term 'medieval' was not intended to be merely descriptive. It was intended to be descriptive/pejorative. One of the persons deploying the term 'medieval' was a colleague of mine in the sociology of religion who is a partisan of social evolution. Although social evolution has been much blown upon, it nevertheless has a habit of sticking around. It is kept available in the mental loft and exposed to domestic viewing on a selective and intermittent basis. Indeed, there are rules about when to expose one's private collection of disallowed attitudes to public view. Broadly one may not expose one's private social evolutionism when talking about simple societies. The word 'primitive' is definitely taboo, since it is linked with superior attitudes towards those held to be 'lower' in the scale of social organization.

However, discreet exposure *is* allowed when talking about religion. In this context religion is held to pass from an all-encompassing social condition to a marginal condition. This passage from comprehensiveness to marginality is generally part of an evolutionary framework, and one capable of being used predictively in that all societies are destined to travel along this road, give a contingent bump here and a contingent bump there, depending on local conditions.

At this point we enter a very doubtful area where all kinds of intellectual phantoms lurk, including philosophies of history, historical periodisation, concepts of phases, ages and stages, notions of progress, notions of convergence, as well as those prophecies of hope in which liberal democracy becomes universal or prophecies of doom in which it appears as a temporary episode. One of the most pervasive and substantial of these phantoms is called the entrance into modernity, signalled by industrial society. Ernest Gellner as philosopher and as anthropologist cum-sociologist is an advocate of this view. No matter about the variety of *origins* there is convergence of *destinies,* provided by modern industrial society. The world is going 'west', and Japan is the most obvious example of the far east going further west than the west itself.

Ernest Gellner is a bit unusual in making a lot of his public subscription to this view. I want to suggest that, disclaimers to the contrary, most of us are private subscribers. Certainly when it comes to a challenge of the kind posed by Bradford Muslims or the late Ayatollah, we respond in terms which indicate our private subscription. Certainly the public rhetoric of controversy is redolent of the contrast between modern and pre-modern, with the pre-modern being nothing more or less than backward, retarded and behind. Of course, that may also be underlined by the way we use words like 'fundamentalist' and 'superstitious' as tucked into the basic evolutionary contrast. No doubt we can use 'fundamentalist' descriptively, but more often it is tucked into the distinction provided by the contrast modern/pre-modern and the pejorative overtones attached to the lower/earlier of these two phases.

In the immediate vicinity of the contrast between modern and pre-modern is another binary opposition which also attracts a huge private subscription. This is the contrast between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, and the key notion here is the erosion of organic, all-encompassing community. Religion is the outward vesture and inner spring of community and the decline of religion runs *pari passu* with the decline of community. Of course, for the enlightened the decline of religion may be seen as pretty tolerable (while the decline of community is on the contrary moderately regrettable), but that does not need to be enquired into very far. The enlightened attitude amounts to seeing community at its most charming in folk-lore and folk dancing, and at its most menacing in the 17th century Salem of the witch trials.

The point to be emphasized here is the pre-eminent notion of the evolutionary passage to modernity and the background assumption that once-upon-a-time there was an all-embracing community which was based, for better or for worse, on an all-embracing religion. The old religious movements, like Islam and Christianity, were part of 'community', and community carries over, or 'leaks' into, the 'modern' period only on the *peripheries* of 'modern' society, like the Western Isles, *or* when migrants from under-developed parts of the world settle in the *centre* of modern society, *or* when small groups of mainly middle class youth are sucked into the enthusiasms of new religious movements or communes.

Note that there is a graduated scale of tolerance available for these leaks. The religious communities of the peripheries can be tolerated provided they do not attempt to discipline people like the Lord Chancellor or erupt into real politics like Mr. Paisley and the Catholic nationalists. The new religious movements are tolerable as private indulgences in (say) Vedanta or Yoga, but not as all encompassing claims made upon

mainly middle class youth. The migrants are tolerable provided their communitarian organization is viewed through the lens applicable to a racial minority. That is known as adding colour and variety, and is nice in the way folk-lore is nice. However, their communitarian organization becomes *in*tolerable when it manifests itself as militant cultural defence carried out in the name of religion. At this point the enlightened go into a state of schizophrenia, publicly declaiming that Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are welcome in our muticultural society, and have a culture equal (if not superior) in its validity to our own, but privately muttering "Medieval Muslims go home if you can't behave yourselves". The matter can be put another way. The enlightened are cultural relativists, who show their liberalism by refusal to distinguish between cultures in terms of value, but who plainly emerge as partisans of western liberalism once the beneficent face of community reveals itself as the maleficent face of militant religiosity. At *that* point all the half-banished notions in the sociological and historical mental loft are allowed back into the conscious mind. And when that happens Islam can be roundly described as 'medieval'. Anathema can be met with anathema.

But why 'medieval'? Well, plainly 'primitive' will not do, since that summons up images of hunters and gatherers, and Muslims in Bradford or Karachi or Gaza Strip are not hunters and gatherers. 'Medieval' has various advantages. A kind of society described and/or dismissed as medieval can be seen as quintessentially communitarian specifically within the frame-work provided by militant religion. Of course, the charming elements of colour, and of guild-organisation, of stability, and craftsmanship, and close-knit relationship are all there, but they are conceptually subordinate to an unyielding, ecclesiastical organisation, to a social pressure excluding dissidents, to the unquestioning acceptance of sacred texts, and to superstition in general. In other words, the term previously used to describe and/or discuss *Catholicism* can be redeployed to discuss Islam. As Catholicism has improved under the beneficent impact of the passage to modernity, so Islam can move into the vacant place. Anathema once reserved for the Pope can be refurbished for the Ayatollah. And to show that these anathemas do not derive from an underground reservoir of racism, the anathemas can and should be used simultaneously against fundamentalist Protestants, who being often whites and certainly Christians are approved and allowable targets of unqualified liberal excoriation. (It doesn't matter that these fundamentalist *Protestants* are not remotely comparable to fundamentalist Muslims in their militancy and in their claims to subordinate the rest of society to sacred writ. The point is not accuracy but the establishment of liberal credentials).

So then, the most convenient term to characterise what is not yet modern and is defined by the specifically religious aspect of close-knit and closed communitarianism is 'medie-val'. I would add that not the least convenient aspect of using 'medieval' is the way it avoids open evolutionism. Though it belongs to the general enlightened condemnation of a back-ward, dogmatic, and all-encompassing Catholicism, it is not implicated in the racial and social superiorities of the imperialist era. The natural resonance of 'medieval' is not of an evolution-ary social phase but of historical periodisation.

One element in the complex of putative 'medieval' char-acteristics is not stressed, however. I have suggested that community as militant religiosity is condemned and commu-nity as social solidarity is applauded, even though the two may empirically support one another. But the element of honour

and shame is not much canvassed. In most pre-modern societies, medieval or otherwise, a man's identity is to a notion of his honour, especially the honour of his family. Insult is deadly and feuding endemic. Moreover, in certain versions of this, as for example, in Islam and Catholicism, the honour of person and family and social group is linked to the honour of the totemic signs which summarise the unity of the whole. Thus to insult the Virgin is to insult simultaneously all wives and womanhood and the honour of the whole group. To insult the wives of the Prophet is equally to impugn womanhood, all wives and the whole group. Liberal society, for all its pro-claimed empathy with the presuppositions of other cultures, persists in treating those in its immediate vicinity as other versions of itself, though with a different colouring and providing different ethnic restaurants. It does not take on board the radical difference between its own form of social solidarity and the form of social solidarity with which it is confronted. What seems radically different is treated as contingent and can be dropped, religion for example. The real demand of liberal society, however, is for assimilation to the liberal norm in which religion is a matter of private variation and not socially and publicly constitutive.

Now, I do not want to be misunderstood. I have little sympathy with fundamentalist Islam and I have no wish to restore the all-embracing bonds and disciplines of community. True, I am interested in the paradoxes of liberalism, and believe it typically to involve many misunderstandings about the nature of social solidarity and individual choice, but I am not persuaded I should accept the demands of Muslims in Bradford about how *this* society should protect *their* honour.

I conclude with an observation. One is that insofar as new religious movements arouse opposition, they do so because they restore at the micro level what old religious movements maintain at the macro level. That is the head and front of their offence. Religion is basic, constitutive, and pervasive. It defines who is the brother and who is not, and its boundaries come as close as may be to the scope of community itself. There is a difference, however. In the case of the Muslim community the fact of being Muslim is prior and coincident with birth itself. The question of choice cannot rise and conversion if it should occur must mean leaving the community. And worse. All choices are exercised inside the prior fact of being Muslim. But in the social context of new religious movements the world of choice is defined as including choice of religion. It is precisely in that area that liberal society first established its concept of what was voluntary. As the individual is drawn into the commitments of the new religious movements, or in alternative language, sucked into the vortex of its totality, he appears to have lost just that voluntary aspect which liberalism defines as of the human essence. To that extent the spontane-ous appearance of a new religious movement in liberal society is more distressing than the migration of an old religious movement. The new religious movement is a regression on the part of those who have already acquired what ought to be of the human essence: choice, and with that the centrality of the individual. The old religious movement, however, is the movement of persons from 'backward' societies into advanced society. They are not regressing. They are simply waiting a bit until they progress. Of course, if they don't progress one knows how to label their condition. They are still 'medieval'.

Perhaps the contrast can be dramatised in the following way. For Muslim society humanity is constituted by member-ship in the socio-religious totality of Islam, or, in a secondary

way by membership of its Jewish and Christian antecedents. For liberal society humanity is characterized by the ability to choose among ideological options separate from the fact of social belonging, and religion itself is conceived as an act of mature decision rather than of automatic membership. Of course, liberal society exaggerated the degree of choice which it offers as distinct from the acceptance of prior donations and givens, but its *differentia specifica* is the *idea* of mature option not inevitable donation. It, as it were, puts up with or elides the fact that most religion is passed on by the decision of *parents*.

To that I will add a postscript about Salman Rushdie himself, as existing between the one, the other, a hybrid. *Perhaps* – I speculate – the hybrid forgot his original habitat and so adjusted to his new ecological niche that the though he could tease the believers in his society just as his peers in England teased the Christian believers in their society. In England the believers had been taught to believe that the test of their faith was to grin and bear the teasing. If they didn't grin they were shown to be insecure by the 'light' of western psychology. Rushdie could help pass that lesson on from the west to the whole world, including the true believers in his original habitat and for that matter in England. He would be helping them forward, moving up a phase, out of darkness into light, out of the medieval into the modern. It was a sort of mission. Unfortunately, they – or some of them – had not learnt that putting up with teasing proved the maturity of their faith better than rubbing out the teaser.

THE ACADEMIC'S DREAM

PETER CAMERON

Introduction

One day last week I found myself in the room of my prolific friend and colleague Frank Roskill. He was absent at a conference and I was looking for some exam papers, but on his desk there was a manuscript which caught my eye. It was entitled 'The Academic's Dream', it was very short, and in spite of myself I read it to the end. My immediate reaction was to dismiss such a trifle, but then I realised that he must mean to publish it - since everything he writes he publishes - and I further considered that any attempt on my part to dissuade him from publishing it was out of the question. Roskill is an engaging man, a man indeed of considerable charm, but I fear that he would regard any intervention of mine as sufficient reason for rushing into print. On the other hand to do nothing was equally impossible: the idea of such an article appearing so to speak unchaperoned in a respectable journal was grossly offensive to me. It struck me as opportunist, cynical, and disloyal - in fact as wholly deplorable. After a period of reflection therefore I resolved to anticipate him. I stole back into his room, copied the article, and now submit it to the public together with this monitory preface and the remarks contained in the succeeding commentary.

I should add that the question whether to divulge my colleague's name caused me great anguish: in the end I decided that nothing was to be gained by withholding it, because the mere appending of my own name would indirectly reveal his to anyone desirous of discovering it. But in any case, in matters such as this the interests of truth must prevail over considerations of charity.

THE ACADEMIC'S DREAM
OR: ON THE MAKING OF MANY BOOKS, AND NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

It has been a busy term. Knowing that I must publish or be damned, I have been building up a portfolio of articles. The problem of course is not in the writing - I try to get one done every Wednesday - but in finding a subject. I have had one or two false starts. For example, I came across what I thought was a certainty in a passage in Ruth. There are at least twenty interpretations of Ruth 2:7, but the more interpretations there are the more fruitful the ground: it means that no one really has any idea what's going on, so the possibilities are infinite. It occurred to me that the word shibhtah is used in the same form at Deut. 23:13 of performing the natural functions, and the word bayith is an obvious euphemism for where one performs them - indeed in modern Hebrew one of the expressions, rather charmingly, is 'house of the seat'. The foreman of the harvesters therefore was simply saying, in the sort of earthy way you would expect from a foreman of harvesters, "she's been working in the field all day, stopping only to go to the lavatory." I hesitated for a while to write it up, out of natural embarrassment at having such a thing above my name, but then I found an article in a current periodical entitled 'Eschatology and Scatology in Luther', which seemed to open up a new seam, so I went ahead. But I was just putting the finishing touches to this potboiler when I discovered, inevitably, a reference to an article written twenty years ago arguing the same thing. Whether the writer argued it on the same basis or not, I don't know. I was too irritated to look it up.

But this experience, and one or two others like it, made me ask myself how obscure or Rabelaisian it is necessary to be before you come up with something which no one has ever said before. So I decided that I must be systematic, and I undertook an analysis of the articles which fill the journals which fill the libraries. I identified four categories.

First, there is the sort of little study I've just been discussing: the latest conjecture on the same age-old crux, wholly lacking in interest or significance, but serving its purpose well enough - that of getting its author's name into print. The trouble is that there are so few gaps remaining in the fence which two thousand years have erected around the subject matter.

Hence the attraction of the second category, where the professional parasites labour at collecting and collating the thoughts of others. If there is one thing easier than providing the twenty first interpretation of Ruth 2:7, it is providing a synopsis of the first twenty. The great advocate F.E. Smith was once appearing before a hostile judge in a complicated commercial case. The judge interrupted him with the words, "Mr. Smith, you've been addressing me for three hours on this point, and I'm none the wiser." "No doubt, my Lord," replied Smith, "but you're certainly better informed." The distinction between wisdom and information is, fortunately, not one which is very widely appreciated.

To the third category belongs

A young fellow called Septimus Clover,
Who bowled twenty-three wides in one over;
The first time this was done
By an archdeacon's son,
On a Friday in August at Dover.

It is the category of the unusual combination. The traditional methods are not enough to ensure a place in the record-books or in the theological journals. You have to steal a march on your rivals by producing a hybrid out of your hat. It's like the advertisements for lawyers in the EEC. It's not enough to be an experienced lawyer. It's not even enough to be an experienced lawyer and speak three languages. You have to be an experienced lawyer and speak three languages, two of which are Danish and Greek. So of course the theologians who have been lawyers or historians or sociologists or computer scientists or criminals or feminists find their old pursuits a selling-point, and insist on their relevance and usefulness to theology far beyond the point at which such claims cease to be convincing.

Indeed some of them insist so much that they create for themselves the fourth category, the category of the new methodology. On this merrygoround the New Testament is programmed or emancipated or classified or emasculated, and all the while multitudes of grateful scholars trample each other in the rush to leap aboard.

When I had completed my analysis I determined that my portfolio should be a balanced one, with a number of shares in each class. And I began to prosper. But then, one night, I had a dream, or rather a nightmare. I dreamt that there was an official reaction against this glorious proliferation of nonsense, that legislation was passed insisting that all editors of journals attach a kind of health warning to everything they printed, in the form of a system of stars, to be interpreted as follows:

One star: this article has been written solely with the intention of adding another line to the author's list of publica-

tions . It is totally without significance, and there is no point in reading it.

Two stars: this article contains nothing original: it is simply a resume of other people's articles in a certain area. As all the articles in question fall into the one star category, there is no point in reading it.

Three stars: the content of this article is original, in the sense that no one else has ever thought to write anything quite like it. There are, however, good reasons for this, so there is no point in reading it.

Four stars: this article proposes an entirely new approach to the subject. If enough people read it, it is quite likely to start a new school. It would therefore be very unwise for anyone to read it.

Five stars: this article is worth reading. (Articles in this category are published biennially in five journals, one for each of the main branches of academic theology.)

I woke in a cold sweat, feeling that my career was in ruins. But I soon cheered up. It was only a dream - and I had the material for another article.

Commentary

Now it occurred to me when I was first reading this effusion that its author was engaging in deliberate irony, but the idea I soon dismissed. I agree of course that it could be taken ironically, and no doubt Roskill assumed that it would be so taken by whatever editor he had in mind — otherwise he could never have hoped to have it published — but it sounded to me too much like a confession: I know the way the man's mind works. He had simply told the truth about himself, hoping that the world would be fooled into thinking him a profound and virtuous critic of human weakness. And it is sad and shocking that any academic theologian should be guided by any other motive than that of promoting the greater glory of God. I doubt that he is representative, in fact I know him not to be; I have a greater faith in the decency and probity of my profession. Nevertheless, it may be of value to set down here by way of antidote what I take to be the cardinal virtues of academic theology, in both teaching and research.

These are honesty, simplicity, and sensitivity, or - with a mnemonic in mind - sincerity , simplicity, and sensitivity. I long ago had a card prettily engraved with these three words and mounted on my desk in case I should ever lose sight of my goal. But almost more important than this trinity itself is the fact that its members are not all of equal importance.

The essential, indispensable quality, which must always be placed first, is sincerity or honesty, or if you like truth. You must always mean what you say, you must want to say it, you must think it both true and significant, and you must intend it as a contribution to scholarship, that is as a help to others in their search for truth (and not as a means of furthering your own career). To paraphrase Wittgenstein, you must say only what you cannot help saying. And you must not say anything you have not felt: it must be your voice and yours alone. In all this there is something of the *imitatio Christi*. Whenever you utter you should be in a position to preface your remark with his: "You have heard that it was said of old . . . but I say to you..."

The second quality is simplicity. Everything you write or say must be transparent: nothing unnecessary must be allowed to stand between your thoughts and your audience. And this is not simply a matter of words, of using Anglo-Saxon mono-

syllables wherever possible, of avoiding cumbersome subordinate clauses. It is also a question of style in a much wider sense. Roskill for example is playing an elaborate game with his audience - or might be. Even now I am not quite sure. The first rule of irony to my mind is to give warning signals so that people know that you are being ironical. Otherwise you are likely to confuse, and that cannot be your intention. Nevertheless there are occasions when simplicity must be sacrificed: there are thoughts which cannot be directly communicated in straightforward language. Again we are challenged by the *imitatio Christi*. The parables of Jesus are in one sense simplicity itself: uncomplicated vignettes from everyday life, involving sheep and coins and vineyards. But in another sense they are the most difficult and demanding forms in literature, precisely because they deal with the incommunicable. You cannot decode the parables - that would be to paint the god Mars in the armour which made him invisible. In other words, there are times when sincerity, honesty, truth must prevail over simplicity.

And thirdly, sensitivity. I read a review recently of the *magnum opus* of another of my colleagues. It was an eloquent and entertaining review, and I enjoyed it vastly, but it was conspicuously lacking in charity. It took the form of a deliciously biting satire which came close to personal abuse. It was in a word vicious, and had I been its subject I should never have written another word. And it occurred to me after I had read it through for the third time, that this sort of thing is really indefensible. It cannot be necessary in order to indicate a book's shortcomings to indulge in vituperation. Indeed it may be almost more effective to damn with faint praise. Sensitivity to the feelings of one's colleagues should be one of scholarship's virtues, and the *odium theologicum* should be as far as possible suppressed. This applies of course not only in the world of scholarship: so often in the church one sees the revolutionary preacher repelling more people than he attracts. And yet - once more the *imitatio Christi* confronts us: not peace but a sword, woe to you hypocrites, the scandal inseparable from the message. In other words, there are occasions when sensitivity too must give way to sincerity, when one must be prepared to give offence in the interests of truth: if something is wrong, one must say so: if it is misleading, insincere, dangerous, one must denounce it: if it is demonic, one must unmask it.

It is in conformity with this self-imposed academic code of honour that I have acted in relation to Roskill's article. Or specifically, it is in accordance with the last stated proviso within that code that I have seen my primary responsibility as being to the truth. I may have lost a friend, but let no one doubt my sincerity.

Polonius Buchstaber

THE RESURRECTION —
# A NEW ESSAY IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

JEREMY MOISER

The following essay hopes to make a contribution to the perennial debate on Jesus' resurrection. Although its scope is narrow, the ideas it proposes illuminate, I believe, many aspects of the problem - exegetical, theological, catechetical, even psychological - and I have not seen them expressed elsewhere. The model is Origen's treatise on first principles [1].

I

Palestinians contemporary with the primitive church would generally have conceived of resurrection somewhat along the following lines [2]. When a person died, he or she went down, beyond death, to sheol, there to await resurrection at the last day. Sheol was spatially imagined as lying below the earth. Resurrection would take the form of a restoration to God, either on a renewed earth or in heaven. This lack of definition in 'locating' resurrection is important. For those who anticipated a renewed *earth*, the doctrine of sheol permitted a pause in the life of the individual before (s)he was brought back from beyond death and restored to this life. For those, on the other hand, who anticipated a *heavenly* resurrection, sheol was a staging post (rendered necessary by certain beliefs concerning death and cosmology) on the deceased's continued journey, beyond death, to God in his heaven.

Let us now imagine the thoughts of the small group of disciples after Jesus' death. They were in no doubt that Jesus had died, had been buried and so had descended, like all the dead, to sheol. This conviction emerges strongly in all later biblical accounts, implicitly in the earlier emphases on burial (1 Cor 15:4; Mk 15:46f; Ac 2:29) and explicitly in the later mention of the harrowing of hell (1 Pt 3:19; 4:6) [3]. Sheol, however, as they believed, could not hold Jesus, and he was therefore carried thence to sit at God's right hand in glory - still beyond death, of course. We thus have the following scheme:
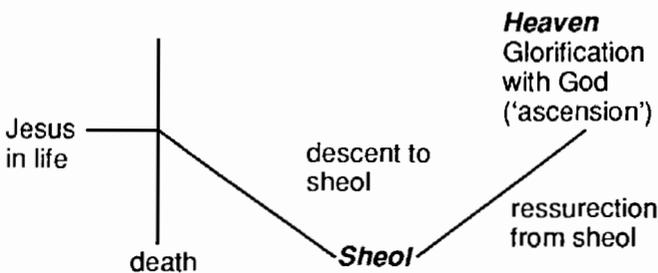
On this scheme, resurrection is strictly post mortem and inaccessible to history. It cannot be proved or disproved, there can be no evidence one way or the other, it has simply to be believed. The three ideas of descent, resurrection and ascension are linked phases in the one process of glorification. This is a stupendous affirmation of God's approval of Jesus and of man's ultimate salvation from the forces of evil (Satan, sin, death, sheol).

Christians have not really advanced beyond this necessarily limited scheme today, and there is no reason why they should. It is a simple, satisfying and in the circumstances rational understanding of events that lie beyond our experience. Furthermore, it is borne out by the earliest account of belief in the resurrection, that in 1 Cor 15. As there are serious misunderstandings of this well-worn passage current even in reputable commentaries, a brief survey of it is required here [4].

II

The starting point for any fully satisfactory exegesis must be the realisation that the entire discussion of 1 Cor 15 is *ethical*. Chapters 12-14 concern disorderly conduct at Christian meetings, which reflects divisions in the community. Hence the firm statement in 15:50 that since flesh and blood (= man as sinful) cannot benefit from God's kingship, Paul's readers must change their ways. They must put aside behaviour and attitudes characteristic of human philosophy (1:20) and of flesh and blood. The ethical nature of the chapter is clear from the following indications:

1. the chapter follows on from chapters 12-14 (δέ in 15:1);
2. Jesus' resurrection means that our faith is not useless and that we are saved *from our sins*, vv 14,17;
3. the Corinthians must come to their right mind and *sin no more*, v.34;
4. they must be steadfast and immovable in the gospel *and its works*, v.58 (cf vv 1f).

The problem confronting Paul (as later in Rm) [5] is how, although we live subject to sin, corruption and death, we may be transformed into other beings with the characteristics of the risen Lord. What agency will rid us of our subjection to the powers of evil (as manifested in death) and make us more like Jesus whom death could not destroy? Simple, exclaims Paul: the divine power! 'We (Christians) shall all be changed' (v.51, divine passive). Apart from vv 20-28, which interrupt the main flow of Paul's argument, only two verbs are in the future up to v.51. From this we may deduce that resurrection is seen as a present reality, begun now, consummated beyond death (vv 51-54).

According to Paul, death (physical and spiritual) was the result of Adam's sin and affects us all (vv 21f), but it has been defeated by Christ (vv 22,26). Christ died and was buried, vv 3f, but he triumphed over death by being raised, vv 4,12,15 etc. Here Paul makes a point crucial to our present purposes: what is true of Christ, he asserts, is true of all Christians. Christ is the first-fruit, vv 20,23; heavenly beings will be exactly like the heavenly Man, v.48. Like Christ Christians must die, but in him they will all be raised. We shall return to this point. If death is a force cutting man off from God, resurrection is the process whereby a Christian passes from a state of mortality to one of immortality. Paul resorts to five images:

1. the seed is sown, and the result is new life, vv 36-38;
2. similarly, life comes from death: the imperishable from the perishable, v.42b, glory from dishonour, v.43a, power from weakness, v.43b, spiritual body from physical body, v.44a. Paul expatiates on this with further metaphors:
3. we take on a change of image, v.49;
4. we are transformed and so inherit the kingdom of God, v.50;
5. we put on a change of clothing, v.53.

Now each of these images balances continuity and discontinuity [6]:

A. 1) death is the end of a person's earthly existence in all its aspects;

2) the heavenly body is utterly different from the physical body.

B. 1) God provides a new body for the deceased Christian;
2) it is the same person who lives, dies and puts on immortality.

As well as talking about death and resurrection, Paul also describes the characteristics of the risen life (a more logical progression is followed in Rm). The spiritual person (2:15; 6:11), that is one who has passed through death and achieved the risen life offered him here and now in Christ, is imperishable (vv 42,53f), in glory (v.43a), in power (v.43b), like the Man of heaven (vv 48f), immortal (vv 53f). Where in Rm the exhortation *precedes* the detailed exposition of Christian ethics, in 1 Cor it *succeeds* it.

Paul also looks to the consummation of the transformation initiated here in life. The final change announced in vv51f will occur within the lifetime of some then living ('we shall not all have died', v.51). It will be heralded by a trumpet, and it will usher in the last age (vv 52-57). Paul reiterates the need to prepare for it now in the way we live (vv 49,58).

There are two final features of importance before we draw our conclusions from this chapter. Firstly. Paul's scrupulous distinction between νεκροί (used for all the dead) and οί νεκροί (used for the Christian dead) leads to a division in the chapter: vv 1-28 discuss in the abstract, so to speak, the possibility and promise of ultimate resurrection from sheol; vv 29-38 discuss the need for *Christians* to be transformed if they are to benefit from it. Secondly, J.C. O'Neill's exegesis of the highly controverted v.29 is perfectly borne out: 'Otherwise [ie if Christ's resurrection is untrue], what will those who are baptised for their dying bodies do? If the completely dead are not going to be raised, why be baptised for themselves as corpses?'[7]. Resurrection consists of escape from sheol.

From this broad survey of 1 Cor 15 it emerges that any idea of Christ's *returning to this life* not only is foreign to the context but would in any case be quite useless. Christ is mentioned in the chapter as it were secondarily, as an example for Christians to follow. The example would be meaningless if Christ either bounced back from death or went through death only to reappear in earthly life immediately afterwards. The entire point of Paul's comparison is that just as Christ was not trapped by death (in sheol) but went on to God (in heaven), so Christians can hope for the same if their lives are worthy. Resurrection from the dead is possible, says Paul, meaning that the dead are no longer, since Christ's victory, doomed to an eternity in sheol (vv 1-28); resurrection from the dead will be granted to those whose lives are patterned on Christ's (vv 29-58).

Empty tombs and physical appearances are to that extent not even secondary: they are irrelevant. They can offer Christians nothing for themselves: Christians cannot aspire to leave their graves or appear to their loved ones left behind on earth. What Paul needs to prove in order to make his point is that Christ really did go on to God having emerged unscathed from sheol. As we pointed out earlier, that is not something that *can* be proved: it can only be believed. Paul therefore appeals to the *belief* of the apostles and others[8]. Their conviction, and his, was that death had not done for Christ, since they knew from experience that he was alive and with God. Paul makes no distinction between his own Damascus road experience and the appearance(s) to the apostles.

The difficulty now arises of squaring this explanation with the later accounts of an empty tomb and appearances, seemingly solid and bodily. If our explanation so far is correct, belief in the resurrection of Jesus had no connexion with appearances or an empty tomb. The production of a body would not have altered at all the disciples' conviction that Jesus had risen to God. Various attempts have been made to bridge the gap between the initial religious experience (even though not viewed necessarily from the above perspective) and the later graphic texts. We might mention Strauss's psychological approach[9], the textual approach of Seidensticker[10], the exegetical approach of Wijngaards[11], the theological attempts of Schenke[12] and Gutwenger[13] and the recent views of Lindars[14]. All we need note here is that there are a number of explanations, some more persuasive than others, which might account for the later genesis of the detailed and concrete descriptions to which the early church resorted to express - and buttress - its beliefs. It is not difficult to appreciate that the resurrection as expounded in 1 Cor 15 is too thin and intangible, certainly for Greeks but also for Jews, to have survived long without elaboration. Such is human nature[15]. The psychological process would be aided by belief in the earthly restoration of all things at the last day: Christ could readily be imagined as anticipating the general return to life.

III

We may take our argument a stage further in another direction by turning to the four gospels (in ascending order of elaboration and perhaps also in chronological order). Interpreted in the light of what we have said so far, these accounts appear slightly less naive and concrete than they are sometimes given credit for. There is evidence that the trappings of empty tomb, annunciatory angels, earthquakes, guards and appearances are not taken too literally even by the authors themselves but serve conscious deliberately theological or apologetical aims. Here we can merely adumbrate a defence of this statement.

1. Mark. Recent research[16] has suggested that the gospel is the work of an anonymous Hellenistic Jew resident near Galilee shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. The author's purpose is to launder the oral Jewish traditions of his day concerning Jesus so that they appealed to the Roman mind. This meant on the one hand distancing Jesus from his Jewish background by exaggerating the opposition between him and the Pharisees (E.P. Sanders), inculpating the Sanhedrin for his death and denouncing the Jews for the later persecutions of Christians (chap.13), and on the other easing Roman minds with regard to Jesus' political ambitions. This is where Mark's treatment of the disciples fits in. They are denigrated because they thought Jesus would be a revolutionary. They were mistaken, but they gave a false impression which the Romans had, unfortunately but understandably, believed!

The empty tomb (Mark's only sop to the dramatisation of the resurrection) serves to expose the (women) disciples for what they are. Having failed to stand by Jesus at the cross (15:40), they disobey the young man's command at the tomb and are denied an appearance of Jesus. The young man himself is best understood as a martyr in heavenly vesture who acts as a foil to the women. He is ' a challenge to the follower of Jesus in Mark's day not to flee but to face death if necessary'[17].

2. Matthew. Mt's treatment of Jesus' resurrection is less extended than either Lk's or Jn's. In substance he follows Mk's account of the discovery of the empty tomb. The appearance to the first witnesses is restricted to a simple scene in which they worship Jesus and receive from him the .message they had already received from the angel (v.7), and Mt has no account of an ascension or exaltation separate from the resurrection.

Mt adds a number of elements to Mk's narrative which indicate his interests: the great earthquake, the descent of the angel to roll the stone away, the angel's dazzling face (cf 1 En 14.20; 106.5,10; TLev 4.3; 2 En 22.9; ApAd 7.52; ApAb 11.2 etc), the fulfilment of Jesus' own predictions, the repetition of 'he was raised from the dead', joy as the women's reaction (cf 1 En 51.5), and their obedience to the angelic command. If the resurrection of the holy ones and their appearance in Jerusalem had not already alerted the reader to an allusion to Ez 37:1-14 (vision of the valley of dry bones), the earthquake would certainly have done so (Ez 37:7). Mt regards Jesus' resurrection as the fulfilment of the eschatological prophecy of God's revivification of Israel, and its purpose as a return from exile (ie in Mt the formation of a new people rather than the salvation of a remnant). There are several other reminiscences of this passage in Mt's text.

The angel's dazzling face is certainly intended as a pointer to Dn 10:6 (cf TAb 12.5; 16.10; 4 Ezra 10.25), a vision whose purpose is to indicate to the prophet the eschatological moment of deliverance and resurrection (Dn 12:1f). (Mk 16:8 may be intended as an allusion to this vision, v.7.) There are other reminiscences of the Danielic vision in Mt's resurrection text.

The women's joy reminds us of Is 55:12 - 56:1, which is again an eschatological passage.

By his insertion at 27:52f, Mt may intend us to conclude that the resurrection of the holy ones is the necessary prelude to the formation of the new community mentioned in v.54 as a consequence of Jesus' death.

At 16:18 Mt has recorded Jesus' promise that the gates of hell would not prevail over the church (cf ApElij 1:10; 2.2; ApAd 8.14). It is but a short step from there via Is 28:18 to our present pericope. The evil people's pact with hell and death has been broken; the Lord is going to rise on the mountain[18] to do this extraordinary work (Is 28:21). The resurrection is therefore an ecclesiological event which guarantees the validity of Jesus' promise to his church. Coupled with this is Mt's identification of Jesus' risen body with the sanctuary of the new eternal temple (26:61).

We may summarise Mt's view of the resurrection in a few sentences:

1. It ushers in the end-time. It is the decisive salvific event.
2. From one point of view it is the consequence, and from another the substance, of Jesus' salvific death.
3. Jesus foresaw it.
4. It is a work of God (hence the earthquake, the angels, the women's fear).
5. It signals Jesus' exaltation to universal lordship.
6. It marks the birth of the new people of God.
7. It guarantees his enduring presence with the church, against which the forces of hell - sheol! - are powerless.

In other words, Mt deliberately creates a short series of apocalyptic and eschatological scenes skilfully woven out of traditional material of Jewish and Christian provenance. His intentions are not historical but theological (strictly, ecclesiological).

3. Luke. The following are some of the emphases of his account:

1. *The Twelve (strictly Eleven) as witnesses.* They knew Jesus in the flesh and can testify that it is now the same person. The idea of witness is not prominent in Lk except in the context of resurrection.
2. *Jerusalem.* Lk omits Mk 14:28 and 16:7 which might be taken to point to appearances in Galilee. In Lk it is the Galilean disciples who witness the Jerusalem appearances. This coheres with Lk's emphasis on Jerusalem as an important salvific centre.
3. *The fulfilment of scripture,* mentioned at length in both appearances, and the fulfilment of promise (24:6,49).
4. *Jesus' presence with the community,* mediated through the eucharist and the Holy Spirit.

There are Marcan connexions (no appearance to the women, unless Clopas' companion was one) and Johannine connexions (the apostles' refusal to believe; Peter's running to the tomb; the presence of the burial cloths; two angels).

On this background, the emphasis on the palpability of the risen Jesus, which is central to both the Lucan appearances, is seen to be theological and deliberately contrived. Its purpose is to confirm the spiritual reality of Christ in his church. The empty tomb, adopted from Mark, and the appearances of Jesus, adopted either from Paul or from other oral or written tradition, serve merely as useful pegs on which to hang an array of theological convictions. The discrepancy in the times of the ascension (Lk 24:50 and Ac 1:3) indicates where the author's priorities lie. Luke (or his source) is not the only New Testament writer to invent or embroider the truth in order to make a point.

4. John. Here I shall refer only to two items by way of illustration. The first is the description of the linen cloths left behind in the tomb (20:6f), an apparently eyewitness detail of compelling veracity. Whatever the author thought of the truth of the tradition he had received, he uses the cloths to reinforce his message that Jesus had broken out of the restricting cloths of Judaism and left them buried in the tomb[19]. The second is the miraculous draught of Jn 21:4-14. M. Oberweis[20] interprets the number of fish (153) on the basis of Jewish gematria as a reference to Cana of Galilee. If there was a Johannine community in that town, they might have felt the need for a 'community-founding tradition' not satisfied in chapters 1-20. The redactor satisfies such a need in two ways. Firstly, Nathaniel, one of Jesus' first disciples, is said to come from there (21:2). Secondly, the catch of 153 fish (which for the initiated means the mission at Cana) is ascribed to a command from the risen Lord. In fact, however, John's whole resurrection account is shot through with symbolism. There is sufficient evidence to doubt the author's belief in the importance of the literal truth of all he says.

IV

It is time to draw our conclusions from the gospel testimony, thus briefly outlined, and gather together the threads of our argument as a whole.

Our Origenian methodology has not been formally justi-
fied, and it must speak for itself. We have imagined the most
likely primitive view of Jesus' resurrection as a process of
glorification on the other side of death. It was this view which
galvanised the first disciples and attracted converts to the story
of Jesus. In time, however, the bare bones had to be fleshed
out, as is always the way, and traditions crept in which were
known to be 'symbolic and 'metaphorical' but which later
Christians, unaware of their origin or from a different concep-
tual background, took too literally. If our view is correct, the
stories surrounding the empty tomb and the appearances of the
risen Jesus could not be true; they must be 'fabrications', and
since in my opinion psychological theories of 'cognitive
dissonance'[21] which plot subconscious reactions are neither
necessary nor apt in our present case, their authors must have
been aware of this. There is evidence in the gospels that the
resurrection stories were transparent to their originators or
redactors, that their origin in kerygma was acknowledged and
appreciated.

Modern Christians need not be dismayed at the apparent
dismantling of time-honoured biblical matter. Our suggestions
focus attention on the essentials of the resurrection story and
render the acceptance of patently false particulars (like the
guard on the tomb[22]) otiose. The infancy narratives have
undergone a similar process in recent yeas.

Notes

1. As H.Crouzel explains (*Origène*, Lethieulleux, Paris 1985,216ff), this work
   theologised 'by way of exercise' (γυμναστικως): part of Origen's
   theological enterprise, approved incidentally by Athanasius whom Crouzel
   also quotes, was to offer *hypotheses* in areas not already decided δογματικως.
   Such hypotheses could be dismantled if their inadequacy was demonstrated
   or if a better one was proposed. The same point is made by H.CHADWICK,
   'Origenes', in *Alte Kirche* (ed.Greschat), Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1984,
   I,140. It should be added that no ecumenical council has ever defined the
   nature of Jesus' resurrection.
2. Cf P. GRELOT, 'La Resurrection de Jésus et son arrière-plan biblique et
   juif', in *La Résurrection du Christ et l'Exégèse Moderne* (Lectio Divina, 50),
   Ed.du Cerf, Paris 1969, 17-53; J.DANIELOU, *La Résurrection*, Ed.du
   Seuil, Paris 1968, 99-119.
3. C.PERROT, 'La descente du Christ aux enfers dans le NT', *LumVie* 87
   (1968),5-29; H.U.VON BALTHASAR, 'Absteig zur Hölle' *ThQ* 150
   (1970),193-201.
4. Amongst the enormous number of recent studies, the following may be
   mentioned: G.L.BORCHERT, 'The Resurrection:1 Corinthians 15',
   Review & Expositor 80(1983), 401-415; L.DE LORENZI (ed.), *Résurrection
   du Christ et des chrétiens (1 Cor 15)* (Série monog. de Benedictina, 8), Abbey
   of St Paul Outside the Walls, Rome 1985; V.GUENEL (ed.),*Le corps et
   le corps du Christ dans la première Epître aux Corinthiens* (Lectio divina, 114),
   Ed du Cerf, Paris 1983, esp.111-116; V.HASLER, 'Credo und
   Auferstehung in Korinth. Erwägungen zu 1 Kor 15', *TZ* 40 (1984),12-33;
   E. JUCCI, 'Terreno, psichico, pneumatico nel capitolo 15 della prima
   epistola ai Corinthi', *Henoch* 5 (1983), 323-341; M.PAMMENT, 'Raised
   a Spiritual Body: Bodily Resurrection according to Paul', *New Blackfriars*
   66 (1985), 372-388; C.H.RATSCHOW, 'Von der Auferweckung Jesu.
   Gedanken zu 1 Korinther 15', in *Von den Wandlungen Gottes*, de Gruyter,
   New York 1986, 315-335 (art.originally published 1973); G.SELLIN, *Der
   Streit um die Auferstehung der Toten. Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische
   Untersuchung von 1 Korinther 15*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen
   1986; H.-J.VOGEL, 'Auferstehung. Ein Versuch, 1 Kor 15. zu lesen', in
   D.Schirmer (ed.), *Die Bibel als politisches Buch* (Urban- Taschenbucher,655),
   Kohlhammer, Stuttgart-Berlin-Cologne 1982, 72- 82; G.WAGNER, 'If
   Christians refuse to act, then Christ is not risen. Once more 1 Cor 15', *Irish
   Bib.Stud* 6 (1984), 27-39. Recent commentaries on 1 Cor include:
   Conzelmann (1981²), Maillot (1978), Murphy-O'Connor (1979),
   Trenchard (1980), Wolff (completed 1982), Lang (1986¹⁶), Pesch (1986),
   Kilgallen (1987. None of these has in my opinion correctly identified
   Paul's argument. In particular commentators insit on regarding the chapter
   as *doctrinal*; they substitute all manner of fancy division for the basic
   twofold scheme proposed below; and they fail to see that general views of
   Jesus' resurrection which rely on physical appearances of the Lord after his
   death are actually *incompatible* with 1 Cor 15.
5. This not to deny, of course, that Paul has also to cope with those who
   denied the possibility of resurrection (v.12).
6. J.GILLMAN, 'Transformation in 1 Cor 15:50-53', *ETL* 58 (1982), 309-
   333.
7. '1 Corinthians 15:29', *ExT* 91 (1979/80),310-311.
8. P.SEIDENSTICKER, *Die Auferstehung Jesu in der Botschaft der Evangelisten*,
   Kath. Bibelwerk, Stuttgart 1967¹, 1968², 6; and 'Das antiochenische
   Glaubenserkenntnis 1 Kor 15,3-7 im Lichte seiner Traditionsgeschichte',
   ThGL 57 (1967), 286-323, esp.31Off. Cf, however, the critique by
   X.LEON-DUFOUR in *RSR* 57 (1969), 599-602.
9. *Leben Jesu* (1st ed.1835), III,140.
10. See under note 8 above.
11. 'Death and Resurrection in Covenantal Context (Hos 6,2)' *VT* 17 (1967),
    226-239.
12. *Auferstehungsverkündigung und leeres Grab*, Kath.Bibelwek, Stuttgart 1968.
13. 'Auferstehung und Auferstehungsleib' *ZKTh* 91 (1969), 32-58.
14. 'Jesus Risen: Bodily Resurrection but No Empty Tomb', *Theology* 89
    (1986), 90-96.
15. See W.J.ONG, *Orality and Literacy. The Technologizing of the Word*,
    Methuen, London-New York 1982, esp.chap.3, 'Some psychodynamics
    of orality', and chap.6, 'Oral memory, the story line and characterisation'.
16. For some of the folowing remarks I am indebted to the late much missed
    Rev Dr Bernard Holland of Worcester, who gave an extramural course
    from Birmingham University in the autumn of 1986. Cf also
    W.H.KELBER, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, Philadelphia 1983,
    particularly chapters 3 and 5. For the empty tomb pericope in Mk, see eg
    F.NEIRYNCK, 'Marc 16,1-8. Tradition et Rédaction', ETL 56 (1980),
    56-88.
17. A.K.JENKINS, 'Young Man or Angel?, *ExT* 94 (1982/3),237-240, at
    239.
18. See T.L.DONALDSON, *Jesus on the Mountain. A Study in Matthaean
    Theology* (JSNT Suppl.Series 8), JSOT Press, Sheffield 1985,170-190.
    Also O.DA SPINETOLI, *Matteo*, Cittadella Editrice, Assisi 1977³,704-
    727.
19. Thus M.SHORTER, 'The Sign of the Linen Cloths: the Fourth Gospel
    and the Holy Shroud of Turin', *JSNT* 17 (1983),.90-96. Cf also
    R.L.STURCH, 'The Alleged Eyewitness Material in the Fouth Gospel',
    in E.A.Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Biblica* 1978, II.Papers on the Gospels,
    JSNT Suppl., JSOT Press, Sheffield 1980,.313-327.
20. 'Die Bedeutung der neutest, "Rätselzahlen" 666 (Apk 13 18) und 153 (Joh
    21 11)', *ZNW* 77 (1986), 226-241.
21. Eg J.G.Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, Prentice-Hall, New York
    1975,37-49.
22. F.W.BEARE, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Blackwell, Oxford 1981,538-
    539. See also P.H.LAI, 'Production du sens par la foi. Matthieu 27,57-
    28,20', *RSR* 61 (1973), 65-96.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Contemplative Face of Old Testament Wisdom in the Context of World Religions

John Eaton. SCM, 1989. Pp. x+150.

Putting together ideas and themes that are usually kept apart seems like a good idea in itself, and the combination and interaction of similar and dissimilar traditions may add even more excitement to the challenge. Most readers, especially students and those interested lay persons who like to search more widely in the scriptures than conventional stimuli permit, will find this book to be a good read. It has several merits, being clearly set out, having the good sense to cite most of the passages it deals with, and informing the reader about the many authors whose names are likely to be unfamiliar.

Its main thesis is fairly straightforward and easily explained: the collectors and writers of wisdom in the Old Testament have fastened on insights and an awareness of human spiritual need which finds a wealth of echoes in the contemplative traditions of many nations and religions. There is therefore something that transcends conventional religious barriers about their teachings, and, more importantly, there is a groundwork of spiritual awareness that is to be found in all the great religious traditions. Essentially this groundwork is contemplative, predominantly mystical and individualistic, and marked by a sense of knowing only in a very small part the truth of human creatureliness and God-dependence.

Where Eaton moves away from the mainstream of biblical scholarship is in his contention that the Hebrew wisdom teachers shared much of this rather mystical undergirding of spiritual truth.

The method of approach is consistently comparative, but, like many other such attempts, it pays little heed to the pitfalls inherent in such an approach. It is therefore more than a little disappointing to find a great many very superficial similarities mixed in with more profound ones. Overall the major proposition is assumed from the outset that all spiritual truth is about the same sorts of things, so all its assertions mean very much the same, however expressed. Probably biblical scholarship has at times been over-anxious to fend off claims that Israelite religion had any very strong strain of mysticism about it. Some features of it may point to a greater sense of the inward nature of faith and the very private nature of communion with God. Certainly biblical interpretation has often developed in such a direction.

Nevertheless the intention behind the varied and sometimes cryptic sayings of the wise, especially such a figure as Ecclesiastes, stand at a great distance from the more esoteric contemplative writers with whom they are here compared. The imaginative connections that are suggested are heavily outweighed by a lack of any detailed attempt to establish clear bases and principles by which the comparisons are to be made. The result is a book with a very mixed character. Its freshness clashes with its indifference to the demands of serious comparative examination and exegetical method.

Ronald E. Clements

Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society

Anthony J. Saldarini. T.&T. Clark, 1989. Pp. x + 326. £19.95

In November, 1989, I attended a synagogue service as a guest, accompanied by a group of Christian theology students. In his sermon, the rabbi spoke quite pointedly and with considerable feeling about that ancient group of observant Jews whom he considered to be the founders of rabbinic Judaism and therefore his own spiritual forebears. I refer, of course, to the Pharisees. He spoke with feeling because he was responding in part to press reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury had described Britain in pejorative terms as fast becoming a 'pharisaic' society.

Habits of language and the prejudices they sustain are notoriously difficult to change. They even become enshrined in our standard dictionaries, as the O.E.D. entry on 'Pharisee' shows. For Christians, prejudices about the Pharisees are in danger of being reinforced constantly by the general impression from the gospels that the Pharisees were powerful enemies of Jesus who were responsible for his crucifixion. It is common also to hear Christianity characterized as a religion of grace over against Pharisaic Judaism as a religion of legalism. Often, the 'conversion' of the Pharisee Saul is interpreted in such terms.

How important, therefore, is the task of careful historical investigation of the ancient sources about the Pharisees and other parties and groups in early Judaism. The past few decades have brought major advances in just this area. Amongst New Testament scholars, one thinks particularly of W.D. Davies, Krister Stendahl, Martin Hengel and E.P. Sanders. In Judaica, the field has been dominated by Jacob Neusner, in North America, and, on this side of the Atlantic, important work has been done by Geza Vermes, Sean Freyne and Martin Goodman, amongst others.

This new book by Anthony Saldarini, who is Assistant Professor of Theology at Boston College, will be seen as a major milestone in the scholarly study of the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees. In methodological sophistication, coverage of the sources (both primary and secondary), and organization of the debate, it builds upon and surpasses previous investigations. It is also written in a very lucid and uncomplicated style which makes it a pleasure to read.

The book has three main parts. The first is an analysis of Palestinian society from an historical and sociological viewpoint as the broad context within which the specific evidence about the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees has to be made intelligible. The second part works systematically through the relevant literary sources, with two chapters on Josephus, one on Paul the Pharisee, two on the evidence of the four gospels, and one on the rabbinic literature. Part three consists of an 'interpretation and synthesis' of the evidence and analysis of the first two parts, and attention is focussed on the respective social roles of the three groups under discussion.

As this is not the place to attempt a detailed account of Saldarini's analysis, I will note just some of the most interesting points. First, a major historical effort is made to situate the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees within the very wide diversity of groups, factions and movements of Jewish Palestine and within the social structure of the Roman empire as a whole. The effect of this is to correct the common view that the

Pharisees or Sadducees (or the Essenes, for that matter) were the only, or even the dominant, groups in first century Judaism.

Secondly, Saldarini makes explicit use of sociological and anthropological theory in order to develop hypotheses about the social roles of the Pharisees and others in a more analytically controlled manner. He writes:

> Errors in the description and understanding of the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees have abounded. Scholars have often treated the Pharisees as a middle-class group, though there was no middle class in antiquity. They have characterized the Pharisees and Sadducees as religious groups separate from politics, even though in antiquity religion was embedded in political society and inseparable from it. The Pharisees have been seen as learned urban artisans at a time when artisans were uneducated, poor and powerless. These fundamental errors in perspective make clear that one has an assumed understanding of society whether one is aware of it or not. (p.12)

The model of society in antiquity adopted by Saldarini is a broadly structural functionalist one, and particular prominence is given, at the macro-social level, to the categories of class, status and power as described by Gerhard Lenski and S.N. Eisenstadt in their work on the sociology of empires. At the micro-social level of analysis, the roles and relations of the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees are analysed in terms of social networks, patron-client relations, ideas of honour and shame, interest groups, social movements, schools and sects.

Third, Saldarini is careful in his analysis to treat the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees as separate (though sometimes overlapping) groups. The effect of this is to sharpen our understanding of the identity and interests of each group independently and in relation to other groups such as that of Jesus and his followers. So the Pharisees and others are treated 'in the round'. The tendency to see them only in terms of what they believed is resisted. And the author's account makes it much more difficult to accept at face value the tendency of the gospels to lump together all the groups and factions with whom Jesus was in conflict (as, for example, in the tirade against 'scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites' in Matthew 23).

Finally, by analysing the sources separately, Saldarini shows that none is free from bias, whether Christian or Jewish. If the gospels have their own axes to grind in their general (though by no means total or undifferentiated) hostility to the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees, so does Josephus and so do the rabbinic sources as well. Thus, Josephus describes the Pharisees and Sadducees as *haireseis* ('schools of thought') in order to accommodate the Jewish parties to Greco-Roman norms of civility; and overall, his evaluation of the Jewish parties is 'guided by larger political principles, especially the desire for orderly government and keeping the peace' (p.131). The evidence of the rabbinic sources for the pre-70 period is notoriously difficult to assess. The Sadducees are cast in a uniformly negative light, for example; and the sages and the Pharisees tend to be co-opted for the interests of the rabbis of the second century and beyond.

I am not surprised that E.P. Sanders is quoted on the dust-cover as describing Saldarini's study as 'the best single book on the Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees'. It deserves to be widely read by students of both early Judaism and of the world of the New Testament ... and by ecclesiastics bent on polemics about 'pharisaical ' attitudes.

Stephen C. Barton

The Ethics of the New Testament

Wolfgang Schrage T. &T. Clark 1988. Pp. xiv + 369. £19.95(hb)

This imposing book flatters to deceive. Its Introduction conveys a lively awareness of the importance of the New Testament's ethics for today, but this promise is not fulfilled in the book itself. Instead, we find an unsurprising account of eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus, together with consideration of themes such as the Will of God and the Law, the love commandments, and 'concrete precepts' such as marriage and divorce, possessions, and violence in a state context. There follow two remarkably slight treatments of 'ethical beginnings in the earliest congregations' and 'ethical accents in the Synoptic Gospels', before the next main topic, viz., 'the christological ethics of Paul'. The Deutero-Pauline epistles - here 1 Peter joins Ephesians, Colossians and the Pastorals - sponsor an 'ethics of responsibility'. Parenesis in James focuses on 'the law of liberty', while the commandment of brotherly love is the hub of a rather slight treatment of Johannine ethics. The book closes with a brief treatment of moral exhortations in Hebrews and Revelation.

Let it be said that there is much in this book that students will find helpful. It offers a systematic treatment, clearly written and informative if slightly dull in translation. It is the best of such books yet to appear and will be a standard reference book for some time to come. If it lacks adventure, at least it is reliable as far as it goes. At times the author allows himself to consider something of the nature of the ethics in question. *Agape* may be its centre and quintessence but it implies quite specific content and criteria: it is not an abstract formal principle (p.11). Jesus may have presented 'an ethics of intention', but this does not imply a low status for actual conduct (pp.43-4); love cannot be reduced to convenient formulas, but Bultmann 'exaggerates the element of the moment and scants the importance of specifics...' (p.80)

Why do I say the book flatters to deceive? *Neutestamentliche Ethik* as a genre goes back at least to Herrmann Jacoby in the 19th century and has tended to reflect the theological propensities of the interpreter and his school. One expects a new version to have something distinctive to say. Where does Schrage stand? One presumes, with *Redaktionsgeschichte*, yet it does not come through strongly, and one is left with the impression that while the book is based on sound scholarship and is in its own way comprehensive and informative, it is all so totally predictable and cautious that one reads it with a sense of *déjà vu*. Could it be, one wonders, that this genre is not as appropriate as it was a century ago?

What then prevents this from being the modern treatment for which one was hoping? One looks in vain for an effective harnessing of sociological approaches to the New Testament (cf. Theissan, Meeks and others). Little is made of narrative interpretation or the modern forms of literary criticism (the reference to Crossan on p.74 should read III.C.3.2). Reader response and rhetorical criticism would have provided enriching perspectives: to study ethics in the New Testament is, after all, to read the N.T. in a particular way. Above all, there needs to be a careful study of how one goes about such a study: hermeneutical problems are not fully elucidated in this book. The traditional paradigm was shaped by the assumption that to study ethics in the N.T. was simply an extension of historical-critical exegesis. This, I think, is no longer tenable. Schrage's

work certainly shows the limitations of such an approach. It is more important to relate ethics to its socio-historical context and to explore questions of development and continuity between contrasting N.T. positions rather than simply to have separate treatments of them. Coherence rather than comprehensiveness should be the aim; and priority should be given to the elucidation of moral teaching and practice rather than to following out an agenda adopted on other grounds. It goes without saying that this would produce a very different kind of book.

J. Ian H. McDonald

Jesus Christ. The Man from Nazareth and the Exalted Lord

Eduard Schweizer. SCM, 1989. Pp.96. £5.95

This brief book by the well-known Swiss New Testament scholar and commentator is a succinct summary of the author's reflections on Jesus. The book comprises three main sections:

(1) The opening chapter is entitled 'Modern Approaches to Christology', and starts from Bultmann taking us through to the 1970s (including a look at Liberation and Process Theology). After weighing different approaches Professor Schweizer expresses his view that 'Christian faith has to move like a pendulum from the proclamation of Jesus as Christ (which challenges us to look first at him) to the tradition about his whole work and experience up to his death and the experiences of his disciples, and from there to their understanding of his coming as that of the risen Lord and thus back to the testimony of the church' (p.13).

(2) The central section of the book is a survey of the New Testament evidence in three chapters, the first looking at the 'kerygmatic' statements about Jesus - pre-Pauline ideas and Paul's own views, the second at the narratives of Jesus - the 'Q' narrative (which is not Ebionite), the pre-Markan narrative and the four gospels themselves, and the third at Jesus himself - his sense of 'sonship', the 'Son of man' concept, etc.

(3) The final autobiographical chapter of the book charts the evolution of Professor Schweizer's own thought, describing his contacts and interaction with great names such as Bultmann, Otto and Barth, explaining some of the major issues and ideas addressed in his own writings and ending with a section on 'Jesus - the parable of God'. He refers appreciatively to recent work on the parables as metaphors, and speaks of learning 'to see in Trinitarian doctrine not a definition of God, but rather a narrative report about a living person' (p.89).

This is not a popular book on Jesus; indeed it is dense and difficult at times (though not always - see his helpful parable of the boy following his master's steps through the snow on p.72). It is too brief to be a textbook or a work that significantly furthers scholarly debate; indeed it has a slightly disjointed feel, and it does not engage with some of the most interesting recent work on Jesus (e.g. by G. Theissen). Nevertheless, as a personal statement of belief and conviction by a major New Testament scholar who has lived through a time of much social and theological upheaval, the book is illuminating. Schweizer's academic roots are in the Bultmann school, and Bultmann's influence is evident both in Schweizer's emphasis on divine grace and theological encounter (no academic theology with-

out involvement here!), and also in his commitment to criticism and his excessive historical caution (we do not learn a great deal about the historical Jesus of first century Palestine in this book.) But Schweizer moves on from Bultmann in many respects, rejecting his teacher's extreme scepticism, refusing to divorce the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, and incorporating into his thinking new insights and approaches (e.g. adopting an eirenic approach to other religions which some will see as in conflict with the Christian doctrine of judgment).

Whether or not we agree with his positions, we may be grateful for Schweizer's wrestling with hard questions - in this and so many other books.

David Wenham

Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: a commentary.

Gerd Ludemann, SCM 1987. Pp ix + 277. £15.00

This commentary is the sequel to Ludemann's highly original proposals concerning Pauline chronology published in English translation in 1984, under the title *Paul Apostle to the Gentiles*. That work gave methodological priority to the evidence of the letters for dating Paul's life and tracing the development of his thought. The discrepancies which appear between such a reconstruction and one based on Acts effectively rule out the traditional view of its author as a companion of Paul. Nevertheless, the traditions used by Acts are not historically worthless; sometimes sound historical data survive the later author's redaction. A good example of this is the reference to the purpose of Paul's final visit to Jerusalem at Acts 24.17, "to bring alms and offerings to my nation". Nothing is offered elsewhere in Acts to explain this motive, but the reference in Paul's letters to the collection for the saints, by which their relative chronology is often established, confirm the historicity of this fragment of Acts. At several points such as this, Ludemann's earlier work appealed to vestiges of sound tradition in Acts to support its chronological reconstruction based on the letters. In this volume he supplies the justification for that appeal. In the context of German scholarship on Acts, Ludemann occupies an interesting middle position, in between the radical redaction criticism of Haenchen and Conzelmann, and the conservative historicism of Martin Hengel.

In a short introduction, based on his inaugural lecture at Göttingen, Professor Ludemann argues that historical criteria, which alone are legitimate (*contra* Vielhauer), show that the author was not an eyewitness of the events he records. Secondly, he argues that there is no compelling proof of Acts' knowledge or the dependence on Paul's letters. It follows therefore that any reliable historical material in Acts derives from traditions. But although we can be sure that traditions are being used, there is no longer any way of reconstructing the oral or written sources through which they reached the author. This is because Acts is a highly literary work, weaving its material into a smooth continuous narrative. The detection of traditions is therefore difficult. One may appeal to apparent internal tensions, or strip away the characteristics of Lukan style, vocabulary, narrative art or theology, but in the end each passage has to be assessed in its own terms and according to its own peculiarities. Ludemann illustrates his procedure with examples, including Paul in Corinth (Acts 18). He detects two

obvious redactional features here: the emphasis on Paul's links with the synagogue, preaching every sabbath; and the positive portrayal of the Roman Governor, The concreteness of the other details in the chapter indicates that they derive from tradition, and some receive corroboration from the letters. But, it is suggested, the author has anachronistically compressed his material into one account; this could explain why two different names are given for the President of the Synagogue (vv.8 and 17). Thus, from his analysis Ludemann retrieves evidence to support his view that Paul first visited Corinth c. 41 AD – the date he assigns to the Edict of Claudius – and returned ten years later during Gallio's proconsulship, with I Thessalonians dated at the time of the earlier visit, and with a full decade of development intervening, both in the situation at Corinth and in Paul's eschatology, before the writing of I Corinthians. Ludemann exaggerates somewhat when he claims (p.11) that "most scholars all over the world" have given assent to his proposals; but he is at any rate accumulating independent evidence, through his researches into the traditions underlying Acts, which may eventually make his claim more plausible.

This procedure requires, of course, a close commentary on the whole of Acts, which is what follows. It is a commentary with a particular focus; it does not aim to be complete, or to replace standard works. Each section of text is treated in the same way: first it is divided into its component subsections; then analysed redactionally, in order, thirdly, to expose the traditions, which finally are assessed for their historicity. The ad hoc method makes some of the judgements appear arbitrary, and open to dispute. And the commentary lacks, perforce, the clarity and excitement of the synthetic argument, which it is designed to reinforce. But those who are already impressed by Ludemann's earlier volume, and are willing patiently to probe deeper into the evidence, will be duly rewarded.

John Muddiman

Critics of the Bible 1724-1873

Edited by John Drury. CUP, 1989. Pp. + 204. £9.95

One has the impression that, among the clientele from whom one might hope for the opposite, there has been in recent years a decline of interest in the twin pursuits, open study of the Bible and doctrinal understanding, held together; the former, yes, but as a specialist, self-contained endeavour; the latter, yes, but in terms of a body of beliefs floating in some detachment from realistic biblical roots. Anyone with the health of religion at heart who views this situation complacently or even as inevitable would do well to ponder this collection of texts, especially as seen through the eyes of John Drury, their editor.

In so far as the present situation represents a sort of truce between biblical criticism and dogma, these texts show various phases of the long struggle to establish attitudes to the Bible consonant with the claim of truth as opposed, mostly, to those of church authority. The texts are English; and that may be something of a surprise. People sometimes gain the impression that, perhaps with the exception of Jowett, serious English biblical scholarship began with Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort — trailing far behind the Germans who made all the major moves. While there is much truth in that as far as sheer scholarship is concerned, English thinkers made the running from the start in the crucial matter of seeing, with unfolding

clarity, the shape and scope of the problem, once the Bible is perceived through eyes unclouded by the doctrinal formulations of post-biblical times.

This selection of texts traces the process of learning to 'hear' the Bible in its own, varied, historically conditioned terms, from the satirical attacks by Anthony Collins in the 1720s on the traditional idea of prophecy, through Robert Lowth's sensitive literary analysis of Hebrew poetry, down to Matthew Arnold's plea for a 'soft' approach to doctrine if the essential moral purpose of Christianity is not to be submerged in a tide of incredulity and apostasy. Sherlock, Blake, Coleridge, Thomas Arnold and Jowett are also represented.

The path of this development is not straight. The rationalism of Collins is modified by Coleridge's sense of tradition. All the same, there is discernible a steady onward march as far as the main issue is concerned — the subjecting of the Bible to candid study in its historical contexts and a convicton of the error and the foolishness in treating it as a specially protected object.

The purpose of this book is to present a collection of texts. In such a task, the editor may exert himself minimally — or attempt something more creative. John Drury has provided material to introduce each of his authors and a substantial Introductory Essay. Almost every sentence he has written repays prolonged attention. He has the knack of seeing the 'innerness' of the developments he describes, and he shows how later movements in biblical criticism had their first stirrings long ago, scholars being not always as innovative as they seem. As long as the Bible continues to be found in both study and church, the tortuous story outlined here is unlikely to find easy resolution. But the truce I spoke of is a real threat to its continuance when patently there is more work to be done. Both study and church would suffer, in quite different ways, if that work remained undone.

Leslie Houlden

The search for the Christian doctrine of God. The Arian controversy 318-381.

R.P.C. Hanson. T. & T. Clark, 1988. Pp. xxxi + 931. £39.95(hb)

Richard Hanson died just before Christmas in 1988, and with his death the Church and academic community of England lost a most interesting and forceful character. He had a passion for truth and rational thinking which made his ministry as a Bishop in the north of Ireland incomprehensible to churchmen there, to whom loyalty meant more than objectivity. He had a voracious appetite for books and appreciation of literature, and was no mean poet, but had a deplorable tendency to think that the words of Scripture had to be read without finesse, and baldly regarded as true or false; he was left with a kind of eclectic modernism, rejecting fundamentalism, patristic exegesis, and radical criticism of the New Testament with equal contempt. He had an intense pastoral and evangelical zeal, but was often impatient of the follies and frailties of those around him, though these weaknesses were sometimes due to genuine insights which he himself persistently missed. He bombarded students and congregations with academic detail, and was puzzled by their

inability to accept the obvious truth of what he said. He achieved great distinction and wide recognition as a theologian and patristic scholar, and was well loved by multitudes who had not quailed before his abrasive style; there was no one he warmed to so much as the person who gave him a good argument. Yet even in his last years he said and believed that his career had been blighted by a kind of Oxbridge theological Mafia. A few months before a death courageously faced he was able to see published his biggest and greatest book, which we now consider.

Hanson regards 'Arian controversy' as a misnomer for the scope of the book, though he covers the ground which the words usually imply. Much of the affair had very little to do with Arius, and 318-381 was a period when the churches had many controversies other than the one about the doctrine of the Son of God. Hanson attempts in this book to survey, evaluate and collate with exhaustive (and exhausting) thoroughness the material relevant to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the period. The argument proceeds like the trans-Siberian train in Dr Zhivago, stopping frequently at and between stations, and from time to time shunted up sidings.

At the start, he argues, no clear definition existed about the deity of the Son and the Spirit. The disputes were not a matter of defending orthodox faith against it 'Arian' corrupters, but of deciding what was, and what was not, orthodox. It was a search, in a debate complicated by the prepossessions of the parties, for an orthodoxy to defend. None recognized clearly what they were about: most saw themselves as defending the simple and traditional faith against its detractors. This was if anything more true of those whom hindsight declared to be Arian heretics, who are even blamed by Hanson for wooden conservatism. If there was a consensus with a long pedigree, it was 'the concept of Christ as the link between an impassible Father and a transitory world, that which made of him a convenient philosophical device, the *Logos*-doctrine', and it had to be abandoned. The same applies to the notion attributed to the Apologists, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus, that, 'though the Son or Logos was eternally within the being of the Father, he only became distinct or prolated or borne forth at a particular point for the purposes of creation, revelation and redemption' (I would question the place of Irenaeus in the list, but the point is generally good). Theology had to move on, and old solutions would no longer work; that was why the 'Arians' were wrong. In this and other regards Hanson tries hard to umpire the debate fairly. He finds Athanasius repulsively odious as a man and as a bishop, but allows him the decisive theological advance which perceived that, 'The Spirit is not outside the Logos, but is in the Logos and in God through him.' Alexander of Alexandria is a subordinationist. Hilary not only condemned the much-maligned Photinians for teaching that Jesus Christ had a human mind, but held a thoroughly docetic view of the passion of Christ; yet his disquisition on the Trinity, and his understanding of the need for new theological terminology, are warmly commended. Arius and his friends might be wrong to defend tradition at the point where they did, but they have a clearer understanding of the suffering in God implied by the doctrine of Christ's death than their more reputable critics. Ultimately Hanson approves the conclusion of Meijering over the search: 'We have to maintain the view that any talk about a divine being which is not truly and essentially divine is mythology. ... There must be an inner movement in God which implies both identity and distinction.'

If that sounds unoriginal, we should bear in mind that with this book it is not the destination but the journey which counts. It is in fact a kind of encyclopedia of the theology of the period. As such it is a *tour de force* which must command admiration and respect. There has been nothing like it in English since Gwatkin, who is hopelessly out of date. The nearest to a comprehensive precedent is M. Simonetti, *La crisi Ariana* of 1975; one of Hanson's great merits in his familiarity with this and other excellent work of recent Italian patristic scholars. Its usefulness is enhanced by the historical assessments of the participants in the debate, and here his study of Athanasius is particularly useful; that of Arius suffers from the fact that Hanson could not include consideration of the radical reordering of the presbyter's career and documents in Rowan Williams' *Arius*. So thorough a survey of the original patristic sources and the modern literature will make this book the starting point for discussion of the range of topics which it covers, and possession of it is essential for anyone who wishes to obtain up-to-date understanding of the issues and available interpretations.

Since the book is such an encyclopedic mine of information, one looks for an index. There is in fact an articulated subject index, fairly full, and useful so far as it goes. But it has some of those disastrous features familiar to those who read indexes of British patristic works, and especially Hanson's books: entry after entry has huge strings of references, freely larded with 'passim' (a word anathematized in any elementary guide to index-making), and failing to enlighten the reader as to what the references are about. The purpose of an index is to make the book readily accessible to the reader, not to satisfy some subjective criterion of easy production by author and publisher; it needs expert attention. Reviewers are in part to blame, and should be much more critical than they are about the contemptuous attitude with which unskilled greenhorns are given the work of indexing. Still, we have half a loaf, and that is better than no bread.

The most serious weaknesses are in matters of detail. Accumulating the material over many years, Hanson wrote it with varying attention to detail. There are errors. Some are misprints – laudably few in general, and especially in the Greek. But sometimes a 'right' word is actually wrong. 'Constantine' appears twice for 'Constantius' on p. 242, making an already tangled skein of Athanasian intrigue utterly unintelligible. Sometimes it is due to a blind spot. None of the publisher's staff could be expected to pick up the systematic miswriting of the name of R. Lorenz as Lorentz, an error which permeates the bibliography and index. Considering Lorenz is the principal source of Hanson's analysis of Arius' ideas, it is obvious that generations of theological students are liable to be led into unguarded error. It was a kind of dyslexia: Hanson, I recall, invariably added an 'e' to the surnames of P.T. Forsyth and E.C. Ratcliff, and even 'corrected' the work of others by putting it in. We find also errors due to the long period of gestation of the book. His chapter 21.2 on Basil of Caesarea seems to go back before 1966, when Y. Courtonne completed his edition of Basil's *Letters* with the third volume; Hanson twice notes the difficulties of operating with only the first two volumes (p. 686 n. 21, p. 695 n.72) and registers his want in the Bibliography (p.880).

Sometimes it is difficult to see whether we are faced with a misprint, or an ill-digested effusion from notes. Hanson reports that, in arguing about the Spirit, Athanasius:
'says openly that the Son does not share in the Spirit in such

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a way that this sharing ensures his abiding in the Father, but rather supplies him to everybody; and the Son does not unite the *Logos* to the Father, but rather he receives the Spirit from the Father' (p. 752).

The sentence after the semi-colon is unintelligible, and I went back to the original, which literally translated reads:

'The Son does not participate in the Spirit in order that thereby he too may come to be in the Father, nor is he a recipient of the spirit; rather he himself supplies this (Spirit) to all. And the Spirit does not connect the *Logos* to the Father; rather the Spirit receives from the *Logos*' (*Or. c. Ar.* III.24).

Hanson mistranslated the last clause, first taking το πνεύμα as object instead of subject, and then misreading at least two important words as a consequence; though 'Son' for 'Spirit' may be only a misprint.

The catalogue of minor errors and mistranslations is probably due chiefly to haste. Hanson was always an impatient man, and in the last stages of publication he knew he was doomed to die. But one error is particularly disastrous, touching a text of prime concern to the Church and to theology, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. The story of the modern interpretation of this set of creeds, and the problems of the relation of N (Nicaea 325) to Caes. (Eusebius' Caesarean creed at Nicaea) and to C (the Creed of Constantinople 381 which the churches recite as 'Nicene'), and the precise origin and function of C, are major subjects of discussion and controversy.

Hanson's broad position, and most of his detailed exegesis, are excellent. He weighs the idea of A.M. Ritter, accepted by J.N.D. Kelly in the latest edition of his *Early Christian Creeds*, that C was intended as an olive branch to reconcile the Pneumatomachi to the Neo-Nicene majority. He rejects this theory, however, chiefly on the ground that 'who with (*syn*) the Father and the Son together (*syn-*) is worshipped and glorified' would be totally unacceptable to the Pneumatomachi, and in no way a mediating formula. As a previously convinced Ritterite, I am given pause. Hanson also rightly emphasizes the Marcellian character of the theologumena in N, and especially its anathema upon the doctrine that the Son is 'of another *hypostasis*' than the Father - an anathema which the Cappadocian Fathers could not have subscribed to without contradicting their main position. The suppression of that anathema at Constantinople is therefore not a formal but a theological matter.

The error comes in failing to see the significance of the clause, 'begotten from the Father before all the ages,' which is present in both Caes. and C, and absent from N. On p.. 816 Hanson lists the differences between N and C. He registers twelve, but fails to include this one. Less significantly, the fact that the original text of C omitted 'God from God' is also overlooked. It is the first of these omissions which is so serious, both factually and theologically. Both N and C are set out in full both in English (pp. 163, 816) and in Greek (pp. 876 and 877); Caes. is given in English (p.159)). Hanson accepts the analysis of Kelly, to the effect that each of the three is on a different base: N is not a rewording of Caes, nor is C a rewording of N. They are of independent origin, as is demonstrated by numerous theologically non-significant divergences. Hanson is consequently prone to minimize the differences, and to reckon only the homoousios and connected words significant in comparing N with Caes., and only the words about the Spirit as significant in comparing C with N. But Kelly's hand is too heavy here. Eusebius has been persistently misread: it is

supposed that Eusebius thought that N was Caes., with only the *homoousios* added. So Hanson writes, 'What Eusebius is really saying is that the Council and Emperor approved of his own Creed, and then went on to produce another similar in content except for the word homoousion' (p. 164). The same view appears in the old translation of Eusebius still allowed to stand in W.H.C. Frend's revised edition of J. Stevenson's *A new Eusebius*; 'our most wise and most religious emperor reasoned in this way [explaining *homoousios*]; but they , because of the addition of Consubstantial, drew up the following formula: [N follows]' (p.345). Once the Greek word *prophasei* is correctly translated, we find Eusebius giving a very different statement: '.. but they, *on the pretext* of adding Consubstantial, drew up *this'*. Eusebius is well aware of the differences, and they are most unsatisfactory to him, requiring much fuller explanation before they could be accepted.

To Eusebius, the divinity of Jesus Christ was sacrificed by any theology which did not clearly assert his preexistence as a distinct person (*hypostasis*) beside the Father. The suggestion that he existed only as the Wisdom or Word inherent in the Father, which was at some stage in history or prehistory put forth, or which empowered and divinized a man Jesus, destroyed the Son's status as God, Creator and Mediator of all. This two-person scheme entailed subordination, so that the divine unity rested in the Father alone. So also Arius held, and Origen before them both. 'Begotten of the Father before all the ages' established the point. It was for that reason unacceptable to the Marcellian and Eustathian faction who dominated the drafting of N. The great title 'Onlybegotten' (*monogenes*) is followed in Caes. by 'first-born of all creation, begotten of the Father before all the ages.' In N 'Onlybegotten' is followed by, 'that is, from the being of the Father': God is one being, not two, and his hypostasis includes the Son. Not surprisingly, when at the Western council of Serdica (342 or 343) the doctrine of Marcellus of Ancyra prevailed, the idea of a pretemporal begetting is part of the description of Arian error. But after Serdica the process slowly began of adjusting the Roman and Athanasian line to accommodate the preconceptions of the eastern majority, who could not abide Marcellus. Athanasius' council at Alexandria in 362 is famous for this. By 377 in a formal doctrinal document a council at Rome under Damascus claimed as Nicene the doctrine,

'that God the Word in his fulness, not put forth but born, and not immanent in the Father so as to have no real existence, but subsisting from eternity to eternity, took and saved human nature complete' (*Letter 2* in PL 13.352-353; Hanson seems not to use this document, perhaps because of doubts about its authenticity).

The definition of the Word engages with the easterners' concern that the Trinity be real and permanent, not temporary or economic.

By the time C was drafted in 381 therefore we can hardly see it as non-significant that the definition contained in N is replaced by one originally present in Caes., and dear to the hearts of Lucianists and Neo-Nicenes as it had been to Eusebius and Arius. While N reads:

'... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
begotten from the Father, Onlybegotten,
that is from the being (*ousia*) of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
True God from True God, ..,'

C now has:

'... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
the Onlybegotten,
who was begotten from his Father before all the ages,
Light from Light, True God from True God, ...'

The modern believer may not relish the thought that 'begotten of his Father before all worlds', as the Prayer Book words the 'Nicene Creed', is a doctrine of Eusebius and Arius, which Nicaea tacitly repudiated. Those who use the modern English version incorporated in ASB and many modern liturgies of various churches will meet only the doctored version, 'eternally begotten of the Father', which is Origenistic and anti-Arian. Nevertheless, it is a point of great theological interest, and Hanson should not have suppressed it, whether wilfully or accidentally.

So the book needs revision. But I have a suspicion it will be with us for some decades. Hanson in his Preface says that writing such a book 'resembles the attempt to photograph a running stream. The photograph gives a picture of what the stream was like at one instant, but the stream flows on and never remains the same.' Perhaps, like Gray's *Anatomy*, Hanson's *Search* will have its deficiencies corrected in more than one posthumous revision, and become a perpetual progress report on the study of the most fascinating creative period of Christian doctrinal development.

Stuart G. Hall

Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century

Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and Jean Leclercq (eds.)
(Vol.16 of World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest). SCM, 1989. Pp. xxv + 502. £17.50

Spirituality would seem to be "flavour of the month" in religious circles. Following series, dictionaries and treatments of individual writers we now have in train a massive American-inspired 25 volume Encyclopedic History of World Spirituality. This book, a paperback version of the American original of 1985, it is the first of three on Christian spirituality. The attraction of spirituality for today's pluralistic approach to religion is undoubtedly its all-embracing polymorphous character. Unlike the doctrines and dogmas so out of fashion it eschews precise definition. Thus the preface to the series candidly admits that no attempt was made to arrive at a common definition of spirituality; it was left to each tradition to clarify and express its own understanding of the general consensus arrived at by the editors of the series.

Bernard McGinn, one of the book's editors, makes a virtue of the same admission in his introduction in which he describes the aim of the three devoted to Christian spirituality as "to present the inner message of Christian belief and practice in a way that will be at once historically accurate and existentially pertinent". The contributors were simply offered a brief working definition. The hope evidently was and is that a clearer and more adequate understanding of Christian spirituality would emerge from the book's 29 articles in 19 chapters, contributed by a deliberately ecumenical spectrum of experts of several nationalities, based mainly in the United States. The twofold aim - which has brought down many such efforts in the past - is both to offer the general reader a clear account of

the history of Christian spirituality and to provide something for a more advanced clientele. How well does it succeed?

The plan is good: after an introductory essay on Scripture as the foundation of Christian spirituality, Part 1 (Periods and Movements) traces the major stages in its evolution from about 100 to about 1200AD, while Part 2 (Themes and Values) deals with its central topics. In both parts distinctive Eastern and Western developments and approaches are treated separately. The blend of more general surveys with more specific topics works quite well and means that the book can be used selectively, for reference, as well as being read as a whole, although I must confess I found it heavy going at times. Inevitably individual contributions stand out, but overall the volume is valuable for the new insights and perspectives it offers on major figures and received views, and the - inevitable - tendency to overlap actually helps to build up a reasonable and coherent picture of the spirituality of the period. But the hope of a clearer definition remains a chimera, to the reviewer at least!

To turn to the individual contributors: Sandra Schneider's article, "Scripture and Spirituality", is a generally helpful survey of ancient exegesis which employs modern hermeneutics to cast a more favourable light on the fathers' "spiritual exegesis". In Part 1 John Zizioulas contributes a masterly article, one of the best in the book, on the early Christian community emphasizing the eschatological and ecclesial character of spirituality. The obligation felt nowadays to include the Gnostics in everything has lead to Robert Grant's competent canter through familiar territory, revealing how peripheral Gnostic spirituality ultimately was. Charles Kannengiesser sets the great fourth and fifth century fathers of East and West in their historical context, if dwelling more on the Cappadocians than on Augustine, while the articles on monasticism Eastern (Jean Gribomont) and Western (Jean Leclercq) give a fascinating picture of the ascetic ideal, if offering little defence or definition of that form of spirituality. Paul Rorem contributes a learned and useful article on Pseudo-Dionysus and his influence and Roberta Bondi ("The Spirituality of Syriac-Speaking Christians") a valuable corrective to our bias towards the Greeks and Latins. Pierre Riche offers a brief but tantalising glimpse of Celtic and Germanic spirituality, their pagan backgrounds and distinctive practices. Karl Morrison summarises the effect of the Gregorian Reform and that great turning point, the twelfth century, is represented by four essays: Bernard McGinn's introduction; a stimulating piece by Benedicta Ward on Anselm as an influence on spirituality as much as on theology; Basil Pennington on the Cistercians and Grover Zinn on the Regular Canons, particularly the Victorines.

In part 2 Christology takes pride of place with John Meyendorff focussing on the central Christological debates of the fifth to eight centuries in the East, and Bernard McGinn briefly noting the distinctive Western view, centring on Anselm and Bernard. Thomas Hopko contributes a particularly helpful article on the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity while Mary Clark outlines the Western view, stressing its practical significance. Of the two articles on the human person Lars Thunberg's on the Eastern view is technical and dense, Bernard McGinn on the Western very lucid and relevant. J.P. Burns offers one of the clearest expositions of the Augustinian doctrine of grace I have come across, while the theme of liturgy and spirituality gets a helpful if schematic and jargon-ridden treatment from Paul Meyendorff (East) and a most learned but

equally jargon-ridden approach from Pierre Gy (West). Leonid Ouspensky's article on icon and art is typically Orthodox both in its rather cavalier attitude to historical questions and its religious depth, while Kallistos Ware and Jean Leclercq offer characteristic treatments of prayer and contemplation in East and West respectively; Ware clear and balanced, Leclercq somewhat fanciful in high-flown Gallic style. Peter Brown gives a lapidary and memorable account of the real significance of virginity in the early Church and Sister Donald Corcoran a brief but fascinating summary of spiritual guidance. The final - and longest - article, by Jacques Fontaine presents a fascinating if idiomatic survey of the birth of the laity and lay spirituality.

If unable to answer all one's questions, the book fills an evident gap. It is well produced with helpful black-and-white illustrations. There are only a handful of errors and misprints, the translations are competent and the index comprehensive apart from a mess-up over Aphraat (omitted) and Apollinaris.

Alastair H.B. Logan

The Hermeneutics of John Calvin

T.F. Torrance. Scottish Academic Press (Monograph Supplements to the Scottish Journal of Theology), 1988. Pp. ix + 197.

It is an interesting time for Calvin studies, and Professor Torrance's book joins William Bouwsma's recent *Calvin: a Sixteenth Century Portrait* with a study of his hermeneutics, of which a major part is devoted to the mediaeval and other influences upon the Reformer. We have come to think of hermeneutics very much in connection with the problem of Lessing's 'ugly broad ditch'; the supposed gulf between modernity and the history witnessed in scripture. But Torrance's concern is with the theory of interpretation in an older and broader sense: with everything that has to do with the relation between language and reality.

Here Calvin is placed firmly in his historical context, which is threefold. He is a product at once of Parisian scholasticism, of the new humanist discipline and, of course, of the new Reformation theology. It is Calvin's inheritance from and development of the former two that provides the focus of this study, which concentrates on them perhaps rather at the expense of an account of Luther's influence upon Calvin. This the author tends to minimise, claiming that in many respects Calvin was relatively independent.

In the first third of the book there is treated 'the Parisian Background', with sections on Scotus, Occam and Major, two of them, it must be noted, from Scotland. Thereafter, the author turns for the remainder of the study to 'The Shaping of Calvin's Mind', in which he claims that while it was Luther who transformed the theological scene, it is to Calvin that we owe both modern theology and modern biblical interpretation. Here the main influences are late mediaeval piety and sixteenth century legal and humanist studies, which at once gave Calvin so much and led to tensions out of which came his mature theology and biblical commentary.

There are two chief conclusions. The first is that despite the continuing influence of his scholastic teachers on Calvin, the crucial break was from their continuing 'terminism', which can

be described unsympathetically as a playing with words in abstraction from the realities with which those words purport to deal. Torrance rightly sees Calvin's theology as concerned to engage with the reality of God, and not simply with inherited speech about God. Yet he also allows for the fact that at times Calvin failed to escape the worst aspects of his early training, and sometimes allows the logic of words to get the better of the logic of the object, as in his treatment, so fateful for later times, of predestination.

The second is that although humanist attention to the sources, to the original text, enabled Calvin to come to terms with the Bible, there was about humanism an anthropocentrism and lack of theological seriousness which, in its turn, was to be swept away by a stress on the majesty of God and the offence of the gospel. Even when it is a matter of Calvin's use of sources towards which he was fundamentally sympathetic, like Augustine, Calvin was essentially free and independent. How much more true was this of his relation to scholasticism and humanism. Like all great thinkers, Calvin belongs in a context while transcending it. (Here Torrance is a complement or corrective to Bouwsma, who tends to write Calvin too much into his context).

The Hermeneutics of John Calvin is not, therefore, simply a study in the history of theology, for the reader is regularly brought up against contemporary theological questions, and reminders that in many ways Calvin's problems were not so different from ours. Take the matter of Biblical interpretation. Towards the end of the book, the author gives a comparison of Calvin's early and humanist study of Seneca's *de Clementia* and the much later *On Scandals*, and reveals something of the tension between Renaissance and evangelical interpretations of Scripture. Does this not prefigure the tension in our day between a merely critical approach to Scripture and one willing to do justice to the intrinsic scandal of the gospel, centring as it does on 'the Incarnation of the Son of God and the atoning exchange it involved' (p.146)? What is the difference between a purely humanist - or critical - biblical interpretation, and one which does justice to the theological dimensions of the Bible? That is a question still far from resolved, and one to which this study of Calvin offers illumination. Yet the interesting point is to be found in the concluding judgement, that 'Calvin remained a "humanist" scholar when he became a Reformer.' The two approaches are not finally incompatible.

Colin Gunton

Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1734-1984

Kenneth Hylson-Smith. T. & T. Clark, 1989. Pp. x + 411. £19.95 (hb)

This book, clearly an attempt not to revise Balleine but to replace it with a version appropriate to the needs of the present day, embodies much honest reading and exploits the results of innumerable graduate students over the last generation. Sad to say, it is a deeply disappointing work, and, in truth, achieves its ill-defined goals less well than Balleine achieved his. The trouble begins with the title. Balleine set out with the entirely proper objective of writing *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* and attained it according to his measure. Dr. Hylson-Smith's title bows to the recent fashion of asserting that because (as in every other party) the evangelical party in the Church has always embraced a range of opinion, it is therefore

not a party at all, notwithstanding the obvious fact that it usually possesses much more organisation than other schools or movements of opinion in the Church. The dates, too, which suggest some kind of 250th anniversary, seem not to signify; Wesley and most of the other characters with which the book begins were not evangelicals in 1734, and, though some pages suggest that the writing of the book finished in 1984, there seems no other significance to the cut-off date.

Where the history of evangelicalism is concerned, the interests of scholars and those of inquirers and general readers are for once at one. All need to know who evangelicals were, in what lay their differences with other parties in the field, and, so far as it can be elucidated, what the sources of their cohesion were and what subsequent history has done with them. The burden of the first should in time be eased for writers of general history by being undertaken fairly exhaustively by the *Diction-ary of Evangelical Biography*, a work which English evangelicals allowed to founder years ago, but which has now been revived (with, happily, much English cooperation) from Vancouver. Meanwhile writers like Balleine and Dr. Hylson-Smith must make a bow in this direction; and the penalty of the present book's turning its back on the notion of party is that the earlier Parts read like a collection of entries of a mini-*DEB*, without ever achieving a notion of an evangelical succession of the sort J.S. Reynolds so successfully created in *The Evangelicals at Ox-ford*, while in the later Parts, where the same method is applied in staccato form to the world in which evangelicals moved, it becomes difficult to distinguish evangelicals from others. *Cognoscenti* will know, for example, that p. 326, beginning with the evangelical appeal to Biblical authority, and going on to the background of modern Bible translation, is not, mostly, about evangelicals. Many of the readers of the book will not.

The book is also insular, even allowing for the fact its theme is English. It is not just that it shows no awareness that some of the useful literature on Wesley is German, that much the best book on Fletcher of Madely is in German, and that most of the decent literature on millenialism is American. It is that the disputes between the early evangelicals and their high-church critics have many points of resemblance to those at issue between the Lutheran Pietists and the Orthodox. The elaborate investigations to which these have been subject bear out the Pietist (and evangelical) assertions of general orthodoxy. What then was it that led the two sides to fight like cats? There were some non-theological factors, but recent work comes down strongly on some points on justification and a different attitude to eschatology. In so far as the author's biographical approach leads to any conclusion at all on this question, it is that the evangelicals, like the second largest car-hire company, tried harder; and that conclusion is unjust to both the evangelicals and their critics. It is the same in the early-nineteenth century. Alexander Haldane, of course, gets his mention in connexion with the increasing strains to which the evangelical party was subject; what is not said at all is that he was symptomatic of a considerable Scots infiltration into the English evangelical world which did much to worsen its temper. In a give-away phrase (p.243) Dr. Hylson-Smith speaks of Harnack's *What is Christianity* helping 'to break down the normal isolation of English theology from the continental thinking', a phrase which betrays an unawareness of the factors which influenced the swing of the pendulum in England between the desire to go it alone and the desire to be part of a larger scene. But it indicates, as the author does not, a change which had come upon English evangelicalism. In the first generation it had been an important vehicle of German influence here; in the nine-teenth century its 'World' conventions had been mostly, but not entirely Anglo-American; now its historian can assume that isolation was normal.

Enough has been said to show that this book is not the brief history of Anglican evangelicalism which that important sub-ject deserves; how far its weaknesses are symptomatic of the present state of the movement had better be left to the movement itself to assess.

W.R. Ward.

Gore: Construction and Conflict

Paul Avis. Churchman Publishing, 1988. Pp. 123. £10.95(hb)

The centenary of the publication of *Lux Mundi* in 1989 provided a fitting opportunity for British theologians to reassess the significance of the theological achievements of the *Lux Mundi* school and its theological representatives. For a theo-logical work that was once hailed by J.B. Mozley as marking 'the beginning of a new era' the absence of its theological ideas and of the theological conceptions of its contributors and their successors in contemporary theological debate is highly signifi-cant and, perhaps even slightly disturbing. Any attempt at assessing the achievement of this period of Anglican theology is therefore also confronted with the task of indicating why it is that its theological fruits are so widely ignored- not least by Anglican theologians.

Paul Avis' book - a reduced and revised version of his PhD thesis at King's in 1976 - gives a very useful and interesting introduction to the theology of Charles Gore (1853-1932) who is still regarded - as Lord Ramsey points out in his foreward - as the most significant Christian thinker in England during the first two decades after the turn of the century. Avis differs from James Carpenter's account in his important *Gore: A Study in Liberal Catholic Thought* (London, 1960) in that he makes Gore's avowed attempt at forging a new theological synthesis central to his investigation. The heuristic assumption is, therefore, that one can detect an underlying (though never fully explicit and never quite unquestionable) consistency of orientation and outlook in Gore's theology which unites the work of the 'young radical' who deeply upset people like H.P.Liddon of the previous generation of the Tractarians with that of the 'hammer of heretics' who did not hesitate to mobilise the forces of ecclesiastical authority against tendencies which he saw as destructive of the doctrinal integrity of the Church of England. The seeming inconsistencies of Gore's theological development and ecclesiastical career appear from this perspective as conflicts between different elements that formed part of his synthesis from the beginning.

The first part of the book presents the different elements that were integrated into Gore's constructive synthesis: Gore's commitment to an ideal of catholicism, interpreted as 'the brotherhood of all men in Christ', with its ecclesiological implications and emphasis on the authority of tradition; his factual acceptance of a Protestant understanding of the author-ity of Scripture which is curiously at odds with the distorted understanding of the Reformation Gore inherited from his Tractarian fore-fathers; his conviction of the legitimacy of critical exegesis - if it is balanced by an equally strong convic-tion concerning the factuality of fundamental dogmatic claims; his emphasis on moral perception as a corner-stone of any

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viable theological outlook; and, finally, his consistently Platonising view of reality. When such divergent emphases are to be integrated within one constructive synthesis, it is not surprising that tensions and (at least apparent) contradictions occur. The question of overriding importance is, however, what can serve as the framework for the integration of these divergent elements.

In the 'Interlude: The "Holy Party" and *Lux Mundi*' which links the two parts of his book Avis draws attention to the fundamental significance of the relationship between nature and grace which structures Gore's theology. Gore's commitment to a view where nature and grace are seen as complementary, to be distinguished in an epistemological, but not in an ontological sense, serves as the key to a theological conception where divine immanence and divine transcendence are seen as strictly correlative and where the mode of divine immanence can be described in evolutionary categories. While Gore was chided for his inclinations towards immanental theology by Darwell Stone he distanced himself clearly from the 'higher pantheism' of thinkers like A.S. Pringle-Pattison. The task of keeping the balance between the emphasis on God's immanence in the world and the stress on divine transcendence which appears necessary for retaining a view of creation as a free act and of developing an incarnational Christology, appears in Gore as a stimulus for theological creativity as well as an incitement for a rather judgemental attitude towards theological conceptions (like those of Modernist theologians) that seem to jeopardize this balance.

The second part of Paul Avis' book, aptly titled 'Conflict', delineates the main areas where Gore proceeded with sometimes inquisitorial harshness against the Modernist tendencies in the England of his day: the relationship between dogma and criticism; his insistence on a Christology that does not equate immanence and incarnation; his continued allegiance to a high Tractarian doctrine of apostolic succession; and his attempts at enforcing the practice of subscription to the creeds as factual statements. Avis gives a very balanced account of Gore's ecclesiastical strategies and their theological motivations. However, it is difficult to explain the strange inversions that appear in Gore's thought; the risk that his emphasis on apostolic succession as the central warrant for the true catholicity of the church turn the Church of England into a sect (as B.H. Streeter feared), and the contradiction between Gore's ecclesiological triumphalism and his kenotic Christology (which Donald MacKinnon observed).

While Avis remains critical with regard to limitations of Gore's theology – his insufficient methododological reflection, his inability to deal with the contradictory implications of his conceptions and his over-emphasis on the evidential value of history – he nevertheless recommends Gore's attempt at theological synthesis as a 'paradigm of the ecumenical enterprise' which is informed by a 'profound sense of the shape and coherence of Christian theology'. However one might balance criticism and praise, Avis has certainly succeeded in directing contemporary theological attention to a period of the history of modern theology that remains highly instructive - both with regard to its achievements and with regard to its shortcomings. In that case of Gore many readers of this illuminating study will feel tempted to conclude with E.G.Selwyn (by no means one of Gore's theological foes):

'Gore's strength lay in the fact that he always said the same thing: his weakness lay in the fact that he always said it in the same way. Not all the reasoning by which he defended or expounded the faith was as valid in 1930 as in 1900, even though the conclusions - or most of them - were.'

Christoph Schwöbel

Religion, Reason and the Self
Essays in Honour of Hywel D Lewis

This tribute collects nine new essays (in English) by seven philosophers of religion and two theologians, most of whom were colleagues of Lewis in Wales or London. The bibliography lists Lewis's Welsh and English writings. Meredydd Evans contributes a biographical appreciation in Welsh and Sutherland in English.

The writers express gratitude for Lewis's encouragement of philosophy of religion in Great Britain, and for his contributions. However, their contributions address current concerns with related topics, rather than discussing Lewis's work. In this they exercise 'independence of philosophical mind', which Sutherland recognises as 'for many (Lewis's) primary academic virtue...'.

Concerning the book's title, almost all the examples and concepts of 'Religion' are Christian, and 'Reason' is used rather than discussed with reference to recent philosophical work on rationality, while 'The Self' seems in many respects to be free from elusive Cartesian dualism.

R. Swinburne's 'Meaning in the Bible' aims to show how Scripture should be interpreted if God is, in some sense, its author and if the Church is its intended audience, as well as its authoritative interpreter. He argues for, and with, general rules for interpreting texts, rules not peculiar to the Bible or the Church, but shared by many Fathers responsible for the Christian canon. As well as using the Fathers and recent philosophers, Swinburne uses recent Biblical interpreters, especially G.B. Caird (*The Language and Imagery of the Bible* 1980), but also B.S. Childs, J. Barr and J. Barton, amongst others. In tacit contrast with Caird, Swinburne maintains, 'The meaning of a sentence being a public thing, it is .. the social and cultural context which determines the meaning of what is said, not the intention... the truth of a sentence depends crucially on the context in which it is uttered; on who is the author, of what work the sentence is a part, and when and where that work is produced ...'. (Cf. Caird, op.cit. pp 39, 61, etc).

Swinburne summarises: 'what it would be like for the Bible to be true ... depends on whether the Bible is one book or many, and on who is the author and its intended audience.' Can this be right, if the Bible is at once both one and many books, and if the sense in which God is called its/their author, authoriser, interpreter, etc., neither rivals nor excludes genuinely human authorship, authorising and interpreting? Swinburne belatedly and revealingly half corrects himself: 'But why, then, a Bible with such complicated rules of interpretation? Why not a 500 page Creed ...? Because it matters that God allowed men to grasp those doctrines through an interaction with him in the context of human history...'.

However, Swinburne's argument apparently presents this

as a weak compromise with the 'strongest sense' of God as the Biblical author who competes with humanity. While his argument offers some logical and conceptual insights, it remains problematic. What would it mean for Biblical interpretation to be guided by (doctrine of) the God who, in covenant with Israel and in reconciliation through Christ, is free in being true to his own, triune reality?

Swinburne distinguishes between what is said (or written) and what is presupposed in a sentence, arguing that if there are public criteria for distinguishing relevant from irrelevant elements of a sentence, truth-value belongs only to what is relevantly said, and neither to the way it is said nor to what is irrelevantly presupposed in saying it. This argument is clearly important for hermeneutics. However, Swinburne does not develop the point that the classical creeds and other authoritative doctrines, which guide Christian reading and other responses to the Scriptures, should be equally open to interpretation by his distinction between what is said and what is presupposed, if his argument is sound. Evaluation of his implied concepts of revelation and communication could be fruitful.

Sutherland on 'The Concept of Revelation' suggests a taxonomy of views. The succinctness of his essay may frustrate or stimulate readers. It can be read as a foreword and afterword for the whole collection, with implied criticisms, suggested developments and a potential overview for relating other contributors.

F.C. Copleston discusses sympathetically how Vladimir Solovyev could contribute to retrieval and development of a patristic, but non-Thomist, approach to the coherence of 'Faith and Philosophy'. This essay would be well read with T.F. Torrance's 'The Soul and Person, in Theological Perspective'. Here the doctrine of the Greek Fathers is argued to rule out cosmological and anthropological dualism, thereby requiring and empowering a Christian personalism (and anti-Cartesianism). The other theological essay is by H.P. Owen on 'The sinlessness of Jesus'. The possibility of relating this topic equally to regulative and ontological functions of theology is intriguing.

In 'Decision and Religious Belief' T. McPherson takes issue with B. Williams in *Problems of the Self* (1973), surveys varied examples of epistemological responsibility and finds among these a proper place for decisions *to believe*. T.A. Roberts discusses 'Religious Experience' with critical use of S.R.L. Clark, H.H. Price on J. Hick, and R. Swinburne, suggesting that an argument from religious experience might well attempt to establish that there are genuine private religious perceptions.

In 'The Issue of the Nature of Metaphysics' Ivor Leclerc advocates a (re)turn to metaphysics, to be foundational for natural science, post-Cartesian and non-reductive. D.Z. Phillips deals with another American philosopher, in 'William James and the Notion of Two Worlds', challenging James's attempts to bring together scientific research and perspectives on the dead. The presence and absence of the dead (in moral or other concern with, or responses to, them by the living) are, Phillips argues, phenomena of *Religion Without Explanation* (Phillips 1976), without foundations too, whether scientific or metaphysical. Beliefs in the reality of the dead can be evaluated for truth and falsity. Such beliefs are not to be appropriated or discarded arbitrarily. Their contexts can require them to be

judged in terms of 'allegiance and deviance, integrity and self deception, genuineness and distortion. Whether these beliefs can become truths for an individual depends on whether he can feed on them.'

This book is valuable both as a tribute and a quasi seminar on issues with which philosophers of religion and theologians must wrestle, in company with H.D. Lewis.

Ian McPherson

Church and Politics in a Secular Age

K.N. Medhurst and G.H. Moyser. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988. Pp. xvi + 392.

For many decades Christian social ethics has concentrated in Britain on the 'middle axioms' approach, building up an impressive corpus of empirical data and theological reflection. At the same time such theologians have worked out a theological method which was heavily influenced by Biblical criticism and an incarnational theology. The field tended to be dominated by Anglican and Free Church theologians, with the occasional American contribution. However, the debate has changed quite dramatically in the 1980s, although it is fair to speak of evolution, not revolution. Contributors from a radical bias now question the whole 'middle axioms' approach, while others have asked how such theological reflection relates to systematic theology.

The approach which has been so dominant since the 1930s still continues. Nevertheless some theologians now discuss the grounding of social ethics in fundamental theology, and far more attention is paid to Barth or the Roman Catholic tradition. At the same time social scientists have begun to ask how social ethics are implemented by the Churches in Britain. Thus from both sides the 'middle axioms' approach is being rethought.

This book takes the sociological investigation of the British social ethics tradition a quantum leap forward. It is no exaggeration to say that it is one of the most important contributions to sociological awareness of how social ethics influences the world in the last decade. The immediate question which it raises in my mind is how sociological analysis of an ethical tradition relates to a dialogue between social ethicists and systematic theologians. Can the two sides meet? It is a difficult question to answer, and the danger is that two different debates will be carried on.

This is however not the concern of this book. It proceeds by four steps in its argument, using both clearly worked out conceptual criteria and empirical analysis. The first step is familiar enough, although it is well presented and cogently argued. In the twentieth century the Church of England has become further and further removed form its once-close association with national government. The creation of the General Synod mark the further erosion of the Reformation settlement. At the same time the emergence of a 'Secular Society' has further marginalized the Church's role in education, and diminished the numbers attending its services. Material concerns have become the staple diet of political life, and the decline of traditional middle-class values leads into a hedonistic consumerism. The authors note that this situation may now be the subject of some reassesment, pointing to Keith Ward's

writings and the desire for greater clarity in society about moral beliefs. Yet this situation must be juxtaposed with two others. First, there is a major crisis in socio-economic and political life. The 1980s have seen a breakdown in any consensus about government's role, and massive alienation among many voters about the possibility of improvement. Secondly, all churches, but especially the Church of England, have become polarized on issues of belief, liturgy and moral values, while the development of patterns of participation, such as synodical government, bureaucratic national and local agencies also deeply divide the Church of England.

If there is a moral vacuum at the heart of political life, with considerable uncertainty about social pluralism, can the Church of England respond in a new way which avoids the old identification of Church and State? Is it possible to bring to bear to the analysis of social problems the corpus of social ethics mentioned at the beginning of this review? The next three steps in the book's argument examine the nature of the modern episcopate, the members of the general Synod, and the staff of Church House, London, who produce reports for General Synod's deliberations.

The authors reveal that the new model of episcopal authority is participatory and bureaucratic. Bishops are no longer part of a regional social elite, whether construed in terms of inherited position, wealth or status. They see themselves as pastors, and as chairmen of synodical committees. Only a few of them espouse a prophetic stance. Significantly many of those who are prophetic have worked abroad, such as Bishop David Jenkins, who worked for the World Council of Churches. The general outlook of most bishops is less challenging of the present government, but there is a desire to explore new social possibilities in such fields as unemployment.

It is no surprise to find that lay members of General Synod are highly educated, and from a higher social status than clerical members (proctors). What is striking is the degree of support in the early 1980s for a centre party. While few wished to question the establishment of the Church of England, there are the stirrings of a distinctive theological approach to some issues. There is clearly a division within General Synod as to whether an organic view of Church and Nation is still to be welcomed, or whether a pluralist society must now be seen as the reality, with the Church of England as a distinctive pressure group. In this discussion the staff of Church House exercise a persistent influence, outlining a comparatively liberal social outlook, based on a theology drawn from a growing international theological consensus.

Will the Church of England continue to move away from its old identity as a politically conservative body, close to social elites in the regions? The answer depends on the nature of the continuing moral debate in modern Britain on the nature of politics and of wealth-creation, and on the internal debate within the Church of England on the nature of leadership and the values expressed by that leadership. But it is possible – just possible – that with bold leadership and a continuing moral vacuum in society the relevance of Christian social ethics to the search for a new social identity in Britain could be quite marked. How such a contribution would relate to the debate in systematics on the identity of Christianity is of course another question altogether. The authors of this book are to be congratulated on a superb treatment of the sociological expression of social ethics in the Church of England. It will become the definitive work in this field for years to come.

Peter Sedgewick

Science and Providence. God's Interaction with the World

John Polkinghorne. SPCK, 1989. Pp. 114. £5.95

With this book John Polkinghorne completes his trilogy about the relationship between science and the Christian faith. In it he argues that faith in a personal God who acts freely within the world can still be rational for a culture informed by modern physical science.

He begins by surveying recent responses to the problem of divine action. Deism (as advocated by Maurice Wiles) is dismissed as incompatible with orthodox Christian belief. Both fideism and existentialism are perceived to beg the question. Against such contemporary denials and agnosticism he affirms that the world is open to divine influence at a macroscopic level. He is more sympathetic towards Austin Farrer (who is, nevertheless, taken to task for his obscurity).

The idea that divine action may be understood by analogy with bodily action is explored in more detail in Chapter 2. The panentheistic view that the cosmos might be understood as God's body is taken quite seriously. However, Polkinghorne objects that it makes the degree of interdependence between God and the world too great for it to be easily compatible with orthodox theology. Furthermore, it suggests that the cosmos is eternal and best viewed as an organism, neither of which implications commends it to one committed to modern physics. A popular alternative, namely panpsychism, is dismissed as failing to take account of the emergent character of mentality. Polkinghorne himself prefers to speak of mind and matter as complementary. This leads him to speculate about a 'noetic' realm: a realm of ideas in which human mentality participates. One might have wished for a more detailed account of this 'complementary metaphysics'. Complementarity has become something of a buzz word in the dialogue between science and religion and a clearer explanation of how Polkinghorne uses it would have been helpful.

Having, to his own satisfaction, argued that modern physics is sufficiently open textured to permit both human and divine freedom of action, Polkinghorne proceeds to tackle some of the major challenges to a traditional doctrine of providence. He begins by denying that providence is at odds with modern science. On the contrary, providence may be understood as continuing creation.

Special providence and faith in miracles are not easily reconcilable with a modern scientific world view. Thus, Polkinghorne devotes a chapter to the rationality of miracles. His understanding is orthodox in the sense that he believes miracles to be an unexpected but, nevertheless, real interaction between God and the world. However, they are not divine 'interference' since, "God's complete action in the world must be consistent throughout" (p. 50). He also dismisses the view, popularised by C.S. Lewis, that miracles may be viewed as the acceleration of nature. Jung's concept of synchronicity (or meaningful coincidences) receives more sympathetic treatment. The chapter concludes with a critique of Hume's account of miracles.

The problem of evil is treated in a similarly orthodox fashion. Dualism and the notion that evil might be mere absence of good are dismissed. Instead, evil is to be seen as a necessary part of a greater good (or harmony). How anyone can

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maintain such a 'reasonable' view of evil after Auschwitz escapes me!

From evil he moves on rapidly to discuss prayer. He maintains an orthodox view of petitionary prayer, regarding it as a genuine collaborative encounter between God and the one who prays. The effect of such encounters is to create new possibilities which would not have been realised had the prayer not taken place.

The concluding chapters range more widely, touching on "Time," "Incarnation and Sacrament" and "Hope." The chapter on time is particularly welcome as most theologians who tackle this subject are handicapped by a profound ignorance of the implications of recent physical theory. By contrast, Polkinghorne is well acquainted with modern scientific understanding of time. Unfortunately, this acquaintance leads him to toy with the process notion of divine dipolarity as a device for maintaining both God's involvement in history and his eternity.

The notion of dipolarity reappears in his discussion of the incarnation. He suggests that we cobble together divine dipolarity and the doctrine of the Trinity in order to create a concept of a God who is able to act in history. Some forms of trinitarianism may need to be supplemented in this way. However, that may simply indicate the bankruptcy of those versions of trinitarianism. Also in this chapter, Polkinghorne defends belief in resurrection (on the basis of his complementary metaphysics) and makes some thought provoking comments on the nature of the sacraments. The work concludes with a brief reaffirmation of Christian hope in the face of the ultimately pessimistic extrapolations of modern cosmology.

My main reservation concerns Polkinghorne's understanding of the relationship between divine and human agency. The book paints a synergistic picture of double agency, i.e., the relationship is basically that of cooperation between free agents. However, this implies that divine sovereignty and creaturely freedom are mutually limiting. This may be consistent with post-Enlightenment ways of thinking but it is fundamentally alien to classical Christian theology. Far from being mutually limiting, divine and creaturely efficacy are there presented as mutually reinforcing: it is the absolute sovereignty of God which guarantees the real freedom of the creature.

My theological reservations apart, the trilogy of which this book is a part makes a useful introduction to the relationship between science and theology. However, contrary to the publishers' claims, it will not "inaugurate a new stage in the science and religion debate."

Lawrence Osborne

The Orthodox Liturgy. The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite

Hugh Wybrew. SPCK, 1989. Pp. x + 189. £8.95

In his foreword to this volume Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia begins with the question, 'What is the Church here for?' The 'least incomplete' answer, he suggests, is that 'the Church is here to celebrate the Eucharist.' Whatever chord this profound – yet easily abused – answer may strike in us, there can be little doubt in today's ecumenical climate that Hugh Wybrew's examination of the development of the Divine Liturgy fills an important gap for the Western reader. His qualifications to write such a book are obvious, and the publisher's claim that it is 'splendidly readable' is largely true. If indeed the interest level lags here or there in the course of tracing out a somewhat intricate history, that is quite forgivable, and not without parallel in the observance of the Liturgy itself!

Wybrew (Dean of St George's Anglican Cathedral, Jerusalem) has aimed his book, quite successfully, at those relatively new to the subject and to the experience of Orthodox worship. The opening chapter provides a very simple overview of the Eastern rite, pointing out those features which are most surprising to a Western visitor. The rest of the book is devoted to explaining how the distinct features of the rite developed (chapters two through eight); a final chapter outlines a number of lessons which the Western Church might learn in pondering on it. We will turn to these in a moment, after making a few more observations about the book's contents.

The brief second chapter, 'The Sources of the Tradition' (which begins at the beginning, with the biblical context), already indicates the author's sense of balance between theological foci and the broader task of historical description. Both must be treated lightly in such a work, but their integration is generally quite satisfactory. Throughout, Wybrew attends steadily to the all-pervasive symbolism of the Liturgy, which incorporates the building and its decor as well as the actions of priests and people. This symbolism, though it has cosmological dimensions and implications as well, is largely oriented to the history of Jesus. The reader will want to make full use of the Comparative Table found on pp.182f., which provides a helpful summary of the evolution of the symbols and the shifts in emphasis this entailed. Given the number of technical terms which it is necessary to introduce in such a book, however, the lack of a glossary is disappointing. Likewise, the scattered diagrams might have been supplemented by one or two photographs, which would convey a good bit more to the reader without first-hand experience.

Wybrew's respect for the Eastern liturgical tradition is obvious throughout. Criticisms are not lacking, but are generally somewhat muted. The strong clericalism comes in for the most frequent negative attention, and notice is taken of the tendency of the historical or symbolic dimensions to distract from the sacramental character of the Eucharist. On the other hand, the 'inherent conservatism' of the East is largely justified by Wybrew in terms of the pressures of the political and social climate with which Orthodoxy has had to contend over the centuries; in any case the growing appeal of such stability for the all-too-unstable Western churches reinforces this favourable judgment. Such recent liturgical experiments as may be found are briefly summarized (especially those which move away from a clerically dominated and highly mystical form), though of course there is no real parallel here to the free-wheeling reform movement with which we are familiar.

When it comes to those lessons which the West might learn from the East, we are offered seven in particular: (1) the value of giving a sacramental cast to the building itself; (2) the usefulness of icons and the importance of the visual dimension of worship; (3) the benefits of involving the whole person – i.e., all of our senses and faculties, and not the intellect merely – in worship; (4) the balance between a strong sense of corporate synaxis (which Andrew Louth has stressed in his recent book

on Pseudo-Dionysius) and the personal freedom of movement or response by the individual worshipper; (5) the admirable preparation and seriousness which attends the Communion itself; (6) the richness of the contemplative aspect of worship; (7) the affirmation of the primacy of worship in the Christian life, which is in itself a way of witness to the world. These suggestions are not made without awareness of corresponding weakness in the East, and for that reason may be taken the more seriously.

Just here, however, one could wish for something further in the way of identifying the most pressing theological issues at stake between East and West, even if actual engagement with the same certainly lies beyond the scope of Wybrew's book. In particular, the question of the eschatology of the Eucharist, which in modern times is being recognized on both sides as a matter of urgent importance, requires some attention if the truly significant lessons of liturgical interaction are to be learned. Conflicting (and often inadequate) approaches do not produce a healthy balance merely by being thrown together. Here the relationship between eucharistic visions and the respective social histories of East and West might also be raised, for this relationship — even in the East — is surely not a unilateral one (as Wybrew seems to imply).

In any event, the remarkable timeliness of this book should not go unnoticed. Recent developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe augur well for a rapidly increasing interaction between Orthodoxy and the rest of the Church, in which each can — and indeed must — learn from the other to face the modern world with a vital eucharistic witness. Wybrew's book is a good place for the Western Christian to begin.

Douglas Farrow

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BOOKS RECEIVED

George Austin *et al Building in Love. The Vocation of the Church* St Mary's Bourne Street Pp. 136 £3.95

Paul Avis *Eros and the Sacred* SPCK Pp. x + 166 £7.95

Eileen Barker *New Religious Movements. A Practical Introduction* HMSO Books Pp. xii + 234 £11.95

J. Christian Beker *Paul the Apostle. The Triumph of God in Life and Thought.* T. & T. Clark Pp. xxi + 452. £12.50

Peter Byrne *Natural Religion and the Nature of Religion. The legacy of Deism* Routledge Pp. xv + 271 £35.00 (hb)

R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (eds) *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* SCM Press Pp xvi + 751 £35.00 (hb)

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