

# FAITH & THOUGHT

## BULLETIN

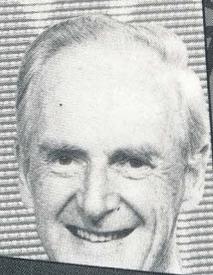
DAVID PORTER  
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**DOES GOD PLAY DICE?**  
John Houghton



A look at the story of the Universe

**CONTENTS**

Editorial	1
Lecture given at the 1989 Annual General Meeting 'The Christian and Modern Western Liberalism' by Tony Lane	2
'Tomorrow's World' by Dr. R. E. D. Clark A brief review of our late Editor's last work, by D. A. Burgess	7
The 1990 Annual General Meeting	8
Book Reviews	9
The Constitution of the Victoria Institute With revisions agreed at the 1989 AGM	17
New Members of the Victoria Institute	21
The Victoria Institute	23

**EDITORIAL**

This issue contains the transcript of the lecture 'The Christian and Modern Western Liberalism' which was delivered at the Annual General Meeting of the Victoria Institute last May, by Tony Lane of the London Bible College. A tape of this talk is available from the Editor upon request. Tony and his family are spending a sabbatical in Kenya and the U.S.A.

The Annual General Meeting in 1990 will also be addressed by a member of the London Bible College, the Revd. N. S. Mercer, and details are given in these pages. It is gratifying to see such a long list of new members of the Victoria Institute. Please advertise our existence among your friends and colleagues. As agreed at the AGM in May last year, we are publishing the revised constitution of the Institute in this issue.

The Editor regrets that there is no correspondence in this copy of the Bulletin, there having been no letters to publish. Readers find such letters interesting and often challenging. Please remember, we welcome your comments and letters. We depend upon you to write in and keep us lively.

## THE CHRISTIAN AND MODERN WESTERN LIBERALISM

A lecture given by Tony Lane of the London Bible College, at the Annual General Meeting of the Victoria Institute, May 16th, 1989.

I am especially concerned with the teaching of Christian doctrine, in particular with the historical perspective, for example, in examining previous ages where Christians have sought to relate their faith to the times in which they lived, whether to Greek thought in the early church or of today, say, in Africa. But there seems to be little consciousness of this in our society. Is it not relevant in our situation? I recently heard a talk on Radio 3 when the 'Book of the Week' made a profound impact upon me. This was Anthony Arblaster's 'Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism'. This helped me by putting a finger on aspects of our culture which we take as self-evident. Then a book by Leslie Newbiggin also focussed my attention. He is one of the few Christian writers who has examined this. I refer to 'The Other Side of 1984'. Recently also, a new project has been initiated by the British Council of Churches entitled 'The Gospel and our Culture, this side of 1984'.

Perhaps I may be permitted to ask you five questions to see how you react, and what is your attitude to certain current statements.

- 1) The State should not discriminate against its citizens on the grounds of race or religion.
- 2) The individual should join a church which suits his own beliefs and styles of worship.
- 3) The modern, western concern for human rights is good.
- 4) God's law shows us the way to live if we want happy, fulfilled, lives.
- 5) The State should not interfere with private lives, except under special circumstances.

These are all statements reflecting liberalism. This does not mean political, party liberalism, nor theological liberalism, but something deeper. These are liberal values, and we are mainly all liberals in our outlook. Liberalism is a philosophy developed in the West over the past 200 years, and moulds the outlook of the way we all think. It is not so much a set of ideas of conscious choice, but a way of seeing the world ... assumptions absorbed in a natural and gradual manner without he or she being aware of their being assumptions at all'

(Arblaster). It is not so much what we affirm, but the way we think—the 'window' through which we view things. And one is most captive to those views one holds *without* being aware of them. For instance, the Early Fathers believed that God was incapable of suffering. It was assumed, without needing to be spelled out.

A major world view today is Marxism, and there is no shortage of critiques of Marxism by Christian writers. I have more books on my shelf on this discussion than on liberalism. This seems to be a general experience. Why is this? Is it perhaps that most educated, western Christians are in fact liberals? Liberalism arose out of Christianity, especially out of protestantism, because it is one aspect of the Enlightenment. And the Enlightenment is both a reaction against Christian orthodoxy, but also arose out of Christian culture; there are common values. Hence, we do not reject all liberalism, since there are elements which are good, Christian elements. But we need to relate it to the Christian faith. There are some things we shall need to affirm, some to correct, some to transform and some to reject. But how shall we define liberalism?

First and foremost is the belief in *individualism*—that the individual comes before the group, the community, the society. Therefore it follows that the rights of the individual are more important than the rights of society, since society is seen as primarily a collection of individuals, who come first, and are more 'real' than society. This has implications ethically, politically and economically, and we have what is called the 'ontological priority of the individual'. People are valued as individuals, and that what makes people different from each other is emphasized, rather than what they have in common. We in the west express our individuality in the way we dress. We may look at Chinese people of a few years ago and wonder at their uniformity, and comment on their regimentation. We believe in expressing ourselves as individuals—something which is self-evident to us. But this has not been true in the past, as one discovers from a study of history. And when one first travels abroad, it is often a shock to find that people so different from oneself seem to be happy. Travelling 'in time' effects the same result.

Next is the concept of *freedom*—the freedom of the individual, especially from coercion of society, state or church. Our freedom is limited only as far as is necessary to preserve other people's freedom. It is tolerated unless it is threatening. And this freedom includes the freedom to believe as we wish—a fundamental right. It is all brought together in the concept of human rights. This goes in the face of attitudes in other parts of the world, for example in Islam. An apostate from this faith may forfeit his life. A particular area at the

present time is the conflict in Malaysia. Moslem Malays control society, and Christians are under considerable pressure. They respond to this on the grounds of pure liberalism; 'God gives each person the right to express his own faith'. But is this seen, for example, in the Old Testament? Did the Hebrews of old have the right to choose what they believed? This freedom is not necessarily Christian. Related to this type of freedom is the shift in emphasis from duties to rights. Merely 200 years ago one still thought in terms of duties. But the U.S. Declaration of Independence states 'these truths are self-evident, that all men are created equal, and endowed with certain inalienable rights'.

Another aspect of liberalism is *tolerance*. Was it Voltaire who said 'I disagree with everything you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it'? The debate carries on in the press as to whether it was Voltaire, or someone else. Religion is all right so long as it is liberal and tolerant, but not as we find it in Ireland, Iran or Lebanon. There is great value in tolerance, especially for those in a minority, but it often goes hand-in-hand with indifference. Religion is seen as no longer relevant. The opposite, however, is not true. One would not find *anti-liberal* tolerance in schools for instance. If one were to question liberal precepts here, one would soon be out of a job. We are not allowed to be liberal in our attitude to liberalism itself. For example, the death of thousands in the cause of religion (?) in Ulster is seen as wicked, whereas the death of millions who defended liberalism against Hitler is seen as heroic. They were martyrs in the cause of liberalism. More recently, more than a million died in the defence of liberalism against communism in Vietnam. Toleration also may go hand-in-hand with scepticism. Don't be dogmatic; there is no certainty. Each has his own opinion.

Another aspect of liberalism is the emphasis on *privacy*. Modern, western people need private lives to withdraw from society, which does not intrude. Nor does the church. This is found particularly in family life, and is very fundamental to us. Visitors, for instance are tolerated by me, and welcome for a time. But there comes a point after a few days where the pressure begins to build up. I find I depend on privacy. This is foreign to other ages and other cultures. In some cultures, the act of shutting the door would be seen as odd. We recently entertained boys from Hong Kong, one of whom lived in a family of 11 in a two-bedroom flat. This is a different concept of privacy from ours. The extended family in some parts of the world is another example, and the community takes precedence over the individual.

Then we come to the area of *morality*, where liberalism stresses

the freedom of the individual to make his own choice. Two reasons for this are that the individual takes priority over society, and that there is a distinction between facts and values. Facts are seen as given truth. Science is objective, and any right-minded person should accept this. Values, on the other hand, are a matter of choice. Ethics falls into the area of values. The individual chooses his own values, for instance religious values. Nowadays, the idea of the objectivity of science is coming under increasing attack, but most of us still think of a sharp distinction between facts and values.

Thus, liberalism in the area of morality is opposed to authority, or dogmatic claims. For example, to quote 'The Bible says . . .' is out-of-court in this area. The purpose of education is to enable the individual to make his own choices. What is the nature of ethics, of love? It is defined, in liberal terms, as seeking the happiness of others. If it promotes happiness, it is right, if it thwarts desires, it is wrong. This is another aspect of the Enlightenment—the pursuit of happiness. It is a basic human right. From this arises an assumption which may well conflict with Christian values, namely that human desires are basically good. People who don't gratify their desires have some sort of 'hang-up'. The doctrine of original sin is perhaps a key area where Christian doctrine clashes with liberal thought. The idea that desires may be lusts goes against the grain.

Finally, an area worth mentioning is that of capitalism. Liberal individuality leads to stress on individual enterprise and an economic system which is as free as possible from state control. Liberalism is thus opposed to communism, socialism, and other forms of state control. It seems that today we find that liberalism is the fundamental ideology of our society, with Marxism struggling. Labour also seems to be embracing a degree of capitalism. Liberalism is riding high and it underlies all British politics. Thus the party with the word 'liberal' in its title is anxious to preserve it, in case conservatives start to use it. One strand of liberalism comes out in the Social and Liberal Democrats, another in Thatcherism. The latter is a revival of liberalism, but less liberal for example in the area of morality. Different parties have more or less of liberalism in different areas. Similar happenings can be seen in other countries. Many Catholic countries have been 'liberalized', and have turned to a non-confessional liberalism. One may cite Italy, Spain and Ireland as examples. Gorbachev is a 'liberal' Russian, and liberalization is occurring in China. (At the time this lecture was given. Ed.) The recent series on TV 'The Triumph of the West' was concerned with the spread of western liberalism.

Let us then outline some of the positive and negative aspects of liberalism today. Among the positive attributes is the freedom of

religion when Christians are in a minority. But some in the USSR fear the end of persecution lest it lead to a flabby church. We have a tolerant society on the whole, relatively free from state control. We have come some way, when we look back and see, for instance how witches used to be treated, and what life was like in Stalinist Russia. But there is a price to pay. In Spain, for instance, there has been an increase in crime and drug-taking and anyone who has been to Eastern Europe knows that one's belongings feel safer there than in western societies. Liberalism does thus have its negative aspects, e.g. in a failure to recognize original sin.

Let us look at the negative aspects of liberalism. Where this outlook is in conflict with the Christian faith, it has two effects. Firstly, it can be a stumbling block to new believers, and secondly, it has a pressure upon believers. We are influenced by it. Four areas where there is tension between liberalism and the Christian view may be defined as follows.

- 1) Liberalism tolerates Christianity, but does not take kindly to an appeal to tradition or authority. This leads, for example, to a liberal view of the Bible.
- 2) Liberalism puts religion firmly into the realm of values rather than facts. This leads to *privatization*; we are free to spend our time in whatever way we wish. The Church in this country has been struggling with this lately, and trying to bring Christianity more into *public life*.
- 3) Liberalism stresses a God of love as One who respects our individual freedom, and whose function is to achieve our happiness, and fulfill all our desires. We are all familiar with this—a liberalism which is opposed to a God who seeks to impose moral demands, and certainly opposed to one who invokes wrath and hell. Modern man is not sure about heaven, but quite sure that there is no hell. This leads to problems for us, because such a God does not exist, and so we have crises of faith. Goethe said that the harsh God of the Hebrews and the God of love are one and the same. An idea that will make every liberal hackle rise is, for instance, the suggestion that AIDS may be in some way a judgement of God. For the liberal, morality is a private affair, in the matter of sexual preference and abortion on demand, to name two. These are individual rights—so long as the individual has been born! Non-Christians argue from these premisses, and find a challenge to them morally offensive. A quote I heard recently in our college, regarding a moral issue was 'There are no hard and fast rules; each case must be taken on its merits'. We have here two liberal shibboleths; the

opposition to dogmatic authority, and the priority of the individual.

- 4) Liberalism leads to individualism, for example in the Church, which is seen as a collection of people who happen to get together for a purpose. Faith is seen in individual terms. Hans Küng has protested against his treatment by the Pope on the grounds of individual liberalism.

In conclusion, we have seen at the start something of the *contextualization* of the gospel, for instance in the early church, and in Africa. What we need today is this process applied to the western church in its attitude to liberalism. One part of the world where today we find stony ground for the gospel is western Europe. We need not just more effort, but more thought. This is work which Leslie Newbiggin has begun, and one welcomes the initiative taken by the BCC to which I have referred. Both these are to be commended as steps in the right direction.

**ROBERT E. D. CLARK**  
**TOMORROW'S WORLD: A SCIENTIST LOOKS AT**  
**THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

Victoria Institute, 1989, 274pp., Paperback, £5.95.

Dr. Robert E. D. Clark was for some years Editor of the Journal of the Victoria Institute, *Faith & Thought*. He made many contributions to the Journal, as well as writing a number of books on science and Christian belief. For many years he deliberated on the New Testament book of Revelation, reading widely, gathering material, gradually crystallizing his views on its interpretation. Although he died (1984) before completing his commentary on the Revelation, in recent months the Victoria Institute has published *Tomorrow's World*, from papers made available by his family, after his death.

In his Introduction, Dr. Clark reviews the importance of the book, its authorship and date, the symbols used, the history of the interpretation of the book, its difficulties and how we can interpret it. He firmly maintains the futurist view—that its main thrust is towards a (then) distant future: tomorrow's world.

It follows that much of the book will be concerned with science and technology, which have such a powerful influence in the modern, sophisticated world. Accordingly, Dr. Clark interprets the visions of

John the Seer in the light of science, instead of spiritualizing them away, as has happened when commentators had little or no understanding of science. The result is an astonishingly vivid and dramatic unfolding of events, often in a remarkably literal manner, expounded with all the originality and perceptive brilliance we have for so long associated with the writer.

While the book may not be the final word on Revelation, it is certainly unique to date. Where else can one read an interpretation incorporating astronomy, ancient history, biology, epidemiology, physics, psychic phenomena and the prophecies of Nostradamus! The book has no index, but there is a detailed Contents list and there

**THE VICTORIA INSTITUTE**

**PUBLIC LECTURE**

TUESDAY 15th May, 1990 at 6.45 pm  
St. Peter's Church, Vere Street, London W1

**SPEAKER**

The Revd. Nicholas S. Mercer, M.A., M.Phil., B.A.,  
Co-Director of Training, London Bible College

**CHAIRMAN**

TERENCE MITCHELL, M.A.,  
Chairman of Council of the Victoria Institute

**FROM ACADEMIA  
TO ARCADIA**

GENESIS 1 USED AS AN EXAMPLE OF POPULARISING  
CONTEMPORARY HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES

**PROGRAMME**

Victoria Institute AGM	6.15pm
Lecture	6.45pm

There will be opportunity for questions and discussion, finishing  
at 8.00pm

is a reference list of 132 books ranging from the 18th century to the present.

Copies of 'Tomorrow's World' are available from David Burgess, at a cost of £5.95 plus £1 for postage and packing. Please write to:

David A. Burgess,  
140 Longden Road,  
Shrewbury,  
Shropshire. SY3 7HT Tel: 0743-67588

## BOOK REVIEWS

Ernest Lucas, **Genesis Today**, Scripture Union, 1989, 160pp. Paperback, £2.75

Trained as a scientist and as a theologian, Dr. Lucas gives a succinct and very readable account of the first eleven chapters of Genesis in relation to scientific accounts of origins. As would be expected from the publisher, the book has a 'popular' style, free from jargon and technicalities, suited to those with little or no background in science. Nevertheless, within the limits of space available, the author has succeeded very well in his avowed aims: to make clear the issues to be faced, the legitimate 'how' questions of science and those of Biblical interpretation.

Before turning to the text of Genesis, the author disperses some of the foggy misunderstandings about the nature of science and about what we can expect the Bible to teach us. This clears the way for an objective appraisal of various interpretations of Genesis 1, such as age-day theories and 'young earth, flood geology'. Puzzles and problems in Genesis 2-11 are then reviewed. Although there is little that is new in the book, it is helpful to have a fair and straightforward summary of a wide divergence of views, with a clear indication that an open mind must on occasion (perhaps surprisingly often) be preserved.

Although there is no index, there are plenty of bold sub-headings. More than 30 books are listed for further readings; oddly, contributions to the debate by Dr. R. E. D. Clark are not mentioned.

There is an error on p 108, where it is said that radiocarbon dating can only be applied to the remains of living things. The method has been used to date lime mortar (which sets by taking up carbon dioxide from the air), iron and furnace slag.

David Burgess

Norman Autton, **Touch: An Exploration**, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989, 155pp. Paperback, £6.95

Norman Autton is a respected name in the literature of pastoral care of the sick. He has published many works in this and related fields. At present senior chaplain at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff, he writes from a lifetime of rich experience. In 1986 he published a volume entitled *Pain: An Exploration*, and this present book on Touch is intended to be a companion volume. The book is fully referenced and indexed and is very readable.

Autton begins by expressing surprise that physical touch has rarely been studied in a pastoral context. The result is that, of all the five senses, least is known about touch in a personal and social context. One reason for this in Britain is the reluctance of people to touch each other, even to shake hands. So much so, that this phenomenon has been called 'the English disease' which manifests itself in 'a no-touch epidemic'.

Physical touch is normally seen as sexual, violent or medical, but not usually as a means of healing. The author describes the intention of the book to explore 'the use of asexual touch in interpersonal relationships' with especial reference to its role in sickness, stress and counselling, and the part that it can play at different stages of life.

He considers first the nature of touch as a basic form of communication. His consideration is personal and social rather than physiological. The importance of touch in daily life he illustrates by the length of the entry for 'Touch' in the Oxford English Dictionary, although this entry is by no means the longest in this Dictionary as Autton claims.

He then surveys the place of touch in human development, concentrating mainly on early infancy, a period in which most investigation has been carried out. There follows a chapter on touch as a form of non-verbal support in the care of the sick. The author suggests that this is a way in which the hospital chaplain can assist the healing process. Too often the hospital chaplain approaches a sick bed with the question, 'What do I say?' uppermost in his mind, but he should remember that touch may be more important than speech in some situations. Subsequent chapters deal with touch in stress situations, in psychotherapy and in the care of the aged, the dying and the bereaved.

The final chapter is on 'The Healing Touch'. Here the author discusses the gift of healing and the use of touch in healing, concluding with a section on the Church's ministry of healing. He provides a brief summary of the place of the laying on of hands in healing. However,

he goes beyond the facts in describing touch as 'an essential element in the healing ministry of Jesus as well as that of the Apostolic Church'. Out of twenty-six records of the healing of individuals in the gospels, Jesus used touch in only ten cases, and in the Acts eight individual cases are described, with touch being mentioned in only three. It is therefore difficult to maintain that touch is 'an essential element' in the healing miracles recorded in the New Testament.

The book is a competent survey of the place of touch in the context of personal, social and therapeutic relationships, and will be of great value to all engaged in pastoral and health care. Not least amongst its areas of usefulness is the wealth of references it provides, often to out-of-the-way publications. It is warmly recommended.

John Wilkinson

Ed. Kenneth L. Barker, **The Making of a Contemporary Translation**, New International Version, Hodder and Stoughton, 1987, 222pp. Paperback, £7.95

The first reaction of two close acquaintances on seeing this volume was, 'Why do we need a book explaining a new translation, especially when the N.I.V. Bible preface already tells us how and why it was produced?' The question is understandable and to some extent justified. However, to reject this book out of hand would be foolish. It consists of a collection of essays dedicated to Dr. Edwin Palmer who served as coordinator of the translation team before his untimely death in 1980.

The subtitle of the work is, 'The Purpose and Method of the N.I.V.', which gives an indication of the scope of the essays. Three of them concentrate specifically on the Hebrew and Greek texts used in the translation and the reason for their choice, also how new light has been cast on the understanding of the Bible by new textual discoveries. Other essays deal with specific themes like the translating of poetry, the importance of literary style and the use made by the New Testament of the Old.

The essay by Palmer himself entitled, 'Isn't the King James Version Good Enough?' will prove instructive to many. In it he shows both respect for the Authorized Version and an awareness of its inadequacies. He indicates some hundred instances where the meaning is obscured either because the text used by the translators was inferior or because the meaning of English has changed since 1611. Similarly Wolf's essay, 'When "literal" is not accurate.' demonstrates

that added words and paraphrases can bring out more clearly than literal renderings the meaning of the original.

Some of the essays focus on specific problems involved in either translating passages like Psalms 1 and 2 or words like *She'ol*, *YHWH SABAOTH*, *Μοϋϋενες* and *υιος θεου*. Here the translator explains how he sets about seeking an accurate rendering.

Although the book is written with the general reader in mind some of the essays will present him with a challenge. Inevitably they vary in quality and length (25 pages on literary style and 6 on anglicizing the N.I.V.) but for those interested in the truth and value of the Bible and not on just whether the N.I.V. is a good translation or not, there is much of value here.

R. S. Luhman

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, **Understanding Cults and New Religions**, William Eerdmans (U.S.A.), distributed in U.K. by the Paternoster Press, 170pp. £7.35

This is an interesting study of the conditions which have given rise to new cults, and the communities which are connected with them.

To provide a backcloth to their investigation, the writers examine the issue of conversion in its Christian context, emphasizing the place given to reason in Christian apologetics. Sociological evidence, however, appears to point to other important factors in the conversion process, namely, interpersonal relationships and communal feelings. Actual communication with cult members, are needful rather than to dismiss their beliefs as invalid. The use of the term 'cult' is defined as 'a group with beliefs and/or practices . . . counter to those of the dominant culture' and the claim that such 'cults' are guilty of brain-washing is also discussed.

Evangelical conversion and the emphasis on reason are viewed in the light of the changes brought about by scientific advance, especially in the field of technology. The writers claim that these changes have produced 'modernity', a new approach to life. The mobility and fluidity of modern life have replaced the stability of Western culture, which existed from the fifth (if not earlier) century to the eighteenth century. The writers believe that 'many (modern youth) seek a new mythological idiom—up-to-date, cross-cultural, experiential and deeply spiritual'. Modernity looks to the future instead of the past, taking as foci of modern myth-making the two themes of health and technology.

In this search, there is explored the interaction between mythology,

primal experiences (e.g. dreams, visions, spiritual healings, sense of destiny) and aspects of the great religious traditions (in particular, Yogic (Eastern) and Abrahamic (Judaism and its heirs)), noting the place given to eschatology, community and prophetic leadership.

The writers recognize, however, that whilst the sociological aspect is important, adequate place needs to be given to the psychological state of the individual, who is often in a condition of crisis (illness; harsh treatment; marital breakdown and a search for identity). In the light of the sociological and psychological factors, it is claimed that the new cults are in fact neither very new nor very religious but serve a therapeutic purpose, even though much of it appears to be of a 'magical' or shamanistic nature. The final chapter has some interesting insights into the relationship of these new cults to Christianity. Amid the search for a spiritual solution in the midst of a social order of great uncertainty (giving rise to 'cultural hysteria'), the claim is made that the 'essence of Christianity is trust', which leads to redemption and liberation, expressed through God's action in Christ.

John H. Chamberlayne

J. Samuel Preus, **Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud**, Yale University Press, 1987. 231pp. Hardback £22.50

'An ongoing concern of this book is to note the extent to which the study of religion emerged out of the criticism of religion' (p. 152). The study of religion has many facets but the question of its origin remains a perennial one. This book gives particular consideration to non-theological explanations, which have emerged since the crises in Christendom in the sixteenth century.

The author begins with Jean Bodin, a diplomat/philosopher, who lived between the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War and sought a path through the impasse of rival interpretations of the Christian Faith. He stressed the 'innateness' of religion from the time of Adam and saw religion as a needful component for the health of society. The writers who followed Bodin are viewed as an 'alternative tradition' to theology, namely, a naturalistic and rational path to account for the place of religion in human societies. These range from the deist approach of Herbert of Cherbury, who used the 'innate theory' as one which made revelation unnecessary; through Fontenelle who sought to demythologize religious history, exempting Christianity from his scheme; to Vico who was concerned to set forth a 'science of man' by an imaginative reconstruction of history.

All these writers led the way for David Hume, whose devastating criticism of revelatory religion sought to provide an explanation of religion within the 'science of man'—wherein religion has reason as its criterion which ruled out supernatural causes and such phenomena as miracles. A new approach, however, came with the developments of the nineteenth century, with the theories of Auguste Comte and Edward Tylor. Comte's recognition of the function of religion in society reached a point where he came to believe in the necessity of religion, though not in traditional forms, so an 'alternative' Church to worship 'Humanity' was proposed as needful to oppose the materialism which would undermine human societies. His recognition of the social dimension of religion and its functions in society were to have important repercussions later.

Tylor's use of 'animism' as the basic principle of religion, from which later strata of religion evolved, leaves many questions unanswered, in particular, in regard to the social dimension in that individual religion appears to play too large a part. Moreover, the use of the term 'evolution' may well serve a purpose in biology, but in human sciences the factor of human volition continues to affect goals and purposes. These naturalistic explanations reached new peaks in the sociological paradigms of Emile Durkheim and the psychogenic explanations of Sigmund Freud. For Durkheim, 'Society' serves as the spring of religious and moral origins, whilst for Freud, it is the institutionalization of repressed desires, which is seen in religious belief and practice.

This book is a valuable investigation into the 'rational' attempts to explain religion. The author does not appear to have any specific definition of Religion as a 'term' but seems to take it for granted. Thus, it is not clear how comprehensive or how narrow the term may be in terms of belief, practice and organization. There is, however, a recognition of the intellectual and affective functions of the religious dimension, with the emphasis on the intellectual. The behavioural and moral aspects of religion could receive more attention. Such attempts to explain religion which rules out revelation leave a hiatus—a vacuum which fails to account adequately for some aspects of change; the grounds for moral advance (especially in the function of the prophet) and for the new horizons—Gore's 'down-rush from the Superconscious'—for which reason, economic, political and social causes cannot altogether account. Reasons of the heart call for a deeper source than the human individual heart or society can provide.

John H. Chamberlayne

Enrique Dussel, **Ethics and Community**, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1988. Translated from the Spanish by Robert R. Barr. 260pp. Softback \$13.95

This volume, in the Theology and Liberation Series, endeavours to 'earth' Liberation Theology within the discipline of 'social ethics'. With this end in view, the writer in the first part of his book sets forth some basic questions of community ethics, with particular reference to the use of his terms, so that these basic concepts may serve to explore more complex and derivative subjects which form the second part of his book. The second part takes up ten specific issues of current interest which need to be elucidated in the light of the gospel demands.

The discussion of the ten fundamental themes in the first part involves the clear differentiation of terms, which are in line with liberation theology, namely, the use of such terms as 'the poor'; 'sin'; 'morality' and 'goodness'—all of which are defined in a manner which is inclined to remind the reader of Humpty Dumpty's reply to Alice in 'Through the Looking-Glass'. 'When I use a word', Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more or less'. Therefore, 'the poor' are defined as 'those in a relationship of domination', the alienated; 'sin' is defined as 'domination' of another which may take the form of individual or institutionalized action and 'morality' is the prevailing system of practice in any particular society. These are seen as set over against 'goodness' (defined as 'service of the deprived', the poor) whilst in place of the established order ('morality'), there is posited 'ethics' (defined as 'the future order of liberation and the demands of justice with respect to the oppressed'). This polarity in the use of terms is prominent throughout the book. The prevailing Social Morality (essentially of Capitalism) is defined as the 'Babylon Principle' which is set over against the 'Jerusalem Principle', in which the Poor are the Agents of the Reign of God, similarly the social relationships of domination are set over against the praxis of *community*, wherein the poor are treated as persons and are satisfied in their face-to-face treatment. These two forms of political arrangement call forth the 'hero' to be the voice of 'communal action', whilst in the 'ecclesial' (or church) sphere, it calls forth the 'prophet', as the one who builds the temple of God. During this process of transformation, morality is seen as relative, whilst ethics serves as the 'absolute' criterion, whereby the moralities are judged. During the course of the discussion of these issues, the terms used are also inclined to be 'of individual inclination', e.g. 'unicity of history'; 'institutionality'; 'ethnicity' and 'intrasystematic', whilst the term 'system' is taken to mean the 'status quo'. It is only fair

to state, however, that the writer does endeavour to explain his terms, by claiming that his definitions go back to the root meaning of terms in their Latin or Greek dress, which may well differ from current usage. There is logical progression, when presuppositions are agreed.

The second part of the book, in the light of the above basic principles, then investigates some ten major themes of modern life, namely, the ethics of work; an ethical critique of Capital; of Dependence of the Poor in terms of exploitation; the transnationalization of Productive Capital; International Loans and Weaponry; the nature of 'Class Struggle'; ethical problems which have arisen out of the institutionalization of socialism and the relationship between Culture and Ecology. These need to be seen in the light of the demands of the Gospel, in relation to social issues, as reflected in the social teaching of the Church. Particular attention is given to Papal Encyclicals and these are discussed in the light of their status. The writer is inclined to regard them as in the main upholding the 'status quo' morality, which therefore is 'relative', and does not adequately face up to the situation of 'the poor' and oppressed. All persons or institutions, which do not face up to the liberation of 'the poor', are defined as 'sinful', and the ultimate responsibility on the out-working of the Christian ethic is placed on the 'Christian community', which is defined as 'the local church' under the authority of the episcopal college (of the nation or continent). This 'local' character is required as it is recognized that circumstances in Nicaragua, in Cuba and in Brazil differ, so this will call for differing interpretation of the social teaching. This is a thought-provoking book, which provides some valuable insights into the practical applications of Liberation Theology.

John H. Chamberlayne

In addition to the foregoing, the following books have been reviewed. Owing to lack of space they are given by title and reviewer only, but if any reader wishes, the review is available from the Editor.

Peter Toon: *About Turn*: the decisive event of conversion. Reviewed by S. Chalmers.

Tony Higton: *Our God Reigns*. Reviewed by R. Holme.

Tom Smail: *The Forgotten Father*. Reviewed by Stuart Chalmers.

Charles R. Churn: *Man, Life and God in the Space Age*. Reviewed by R. S. Luhman.

David J. Wells: *God the Evangelist*. Reviewed by Stuart Chalmers.

## THE CONSTITUTION

Adopted at the first Annual General Meeting of the Members and Associates, May 27th, 1867, with Revisions of 1874-75, 1910, 1912, 1920, 1939, 1952, 1967, 1979 and 1982.

### 1. OBJECTS

The Victoria Institute or Philosophical Society of Great Britain (hereinafter referred to as the Society) is established to advance the Christian religion as revealed in Holy Scripture.

In furtherance of the foregoing object the Society shall have the following powers:

- (1) To investigate fully and impartially the most important questions of Philosophy and Science, but more especially those that bear upon the great truths revealed in Holy Scripture, with the view of reconciling any apparent discrepancies between Christianity and Science; and to associate together men of Science and authors who have already been engaged in such investigation, and all others who may be interested in them, in order to strengthen their efforts by association, and, by bringing together the results of such labours, after full discussion, in publishing the printed Transactions of an Institution to give greater force and influence to proofs and arguments which might be little known, or even disregarded, if put forward merely by individuals.
- (2) To consider the mutual bearings of the various scientific conclusions arrived at in the several distinct branches into which Science is now divided, in order to get rid of contradictions and conflicting hypotheses, and thus promote the real advancement of true science: and to examine, discuss and publish the results of such research concerning all supposed scientific results with reference to final causes, and the more comprehensive and fundamental principles of Philosophy proper, based upon faith in the existence of one Eternal God, who, in his wisdom created all things very good.
- (3) To publish Papers read before the Society along with full reports of the discussions thereon, in the form of a journal or as the Transactions of the Institute.
- (4) When subjects have been fully discussed, to make the results known by means of Lectures of a more popular kind, and to publish such Lectures.

- (5) To publish English translations of important foreign works of real scientific and philosophical value, especially those bearing upon the relation between the Scriptures and Science: and to cooperate with other philosophical societies at home and abroad, which are now or may hereafter be formed, in the interest of Scriptural truth and of real science.

## 2. MEMBERSHIP

- (a) The Society shall consist of Members elected as hereinafter set forth and signifying interest in the Society's charitable work by financial contributions thereto.
- (b) The roll of Members of the Society shall include all those designated on the 15th day of May 1989 as Fellows, Members, and Associates, and all others subsequently admitted by the Council.

## 3. COUNCIL

- (a) The government of the Society shall be vested in a Council, the members of which shall be elected from amongst those Members of the Society who sign, if elected, a Basis of Faith approved by the Council.
- (b) The Council shall consist of the President, the Honorary Treasurer, and not exceeding ten others.

## 4. ELECTION OF COUNCIL AND OFFICERS

The President, the Vice-Presidents, and the Honorary Treasurer shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting, which shall normally be held in the month of May.

At the Annual General Meeting in each year, one third of the other members of the Council or if their number be not a multiple of three then the number nearest to one third shall also retire in order of seniority of election to the Council, and be eligible for re-election: as between members of equal seniority the members to retire shall be chosen from among them by ballot unless such members shall agree between themselves.

Casual vacancies may be filled by the Council and shall require ratification at the next Annual General Meeting.

## 5. NOMINATION FOR ELECTION

For such annual elections nominations may be made by any Member

of the Society and sent, together with a statement by the Nominee that he or she is prepared to stand, to the Secretary not later than the 1st March in any year. The Council may also nominate for vacancies, and all nominations shall be submitted to the Members at the time when notice of the Annual General Meeting is posted.

If more nominations are made than there are vacancies on the Council the election shall be by ballot amongst the Members in good standing. Ballot papers shall be sent to Members with the notice of meeting, and may be returned, completed, to the Secretary, either at the meeting or, by post, not later than a week before the meeting.

## 6. MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURE

Any person desirous of becoming a Member shall send to the Secretary an application for admission. Upon such application being transmitted to the Secretary, the candidate shall be proposed to the Council and if elected, enrolled as a Member of the Victoria Institute, in such manner as the Council may deem proper. Such application shall be considered as *ipso facto* pledging the applicant to observe the rules of the Society, and as indicative of his or her desire and intention to further its objects and interests.

The Council shall have power to remove from the roll a Member who by reason of improper conduct or lack of qualifications is considered to be in breach of the rules, objects and interests of the Society, but subject to a right of appeal.

## 7. COUNCIL BUSINESS AND RULE MAKING

The quorum for meetings of the Council shall be four. The Council may make such rules as it considers desirable for furthering the objects of the Society and regulating its business including:

- (a) the setting up of an Executive Committee to include the Chairman of Council, the Hon. Treasurer and another or others of the Council to transact routine business
- (b) the setting up of other *ad hoc* committees to which may be appointed persons who, though not members of Council, are specially qualified to advise on some particular subject.

## 8. PAPERS

Papers presented to the Society shall be considered as the property of the Society unless there shall have been any previous engagement

with its author to the contrary, and the Council may cause the same to be published in any way and at any time it may think proper.

#### 9. PROPERTY TRUSTEESHIP

The whole property and effects of the Society shall be vested in such Bank or Trust Corporation as the Council may direct and held in trust for the Institute. The Council is empowered to invest from time to time in or upon any investments for the time being authorised by statute for the investment of trust funds by trustees, and in and upon such other investments as the Council shall be advised by competent stock and sharebrokers and the Council shall have the usual powers of trustees in regard thereto.

#### 10. FUNDS, etc.

All moneys received on account of the Institute shall be duly paid to its credit at the Bankers, and all cheques shall be drawn, under authority of the Council, and shall be signed by any member of the Council and countersigned by the Honorary Treasurer or the Secretary.

#### 11. AUDIT

The accounts shall be audited annually by the Auditor (or Honorary Auditor, not a serving member of Council), who shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting, and who shall make a written report to the Council at the first meeting after such audit, and also to the Society upon the day of the Annual General Meeting next following—stating the balance in the Treasurer's hands and the general state of the funds of the Institute.

#### 12. CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION

No change in the Constitution or the policy of the Society shall be decided upon by the Council without prior notice being given in writing to the full Council and all Vice-Presidents and past Presidents at least six weeks before the meeting at which such change shall be voted upon and all those entitled to receive such notice shall be entitled to attend, speak and vote at such meeting. Any such change shall require ratification at the next Annual General Meeting.

**NEW MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIA INSTITUTE**

A (J) indicates joint membership between the Victoria Institute  
and Christians in Science.

## a) 1989

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Mr G. S. Lee	Weybridge, Surrey	J

The Editor regrets to announce the death of a former member—  
Mr. K. A. de Cobain, of Goole, North Humberside.

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or  
The Philosophical Society of Great Britain

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The *Faith & Thought Bulletin* first appeared in 1985 under the title *Faith & Thought Newsletter*.

The new title reflects a wider coverage, since it will contain some short articles, notes and book reviews, in addition to the news items hitherto, which would not fall within the purview of the journal.

It is published by The Victoria Institute and mailed free to all Institute members, along with *Science and Christian Belief*.

The journal *Science and Christian Belief* is published jointly for VI and CIS. It replaces the CIS (previously RSCF) *Newsletter* and the VI journal *Faith & Thought*, the final number of which was volume 114 No 2 October 1988.

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