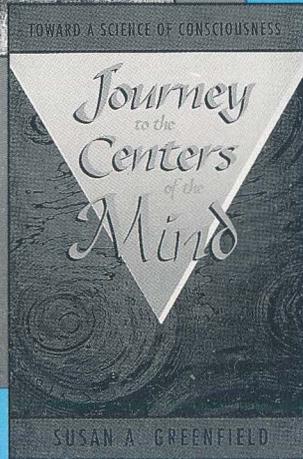
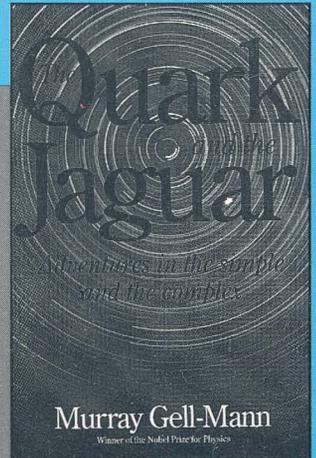
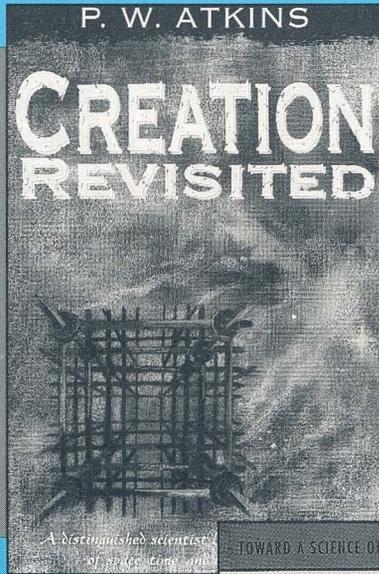


# FAITH & THOUGHT

BULLETIN



OCTOBER 1995 NUMBER 18

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## EDITORIAL

We are pleased to welcome to the Institute eighteen new members, and we hope that their membership may be of benefit to them, whatever their ministry. However, we need even more subscribers to maintain our numbers, and we ask that all members will endeavour to make our efforts known to their friends and colleagues.

The article by Emeritus Professor J. N. Birdsall has been submitted in response to comments in earlier Bulletins on the subject matter of Textual Criticism, and we thank Professor Birdsall for sharing his scholarship with us. Dr. Diana Briggs has written her assessment of a very interesting meeting at the Royal Institution at which the editor was also present. Brain and mind research is one of the frontiers of science, and a topic we need to know more about. We commend the article to you.

## NEW MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIA INSTITUTE

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London

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1995

The Annual General Meeting of the Victoria Institute took place on May 16th at the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, St. Peter's Church, Vere Street, London. The Chairman, Terence Mitchell presided, and after receiving apologies, the minutes of the 1994 AGM were accepted. (Published in *Faith and Thought* Bulletin No. 16 of October 1994).

**Election of Officers:** The President, Vice-Presidents and Honorary Treasurer were elected for a further term of office as also were two members of Council, The Revd. Charles W. Karunaratna and The Revd. E.C. Lucas, together with a new member, Dr. John P. Kane.

**Accounts:** The Hon. Treasurer presented the Accounts for year ended 31st December 1994 which were formally accepted, subject to figures awaited from Paternoster Press and to audit.

**Auditor:** It was reported that no-one had been found willing to undertake an audit in an honorary capacity, but regulations, still to be published, under the Charities Acts 1992 and 1993 were expected to require, for charities with annual income of less than £250,000, 'independent examination', with professional audit when annual income was in excess of that figure. The members unanimously voted for the current year's accounts to be 'examined' and requested Council to make the necessary arrangements with the object of reducing the cost of this service.

Immediately following the AGM the Chairman introduced Dr. John P. Kane, BA, Ph.D, Lecturer in Comparative Religions, Department of Religion and Theology, University of Manchester, who delivered an illustrated lecture under the title, *The Archaeology of Jerusalem and the New Testament*. It is hoped to reproduce a major part of this presentation in a later number of this Bulletin.

## PRINCIPLES OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The Council of the Victoria Institute has done me the honour of inviting me to write for *Faith and Thought* on the principles of textual criticism. I am happy to do this, and have sought to give an exposition of the science and art of the craft as generally practised today. Almost all my research activity over thirty years has been in this field. I began to write without specific reference to an earlier article, but as I wrote, it seemed appropriate to me to utilize, towards the article's close, examples discussed by Mr. C.W. Mitchell (*Faith and Thought*, Bulletin 14, 1993) which appeared germane to the exposition at that point.

I risk uttering a truism in stating that, since the sixteenth century, our understanding of the world and its functioning has changed profoundly from that of our ancestors in preceding centuries, and that, impelled by yet greater intellectual explosion in our time, it continues to change. This is not only in the field of the natural sciences, of which we are made keenly aware by the exploitation of their discoveries in technology. Before the natural sciences got under way, literary and historical studies, as well as philosophy, had blazed a trail which led to a revolution in the investigation of the literary sources of historical knowledge and their transmission, and in the writing of history itself.

An important aspect of that investigation is the basic study which is known as textual criticism. In this phrase, as in a large number of technical scholarly terms, we find a first word which we meet only in a technical sense, namely "textual", and a second which bears in this context a sense distinct from that which it bears in colloquial speech. Words change in value as years pass, and thus "criticism" in colloquial English bears only the pejorative sense of derogatory or carping comment. In its technical application it indicates the application of principles of judgement or assessment to a body of data, especially with regard to data which have increased in number or volume to the extent that previous assessment must be called in question.

The data in the case under consideration are the various sources of the text (that is, the wording) of the New Testament. These consist of three main categories of material. First there are manuscripts in the original Greek language in which the documents were composed (or, at any rate, in certain cases perhaps, have been transmitted to our day). Secondly, there are found manuscripts in various ancient languages into which translation was made at different dates before the crucial sixteenth century; of these the earliest were made directly from the Greek, while others, generally at later dates, were made from an intermediary earlier translation. These each and all may have undergone subsequent revision from other sources deemed superior in quality by scholars of the day. A third category of data is that composed by quotation and adaptation of the New Testament documents in various activities within the church such as preaching, commentary, the language of liturgy and hymns, polemic and much else. Such data come from writers both in the original, and in the languages of the early

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translations. All these writings are themselves transmitted in manuscript up to the invention of printing. Some may still remain known only in manuscript form, and unpublished otherwise.

The extent of these data was unknown, even unimagined, before the end of the Western middle ages. Scholars of antiquity and in medieval times knew that there were divergences of text to be found in certain cases, but were unaware of the extent of such wide divergence as proves to be in fact the case, while the notion of thousands of witnesses had not yet dawned. The mass of new material began to be assembled in the fifteenth century as the Eastern Roman empire approached its end, and scholars and manuscripts moved from the East to Italy and stations West. The wealth of the rulers first in Italy, then France and Spain, and latterly in England, Scandinavia and Germany brought these new sources of information into the sphere of the scholars of their day.

But the possibility of assembling a body of readings (that is, variant forms of words or phrases) from this newly acquired mass of material and of accounting for their mutual divergences, were thoughts still far from those who printed the first editions of the Greek New Testament, as was the notion of distinguishing an original text, and its subsequent development. They used what manuscripts were to hand, or provided by their patrons. We do not seem to know which or how many precisely were used for the Complutensian Polyglot (produced in Spain in 1514) while about six of those used by Erasmus (1516) have been identified. The death of the editor of the former, and the haste of the latter's publisher to be first in the field each produced some faults in the respective editions. In both cases, the text as printed is one which concurs with the text of most manuscripts produced from the tenth century onward in the Greek Empire or in Greek areas already under Muslim domination.

The Complutensian Polyglot was overshadowed by the hastier work of Erasmus and it was that text which was reprinted with little change by the successors of the pioneers. In 1550, the Paris editor Robert Etienne (Stephanus) produced such an edition, but with a margin giving variant readings from fifteen manuscripts. This may be said to be the beginning of textual criticism in that it made scholars aware of the existence of varying wording, and the need for decision; but no scholar proceeded to attempt such discrimination. Succeeding centuries saw the gathering of more and more material, for example in the so-called "London Polyglot" of Bishop Brian Walton (1657), while critical discussion of both the various categories of witness and the variations of text are exemplified in the pioneering work of John Mill (1707). The eighteenth century continued to produce those who added to the knowledge of documents, such as John James Wettstein, and those who deepened the understanding of the judgement of readings, such as John Albert Bengel. The work of all these can still be studied and drawn upon with profit today.

As in the natural sciences, and in the more closely allied fields of the study of

classical and vernacular literatures, it was the nineteenth century which saw the first definitive steps in the analysis and synthesis of the data gathered by previous generations, or lately brought to light. The early part of the century was marked by the remarkable activity of Constantine von Tischendorf, untiring and serendipitous. He discovered a mass of new material in manuscript form, not only in Greek and not only in the field of the New Testament. His successive editions of the New Testament with critical apparatus (i.e. listed variations, verse by verse) are still absolutely indispensable, and the accuracy of his information astonishing. There were many others too, amongst whom one must not omit to give especial mention of Samuel Tregelles, who equals Tischendorf in the accuracy of his report. His edition should also be consulted for the material he covered.

The classification of manuscripts according to the text they attested in common had been earlier undertaken by various scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the discoveries of Tischendorf and his peers had made some significant changes in the landmarks. This was especially so with the discovery of the codex Sinaiticus, and the accessibility of the codex Vaticanus. These were both of the fourth century and thus earlier than Greek material previously known, and moreover, were practically complete in the extent of the New Testament preserved in them. These together with other evidence from versions and quotations indicated a text which was attested as early as the late second century in Egypt. (Evidence in quotations proved this in the time of Westcott and Hort. Papyrus discoveries have confirmed that conclusion.) The identification of this text enabled other manuscripts with related texts to be more accurately analyzed, some to be seen as closely related to the great fourth century codices, and others to be placed in a class apart.

Two other texts had been earlier distinguished. One had only one main Greek manuscript amongst its attestation, namely the codex Bezae (which had a Latin version facing its Greek). This had been known since the sixteenth century. In the nineteenth century it was generally dated rather later than the fourth century where we should now date it in the light of our increased palaeographical knowledge. With it was evidently to be associated the Latin translation antedating the revision by Jerome. Hence it was dubbed with the misnomer of the "Western Text", even though Griesbach, who coined the name, already knew that this text's peculiar readings were often also supported by one of the Coptic versions from Egypt! The third main grouping into which witnesses to the New Testament text were divided was that of the majority of manuscripts available to scholars at that time, the text of which was roughly equivalent to that printed in the early sixteenth century.

The question which faced textual critics at the end of the nineteenth century was how to relate the differences in text of the groupings of witnesses to the development of the text, thus distinguishing an original stage from later stages

which were termed "corruptions" (another technical term, more pejorative in the lay ear than it should strictly be). The two English scholars Westcott and Hort produced an edition in 1881 which has been the beginning of modern textual criticism, and the focus of debate. They followed a pattern which had already been anticipated in theoretical terms by the great eighteenth century English scholar Richard Bentley, and put into practice by the German philologist Karl Lachmann.

These earlier scholars perceived that they could arrive at an edition representing the text of the New Testament in the fourth century by a judicious use of ancient Greek manuscripts, early versions and the quotations in Christian writers. Lachmann was a philologist working not only on the New Testament text, but in classical Latin, where he edited Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*, and in his native German literature, where poetry of the middle ages occupied him. In both he had been outstandingly successful, applying to each field a "genealogical method", using the discovery that the manuscripts of the works in these two fields could be demonstrated to be descendants by copying from a single old manuscript, which was either still extant or could be reconstructed.

The difference in the situation of Lachmann at the beginning of the century, and Westcott and Hort at its close arose from the number of manuscripts with which they had to deal. Instead of few, they now dealt with many. But in their attempt to apply genealogical method, they treated the text derived from the agreement of a number of manuscripts as if it were the text of a single manuscript. The singularity of the codex Bezae on the one hand, and the excellence which they perceived in the codex Vaticanus on the other (even when it stood alone), may have increased their inclination to do this. However, they made clear the criteria by which they determined the relationship of the three main groups into which the evidence fell upon examination. The high incidence of conflate readings in the text of the mass of manuscripts showed this to be the product of an act of editing which had brought together divergent readings of the two other texts, and hence these must be assumed to be antecedent to the third. The lateness of date of that was demonstrated by the criterion of the earliest quotation of its specific readings, which they observed to be in the work of John Chrysostom in the late fourth century. This dating of the text of the majority of manuscripts still stands. That text is not known in manuscripts or quotations before the late fourth century.

Following the criterion of quotation, they found that the attestation of the "Western Text" in fact antedates that of the text of the codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, called by them the "Neutral Text". The appearance of that they dated by its appearance in Origen, in the third century. But second century writers such as Justin martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian and the third century Cyprian were found to attest the "Western Text". Yet for Westcott and Hort that text was corrupt. They had reached this conclusion on the basis of an examination of the

quality of the two texts, and consequent estimation of the intrinsic probability of the originality of the one or the other. In that examination they had found the "Western Text", by contrast with the "Neutral Text", prone to paraphrase, addition of details in a way reminiscent of the accounts in early Christian apocryphal materials, and in harmonization abolishing the distinction of parallel passages. These features, together with many minor, they held to show that the "Western Text" was secondary to the "Neutral Text" in most regards. The only exception was a number of passages mainly in the latter chapters of St. Luke's gospel, where they suspected addition to the "Neutral Text". (For those who have at any time acquired the technical terminology, may I make the reminder that these exceptions are the "Western non-interpolations"?)

The exposition of their method by these scholars set the agenda for the century which has followed. This description has not been simply taken from the introduction to the edition of Westcott and Hort, although that repays study, but have been adapted with that as base in the light of the progress of research in the twentieth century. The method starts with the study of the manuscripts and the other sources of information. It undertakes a classification based on common groupings of words with salient variation. There follows a process of discrimination and selection, primarily by the criterion of early attestation. Because of the dating of the documentary evidence, this criterion left Hort and his colleague, in certain cases, in perplexity in determining some details of the original text. In that case, they were obliged to use the procedures of rational criticism, and we find ourselves under the same obligation.

Westcott and Hort depended upon Tischendorf's editions and the edition of Tregelles. The former, in editing his final edition (in two volumes, 1869 & '72), used about eighty-eight manuscripts in the older style of Greek writing, known as uncial or majuscule. The latest hand edition of the Institute for New Testament Textual Research at Münster, published in 1994, can now list 301 such as utilized in its preparation. Westcott and Hort intimate that their estimate of the number of known Greek manuscripts in the late style (known as cursive or minuscule) is between 900 and 1000. The Münster edition lists over 2800. Greek manuscripts containing passages of the New Testament arranged as a lectionary are by convention classified without distinction of their style of writing. Westcott and Hort knew of about 400. The last number within the list of this category given in the Münster edition is 2211.

But in addition there is now a whole category of material which was almost completely unknown a hundred years ago. This was constituted by the information recovered, mainly from Egyptian excavations, in manuscripts written on papyrus, the primary writing material of the ancient world. In the Münster edition, ninety-eight manuscripts on such material are listed. Many are very fragmentary, having only a few verses, but in contrast, others, such as those from the famous collections of Sir Chester Beatty and Mr. Martin Bodmer, contain

books of scripture, or collections of such books, complete or almost so. Papyrus does not confer a particular authentication upon a text. The dating of the manuscript is of basic importance, while even in an early example, a text with errors could be found. However, the discoveries on papyrus have increased our knowledge of the text in the second and third centuries in a way parallel in importance to Tischendorf's discoveries of uncial manuscripts. It should nevertheless not be overlooked that since papyrus, because of climatic conditions, was preserved only in Egypt, it is generally knowledge of the textual situation of the New Testament at that date in Egypt which is recovered.

Not only has the numerical count increased greatly but we have today a far more detailed knowledge of the text of all these categories than a century ago. Access to those not published in print has been facilitated by the microfilm. Very useful selections were made in the Patriarchal Libraries in Jerusalem, the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai and the Libraries of the monasteries of Mount Athos, by expeditions of the Library of Congress, in 1949-50, 1950 and 1952-53 respectively, and there are other such collections elsewhere. Copies may be obtained, while some other institutions have purchased all three collections. Most large national and university libraries have facilities to reproduce their holdings on microfilm for individual and institutional research.

There is an analogous increase numerically and in understanding in the study of the ancient versions, and there has been much advance in the interpretation of the information to be gleaned from quotation and allusion in both Greek and other Christian writers. This has been assisted by several new series of texts of the Fathers, which ensure that we can now rely on the oldest ascertainable form of their writings. Thus we may come as near as possible, through quotations within them, to the form in which the text of the new Testament was known to particular authors, or at a certain period or place.

This increase in materials, which is such an advantage in these studies, at first occasioned difficulty. Hort had developed the analysis of the text into a number of "texts", distinctive of particular groups of manuscripts (we use the term "text-type" today). The two groups dated by him as the earlier appeared fairly simple in their constituency, because of the few attesting manuscripts which were known. It is a fact that he and Westcott relied heavily on Codex Vaticanus and Codex Bezae. It is, I believe, anachronistic to criticize this. But as new material became available, scholars had to take account of a much larger number of constituent manuscripts in the analysis of each group. This led to a succession of hypotheses to take account of the fact that, as every student of manuscripts soon learns, each manuscript is an individual. My teacher Robert Casey put it racyly, "A manuscript is something between a gadget and a personality". No manuscript, however closely related to another, is identical with its relative, not even one which we can prove by various techniques to be a direct copy of it.

The pupils of Hort and other immediate successors (we think of James Rendel

Harris and Kirsopp Lake as examples) introduced the notion that a "pure text", which might be found in a particular manuscript, was to be seen in others only in an impure or corrupted state. Not infrequently "pure" was taken to mean early, "impure" later. This helped to deal with the few minuscule manuscripts which came to light with texts like the Codex Vaticanus. But other witnesses of all three categories demanded a different explanation. These shared some distinctive readings with Vaticanus, and some with Bezae, with a very few peculiar readings of their own. In due course, the new hypothesis was created that these were relics of a third old text-type.

This led to the theory which is known as the "theory of local texts". This based itself on the data of the relationship of these Greek manuscripts to early ancient versions of the attestation of their distinctive combinations of reading in the quotations by certain fathers. The varying text-types (now more than three) were interpreted as those which were accepted as in some sense authoritative in different areas of the early church and their chief cities. These were Alexandria (Egypt), Caesarea (Palestine), Antioch (Syria) known in the earliest form of the four gospels in the Syriac language, Ephesus (Asia) known in the Latin text current in Gaul, and the old Greek text of the Roman church, likewise surviving in a Latin dress in Carthage (Africa). The text of the majority of Greek manuscripts was perceived as a standard text arising in the early days when the empire had moved its centre to Byzantium (Constantinople). This standard text, although we do not know of any act of authorization, was in use and circulation parallel to the indubitably authorized revision of the Latin version by Jerome, known as the Vulgate.

This was a theory with many attractions, for texts definable by shared combinations of variant reading may indeed be localized in the named areas. In the case of Alexandria and Caesarea, an hypothesis of Biblical scholarship interested in textual questions and producing a revised text could be plausible suggested. But the notion of authorization of a textual form by ecclesiastical authority remains anachronistic and without objective evidence. But a creeping uncertainty has characterized debate since the very earliest proposal of this reconstruction, the major basis of which is the lack of exact identity between the members of the various text-types or their smaller constituent groups of manuscripts.

Hence the problem "How do we identify a group of manuscripts?" has been examined in great detail and in more and more technical ways. In a text so well known as, in general terms, the New Testament, we cannot rely, except in very discrete groups interrelated by a process of direct copying, on the adage which still applies to some classical Greek texts "Community of error denotes community of origin". (In this adage, "error" means grammatical error, not some reading which we do not consider on other grounds to be original to the text.) The problem has over recent years consequently been approached on the analogy

of modern advances in the classification of species made up many individual living organisms. The working out of these analogies has required mathematical and statistical skills which many textual scholars such as the present writer do not possess. They can only observe the taxonomical charts which their colleagues have produced. Here we find presentations of the related groups of manuscripts, in which the idiosyncrasies of each member are indicated. The whole appears to some degree like the colour charts of our childhood, illustrating the spectrum. Instead of distinct bands of colour (i.e. complexion of the "text-type"), there is seen a gradual blending of each major hue into its neighbour. The main points of focus which led Hort and his successors to speak of such and such a "text" may still be perceived, but not as attested by witnesses which are identical each with the next. Although we perceive in such a presentation a textual situation in which mixture has played a great part, we are enabled to see a pattern, a pattern within which are several quite distinct foci. The older analyses had as their gravest fault classification by agreement in distinctive readings only, without balancing these by taking account of points of disagreement. The recent analyses, plotting differences between witnesses as well as agreements, have shown that the older analysis was on the right lines, but make it more precise in accord with modern taxonomical statistical methods.

The taxonomical and statistical work just summarized has in fact justified the older analyses of Westcott and Hort and their successors. In a characteristic presentation, we find a block of witnesses corresponding to the "Neutral text", nowadays generally termed the Alexandrian text. Next we find blocks which present the data which Hort's successors in the earlier decades of this century interpreted as evidence of a "Caesarean text". These are more often now seen as the traces of a process by which the Alexandrian text was transformed into the earliest strata of the text of the Byzantine period. The blocks next to the so-called Caesarean text-types are those of the manuscripts of that Byzantine text, which fall into several sub-groupings, not identical in every particular. The Western text stands apart, quite distinct from the rest. Its position however indicates the fact that a proportion of its readings are shared by the Byzantine text.

The relationship of texts is shown by such taxonomies, but the history of the text has still to be otherwise constructed. We have already mentioned (as the earliest modern centuries already perceived) that the texts may be dated by the occurrence of their main features in the quotations of writers of various centuries, and in versions of which the date of origin is known. But while this may lead to the possibility of confident statement that such and such a combination of readings was known in such and such a place, at a time which may be approximately dated, and even that it was generally quoted by some named Christian writer, we do not have confidence any longer to say that such a text was created in a particular place, or by a known Christian scholar or leader. We can gain a picture of relatively early and late forms of text, and some notions of their

geographical distribution, but are not able to distinguish the divisions of the early group by more precisely dated points of origin. Some data previously seen to indicate the existence of a text-type are now seen to attest the process which led to change over a period, which may be dated by the same means.

For scholars who worked in the expectation that to trace the history would lead us back to the original text, such conclusions have seemed failure. An alternative approach to the resolution of the problem of the original text is to be seen in the work of G.D. Kilpatrick. He emphasised the view that original readings may be found anywhere within the definable text types. This approach, which many scholars, including the present writer, have utilized or commended at some point in their development, is known as rigorous eclecticism. It has been demonstrated consistently only by Kilpatrick and his pupil J. Keith Elliott. In his early work Kilpatrick enumerated various distinct criteria by which such original readings might be discerned, but the main thrust of both his and Elliott's work has been to seek the cause of the corruption of the text at a very early period in one main factor. This was the Atticising movement of the second century, which had a great impact upon contemporary secular literature. Various writers composed lexica or other categorized forms of discussion and instruction to intimate what was Attic and what Hellenistic, the latter being the form from which they wished to free the literary style of their day. Other authors defended literature written in the contemporary form of Greek against the Atticizers. It should be emphasised that Kilpatrick's work was based on considerable erudition and has much to teach us, and that Elliot has worked with great industry in his footsteps. The approach has not however commanded the assent of most textual critics, as a single road to the restitution of the original text. The main reason for this - some unworthy personalia apart - is the lack of any solid historical framework, apart from the existence of the Atticizing movement itself, into which the activity of stylistic correctors and others might be fitted, if it were seen as a single dominant influence. No impingement of the movement upon the church of the period can be clearly demonstrated.

In my opinion, it is towards an historical reconstruction that we must still work. We have the materials. The taxonomic work referred to confirms the divisions which less sophisticated methods had already indicated in earlier centuries. The work of those predecessors on geographical and temporal location of texts is a preliminary sketch map, which better texts of the versions and the fathers can enable us to improve. The work of Kilpatrick however does reveal that we shall not find the original always preserved in any single text-type. That work is but one example of that demonstration. That, for instance, of Günther Zuntz, a scholar of a different approach, is another convincing example. Those with competence in Greek cannot find a better way to understanding the modern textual critic at work than to read Zuntz on *The Text of the Epistles*, published in 1953. In that series of lectures are to be found, on the one hand, the study of the

most ancient manuscript and its later textual allies, of the ancient versions, and the earliest quotations. In parallel with these emphases, attention is equally paid to the style of Paul seen in the context of his letters, which is one source of criteria for decision between readings of equal antiquity. Another model is the work of Josef Schmid on the text of the Book of Revelation, published in the same decade. This suffers, for many English readers, from the further inaccessibility of being written in German. It is worthy of close study, however, by those who can read it. Since the textual problems of different parts of the Canon are not identical, neither masterpiece gives us a blueprint for work on the gospels. These are of greater complexity both because of their origins, and because of their more frequent copying and use, not to mention the effect of recollection in the mind of scribe and preacher. But the basic procedure will be found to be needed in this case too, namely to go to the earliest sources, and to seek for demonstrable criteria, often stylistic, for decision between variations in witnesses of similar date.

These criteria have not infrequently been summarized in the past, and this essay is not an appropriate place to do so at length. A classic study dating from 1935 is that of the French scholar Marie-Joseph Lagrange, founder of the School of Biblical and Archaeological Study in Jerusalem. His work treated the whole of the New Testament, discussing the chief manuscripts and versions. The subtitle of the book is *Rational Criticism*. A summary of the criteria by which this proceeds is that, amongst a group of various forms of the text, that form is to be preferred as original which explains the origin of the others. Variation on stylistic grounds, to which Kilpatrick gave his main attention, is an instance of this. Knowing, as we do in that instance, that during a certain period, stylistic fashion preferred one locution to another, we should consider the locution which would have been preferred as stylistically acceptable to be secondary to another which we know would have failed the same tests. The best generalizing summary of the practical application is the adage that the more difficult, or harder, variant form is the preferable. This arises from the concern, common to all periods and milieux, that the meaning of scripture should be comprehensible and not cause any perplexity or offence to hearers or readers. This concern might eventually express itself in emendation, unconscious or deliberate, the effect of which will be creation of an easier text.

It may be helpful to look for examples, first in three instances recently raised by C.W. Mitchell. He argues for the preferability of the Greek text underlying the Authorized Version in all three cases. But all three readings in that form of text are in fact cases where a harder text has been replaced within the later tradition by an easier. The difficulties perceived by Mitchell in the Greek text going back to the work of Westcott and Hort, and in modern English renderings based on such a Greek, are simply replicating the difficulties which would have been felt in the early centuries. In the case of Mark 7.31, since Palestine and Syria remained the home of strong Christian communities for several centuries, the geographical

puzzle of a journey from Tyre to Galilee through Sidon would have caused perplexity. A simple change of case ending and the substitution of a connective by a preposition resolved this by producing the innocuous reading "regions of Tyre and Sidon". There is no record of any discussion of the problem latent in the harder reading in early Christian writers. Opinion would differ amongst modern exegetes about an explanation of the harder reading, accepted as original. I am probably among a minority in still considering that we have here a fragment of authentic material about the movements of Jesus at a crucial point in his ministry. In this I follow the Cambridge scholar of the early part of the century, F.C. Burkitt, who saw this circuitous journey as a prudential avoidance of the territory of Herod Antipas who, by identifying Jesus as John the Baptist risen again, implicitly threatened him with a like fate.

The enigmatic "Judaea" in Luke 4.44 gave way to "Galilee", presumably harmonized to the parallel Marcan passage. This will not have been to deal with any specific observed difficulty, but is part of a continuous process of harmonization which had its beginning as soon as the Church treated the fourfold gospel as a unity. In any case, as Mitchell points out, the reading appears incongruous in its context. It is apparently not alluded to by any early Christian writer. Modern exegetes have no explanation. I.H. Marshall in his commentary on Luke inclines to accept that of the redaction-critical technique, seeing the reading as theological in implication, emphasising that Jesus' ministry (while exercised in Galilee) was to the Jews. My own inclination would be to see the product of something so banal as an early transcriptional error.

The genitive absolute *tou heliou ekliptos* of Luke 23.45 does not in fact necessarily carry the astronomical nuance which makes it nonsensical. The verb is ambiguous. Its essential meaning in this context is simply that the sun "failed". The verb is indeed used to describe the astronomical phenomenon of "eclipse", but it is not confined in usage to the description of such a specific technicality. Entries in the standard lexicons of both Ancient and Biblical Greek substantiate this beyond a peradventure. We find in ancient exegesis both interpretations. Either an eclipse took place miraculously (an event deemed to fulfil prophecy), or the sun withdrew its light, or had its light temporarily extinguished by some other means. That the verb was not seen as a contradiction of that used in the alternative reading (*eskotisthe*, "was darkened") but as synonymous, is shown in a sentence from a commentary on Job (probably of fourth century authorship). There we find the sentence "at the passion of our Lord, the sun was darkened and failed ... but it did not fail by what is customarily termed eclipse". The origin of the reading "darkened" would be to simplify the interpretation by removing the apparent ambiguity. The commentary which I have quoted, although not giving a direct quotation, is a good example of the process of conflation of two different readings which Westcott and Hort noted as characteristic of the later text which began to appear at about that date.

If we examine the attestation of these three difficult readings, we indeed find that they are known in the fourth century codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, but not in these alone. Numerous manuscripts and ancient versions also are worded in this way at these points. In the recent taxonomic presentations of affiliation the Greek manuscripts in these cases will generally be grouped in one sector, but not as if they could be considered as precisely identical in all points of text. Using the older terminology, we would denominate them as witnesses which attest "Neutral" and Caesarean" texts. We may still construct a plausible argument that in some indirect way, these were associated with the centres of learning within the ancient church of Alexandria and Caesarea. It is respect for what they had received which is shown in the retention of difficult and obscure readings, and their desisting from the easier options of alteration. This is in accord with the traditions of textual care which they had adapted from the philological traditions of the library of Alexandria and other centres of learning. It is no matter for surprise that careful examination of the manuscripts whose text shows such provenance has led to the scholarly consensus of their paramount excellence.

The papyri discovered have generally proved to adhere to this kind of text, although other varieties can be found, showing that the changes within the text did not necessarily originate in different places. I myself some years ago studied the text of Luke in a recently discovered papyrus, known as the Bodmer papyrus. The main thrust of that study was a comparison of its text with that of another papyrus known for some thirty years, the Chester Beatty papyrus. The latter manuscript had been associated with the so-called Caesarean text, while the Bodmer papyrus has been proven to be a collateral ancestor of the Codex Vaticanus. Following the anticipations of the theories of the day, which Kilpatrick's views appeared to underpin, I anticipated that the Bodmer text would show signs of stylistic improvement, correcting and polishing the vernacular Greek in which the gospels are written. But this proved not to be the case. It is the Chester Beatty papyrus which, so far as an examination of that one gospel is concerned, shows corrections to a more acceptable norm, while the Bodmer papyrus generally retains forms of words and spelling which Atticists and others would have rejected. By extrapolation then, we may argue that the Neutral text which the codex Vaticanus brought to scholarly attention has a better record in these respects than the texts such as the Caesarean and Western texts.

This does not necessarily mean that all variations of text in any one text-type are acceptable. We still must cope with such enigmas as we find when studying the Marcan variant referred to above, within the wider context of the gospel's storyline which Burkitt's hypothesis introduced as a criterion. Later in the gospel, namely at chapter 10, verses 11 and 12, Jesus declares himself about divorce in the context of a question from Pharisees. By this time, the circuitous journey of chapter 7 is past, and Jesus is now in the regions of Judaea, but still outside the authority of Antipas. The declaration of Jesus, in certain manuscripts, gives his

prohibition of divorce on any grounds in the order that the woman leaving her husband to marry another is condemned first, and the guilty man second. This might seem to be an indirect reference to the Herodias affair, which again reveals Jesus as the critic of Herodian court behaviour. If it were the original text here, it would fit in with the explanation of the geographical conundrum discussed above. That this order is original seems supported by St. Paul's report of a teaching of the Lord on divorce in which woman precedes man (1 Cor. 7.10 & 11).

Now the attestation of this reading is not shared by the Vaticanus and its close allies. Its main Greek support is in a group of manuscripts whose study led to the hypothesis of a Caesarean text, and in another rather eccentric Greek manuscript of Egyptian provenance. It is also found in manuscripts of two Eastern versions, Syriac and Georgian. Without going at greater length into the transmission of the text of Mark, we cannot deal at length with some of the implicit issues. We may, however, suggest that a factor which militated against the preservation of this order in the so-called Neutral text, would be the necessary links of the prohibition with the ordering of behaviour within the church. This would facilitate the assimilation of the words of Jesus at this point to the statements on the matter attributed to him elsewhere within the gospel record. The text of the group of Greek manuscripts supporting the "woman first" order with its very slender attestation possibly survived only in a scholarly context. For some of its peculiar variants and also some attested by the Old Georgian version (closely allied to this type of text throughout the gospels), were certainly known to Origen, the greatest Biblical scholar of the first three centuries.

One last example may suffice to give some intimation of working on variant readings, taking both internal criteria and affiliation of attestation into account. Early in the gospel of Mark we find one of the most astonishing variations anywhere in the text of the New Testament, one which has not entered any authoritative text at any period. In Mark 1.39, in the first encounter of Jesus with a leper, when most attestation gives "moved with compassion" as the description of Jesus' initial response, a small group gives another verbal expression, "moved with anger". There is, incidentally, no other instance where the "compassion" root alternates with the "anger" root, although Jesus is not infrequently described as compassionate in such circumstances. The variation is known in the Codex Bezae, which probably originated in Palestine or Syria, although some scholars still consider that it came from the West, say Sicily. It is found too in the earliest stratum of translation into Latin, going back to the second century. Its third source of attestation is in Syriac, not a separate gospel of Mark, but in the harmony of the gospels known as the Diatessaron. It was in that form that the gospels were first known in the Syriac speaking world, and it is in the commentary of Ephraim the Syrian that we find the phrase in this form. St. Ephraim does his best to expound it. He knows no other text. His inability to explain it in any conclusive way has been inherited by all exegetes since. So

difficult a "harder reading" was it that even the scholarly patience of the Alexandrian tradition could not tolerate it. It survives only on the borders of the earliest Christianity and its scriptural texts, and the fact that it is only attested in these rare instances shows that it was quickly superseded. Its very difficulty and its early disappearance make it one of the classic examples of the adage that the harder reading is the original reading.

I was asked to write on the "principles of textual criticism". I have presented this topic against an historical background. Textual criticism must begin with the history of the text. That is imperative in so complex a tradition as the New Testament. But it is patent that an historical method alone takes us only part of the way to the original; rational criticism must be also brought into play. In contradistinction to Kilpatrick and Elliott, I consider that a judicious combination of the two approaches is best adapted to the nature of the evidence. We find that while text-types differ in the proportion of acceptable readings which they attest, no early text is entirely without readings worthy of scrutiny and inclusion in a restored text. Later texts are not without their value in that process, since they can reveal to us the principles upon which selection and emendation are likely to have taken place. It has been my aim to practice such a method, combining these two prime emphases. The examples utilized here are illustrations of this, and I hope that they may have proved to be illuminating.

Theologically considered, I see this method as faithful to the central Christian declaration of Incarnation as the divine strategy of salvation. This involves for me, not only "Our God, incomprehensibly made Man", but also that "we have this treasure in earthenware vessels". These vessels are not only the frail apostles of the word, but the frail scribes, editors and exegetes through whose activity the scriptures were passed along the ages. It is a fact of experience that the over-simplified texts of the Middle Ages with their erasure of primeval difficulties, and their conflation of divergent renderings, have been no less the means of revealing the abundant power of God, than the earliest words from the apostles in the manuscripts which we no longer possess, but to which textual criticism brings us nearer. So today, no doubt (although I speak of one of the "bêtes noires" in the menagerie of modern English translations) the Good News Bible, with its abolition of subtlety and the banality of its expression, conveys the good news, as well as do the polished and repolished renderings which seek to bring us nearer to the Greek of the original. Nevertheless, the variant readings, the changes in the text, the preferable harder readings, are there to be coped with and to learn from, not to be dismissed. They bring a vividness to the text, and "stab our spirit broad awake". A text with the harder readings restored gives us, for example, a Jesus conducting his ministry in a complex and challenging human situation shared by his contemporaries, words of Paul redolent of greater force and poignancy, visions of the Revelation more striking and arresting than hitherto.

I declared in my inaugural lecture of 1984, "We have to cope with a text containing many variations, some unresolved". In that situation, I proposed that we should treat our knowledge of scripture as "knowledge of scripture within the church, and not only as a foundation document separate from the church". "The variations will themselves be treated as part of scripture, showing us not only the original, but the church's understanding of it. Sometimes a *misunderstanding* which warns us against misinterpretation, sometimes a gloss which illuminates nuances of the original which further reflection has emphasised. Thus, both text and interpretation would be source material for theological discussion and for edification." This I still consider to be the way forward, saving us from much fruitless controversy, and releasing our energies for more profitable tasks in the field of textual study and elsewhere.

**J. Neville Birdsall**

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### **Bibliographical Note**

My inaugural lecture "Textual Criticism and New Testament Studies" was published in 1984 by the University of Birmingham. It is now out of print. A more detailed study by me of the history of the text, and our sources for knowledge of it, is to be found in the *Cambridge History of the Bible*, Volume 1, as Chapter 11 "The New Testament Text". A summary by me of more recent work appeared in *The Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* no. 16 (1993) pp. 7-19 "A hundred years and more since Westcott and Hort: where have we got to in the textual criticism of the New Testament?"

The work of Günther Zuntz *The Text of the Epistles* was published by the British Academy in 1953.

Summaries in English of the work of Josef Schmid on the text of the Book of Revelation are to be found in the journal *Vigilae Christianae* vol. 13 (1959) pp. 1-13 by the late Professor G.D. Kilpatrick, and in *The Eoangelical Quarterly* vol. 33 (1961) pp. 228-237 by myself.

The work of M.-J. Lagrange, *Critique Textuelle - 2ème partie: "La critique rationnelle"*, was published in a second edition in Paris in 1935 in the series *Etudes Bibliques*. I believe it to be out of print.

In honour of Bruce M. Metzger, there has recently appeared a volume of essays entitled *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*. A better and more up-to-date collection cannot be named. Anyone wishing to acquaint himself with the state of the art would profit from this. There are chapters on each category of material, and on all major ancient versions, as well as surveys of and contributions to the theoretical debates. It was published by William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A., edited by Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, ISBN 0-8028-2440-4.

**NEW SCIENTIFIC PATHS TO THE MIND - A DEBATE HELD AT THE  
ROYAL INSTITUTION, LONDON ON 25 MAY 1995**

Steve Connor, writing in the *Independent on Sunday* on May 21 1995, described the brain as the ultimate enigma, the last frontier. A large and enthusiastic gathering at the Royal Institution on 25 May was allowed a glimpse of some of the slowly unfolding secrets of this enigma on the occasion of the launching of two exciting new books: Susan Greenfield's *Journeys to the Centre of the Mind* (Freeman's, 1995) and Roger Penrose's *Shadows of the Mind* (OUP, 1995). Both attempt to address the problem of human consciousness, one from the viewpoint of the neuroscientist, the other from that of the mathematician.

Susan Greenfield has long been fascinated by how, in her words, "our very personalities and mental processes, our 'states of consciousness', derive from a slurry of tissue with the consistency of a soft boiled egg." Some may already have heard her splendidly informative and readily accessible Christmas lectures at the Royal Institution. This new book, which aimed at a general although scientifically educated audience, is equally enjoyable as she leads the reader on from basic scientific and philosophical questions to developing her theories of mind and consciousness. She assures us that her neuroscientist's view of consciousness should be seen alongside that of the philosopher, the mathematician and others, and she discusses the views of these others in some detail throughout the book. In her introductory talk, she discussed both qualitative and quantitative properties of consciousness. On the one hand, there is a qualitative distinction between groups of neurones carrying out a range of functions, and the working together of a number of these to create a conscious being. On the other hand, there is the quantitative development of consciousness from foetus to mature adult. This was compared to the physical existence of an unused telephone network, which lies dormant until someone makes a telephone call. Likewise in the brain, a physical but dormant network exists in the early foetus, but it takes time for it to become stimulated and for connections to be made. Indeed, the network is never static, even in the mature adult.

Roger Penrose introduced his talk by contrasting computers and the brain, and introduced the possibility, somewhere in the future, of a conscious computer for the which the brain might be a model. Citing Gödel's Theorem and quantum theory, he suggested that the brain may "dither" between quantum and classical properties, and suggested the intriguing possibility that perhaps the cytoskeleton and, in particular, microtubules may be the brain's "ditherers", involved continually in altering the strength of synaptic connections.

A lively discussion followed and covered such topics as the definition of the emergent quality of consciousness, the equality (or not) of all neurones, brain death and clarity of thought, the nature of free will (are we just victims of our neuronal connections at any one time?), lack of consciousness and the division of function in different parts of the brain, introspection and self-consciousness, and

the nature of collective intelligence.

So what does all this mean to the Christian? What has belief in God to do with neuronal networks and the possible existence of centres of consciousness? We may be wise to extend Susan Greenfield's advice and let the Christian view of the mind encompass descriptions from other disciplines, each having the potential to be correct and each complementing the other. We could add to her remark about soft boiled egg, that somehow our comprehension of a loving creator God also derives from this "slurry of tissue". No single area of the brain has been demarcated either scientifically or philosophically to be the centre of consciousness, to contain the essence of self or to be the abode of the soul in a religious sense.

There remain many as yet unanswerable questions - for instance, how does outward behaviour or sensation derive from the internal workings of neurones in a given region, what is the nature of personhood and individuality? The idea of consciousness developing in the physical body from conception onwards as outlined by Greenfield poses questions about personhood. Verhulst writing in *Nature* (375, 352) questioned the issue often discussed by the pro-abortion lobby, that a foetus has no rights. It had been suggested in an earlier issue of *Nature* (Godfrey, 373, 100) that the development of the person and the physical body are somehow inseparable and that the gradual nature of human ontogeny implied a similar gradual growth in the rights of the individual. Although this inseparable quality has a basis in scripture, Verhulst sees it used as an excuse to deny rights to the developing foetus and suggests that this gradual nature of physical development must not be confused with the emergence of an individual with a pre-existing platonic soul. In other words, it is possible for the soul to be pre-existent, even though its manifestations are gradual. Although Greenfield is concerned with the physical and not the immortal, this view is more in line with her idea of the gradual emergence of consciousness.

The issue of personhood and individuality also arises from recent work by Winkler *et al*, *Nature* (375, 484) that some learning and memory impairment resulting from brain damage can be reversed by the use of genetically engineered cells. We also know empirically that some people suffering strokes can, over a period of time, show remarkable degrees of recovery. If we extrapolate from learning and memory to the more complex issue of personality, this work has important implications of questions about how much brain damage is necessary for irreversible personality change, and whether it is the localisation rather than the overall extent of the brain damage which is important. Further, what types of intervention to repair brain damage will result effectively in the creation of a new person in an old body? A completely new ethics will be necessary to encompass these fascinating problems.

**Diana Briggs,**

*Scientific Liaison Officer at TCS Biologicals, Buckinghamshire*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**R.S. Luhman**, *The Search for Understanding: a course in philosophy and religion* (Westcliff High School for Boys, 1992, 100 pp., plastic spine with laminated covers, £5.00).

This course provides an over-view of the major areas in the philosophy of religion. Its eight chapters deal with: faith and reason, the proofs for God's existence, the concept of God, religious experiences, the problem of evil, life after death, morality, and the question of truth in religion. Each chapter is helpfully broken down into short sections, and there are occasional questions to provoke thought about what has just been dealt with and aid assimilation of the material. At the end of the chapter there are references and essay questions. The 'religion' dealt with is primarily Christianity, but due account is taken of the beliefs and teachings of the other major religions, for example when discussing evil, life after death, and morality.

Because such a wide range of issues is covered in a relatively short book, the material is quite compressed. This inevitably leaves the author open to the criticism that a particular philosopher's position has been over-simplified or that certain arguments are ignored or not given in enough detail. Some of the attempts to outline scientific ideas in the section 'Cosmological Arguments in Modern Science' are too brief to be of much help to the non-scientist. However, in this reviewer's opinion, the author has made a good job of a difficult task. The result is a useful primer in the philosophy of religion. To get full value from it one will need to follow up the references. A short, annotated bibliography at the end of each chapter would be a useful improvement.

The book is quite clearly a private production. There is no indication of how one might obtain copies of it. Incidentally, it contains a number of typographical errors, many of the kind that the spell-check of a word processor will not pick up, such as a wrong word that is spelt correctly (e.g. mislead for misled).

I am not clear about the purpose of the book. Presumably the author is a teacher at Westcliff High School for Boys. Maybe it is intended for use in sixth-form Religious Studies courses. If so, I would judge that the students would need a good deal of support from the teacher in order to cope with it. Anyone wanting a 'workbook' style introduction to the philosophy of religion, and willing to put some effort into it, will find a worthwhile course of study. Its value would be enhanced by studying it with a small group, which would discuss the questions provided in the book.

**E.C. Lucas**

*Baptist Theological College, Bristol*

**M. Thain and M. Hickman** (Editors), *The Penguin Dictionary of Biology* - Ninth Edition (Penguin Books, 1994, 665 pp., PB., £6.99, ISBN 0 14 051288.8).

This latest edition comes four years after the last, and has been much updated and expanded. The items are picked out in heavy print for easy location. In

addition to standard entries from previous editions, there is much new material. Programmed cell death, human genome project, selfish DNA etc. are included with many others, and yet there is room for the Krebs cycle in full, and many diagrams of chemical and biological structures. There is an especially full item on the cell cycle and division. Altogether the dictionary is a very comprehensive work.

**Nigel Henbest**, *The Planets* (Penguin Books, 1994, 206 pp., PB., £15.00 ISBN 0 14 013414 X).

This lavishly illustrated book, of A4 size, covers the latest knowledge about every planet in detail, with a summary table and a good index. The last chapter allows us to stand on the edge of the future, with its possibility of reaching out with space probes. Truly we stand at the borderline of great discoveries with our modern technology. The author is a consultant for many TV presentations, and an excellent communicator. There is a colour photograph on virtually every page.

**David Block**, *Starwatch* (Lion Books, 1994 (1988), 160 pp., PB., £9.99. ISBN 0 7459 3024 7).

This volume is also lavishly illustrated, and aims to cover, in less detail, the whole universe. Thus it has to be selective. It is aimed at the interested layperson and is very readable. The author communicates his sense of wonder at the handiwork of the Creator and in fact the book is written very much from the standpoint of the believer. There are brief notes on Einstein's theories, the star of Bethlehem, and many others. It is just the book to give an inquisitive child or grandchild!

**A.B. Robins**

**Elizabeth Breuilly and Martin Palmer (Eds)**, *Christianity and Ecology* (Cassell, 1992, 118 pp., 0 304 32374 8)

This volume forms part of a series sponsored by the World Wide Fund for Nature with the overall aim of exploring how different world religions have viewed the natural environment and the relevance of religious belief for our handling of the current ecological crisis. If this volume is typical of the series as a whole, it is designed as a semi-popular presentation for the benefit of parish discussion groups and, perhaps, for use in schools.

The editors have divided the contents into four main sections tackling respectively the ecological crisis, the roots of Christian attitudes to the environment, historical case studies and practical contemporary Christian responses.

The first section consists of a single paper by Freda Rajotte (a former member of the WCC Church and Society Unit). She moves rapidly and uncritically from a summary account of the ecological crisis itself to a statement of Christian culpability which reflects the secular environmentalist consensus rather than the views of informed Christian theologians. One is left with the distinct impression that the Church, as she sees it, is a conservative institution hellbent on

maintaining the status quo over a wide variety of issues (she even implies that Christianity resisted the movement to abolish slavery!).

By contrast with the shrill and tendentious opening section, the three papers on the roots of Christian attitudes are balanced and helpful pieces of work. "The Bible and the Natural World" and "The Influence of the Bible on Christian Belief about the Natural World" are by Dr. Ruth Page. She presents a positive view of biblical teaching in relation to the environment and also offers a counter to Rajotte's suggestion that western Christianity must bear much of the blame for the present crisis. The third paper is a precis of lectures given by John Zizioulas at King's College, London. Serious students of the theology of nature will want to read the original version (published in *King's Theological Review*) but the editors are to be thanked for making this important material more widely available.

Turning to the historical case studies, we encounter first an excellent study of Benedictine monasticism by Sister Joan Chittister. She summarises the Benedictine ideal in terms of hard work, respect for the land, simplicity, care and stewardship and examines its implications for environmental ethics. This is followed by a study of St. Francis by Father Peter Hooper of the Franciscan Study Centre in Canterbury. Hooper presents an interesting but, I suspect, anachronistic picture of Francis. He admits, but fails to explain, the consistent failure of Franciscans to live up to the ecological idea he portrays. Could it be that there were other facets in Francis, warring with his love of nature? That was certainly true of St. Bonaventure, the first great theologian of the Franciscan Order. The concluding contribution in this section claims to tackle the Protestant tradition. However, its author Martin Palmer seems to be more interested in launching a tendentious attack on Calvinism than in giving a fair account of what is, after all, an extremely diverse family of Christian traditions. He accepts Max Weber's correlation between Calvinism and capitalism uncritically, apparently unaware of the serious questions which have been raised regarding Weber's thesis. Calvin himself is presented as a religious fanatic who did not believe that God cared for his creation (apart from the elect)! Now it is certainly true that Calvin shares the Augustinian ambivalence towards the natural world which runs throughout western Christianity. But Palmer's suggestion that Calvin was 'a major contributor to the growth of an exploitative attitude to nature' (p. ix) is errant nonsense. On the contrary, Calvin was the first reformer explicitly to assert our duty of responsible stewardship with respect to the natural world.

The concluding section, like the opening, is by Freda Rajotte. In it she offers a variety of suggestions for individual Christians and churches seeking to make some kind of genuine response to the ecological crisis.

People seeking to use this book as a resource for parish or classroom discussion will be helped by the questions which are interpolated into the text at frequent intervals. However it has two serious weaknesses: the lack of bibliography and the tendentious nature of the contributions by Rajotte and

Palmer. A book which presumes to be a teaching resource should enable readers to look elsewhere for complementary (or contradictory) perspectives. And it should eschew the temptation to perpetuate ill-informed prejudices.

Lawrence Osborn

**Gabriel Vahanian, *L'Utopie Chrétienne*** (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1992, 329 pp., 128 F.)

'Europe isn't just the crossroads, it is also the crisis of Man; only they that perish can grow, they that have doubt, believe.' (p. 11) Doubting, working even as an iconoclast, battling the fixation of beliefs - the author of *La Mort de Dieu* carries on the triple operation of demythologisation, desacralisation and deconstruction in his latest publication, operations which in his view characterize Western thought.

The sacred, says Vahanian, is what is left of religion when it has lost its faith, when data and fate (*datum et fatum*) replace newness (*novum*). Religion should therefore always work towards desacralisation, towards replacing 'the deification of Earth-Mother by the utopia of the Promised Land.' (p. 91) For utopia isn't a hypothetical, unreal non-place; it is a sacrilegious and anarchic ethics, oriented not by Eden in the beginning, nor by the other-worldness of the Biblical Apocalypse, but by newness become feasible with the help of technology.

Against modern criticism of technology, Vahanian puts forth its value in the humanisation process. Language is technical: what would faith be without language! We need a technical, heuristic and ephemeral utopia for today; we need dialogue, relationship, even conversion, to keep man from dreaming the sacral dreams of another world, another humanity. Our choices must be made in *this* world, either for life and goodness, or for death and evil.

Besides the deep analyses of Plotinus' philosophy or of the encounter within the Christian melting pot between Jews and Greeks, analyses of a history of the concept of utopia, the author presents the phenomenon of religion using two paradigms. First the holiness or soteriological paradigm relevant to a spatial symbolics: the world as representation. Second, the utopic or eschatological paradigm, in answer to a time symbolics: the world as foretaste. But the Christian faith happens to rest on an empty tomb, a non-place: the mystery of the risen Christ. Such is the *novum*, that neither God nor man, but Christ, is the measure of what is.

In this dense, stimulating book in which philosophical and theological positions are laid down, Vahanian takes arms, in a time of ecological crisis, against the partisans of 'nature knows best', a slogan incompatible with the Biblical notions of Creation, Redemption or Plerome. He also reminds us that utopia, ethics and the right orientations are not to be confused with God's Kingdom. In view of these two Western temptations, it's a question of changing the world and not of changing worlds.

Frère Jacques Arnould, O.P.

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## PUBLICATIONS

	Volumes	Concluded
Journal of the Transaction of The Victoria Institute	1 - 89	1957
Faith & Thought	90 - 114	1988
*Science & Christian Belief	First Volume in 1989	
*Published jointly by The Paternoster Press (Send The Light Ltd.) for Christians In Science & The Victoria Institute.		

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