

FAITH & THOUGHT

• BULLETIN •

DAVID PORTER
user's guide to
THE Media

- SOAPS •
- NEWS •
- ADVERTISING •
- MANIPULATION •

FRANKS BOOKS

The Open Mind
and other essays

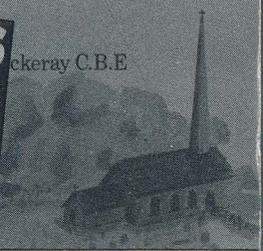
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**DOES
GOD
PLAY
DICE?**
John
Houghton

A look at the
story of the Universe



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EDITORIAL

This Bulletin marks the start of a new venture. Members of the Victoria Institute will know that this April, 1989, a new journal is being published jointly with Christians In Science, namely *Science and Christian Belief*. The title 'Faith and Thought' will continue, however, in the sense that what has been the Faith and Thought Newsletter will now be the Faith and Thought Bulletin. The link with the journal of past years is thus retained. We hope to issue the Bulletin with each copy of *Science and Christian Belief*, and therefore invite all members to contribute news items, comment, correspondence and articles.

In this issue we have published reviews of books which are thought to be less related to the aims of *Science and Christian Belief*, which has become avowedly more scientific in emphasis. We have several letters on a range of topics, and you are invited to comment on the issue of Faith and Thought over the matter of Biblical interpretation. We should again like to stress that all views in articles and letters are those of the authors and not those of Editor and Publisher. Having said this, we do welcome comment through our columns.

MEMBERSHIP

It is with regret that we record the death of the following during the past months:-

G. H. McKenzie OBE MA BSc	(Salcoats)
Dr. D. B. Prowse	(Killara, NSW)
Prof. H. Armstrong	(Kingston, Ontario)

The following members we have lost touch with. If any member is able to give us any news, please write to the Hon. Sec., Mr. Weller.

Dr. D. Fagan	(Wilmington Sq. WC1)
J. M. Clark FSS, AMISMM	(Croydon CR0 6PT)
Revd. V. J. Blackmore MSc, MTh	(Sheffield S7 2EN)
Revd. B. Andrews BSc DipTh	(Dormansland RH7 6QL)

ERRATUM

We apologise to Tony Lane for an error in proof-reading in the last copy of *Faith and Thought*. On page 179 of volume 114 in the second column of his review of 'The Gate of Glory' we have changed the meaning of a sentence. Thus, seven lines from the foot of page 179, the sentence should read . . . 'the issue of whether it refers to a specific event (albeit in symbolic terms) is *not* irrelevant'.

We hope that this error has not confused our readers.

AN APPEAL TO WRITERS!

ESSAY COMPETITION 1990

In every even-numbered year the Victoria Institute awards a prize of £150 for an essay on a topic consonant with the aims of the benefactor concerned. For 1990, the originator of the prize fund was Dr. R. H. Gunning, as long ago as 1892. The terms of his endowment are 'the reconciliation of science and religion'.

Entries are therefore invited on any subject which tackles the relationship between science and the Christian faith.

The essay should not exceed 7000 words, excluding documentation, and should be addressed to the Honorary Secretary at the Victoria Institute's office not later than September 30, 1990. The essay should be type-written, with double spacing and 2cm margins, and under-signed with a motto only. It should be accompanied by a sealed envelope with the motto outside, and the author's name within. Each essay should be accompanied by a brief synopsis of 200 words setting out which parts of the essay are claimed to be original.

The Council of the Victoria Institute will own the copyright of the essay, though will normally permit the author to embody the essay in a more comprehensive work later. The name of the successful candidate will be announced as soon as possible after a decision has been reached. In all cases the decision of the Council is final, and it reserves the right to withhold the prize if no entry is deemed worthy.

Candidates are assumed to have assented to these rules when an essay is submitted.

**YOUNGER WRITERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY.
WE INVITE THOSE UNDER 30 YEARS OF AGE TO INCLUDE
THEIR AGE IN THE APPLICATION.**

PRESS RELEASE**THE WHITEFIELD INSTITUTE INAUGURAL LECTURE**

On May 4 1988 Professor Alvin Plantinga of Notre Dame University, one of the foremost Christian philosophers in the world, gave the inaugural lecture for the Whitefield Institute in Oxford. His paper was on 'Justification and Theism' and he argued for a full-blooded Christian approach to philosophical issues. A good audience had been drawn to hear Professor Plantinga and to support the launch of the new brochure for the Institute. Its work is a new evangelical initiative in theology and education. Its focus of concern is theological, philosophical, ethical and educational issues. It assists post-graduates and those seeking to apply their minds biblically to the problems and trends of our modern secular age. For further details of its work and a copy of the brochure, please write to: Dr. David Cook, 114 Southmoor Road, Oxford, OX2 6RB.

ROSMINI HOUSE

We have been asked to draw the attention of our readers to the translations by Denis Cleary and Terry Watson of the works of Antonio Rosmini. The latter lived from 1797 to 1855 in Italy and wrote extensively on moral philosophy. Two of his works so far have been translated, and are available on loan from the Editor to any reader who is interested. The volumes are:- 'The Origins of Thought' and 'Principles of Ethics'. A third volume will follow shortly, namely 'On Certainty'.

COMING SOON

**'TOMORROW'S WORLD'—A Scientist looks at the Book of Revelation
by Robert E. D. Clark**

Dr. Clark gives a fascinating account of the prophecies in the book of Revelation. He writes as a scientist, explaining many of the visions of the seer in the light of science and technology, showing how surprisingly easy it is in the 20th century to understand a part of the Bible which has for so long proved an enigma.

Dr. Clark was associated for many years with the Victoria Institute

and Research Scientist's Christian Fellowship. He was an outstanding interpreter of science to the layman.

To be published by the Victoria Institute in summer 1989.

For information, contact:-

David A. Burgess,
12 Cardiff Road,
London W7 2BW
Tel: 01-567 4679

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor has received a letter enclosing a copy of *English Churchman* for December 30 and January 6 (number 7236). In the course of a paragraph which describes the new journal *Science and Christian Belief*, the Editor of *English Churchman* makes some criticism of the last issue of *Faith and Thought*. Thus . . . 'We are uneasy about some of the panel of reviewers. What one reviewer says about George Carey's book *Gate of Glory* seems to sum up the kind of emphasis we find in *Faith and Thought*. "He seeks to write ecumenically—as an evangelical, yet open to helpful insights of other traditions".' The Editor of this Bulletin regards this remark as an endorsement of our policy that we are open to insights of many traditions. Perhaps readers would care to comment on this. Although the Council of the Victoria Institute has always been made up of Christians with an evangelical basis, it has never been the policy of the Institute to limit either articles or reviews in this way. It may well be that the new journal *Science and Christian Belief* takes a different stand. The following letters have been received, some of which have been occasioned by the issue of *Faith and Thought* in question.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Dear Dr. Robins,

As a longtime member/fellow of the Victoria Institute, I write both to congratulate you on your editorial efforts and to make a positive suggestion.

I have for years admired the writings of the late Robert E. D. Clark, from his *Darwin, before and after* onwards, culminating in his typical and, to me, super article just published in *Faith & Thought*. I specially appreciated his christian/critical comments on a vast range of

journals. I know many will be grateful if you can keep such a process going, whether in the Newsletter or in the new combined journal.

I was very sorry to read in the article by Dr. K. G. Greet the last two sentences to his introduction which seemed to me to pull the carpet from under his thesis: '... the story of Adam and Eve is not to be taken literally. We would be foolish... if we did not take it seriously.'

I cannot understand why I should take seriously a myth (which presumably the story is if it is not literal). While any myth may be interesting, why should we take it 'seriously'? But far more important than this, I greatly regret his seeming cavalier disagreement with what Paul and the Lord Jesus evidently thought about Adam and Eve. Is he wiser than they?

The role of the Institute is both to defend the biblical revelation and to relate it to modern thought and discovery, is it not? So here is my suggestion—that you should invite a respected and able theologian (or a small group of, say, 3) to comment on this assertion of Dr. Greet. John Stott touches briefly on this matter in his *Essentials*... (Hodder, 1988).

As a Fellow of the Institute, I welcome in *Faith and Thought* critical comment and doubts aired. But statements which are flagrantly at variance with the New Testament should not be presented in such an unquestioned way as to suggest that they are now 'accepted' fact. I remember, of course, your note on Editorial policy. But when an article or review seems clearly to depart from the conservative biblical position, could the Editor say that 'the views here expressed will be commented upon in a later article... ' (or some such words) or 'correspondence on this is invited'? And in this case, could you invite an article or at least correspondence?

With my kind regards and best wishes,

Yours sincerely
DAVID TRAPNELL

Faith & Thought Newsletter, April 1988

'BIBLE NUMERICS'

Dear Dr. Robins,

In response to your editorial invitation I would like to make a few points concerning the above article. I have been a committed Christian since my childhood, and as a physicist was personally concerned about inspirational problems such as those dealt with by Ian Barbour and Sir Alister Hardy.

In the pre-Arabic numeric period, when numbers were often written in terms of numerical values assigned to alphabetic characters, a significance came to be seen in a man's name translated as a number. An example of the use often found in Jewish apocalyptic is found in the book of Revelation where the name of the Beast is defined as the number 666. Such use is found also in the apocalyptic sections of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. As a child I was informed that from such sources we knew that the Parousia would come in either two or five years. When both had passed without incident, I inherited a habit of judging the pudding in the eating of it.

The article above deals with the numerical significance of scripture, a matter of great interest to the Jewish mind in the first century, as illustrated by the use of numbers culled from the creation accounts by Philo. In the last century many in the USA did the same with numerology assuming, without logical proof that 'inspiration' must be identical with 'verbal inspiration'.

There are two terms in Greek, which may be translated into the English 'word'. One is derived from the sound of flowing water, signifying the sound which issues from the mouth, the other derived from a verb to 'set in a logical order' (logos) and concerned with the meaning of the word. It is this latter which is used by John to speak of our Lord as 'the WORD become flesh', that 'eternally existent revelation which they had actually handled and seen, having had opportunity to observe closely', and which he was then describing to others.

When we speak of the divine inspiration of the Bible, we are assuming, not a mechanism, but a process by which God passed His thoughts into our human minds. When, through the Holy Spirit, much of such meaning had been accomplished in terms of the Hebrew language, Paul described that stage as but a schoolmaster to bring us to the adult education of the university. In the person of our Lord in a cloak of human flesh, that revelation was completed in His living personality.

Human pride in one's own cleverness has frequently led to the assumption that if it be acknowledged that God has done 'x', then He could not have done it better than we would have done if only we had the power, using a tape recorder and a typist as prophet. A little reflection should have shown that verbal inspiration, in which the meaning is contained in the spelling of each word, is the most ineffectual method which could possibly be used for His universal purpose.

The vast majority of the human races have never had direct access to a single word spoken by Prophet or the Lord. Several versions of

the Law and the Prophets existed in O.T. times, at least four translations into Greek (LXX) all from a Hebrew original differing from our own testament. All were in use by the first century church. A fifth Greek version was used by Paul for his quotes in epistles, the language of the Ministry was Aramaic, and several Greek versions of the N.T. were in circulation by the fourth century.

I am personally convinced that our Bible written over a period of many years, contains indisputable evidence of its unity and of a derivation beyond human capability. The revelation made by God concerning the man-God relationship could not, and has not, been derived by knowledge of the spelling of any words used by the original authors. To quote Paul, the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God stronger than man, and while it is virtually certain that God directed the authors and translators, the mechanisms that He used are for the moment beyond our puny comprehensions.

Yours sincerely
R. T. LOVELOCK.

ECOLOGY

Dear Sir,

There has been much talk and publicity lately about the growing wave of public concern over environmental matters, not to mention the 'greening' of the political agenda in both government and opposition camps. But how genuine is all this environmental awareness? What is or should be our response as Christians to environmental issues? And what does the Bible have to say on these matters?

The Christian Ecology Group seeks to address these issues by spreading ecological insights among Christian people and churches and spreading Christian insights into the Green Movement.

As a supporter of the Christian Ecology Group and a lecturer in Environmental Science at Thames Polytechnic, I am offering my services as a speaker to church groups and organisations, to talk about the Christian responsibility for the environment. If you are interested, why not write to or telephone me? Perhaps there is a particular topic you might like addressed—then please get in touch. I would welcome the opportunity of spreading the Green Christian word, and of saying a little more about the work of the Christian Ecology Group!

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely
DR. EUAN MCPHEE

POLLUTION

Dear Sir,

I refer to *Faith and Thought* Volume 114, No. 1, page 93, item 'New Disciplines'.

There is one discipline (if indeed such can be so called), which is becoming of urgent concern to both Christians and non-Christians. Possibly it would be more accurate to call 'Pollution' a lack of discipline, but how can an unsavoury subject like 'pollution' be of interest to *Faith and Thought*.

Accepting that this world on which we live was an act of internal creation, we may then examine whether both organic and inorganic desecration constituted an essential part of the intended mechanism of earth's existence. Before mankind became a functioning part of the changes on our planet's surface, this world was 'self sustaining'. There was no one to stoke fires, press buttons, fill fuel tanks or pull levers, yet year after year came summer and winter, growth, death, decay and rebirth with each cycle adding to earth's fertility and ability to 'self renew'. With storm, flood, earthquake or volcano, all leaving their own signature on the landscape, each is followed by a demonstration of 'self renovation'. With all of this, there has been no constant uniformity, nevertheless, conditions have been maintained enabling both mobile and non-mobile forms of life to continue. There have been changes, both long term and short term (geologically speaking) demonstrated in earth's strata and fossil forms. Through all ages, our earth has retained its ability to 'self-sustain', 'self-renew' and 'self-renovate'. The cycle of germination, growth, maturity and decay in the vegetable world has not produced pollution; the same has been true of animal existence, in fact the passing on of both animal and vegetable life has led to greater production of similar or identical species. The records preserved in the rocks and earths detail various amendments and modifications to our planet's occupants, yet none of these changes have curtailed the three essentials—sustain—renovate—renew.

With the coming of humankind arrived a life form with a different potential, one which interfered with earth's ability to renew and renovate, and while we have not yet found the method by which the earth's built in capacity to 'sustain' can be stopped, we may have developed habits that will make existence pointless. The residues will exclude an environment for humankind.

Accepting that we and all around us are part of a creational act and that this accomplishment was pronounced 'good' by the creator, then was pollution an intended function of the world's mechanism? Also

there is no valid reason for treating the first chapters of Genesis as a writing apart from the rest of the Bible. These venerated writings start with origins, some history, and then a 'Law', more history, establishment of a Kingdom, Psalms, the Prophets and then Christ and Christianity, ending with the Epistle and Revelation.

What is Pollution? We are pouring various gases into our atmosphere, all sorts of liquids into our oceans, rivers and lakes and in a variety of ways altering the function of our land surface, all inimical to human existence. If we humans are the end piece of creation, then we 'end pieces' are becoming the agents by which creation is being uncreated.

The following items from scripture suggest that the creator is concerned about human disregard for his creation. In the beginning, everything is declared 'good' and Adam is in a world which is capable of providing for him. (I refer here to R. D. Clark's *Genesis and Geophysics*, Vol. 114-2, page 116 and P. J. Wiseman.) Adam was presumably created a full grown male and as a humanized statue did not amount to a complete man. Adam left in this condition could not have continued to exist, unless it is to be supposed that knowledge and experience was also built into him. Our own relationship with children illustrates that after birth there is a necessary period of discovery and learning. If we expand Wiseman's thesis to cover the situation at Adam's 'birth', this same circumstance will also apply. The consequence of such is that Adam started his existence with a 'good' body and a 'good' education, which did not (I reason) cover how to pollute.

The first record of pollution is in Genesis 6 (K.J.V.) in the marginal notes V. 5, 'purposes and desires' and V. 5, 'the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'. The flood eliminated this condition. Mosaic Law if followed in its detail is a pollution-free code and brings health and long life.

The Book of Isaiah, 45, V. 18, says the creation was to be inhabited. The world can not be inhabited for much longer with all that we are doing.

I feel that I *must* cut this off now, but with a final thought, in Revelation, 11, V. 18, (K.J.V.) the record says 'and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth'.

I hope that all of this will not seem of no consequence to you. Out here on the west coast of Canada, we are experiencing toxic discharge from our pulp mills and lumber industry, a recent oil spill has killed thousands of sea birds and may have disrupted underwater life. In central Canada, over 1000 'fresh' water lakes are now dead

from acid rain. It is distressing to catalogue these tragedies and to contemplate how soon we all will be victims.

Yours truly,
G. D. SHRIMPTON

BOOK REVIEWS

Watson E. Mills (Ed.) *Speaking in Tongues* William Eerdmans (USA), distributed in UK by The Paternoster Press. 537 pp. £22.20

The heyday of books on glossolalia was the 60s and early 70s, particularly the writings of the Jungian theologian Morton Kelsey (sympathetic) and John Kildahl (critical). Popular books, which had large sales, were written by John Sherill and Larry Christenson in that same period. Since then, less writing has been done, and the subject seems to have gone off the boil. It has long ceased to be central to the Charismatic Renewal, where the focus is now on 'signs and wonders', and particularly the gifts of healing and miracles. It does seem to point again to the initiatory function of the gift in the Acts of the Apostles. It starts things off, not least the example of Pentecost itself.

The book under review is a carefully compiled 'guide to research on glossolalia' edited by Watson Mills, a Professor at Mercer University in the United States. This is a worthy compendium, and my major regret is its title, for in reality its scope is wider than glossolalia. For instance, there is an excellent study of the Black Pentecostals (though limited only to the United States) and another by the Catholic journalist Rene Laurentin on Catholic Pentecostalism.

The book is divided into sections on exegetical, historical, theological, psychological and sociocultural studies. This demonstrates both the width of the subject itself and the thorough way the editor, who contributes two chapters himself, has sought to cover it.

I was particularly delighted to see the inclusion of John Sweet's study of the subject in *New Testament Studies*. When it came out as long ago as 1967 it was for me like a breath of fresh air, and is still in my opinion the best theological treatment of the subject, although it is all too brief.

This book should be included in any library concerned to understand a major feature of what has become the largest grass roots church movement in the 20th century. If David Barrett is right, the movement is 71% non-white. It is a pity that the black contribution to the book is so small. This is a sad reality—the Western rational mind, which tends to reject phenomena like glossolalia, happens to

be more articulate in this form than the Third World, which tends to accept them.

MICHAEL HARPER

Trevor Shaw, *E. M. Blaiklock: A Christian Scholar*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1986, 204 pp. Paperback £8.95. Hardback £11.95

Edward Musgrave Blaiklock (1903–83) taught in Auckland University College, later the University of Auckland, for forty-two years (1926–68), the last twenty-one of these Professor of Classics. He was known to a wider public as an occasional journalist: for forty-one years he contributed a weekly article to a New Zealand newspaper under the pen-name Grammaticus. To an even wider public he was known as an apologist for the Christian faith from the standpoint of what he called 'informed conservatism'. In a long series of publications he drew upon his expert knowledge of the Graeco-Latin world to illustrate the New Testament writings and to promote confidence in their trustworthiness. He was much in demand as a leader of tours in Bible lands; those who took part in them appreciated their leader's ability to make the Bible record come alive on the various sites which they visited.

The life of a classical scholar is not normally adventurous or exciting, but those who knew E. M. Blaiklock will be glad to have this record of his career and portrait of his sensitive personality. Many who did not know him will value the opportunity of getting to know something of one who was described, not without reason, as 'New Zealand's best known Christian'.

F. F. BRUCE

Stuart Blanch, *Encounters with Jesus*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1988, 240 pp. Paperback £7.95

This new title in The Jesus Library, edited by Michael Green, is contributed by the former Archbishop of York. It is a fresh study of the Gospel of Mark, in which attention is concentrated on a series of Jesus' encounters with individuals, from John the Baptist to the centurion at the cross. The section on the transfiguration is entitled 'An encounter with God'; that on the resurrection appearances, for which Mark's truncated account is supplemented from other New Testament documents, is headed 'The last encounter'.

Lord Blanch's treatment is designed for the general reader, but it is

based on up-to-date scholarship; it is marked throughout by spiritual wisdom and insight. The Bible text of each passage studied is printed in full, according to the New International Version. Not only is there a lucid exposition of each passage; the questions raised for the modern reader are fairly faced, and real help is given in answering them. Can we, for example, believe in demons? Are the Gospels anti-Semitic? These questions, and others arising out of Mark's record, are considered in relation to the social setting of the time and place to which they belong. To make the transition from an ancient world-view to our own, without losing the essence of what is conveyed in the ancient terms, is a delicate but not impossible task. If the language used in the first century to describe demon-possession and the like can no longer be used, 'we have to devise a language of our own to describe not dissimilar phenomena'.

Lord Blanch tells of the sense of discovery and excitement with which he studied those ancient narratives afresh; something of the same sense may be experienced by his readers as they make their own encounter with Jesus in these pages.

F. F. BRUCE

Oliver O'Donovan *Resurrection and Moral Order—An outline for Evangelical Ethics* IVP. (1986) 284 pp. Hardback £14.95

O'Donovan opens his book with the following words, 'The foundations of Christian Ethics must be evangelical foundations . . . Christian Ethics must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ'. Moral thinking can only claim the title Christian if it flows from the conviction that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Christ's resurrection affirms and vindicates the created order; it renews it and carries it on towards its ultimate goal, which is a redeemed universe. This is O'Donovan's thesis in a nutshell.

O'Donovan invites his reader to consider the created order as a complex network of teleological and generic relations. Any attempt to think about morality must, according to O'Donovan, make a decision early in its course, overt or covert, about these forms of order which we seem to discern in the world. Going on to the subjects of Eschatology and History, O'Donovan argues that in Christ and in the world order to come, there is the vindication and perfect manifestation of the created order. This was always in existence but never fully expressed. So the eschatological transformation of the world is neither mere repetition nor negation, rather it is its end, or 'telos'.

In the chapter concerned with the knowledge of Christ, O'Donovan

claims that Morality is man's participation in the created order. 'Christian morality is his glad response to the deed of God which has restored, proved and fulfilled that order, making man free to conform to it.' The exploration of this claim completes the first part of the book, in which the author addresses what he calls the 'objective reality'.

In part two of his book, O'Donovan examines the 'subjective reality'. He claims that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to make these objective realities, discussed in part one, subjectively real to the believer. This the Spirit does by evoking our free response as moral agents to the reality of redemption. The Spirit confirms and restores us as moral agents, as subjects of our own actions, not as divorced subjectivity which subsists in its own self awareness. Our freedom as moral agents depends upon our acting in accord with reality. Reality is the point at which the authority of redemption and our freedom, complement each other. It is the Holy Spirit who makes the reality of redemption authoritative to us. This authority is the means by which we can act in a meaningful way in the world. The authority of redemption is invested in the person of Jesus Christ. The Father conferred this authority when He raised Him from the dead. This action was quite apart from us or our faith. The Spirit speaking, not from himself, makes the resurrection a present reality, thus eliciting both our faith and our free obedience. The meaning of Jesus' life is a worldly meaning grounded in the reality of the world. Because this is so the reality of this human existence can command our lives in the world and reorder them in the restored creation.

It is O'Donovan's thesis that the burden of morality arises from its arbitrariness. The proclamation of the gospel overcomes this arbitrariness. Unable to cope with either the arbitrariness of morality or the ambiguous nature of the law with its blessings and cursings, the gospel message that God mercifully forgives sins, transforms terror and enables moral action in a true sense. Alienation is overcome as God is known as Father. From this basis O'Donovan closes the second section of the book with an examination of the freedom of the Church and the believer.

The third and final section of the book, entitled 'The Form of the Moral Life', examines Christian morality under various headings—'The Moral Field', 'The Moral Subject', 'The Double Aspect of the Moral Life', and finally, 'The End of the Moral Life'.

One could not describe O'Donovan's book as a 'popular read'. It is meaty and at times heavy going. However, to my mind, it is one of the best examinations of the Christian contribution to ethical thinking since Bonhoeffer's 'Ethics'. For those who really want to get to grips

with the interplay between theological thinking and moral action, this book is a must.

MICHAEL W. ELFRED

L. Ivan and M. Melrose *The Way We Die* Angel Press, P.O. Box 60, East Wittering, Chichester PO20 8RA. 1986. 106 pp. Paperback £4.95

Dying is everyone's business. Whether with Addison we 'fear death as children fear the dark', by the late 20th century many have come to fear dying as much, if not more. This book maps some last stages of the pathway to death, drawing on a combination of contemporary scientific insights from the intensive care unit, the terminal care hospice and the pathologist's probing together with those of philosophy and religion (mainly from a Roman Catholic standpoint).

Ivan and Melrose, respectively a neuro-surgeon and an operating theatre sister in Canada, thus set out to deal pragmatically with actual criteria for determining death in the no-man's land covering loss of consciousness, coma, cardiac and respiratory arrest, in all of which conditions one may remain technically 'alive', e.g. on a life support machine, and yet be irreversibly dying. In this process 'death', or the moment of it, becomes a matter of diagnostic agreement between experts, arbitrarily occurring at a notional point, when in fact the final stages of dying involve the death of bodily organs at a differential rate, culminating in the extinction of the cerebral cortex and of the upper and lower brainstem.

Until irreversible brain failure, which means that the brain now consists only of dead tissue, is diagnosed, optimum medical and nursing care needs to be given. Once the point of brain death is reached, however, adjuvant life support systems are seen as irrelevant and relatives and staff are to be encouraged to understand the inevitable stages of the dying process so as to keep grief and strain to the practicable minimum.

Among the modes of death reviewed, suicide, tenth in the order, is commonest over the age of 65 and is a steadily growing, primarily male phenomenon worldwide. Israel has the lowest suicide rate; Hungary, Denmark, Austria and Finland the highest; Britain a lower one, but 5 times that of Israel. Euthanasia is also reviewed in the light of Canadian public opinion, which has increased its support for mercy killing: from 45% approval and 43% disapproval in 1968 to 66% and 24% respectively by 1986.

One of this book's distinguishing marks is that it does not limit itself to issues only on this side of death or only on the body and mind; in its

final chapter it addresses questions regarding life after death, though it does not attempt to deal with the difference which settled beliefs on this theme can make to dying well or badly, as John Hinton does in his Penguin on 'Dying'. Furthermore, having explained entirely, as the authors see it, the functions of 'psyche and mind' in terms of the biochemical and biophysical, and having allowed that the soul may amount to the totality of these functions, they acknowledge that the soul may leave the body-mind constitution of personhood at death; otherwise the soul, *qua* material, must cease to exist when the brain is destroyed. They are coy about their conclusion that the soul remains elusive, acknowledging what they call the idealist view but sticking evasively to a materialist one after starting the 'idealist' hare.

Perhaps their view comes across most intriguingly and consistently in their survey of near-death experiences, which have multiplied in recent years as much as claimed sightings of U.F.O.s. They find a consistent pattern of subjective recollections by many subjects, e.g.:-

1. Peace and contentment (60%)
2. Detachment from one's physical body (37%)
3. Entering the darkness (23%)
4. Seeing the light (16%)
5. Entering the light (10%)

On this evidence and the quoted comment of K. Ring ('Life at Death'—A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience, New York 1980: 'There are many who reported to me . . . a heightened sense of the spiritual dimension of life. Whatever we may think of the reality of these experiences, they are real in their effect.') our authors prove frustratingly cagey, regarding the NDE as the subjective side of cerebral hypoxia.

'We do not think that the phenomena of NDE have anything to do with the afterlife. All of the somatic and emotional experiences that have been described can certainly originate in the brain, caused by chemical changes in near-death emergencies. Some of the phenomena clearly fall into the realm of . . . hallucination.' (Heaven and hell—simply attributable to L.S.D.?) 'The interpretation of these phenomena by the affected brain is the response of a progressively faulty cortex that is still capable of playing with these images and feelings according to the culturally conditioned and prevailing system of beliefs.'

In their teasingly 'nothing-but' view our authors seem to beg some fascinating questions which biologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, philosophers and theologians might rewardingly explore.

A. J. W. GROOM

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*.

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