

In short, then, I reject Dr Attfield's suggestion that only an individual can create. Creation as I understand it has to do with the fact that anything exists at all, with the fact that there might have been nothing at all. If God is the Creator he is the cause of the existence of all things and he cannot be regarded as an individual. If this conclusion undermines theology, then it is high time that theology was undermined.

Reviews

DEATH AND AFTER: WHAT WILL REALLY HAPPEN? by H. J. Richards *Fount*
1980 pp 126 £1.25

Hubert Richard's answer to the question in his title is that we can know nothing of any supposed future life. He believes that hymns affirming the Christian hope are dishonest (p 24); that theology books which claim to provide information concerning another world "should be prosecuted for fraud" (p 14); and that biblical texts which appear to be talking about a future life are actually talking about the present one (p 92). Consequently he claims that the true believer is not one who looks for pie in the sky when he dies, but one who realistically accepts responsibility for our present society and "declares himself ready to change it" (p 51). The book ends with an endorsement of the cynicism of the book of Ecclesiastes concerning the absurdity of life (p 116) and the unlikelihood of it serving any kind of larger purpose.

To be fair to Richards one should add that throughout his book there are occasional lines of reverent agnosticism about the possibility that there may be something more to be said, and indeed he deliberately ends his chapter "after Death, What?" with a comma rather than a full stop to underline this. Nevertheless the central thrust of his argument is that after death we do not continue to exist (cf p 91), and that it is with the living of this life that our faith should be solely concerned.

This is a surprising conclusion for an English Catholic. According to the Vener-

able Bede, our pagan ancestors finally embraced Christianity in 627 A.D. precisely because they were assured by St Paulinus that Christianity possessed "clearly revealed truths" concerning what follows this life, whereas their ancestral paganism could claim no such knowledge. So if Hubert Richards is right, the fourteen centuries of English Catholic Christianity have been based on a false prospectus, and we are in reality in the same position as our pagan forebears.

Richards believes that New Testament faith is concerned with our present worldly existence, and that the message of the resurrection of Jesus is a disclosure of a new kind of life now available, rather than of any supposed future destiny. He supports his position by extensive quotation from the parables which speak of the gradual growth of God's Kingdom among men; from the teaching found in St John's Gospel concerning eternal life, resurrection and judgment as present realities, and from St Paul's stress on the existential consequences of resurrection faith.

It is useful to be reminded of just how much of Jesus' own teaching was concerned with the issues of everyday living, and how much of St Paul's emphasis on Jesus' resurrection is related to the transformation which he believes can be wrought in the lives of the believer by the power of the indwelling and risen Christ (cf Romans 8:10-11). At the same time however, none of this alters the fact that the New Testa-

ment also contains numerous references to a future life, and that it was this future hope which provided the first followers of Jesus with their inspiration for change in the present. We are indeed called to work and pray that God's Kingdom may come and his will may be done on earth, but our inspiration for this is the conviction that God's will is already being done in heaven. Likewise though St Paul believed that those baptised into Christ's death are called to live their lives in the power of his resurrection, it remained axiomatic for St Paul that our own resurrection is a future event, and indeed that "if our hope in Christ were limited to this life only we should, of all mankind, be the most to be pitied!" (I Corinthians 15:19).

The problem for Hubert Richards is that he finds the notion of literal life "after death" unintelligible (p 12), and yet his pastoral sense impels him to salvage as much as possible of the New Testament's teaching. He therefore concentrates on the substantial elements of New Testament thought which relate to the quality of life we are called to live now, and severs the connection between this teaching and the future hope. I am not persuaded that this is possible, and I am confirmed in this view by the extent to which Richards finds it necessary to understate or even contradict the views of both Jesus and St Paul on this matter.

On page 11, Richards argues that "if men think their real treasure is in another world, they will be indifferent to the injustices of this world", and he asserts that such other-worldliness "has little in common with ... the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth". Yet the example he cites of teaching supposedly alien to the mind of Christ is in fact attributed to Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19). Likewise on p 94, Richards assures us that if St Paul had been asked "What will happen to you

when you die?" he could only reply "I don't know, but God has never disappointed me yet". However, we possess in I Corinthians 15:35 ff St Paul's actual reply to such a question, and it bears no resemblance to the agnosticism Richards' speculation attributes to him. On the subject of the resurrection hope, we do not need to imagine what St Paul might have taught we can read what he actually did teach.

The reader should also be warned of Hubert Richards' habit of inserting his own additions into some of the texts he cites. Thus on p 39 all five quotations contain the words "already" or "here and now". But these words are from Richards' pen, and explain why these "quotations" cited convey a far greater sense of the present than did St Paul's original version. Likewise the non-theologically trained reader should be warned that very few scholars would be willing to accept Richards' assertion that St John's Gospel gives a more accurate picture of what Jesus himself taught than do the Synoptic Gospels (p 87).

While one can understand the motivation behind Hubert Richards' attempt to re-interpret the language of resurrection and eternal life in ways more acceptable to modern thought, the fact remains that in the New Testament such language has always a future reference as well as a present significance. The New Testament teaches life after death, and we do a disservice to all if we seek to conceal this fact. In 2 Timothy 2:18 we learn that Hymenaeus and Philetus were teaching that "our resurrection has already taken place". The author of that Epistle describes their opinion as "wide of the truth" and as "upsetting people's faith". It would be interesting to know if a similar verdict would be returned by the Christian community today.

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ROMANS, Volume II, IX – XVI by C. E. B. Cranfield (The International Critical Commentary) T. and T. Clark. 1979 pp 482 £8.50.

Volume I containing a brief introduction and commentary on chapters I – VIII, appeared in 1975. This volume contains commentary on chapters IX – XVI, an essay on Paul's purpose(s), an essay on some aspects of theology, and four indices.

The commentary is presented in three main parts: the unbelief of men and the faithfulness of God (9:1-11:36), the obedience to which those who are righteous by faith are called (12:1-15:13), and the conclusion to the epistle (15:14-16:27). We