

lived 2,000 years ago and who now lives, in his risen and glorified human nature, and speaks in his body, the Church. This faith, he believes, is being denied by much modern theological scholarship. At the root of that denial is the arbitrary, anti-supernaturalist bias of most recent and contemporary New Testament scholars. (The 'docility' of Professor Moule towards the New Testament material, said to be shared by Dr Hengel and Canon Harvey, is seen as a shining exception). The conflicting conclusions to which the methods of critical New Testament scholarship lead ought to have persuaded even the scholars themselves of the errors of their ways.

Dr Mascall is undoubtedly right about the inconsistencies and mutual contradictions between the varied findings of New Testament scholarship, particularly about the life and teaching of Jesus. He is also, I believe, right in his view that Christian theologians have not been very successful in coming to terms with that phenomenon. This is a difficult and disturbing problem which he is right to keep on about. But what he offers as a solution appears to be a return to a pre-critical confessional reading of the New Testament. To give one example, is it a responsible way of meeting those who 'would explain away the resurrection as involving less than the literal raising of the physical body of Jesus' to cite Lk. 24:42–3, Jn. 20:27 and Acts 10:41 without any discussion either of their position within the developing tradition or of other New Testament texts (p. 47)?

No doubt some of the problems many Christians feel about the significance of Jesus for their faith—about 'who he is' and 'how we know him'—are self-inflicted. But not all. And unless someone has felt the reality element in those problems, in a way which Dr Mascall does not appear to have done, he is not going to have much of help to offer towards finding a way through them.

MAURICE WILES

GOD OF CHANCE, BY D.H. Bartholomew. London. SCM Press Ltd. 1984. pp. ix + 181, £5.95.

David Bartholomew is Professor of Statistical and Mathematical Science at the L.S.E., and his treatment from a Christian standpoint of the problems raised for talk of divine plans and purposes in the world by the existence of random processes in nature is much to be welcomed. It is generally accepted that many physical processes at the sub-atomic level are indeterministic; that is, they are such that they might turn out one way or another, and there is nothing in any prior state of affairs which determines the outcome in any way. Crucially, it appears that the gene mutations which are at the bottom of evolutionary development are of this sort. Many, notably Jacques Monod in *Chance and Necessity*, have concluded that randomness in evolutionary development rules out all talk of a divine plan for this earth and this species, because God could not have known how living species would have developed.

Monod, is, of course, wrong. Even though randomness at the sub-atomic level makes it impossible for precise predictions of future events to be made on the basis of physical law, randomness in itself does not preclude the possibility of God directing the physically random process either wholly or in part so as to ensure that his purposes for the world are fulfilled. What Bartholomew argues, however, is rather more interesting than postulating the mere possibility of a God pulling the strings behind physical randomness, a picture he is inclined to deny in any case. He shows that in a number of different types of case chance at one level of matter does not preclude predictability and purpose at another. Certain types of pattern, such as the even spread of paint over flat surfaces, are best achieved by random spraying. The behaviour of gas clouds is entirely predictable, though the movement of individual molecules is unpredictable. More controversially, he cites the biological arguments of Prigogine, Eigen and Winkler, that given the basic properties of matter in the world, the evolution of life was highly probable somewhere in the universe. I would have liked more detail on this than

549

Bartholomew supplies because it is relevant to the claims of Hoyle and Wickramanasinghe that life on earth is statistically so improbable that it needs explanation from outside. (Actually Bartholomew shows by means of Bayes's theorem that even if it were correct, the slight probability Hoyle and Wickramanasinghe think amino acids had of combining the way they did to form life would not by itself justify the belief that life could not have evolved randomly and would have needed an intelligence to create it. To show that, one would have to show that life could not have evolved randomly in any other way, and also, I would add, that the prior probability of an immaterial God creating a material world was not less than zero.) Nevertheless, the general point that stochastic (indeterministic) processes preclude neither purpose nor predictability is well made.

In fact, Bartholomew thinks that the divine purpose might be better served by a universe exhibiting stochastic processes, than a totally determined one. Such a universe, in his view, would make room for freedom and creativity in intelligent creatures and would represent God as a fellow-labourer and fellow-sufferer in creation. This would not limit God's power had he freely chosen to create such creatures, and such a view accords well with some aspects of traditional theism. On the other hand, the divine plan becomes far more risky if the universe is based on randomness at critical points. While life might have developed with a high probability given the basic properties of matter, I am not clear that intelligent human life can be said to be highly probable. Evolutionary processes are irreversible; one development rules out the possibility of others occurring because it alters the ecology significantly. Moreover, a deeply chancy universe makes it very difficult to make sense of the traditional Christian doctrines of the Redemption and Incarnation, for Mary might have miscarried or Jesus died in an accident at an early age. Indeed, the earth might have been hit by a meteorite before Jesus had been born, and the human race wiped out. Might intelligent life, and falls from grace have been produced randomly in many parts of the universe, or nowhere at all? Bartholomew recognises these difficulties his position has for traditional theology, but I think he underestimates them. I am not sure that it is possible to maintain belief in the specific purposes Christians attribute to God without having God pulling the strings behind the apparently random processes of nature. Nevertheless, Bartholomew's book deserves and will repay attention from those interested in questions of the relations between chance, design and predictability.

ANTHONY O'HEAR

A GALILEAN RABBI AND HIS BIBLE: JESUS' OWN INTERPRETATION OF ISAIAH BY Bruce Chilton, *SPCK* 1984, £15.00 pp. 216

This book is something of a mixture. It begins with a long introductory section on the relation of Jesus to Judaism, and on our understanding of early Judaism in particular through study of the Targums. Dr Chilton warns us against assuming that rabbinic material can be used to give us a picture of Judaism in the time of Jesus, but he argues that the Targums are more likely than other rabbinic documents to contain traditions reflecting Jewish thought of the period before AD 70: moreover, the Targums represent the popular piety of Judaism, rather than the scholarly attitudes of the later rabbis. Building on his earlier study of the Targum of Isaiah, Dr Chilton suggests that this Targum, in particular, gives us important 'insights ... into the theology and faith of early Judaism'. (p. 57).

In the central section of the book, Dr Chilton considers the relationship between Jesus and the Targum to Isaiah. Though acknowledging that the Targum itself took shape much later, and therefore could not have been known to Jesus, he maintains that 'some of the material available in the Targum represents the early Judaism in which Jesus himself believed, and which was the basis of his distinctive preaching' (p. 57). To demonstrate this, Dr Chilton first looks at the theme of the Kingdom of God in the

550