

essence a mystic who sings, and theology is his song". The same idea is reflected in the epithet "mystical theologian" applied to Eckhart in the book's title.

The third section of book, on understanding Eckhart, treats of the Meister's language and of the question of his orthodoxy. (To these is appended a useful survey of his influence.) Davies' survey of Eckhart's rhetorical techniques is clear and well researched. I am not convinced, however, by Davies' assertion that Eckhart poeticized theological language by loosening the relation between the signifier and the signified (nor by his claim earlier in the book that in Eckhart theology becomes a *manière de parler*). It seems to me that we should assume that Eckhart means what he says except when he is being frankly metaphorical (as when he likens God to a horse) or frankly self-contradictory. Moreover, the notion that logic and concepts are applied to the world, rather than grounded in it, is a modern one. Eckhart was too much of a Neoplatonist not to assume that discourse mirrors and is in some sense embodied in reality itself. In my view the peculiarities of Eckhart's scholasticism (for example, his treatment of analogy) arise not because he is willing to talk nonsense if it has a good effect, but because he is willing to take a partial, one-sided and as it were mischievous view of a complex reality.

There are many points in this book with which one could take issue at length. This is among its merits. The book is admirably lucid, and marked throughout by a certain sincerity and directness that engages the reader and does full justice to Eckhart. Davies conveys a high regard for the Meister, but he is by no means an abject devotee, and is ready to admit or suggest weaknesses. There are some errors: for example, Averroes was not in fact an Arab (see page 130), and the popular notion that Thomas and the Dominicans subordinated loving God to understanding him while Bonaventure and the Franciscans subordinated understanding God to loving him, a thesis to which Davies appeals at several points, should be taken with a large pinch of salt. There is some unevenness, especially pertaining to the Latin tradition of the preceding centuries. But the book is a very welcome contribution to the literature on Eckhart and is in my view the best introduction to Eckhart available in English.

P.L. REYNOLDS

SCIENCE AND THE SOUL: NEW COSMOLOGY, THE SELF AND GOD by Angela Tilby. SPCK. 1992. Pp. 275. £12.99.

During the present century our knowledge of the universe has been transformed by Einstein's relativity, by quantum mechanics, by nuclear physics and by cosmological studies of its early development, generally referred to as the big bang. This has profoundly affected our views of our relation to the material world, and the theme of this book is the effects of this new knowledge on theology. It is written by the producer of the BBC television series *Soul*. The author, a theologian, interviewed many scientists, including Hawking, Weinberg, Davies and Guth, and describes

in some detail their discoveries and related theological matters.

This is a worthwhile but difficult task, requiring a deep understanding of both physics and theology. It is first necessary to look at the actual experimental results and their theoretical interpretation; this is the province of the physicist. Then there is the question of its wider meaning, and its theological implications. The chief difficulty is that the same physical theory may often be interpreted philosophically in different ways, and so the philosophical interpretation is not entailed by the actual physical results. Physicists, especially theoreticians, are prone to speculate far beyond the evidence; this is right and proper, and often stimulates further progress, but it is exceedingly unwise to base wide-ranging theological conclusions on such speculations.

Thus Einstein's theory of relativity, which is primarily concerned with the transformation equations between moving reference frames, has been widely interpreted as meaning that all is relative. In the words of the author, 'it is rare now to find pastoral counsellors referring people to an absolute morality or an absolute set of principles. Spirituality has come to be about exploring one's own frame of reference in order to discover why you see things as you do. How individuals construct reality is more important than how reality is. . . In the context of prayer, rigid notions about the present and the past have to loosen up. . . Where time is flexible, relative to each person, the past can be revisited and healed.' Einstein was, however, concerned to establish the invariant quantities in systems of particles in motion. If he had called his work the theory of invariance we would perhaps have been spared all this dangerous and groundless talk about everything being relative.

It is much the same with quantum mechanics. Wide-ranging philosophical and theological conclusions have been derived from the theory, but the vital question is its relation to reality. Is it the complete and final theory (the view of Bohr) or just one more step along the road (Einstein)? If you follow Bohr, then you can say that 'there is a fundamental indeterminacy of nature in the quantum realm', so that 'quantum mechanics is important for our psychological and spiritual formation because it fatally undermines the determinate character that both science and theology had formerly imposed on nature and human nature', and that 'One of the things that moves the quantum world from possibility to reality is the presence of observers.' Thus quantum mechanics 'opened up a way for the universe to be present to God in every moment of its particularity. At every moment creativity was in action, working through randomness, chance and spontaneity. . . It also provided a model for understanding some of the central paradoxes of Christian doctrine. The dual nature of Christ, as both divine and human, could be seen in the light of the principle of complementarity'.

If however one takes the view of Einstein, that our theories are a series of attempts to understand the behaviour of an objective external world, independent of the observer, these speculations are all castles built on sand. It is perfectly possible to believe that the material universe (excluding of course ourselves) is a totally determined system.

The author does indeed recognise that there are other interpretations of quantum mechanics apart from that of Bohr, but fails to provide adequate reasons either for accepting that of Bohr or for rejecting the alternatives.

It is of course conceivable that one could derive valid theological insights from false philosophical speculations. Thus the author believes that 'Classical spirituality is about doing God's will. Quantum spirituality could be about becoming a self. Classical spirituality is about choosing right rather than wrong and good rather than evil. Quantum spirituality could be about glorifying God by reflecting on the divine.' Such views may or may not be useful, but they have nothing whatever to do with physics.

Cosmology is one area where modern physics has profoundly changed our views of the world. We can now trace the evolution of the universe in great detail from the initial singularity to the formation of the chemical elements that sustain life. We are part of an intelligible process spread through space and time. Even here, however, the author fails to distinguish between the singularity and the creation by God, which is beyond the reach of science. For all we know there might have been a previous contraction.

Scientific research certainly tells us about the world, but the speculations of scientists especially when they extend to philosophical and theological questions, should be treated with extreme caution. It is most hazardous to base theological conclusions on them.

PETER HODGSON

DIVINE DISCLOSURE: AN INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH APOCALYPTIC by D.S. Russell. *SCM Press*, London. 1992. Pp. xxi + 164. £9.95p.

This book provides a good, clear, helpful, fairly up-to-date and pretty comprehensive introduction to Jewish apocalyptic. The author was formerly General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, and prior to that he was Principal of Baptist Theological Colleges at Leeds and Manchester. He has written a number of books over the years on this and related themes, the ones specifically on apocalyptic being *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (1964) and *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern* (1978). Over the years apocalyptic studies have been quite vigorous, and in this latest book Russell has changed a number of his earlier positions in the light of scholarly developments, something which he sometimes frankly admits.

After a brief Introduction, which traces the renewal of interest in apocalyptic to the availability of new texts and a growing appreciation of its theological importance and relevance, chapter 1 is entitled 'The Literature: Identification and Definition'. Amongst other things this grapples with the tricky question of the definition of apocalyptic. He rightly takes on board the point fairly recently emphasized by Christopher Rowland that apocalyptic is concerned not only with the revelation of