

tenseless time, or to have one's full duration at once?

Or consider the following, from the exposition of Leftow's own view: 'Eternity is logically a date. If eternity is the date of God's existence, God's existence is the sort of thing that can be dated, and so it makes sense to speak of God's existence as simultaneous with God's existence. This simultaneity is not the simultaneity of any temporal frame of reference' (p.234). 'Thus there is a distinction to be made between being located in eternity and being eternal....(If we held that a timeless being had QTE, we could not say that a timeless being's duration did not involve earlier-later relations. But a timeless duration would still differ from a temporal being's duration in being partless and from the "duration" of an instantaneous temporal event in being extended). Thus even if temporal events occur in eternity, they differ significantly from truly eternal beings. All of this seems quite conceivable, and so appears possible' (p. 237). All these statements are meant to be taken literally, I think, though on one occasion at least Leftow refers to the 'extension' and 'point' understandings of eternity as 'models', a term which he does not define (pp.148-9).

If one were to hazard a reason why such statements figure so largely in the argument of this book it lies in a tendency to reify time, including events that occur in time, and to reify eternity on the model of time, despite the favoured view of eternity as durationless. So events occur in time, and in eternity (e.g. 232). Beginnings are temporal yet immutable kinds of entity (p. 77). See also pp.114,,151,236.) But is eternity, and are beginnings, entities?

This is learned and sophisticated treatment which those who are interested in its topic cannot afford to neglect. One hopes that philosophical attention will be given to testing the meaning of many of Leftow's statements. But one cannot avoid the feeling that Professor Leftow has taken on more than is wise within the covers of one book. At his best, e.g. his discussion on the relation between divine eternity, simplicity and uniqueness (p. 70ff..), and his reconstruction of Augustine on eternity as truest existence, Leftow is very good, but he is often much harder on those that differ from him than he is on himself; can it really be true, as Leftow claims, that yellow, the number 3, and any other entity without spatial location are spatially contiguous with all spatial things (p. 225)?

PAUL HELM

BELIEVING, UNDERSTANDING THE CREED by Gerald O'Collins
S.J. and Mary Venturini *Harper Collins*, 1991 Pp.178. £7.95

The Christian gospel is not just a set of precepts or counsels to be followed. It is also a faith to be believed. Christians are those who have heard and believed the good news. Of the many summaries or articulations of Christian belief, the Apostles' Creed stands out. Composed in the second century it became, and remains a classic statement of the faith. It is the Apostles' Creed with which the present book is concerned. And the articles of this creed give the book its structure.

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Given the balanced and classical structure, the style of the chapters themselves is chatty and engaging. Each article is commented on first by Fr. O'Collins, an Australian Jesuit theologian and then by Mary Venturini, a journalist and mother of three. These authors bring to the creed, not just theological skill or historical knowledge, but personal experience, anecdotes and examples from life, art and architecture. Both writers have a vivid awareness of modern questions and difficulties. Indeed much of the freshness and honesty of the book comes from the attempt they make to take these difficulties as seriously as they take the creed itself. So they note that, while for the Jews it was the cross that was a scandal and a stumbling block, for us it is the resurrection. And they look squarely at the significance of bodily resurrection and the empty tomb.

Running throughout the book is a stress on suffering and hope, hope and confidence in the resurrection in the midst of suffering and doubt. Being an honest presentation of the faith, this book is also an apologetic. It does not attack all things new in a manner unconcerned with the experiences of modern people; but it is filled with modern concerns to which it brings an understanding of the gospel. The way these articles consistently chime in with our common experience is also a reason for finding them to be believable.

For some the style will be too conversational. I was not sure what to make of, 'Death is not simply the knob at the end of the walkingstick of life' (p.9). More seriously there is a very curious and surely quite mistaken passage about the second coming. Venturini makes the claim that we will need faith to recognize Jesus when he comes again in glory. 'For all our preparation shall we, like the Jews before us, fail to recognize the Savior when he comes again?' (p.129). This must be wrong, for what little we know about the second coming is that then all will recognize him. 'then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' (Matt.24,30). This error is not so serious though, as it is contradicted by O'Collins earlier in the same chapter. This is a good book. It is well written, engaging, easy to read and full of insight. It would make an excellent text to give to those who express an interest in the faith, or those without or within the Church who wonder why we have a creed. And that, I suspect, is quite a number of us.

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