

says, is consistent with Biblical ideas of social justice. If there is a unifying theme in the book it is the 'contextualist thesis', which bears on the interaction between science, technology and society. There is said to be a three way relationship of mutual influence between them. Technology is an instrument of power exercised by some people over others, normally the rich over the poor. This leaves scope for choices to be made in the control of technological innovation, if only the political means and will are present.

On the evidence presented however, there is not much in the present political culture of Western countries which will save us from the eventual control by a few big companies working outside electoral politics. They are set to own the scientists, the factories, the cities, the plant and animal genotypes, the food brands we have to eat, the water we drink, to determine the quality of the air we breathe, and to decide who will work and who will not. They have the power to relocate almost overnight, leaving entire regional communities workless. They have the power to create vast surpluses of labour which can be exploited by re-structuring jobs so as to avoid commitments to the health, job-reliability, and a living wage for their workers. What is most under threat through the corporate ownership and control of technologies is the existence of human communities themselves, starting with families. It is a great deal more difficult now, after the post-war technological revolution, for most people to plan for a stable life, in which a trade can be learnt, or a career followed, in which children can be raised in security and given any kind of conviction that their lives might be of value, either to themselves or to anything resembling a community. Most current debate about the supposed breakdown of social morality starts at exactly the wrong point—with the desperate decisions made by individuals whose lives are already ruined by forces beyond their control. It ought to start with the decisions made by the inhabitants of laboratories and boardrooms and their friends in government. This book, for all its faults, makes a start.

ROGER RUSTON

**SPIRIT AND BEAUTY. AN INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS** by Patrick Sherry. *Clarendon Press, 1992. Pp. viii + 192. £25.00.*

In this work, Patrick Sherry describes and appraises the theological tradition which has associated the Holy Spirit with beauty. The representatives of this tradition have concerned themselves with beauty of various kinds: the beauty of artistic products; moral beauty or the beauty of saintliness; the beauty of the natural order; and the beauty of God himself. Among the theologians who have spoken of the Spirit in these various connections are Irenaeus, Jonathan Edwards, and Sergius Bulgakov. Thus for Irenaeus, it is the Spirit who adorns the created order, and according to Edwards, the Spirit is 'the harmony and excellence and beauty of the deity' (p 95).

While this association of the Spirit and beauty has found representatives across epochs and denominations, it remains a minority

view. The author notes that this reflects a neglect of the Spirit and beauty considered as individual subjects of enquiry. Thus theologians have often concerned themselves with the Son rather than with the Spirit; indeed one recurrent theme of the book is the tendency of Western theologians in particular to associate beauty with the Son, following the example of Saint Augustine. And beauty itself has been neglected: rather than beauty, it is truth and goodness which have tended to hold the attention of theologians. Some explanations for this emerge from the book. Thus the crucifixion must place a question mark against any easy assimilation of theology and aesthetics (p 85); and no doubt the association of goodness and truth with an immaterial agent makes for less perplexity than the association of beauty with such an agent.

Sherry discusses this second difficulty at some length. In particular, he considers how we might relate God's beauty and the beauty of his creation. In the manner of Christian Platonism, we might say that earthly beauty 'partakes' in divine beauty. But Sherry argues that this account, along with other established accounts, is beset by serious difficulties. In preference to these approaches, he notes the possibility of making cross-categorical comparisons of different kinds of beauty, and as an example cites this remark of Jonathan Edwards: 'How great a resemblance of a holy and virtuous soul is a calm, serene day' (p 152). Sherry suggests that an approach of this kind provides 'a minimal account of how we can allow for a likeness between creatures and God, adequate to cover the theological points at stake' (p 154).

Unfortunately, the author does little more than point to the possibility of an account in these terms. This is a pity, for the distinctiveness of his own approach (as compared with that of Wolterstorff for example) depends upon his claim that there is a relation between divine and created beauty; and of course the project of constructing a theological aesthetics is made immeasurably more worthwhile if we can hope to apply aesthetic categories to God himself. One way in which we might proceed here is by reflecting further upon the ways in which in the human case beauty of character may be expressed in bodily form, in terms of facial expression, gesture, and so on.

The author has a high estimation of the importance of his subject. Thus he speaks of 'the disastrous divorce between religion and a sense of beauty in our time' (p 181); and he observes that the concern of theologians for doctrine and ethics to the exclusion of aesthetics has contributed to an 'intellectualization' of religion in recent centuries (p21); he also shows some sympathy for Simone Weil's claim that divine beauty is 'the attribute of God under which we see him' (pp 77-8). If these claims are even partly right, then the attempt to recover a tradition of theological aesthetics, in this case one centred on the Holy Spirit, must rate as a profoundly important enterprise. This book offers a significant contribution to that endeavour. However in view of the relative neglect of the subject, and in view of its potential richness (p 154), there is of course much that remains to be done, both theologically and practically.

MARK WYNN