

to Cassian.

There are some notable essays on Anglican spirituality but some of the most enjoyable were in the areas of which one knows least. Examples are Sebastian Brock's four pages on books in the Syriac tradition and Diarmuid O'Laoghaire on Celtic titles.

The Orthodox contribution is rounded out by the late Alexander Schmemmann's essay indicating that although "secularism" is a western heresy, nevertheless it is the heresy of our time to which the Orthodox Church, like the others, is exposed. Like the others, the Orthodox Church by way of first reaction retired into its own world view and social and thought system, for lack of any common language with which

to confront the problem. How can an essentially monastic spirituality help in this modern situation? Schmemmann points out that Byzantine monastic spirituality is essentially 'eschatological', which means it is the living reality of a new life. Despite 'secularist' reductions, it is the transfiguration of this life, which "joy no one can take away" (p523).

One could continue to explore the themes of a variety of other essays, but to sum up we may say that the book achieves its rather insular and Europeanised aims. Its very success indicates the need for further work which includes consideration of other groups of writers and even the spirituality of other religions.

The Revd Philip Hutchinson is the Anglican vicar of Christ Church, St Kilda.

★★★

"Lost in the Cosmos"

by Walker Percy,

Arena 1984, pb, pp262, \$9.95. ISBN 0-09-935860-3

Review by Owen Salter.

You will either come away from this book believing that it's changed your life, or that it's a bucket of old codswollop. Much depends on how hard you're prepared to work almost as much as on whether you can work out what the Dickens old Walker Percy is driving at.

I say 'old' Walker Percy because he is old. After nearly a lifetime as a respected American Catholic philosopher, he suddenly decided to start writing novels, and has made quite a fist of it, enough for the publisher of this book to describe him as 'One of America's most distinguished contemporary novelists'.

"Lost in the Cosmos" is his latest book. It is not a novel. It is not a philosophical treatise. In fact, it is rather hard to say what it is.

Here's some thought pictures to give you

something of its feel: Sigmund Freud setting or if you prefer, sitting a HSC exam;

Karl Barth and the Guru Mahara Ji playing chess in a pueblo in the Sangre de Cristo mountains; Kurt Vonnegut producing an edition of *Sirens of Titan* with cross-references to Helmut Thielicke's *Theological Ethics*; Soren Kierkegaard trapped with Slartibartfast, Arthur Dent, Zaphod Beeblebrox and Bert Newton in the Restaurant at the End of the Universe.

These tell you nothing about Percy's book, but they give you a good idea of the frame of mind you'll need to adopt if you're going to tackle it.

"Lost in the Cosmos" is subtitled 'The Last Self-Help Book'. Imagine all the self-help books ever written bundled up in old Safeway bags and jettisoned from the

Starship Enterprise into a black hole at the edge of a distant galaxy this is arguably what they might come out as in the anti-matter universe at the other end.

This is everything your average self help book is not. It is not easy reading. It does not tell you things you already know but want to see written down to make you feel good. It does not reassure you you're okay.

It most assuredly does not advocate positive thinking at least, not in any form recognisable by your average Californian group therapist.

Instead, it assumes an ability to think, more, a desire to think. I mean to think hard and deep. Very un-self-helpish: if there's one thing guaranteed to undermine all efforts to improve yourself, it's thinking long and hard about who, what or why you really are.

"Lost in the Cosmos" is a self-help book that doesn't help you look at your behaviour and modify it. It is a self-help book designed to force you to look at who you are, and to face the fact "that of all the bil-

lions and billions of strange objects in the Cosmos, novas, quasars, pulsars, black holes, you are beyond doubt the strangest".

It plays a lot of games, breaks a lot of rules, creates and stifles a lot of laughs, capitulates by the sheer dexterity of its approach and frustrates the heck out of you because it looks like a popular bed-time book but actually requires effort, concentration, application and downright grit to get beyond the surface of Percy's clever prose.

As I say, you'll either think it's life-changing or a bucket of old codswollop. Percy helpfully includes "A preliminary short quiz which you can take standing in a bookstore and which will allow you to determine whether you need to buy this book". I can safely say it's the most unusual quiz you'll ever take.

If you proceed to the book, you too may I say 'may' find out "why it is that man is the only alien creature, as far as we know, in the entire Cosmos".

Owen Salter serves as the editor of *On Being*.

★★★

In Black and White and Colour A survey of Aborigines in Australian Feature Films.

Peter Malone MSC

Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit, Series No.4, 1987. Available from NYMU, 4/17 Jersey Avenue, Leura, NSW 2780. Bp \$9.95 plus \$1 postage/handling. Pp156 (text 139pp)

Review by Peter Bentley

This is the latest book in the Nelen Yubu Missiological series which aims to produce publications which examine black and white relations in Australian religious and social life.

The author, Peter Malone msc, is a wellknown film reviewer and commen-

tator. In this publication, Malone is primarily concerned with the feature film produced in Australia up to 1986.

The survey is intertwined with a commentary concerning the role that these films play in the depiction, development and reflection of white attitudes about

Aborigines in the community. It should be noted that in this short study Malone does not concentrate on themes of racism or the half caste/black dimension which more polemical critics have elaborated upon. There is a brief chapter and some interrelated comment about the documentary film. Overall some two hundred films are mentioned in the book.

Malone's survey is essentially a chronological history, though there are three distinct parts and thematic breaks. The first part surveys cinema from 1900-1970. In this part Malone examines the silent period: 1900-1930, sound: 1930-1960 and major films of the pre 1970 revival period. Part two is entitled *Transition: Walkabout*. This chapter is dedicated to the Nicolas Roeg film *Walkabout* (1971). Malone notes the changed portrayal of Aborigines within the context of this film and the new Australian cinema which had such an impact on the film industry. There is a more sensitive and positive depiction of aboriginal culture and life.

The third part, *New Australian Cinema: 1970 -* is divided into functional chapters including Children's films and telemovies, Small Budget Features, 19th Century Images, Into the 20th Century and Personal Mythologies.

About two thirds of the book is devoted to the New Australian Cinema. This arrangement is due not only to the resurgence of the film industry and the deepening of white Australian awareness of aboriginal life, but also to Malone's own experience in film writing and reviewing. He became the film reviewer for *Annals* in 1968. Very few films made before 1970 were (and are still) available for viewing. He points out that he has been quite reliant on other studies, notably Pike and Cooper's book *Australian Film 1900-1977* for information about the period 1900-1970.

It is worth noting that the first known reference to any aboriginal presence in a feature film was in *Moonlight* (1910). In this bushranging adventure, the director's wife played an aboriginal woman in black

face. A feature of films up to 1970 was the portrayal of Aborigines by whites and the confusion of Hollywood style African cultures with aboriginal cultures. Some films examined aboriginal culture (and even controversial issues eg, land rights) seriously, but most still portrayed Aborigines in a patronising way. Malone's discussion of Francis Birtle's *Coorab in the Island of Ghosts* (1928) provides an excellent example of this last point.

A film which could have been examined further is *Shadow of the Boomerang* (1960). This film was made after the Billy Graham crusade of 1959 by the Graham Association film group, World Wide Pictures. The study concerns a white racist American and his sister in outback Australia. The American's conversion through Graham's message and the witness of his tolerant sister lead to his change of heart toward the Aborigines.

Other films examined include the Chauvel classic *Jedda* (1955), a unique film for its time and Chauvel's last production, *Journey Out of Darkness* (1967), an enigmatic title and film, in which the aboriginal roles were played by actors in black face. The comparisons with *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978) are worth noting, but perhaps a better comparison at least for *Journey Out of Darkness* would have been *Backlash* (1986).

There are excellent discussions about small-budget features like *Come Out Fighting* (1973) and *Wrong Side of the Road* (1981) and *Backroads* (1977), in which Gary Foley was actively involved.

The chapter entitled *Personal Mythologies* is also worth noting for the sympathetic and spiritual examinations of the controversial Herzog film *Where the Green Ants Dream* (1984) and Michael Lee's *Turn Around* (1984). The extensive discussion about *The Last Wave* (1977) is also a significant contribution to the debate within Christianity about mystery, myth and other religions. A separate chapter examining in detail the film im-

ages of aboriginal religious traditions and the portrayal of the conflict and union between Christianity and aboriginal religious experiences would have provided a valuable link with the wider aim of Nelen Yubu. The notes and indexes are helpful, though a chronological listing of the surveyed films in the context of a comprehensive Australian film list would

have been a useful comparative appendix. In any survey there are necessary limitations. Peter Malone has provided a comprehensive survey which will be enhanced by further exploration of the many themes and questions he has raised.

Peter Bentley is the research assistant for the National Catholic Research Council.

Short Notices

"Church, Worship and the Local Church,"

Edited by B.G. Webb,

Explorations 2, Lancer Books, 1987, pp 120, p/b, \$6.95, ISSN 0-818-4461, ISBN 0-85892-354-8.

These books contain the Moore Theological College Autumn School of Theology lectures for 1985 and 1986. "Explorations 1" contains the following: "The Use of the Bible in Modern Controversies: A Watershed among Evangelicals?" by John Woodhouse; "Two New Testament 'Worship' Terms" by Mark Harding; "Yesterday's Ministry for Today's World" by William Lawton; "Sexuality, Personhood and the Image of God" by Robert Doyle; "Women's Ministry in Historical Perspective" by Marion Gabbott; "Ordination of Women in Evangelical Anglican Perspective" by Graham Cole; "Biblical Study Paper: 1 Timothy 2:8-15" by Glenn Davies.

The second volume concerns the church and worship and contains: "The Doctrine of the Church: Towards Conceptual Clarification" by Graham Cole; A response to Graham Cole's paper by Robert Doyle; "The Biblical concept of Praise" by Mark Harding; "The Biblical Concept of Edification" by David Peterson; "The Biblical Concept of Fellowship" by David Broughton Knox; A response to Broughton Knox's paper by William Lawton; "Biblical Study Paper: Romans 12" by Michael Raiter; "The Lad and His Church: Implications for Worship" by Peter Jensen.

Most of the papers were written by members of the teaching staff of Moore College. It is very good to have them available in this handy form.

"Living Stones"

by Helen Roseveare

Hodder and Stoughton, 1988, pp 233, p/b, \$9.95, ISBN 0-340-42462-1.

Dr Helen Roseveare has been a missionary with WEC International an interdenominational evangelical missionary society, known for many years as the World-wide Evangelisation Crusade. After surviving revolution in the Congo, she has gone on to write

Lord himself was single, and that simple fact should be enough to stop us exalting marriage higher than is humanly sensible. But then, society teaches us, and we Christians sanctify the idea, that a woman is incomplete without a man.

If what is needed in the world is Christian feminism, then this book provides it, biblically and altruistically, and most of all with humour! I have never enjoyed reading footnotes as much as I did for this book. For example, "All the women in history have been men. Discuss." 1066 and All That. In fact I have been unable to find this quotation in my copy of 1066 - but if

it isn't there, it certainly ought to be! Will the book be read and listened to? Who knows? Despite its clarity and commonsense theology, it is by a woman, and a lay woman at that.

By the way, the other book I have been reading is "The Liberation of the Laity" by Anne Rowthorn!

The Revd Peta Sherlock was formerly assistant chaplain at Fribank Anglican School, Melbourne and is at present part-time lecturer in Preliminary Greek and tutor in Introduction to Theology at Ridley College.

"Television and Religion: The Shaping of Faith, Values and Culture"

William F. Fore, Augsburg Publishing House, Minn., 1987
P/b, pp 219, \$US11.95 ISBN 0 8066 2268 7

Review by Peter Bentley

William Fore has provided the Christian community with a challenging reflection based on thirty years experience in church based television. In *Television and Religion*, Fore discusses much more than the demise of religious programmes on secular television. His examination covers a wide range of ethical and theological issues. For instance, Fore's concise analysis of modern culture is based on R.H. Niebuhr's models of Christ and culture. His discussion of the relationship between the church and communication is aptly centred around the works of Avery Dulles and Paul Tillich.

Though Fore's analysis is based upon the American media it still has implications for the Australian scene. In the chapter "US Media: The whole world is watching", Fore relates that the vehicle for the new colonialism is the media. Australia has certainly not been neglected by the American media (and perhaps by the American media by a former Australian). A quick check of the weekly television

programme will reveal the extent of American programming. Australia has similar television ownership, viewing patterns and video consumption compared to America. Certainly we do not have the variety of narrow cast media which exists in America, but it is probable that mediums such as cable TV will be established here before too long.

In the introductory chapters Fore presents his thesis that television has become a functional religion for our society today. He develops this theme throughout the book and links the rise and development of the electronic church to this functional secular religion. The two chapters on the electronic church examine the preachers/leaders and their audiences. Though Peter Horsfield in *Religious Television. The American Experience* provides a more extensive examination of these areas, Fore's discussion is a useful and contemporary summary of the work of the main researchers. The Jim Bakker scandal, the Oral Roberts controversy and

Pat Robertson's political ambitions are all commented on briefly. An important point to note is Fore's realisation that the electronic church, though inadequate in its response and theologically compromised has highlighted the needs of people today. It became obvious to Fore that the local church was generally unable to deal effectively with the needs and problems of contemporary society. People tuned into the electronic church (and television in general) and turned off the local variety.

Topics covered in other chapters include media violence. Fore examines several media studies, concluding that most researchers agree that media violence has harmful consequences. Though the research in this area is extremely complex Fore's summary is adequate, considering the general nature of his book. His discussion of the possible actions which individuals and churches could take to reverse violent media trends links in well with his theme of changing the media by "creative transformation". Fore believes that the church media should be stimu-

lated to produce quality programmes (like the giving of the Humanitas Awards by the Paulist Fathers) and reformed by public lobbying and the busting of media trusts. Fore notes the problems associated with boycotting and discusses the implications of censorship within the context of the American First Amendment. His comments about the changes to and demise of the American public broadcasting authority are worth noting considering the proposed changes for the ABC.

Fore concludes his study by presenting a vision for change. His hopeful vision alleviates the depressing picture which is depicted in the chapter on the US Media and the world (particularly the Third World). The practical orientation of this book has the potential to awaken and activate the Christian community to take up its share of the responsibility in the television world. After reading this book responsible action would appear not only appropriate stewardship, but necessary.

Peter Bentley is the Research Assistant for the National Catholic Research Council

"Longing for the Heavenly Realm. The Missing Element in Modern Western Spirituality"

by Peter Toon, Hodder and Stoughton, 1986, pp 140, p/b,
\$7.95 ISBN 0 340 39134 0

Review by David Powys

Peter Toon's books are characterised by a pastoral intent. "Longing for the Heavenly Realm" is no exception. Its subject is "Christian hope" though it treats the theme more narrowly than other recent popular works, reflecting a strong dependence on certain sixteenth and seventeenth century divines.

It was this narrowness, which at times erred towards polemic, that flawed the book for me. While it is appropriate to

construe Christian hope both in terms of the dimensions of time and space (both of which are found in the New Testament, though the former more frequently and consistently), Toon consistently appeals to the latter. He writes of "heaven" objectifying it in such a way, and giving it an independence of God, that I do not find true to the New Testament accounts.

To suggest that the book presents a one-sided perspective is surprising in view of

shares this concern over personal experience as the reader of a text attempts to identify closely with both the surface level and depth meanings of the author's text and of the text's author through the old and time-honoured analogical method of interpretation. This involves sharing the life journeys and journeys of the soul or psyche from original bliss in Paradise, through the Fall and chaos to a future Paradise or wholeness. The stress on experience in Gnosticism is also creating current interest as issues of faith and belief are being put into the 'too hard basket'.

The troublesome liturgical phrase "This is the Word of the Lord" annoys the author considerably because even from a traditional, theological perspective, little in the bible is actually oracular or prophetic. Most of it is human reflection, wisdom, narrative, hymnody or practical advice. (p 71) This has long ago been discovered by preachers seeking down-to-earth food for their hearers lives. Naturally, a secularist would go further than Barton and simply say that none of the bible is the "Word of the Lord".

The problems involved in relating an

ancient text to the modern world are not overlooked by the author and a more appropriate title for this book in my opinion would be "Honest to the Bible". Like the 1960 book "Honest to God", it throws out many challenges to people in all exegetical camps and, although these lecture-sermons were originally directed at long-suffering and often very confused fellow Anglicans or members of the Church of England, seated dutifully on their rock-hard pews, this book's sensible promises and intellectual honesty should have a very wide appeal to the many bewildered yet honest searchers, marching bravely towards the 21st century. If you wish to avoid the mental gymnastics imposed by fundamentalists and the sight of the bible in the rubbish bin, then this book is for you.

John F. Noack is a graduate of Luther Seminary, Adelaide and the University of Melbourne, Parkville, and teaches World Religions and Medieval History at Trinity Grammar School, Kew, Victoria. He is a member of the Australian Association for the Study of Religion and the C Jung Society of Melbourne.

★★★

"Catholic Beliefs and Practices"

C. Leavey and M. Hetherington, Collins Dove, Melbourne 1988,
pp 136, p/b Rrp \$16.95, ISBN 0 85924 732 5

Review by Peter Bentley.

"*Catholic Beliefs and Practices*" is the major work of the series known as PICT (Pastoral Investigation of Contemporary Trends). The six works in PICT were commissioned by the former National Catholic Research Council several years ago and eventually pub-

lished by Collins Dove simultaneously.

The difficulties co-ordinating a large number of authors and projects proved to be enormous. It is a pity that this series and this major work in particular were not produced earlier. By the time of publication the Australian Church scene had been bombarded by histori-

cal, sociological and selective studies from many sources.

Nevertheless this study of "*Catholic Beliefs and Practices*" does hold significant interest. It is not a statistical account. In fact quite some time is spent justifying the authors' sociological perspective. The study itself follows a more anecdotal path. Fifteen stories are told in the context of James Fowler's theory of faith stages. These stories take up the bulk of the text. There are six Stage 3 people, six Stage 4 people and three Stage 5 people. The fifteen were chosen out of 60 interviews recorded in Sydney during 1986. The ages of the people range from 18 to 76 and there is a variety of attitudes toward the institutional church. All the people interviewed had some connection with a catholic parish (two were chosen), though this may have been quite incidental.

The stories make fascinating reading and provide a wealth of material for pastoral reflection and dare I say ser-

★★★

"Noon to Nightfall - a journey through midlife and ageing",

by Mary d'Aspice, Collins Dove, Melbourne 1989, pp 256,
p/b, ISBN 0 85924 783 X, \$16.95.

Review by Marjorie Craig.

In "*Noon to Nightfall*", Mary d'Aspice compares the journey through life with the sun's journey through the day. It rises in the morning, affecting an ever widening section of the world, and reaches its highest point at noon, when it immediately begins a gradual descent. "The sun falls into contradiction with itself". In the morning of life, the world fashions us to a certain extent, but when noon has been reached, (the

noon projection. Many of the stories are quite revealing and portray staggering dimensions of personal depth. I feel that these stories will be of wide interest, while the introductory section and concluding sections may be of more interest to those people involved with religious sociology and its application. Having said that, I should add that the introduction does provide an excellent summary of Fowler's theory and a useful account of overseas projects (mainly USA) and current debate in the area.

In many ways the questions that this study raises are more important than the actual research produced. The nature of our religious character, and the factors which influence this character, are key areas of concern for all churches as they try to develop an educational methodology which is more applicable to our 'age' and 'stage' of faith.

Peter Bentley is a writer on issues in Australian Christianity.

★★★