

tion, one would think. Rather, the immanent and transcendent are distinct, yet connected: the transcendent God manifests Himself in creation, epitomized by the Eucharist's transubstantiation, in which the transcendent Deity *infuses* the immanent with His grace. Creation's goodness *qua* God's creation constrains our treatment of it, hence implies codes of morals (constraining treatment of others) and stewardship (constraining treatment of nature)—the very piety for which Weaver pleaded.

Dualism, it seems, ultimately implies two disastrous phenomena: disembodied, presumptuous mind, isolated from external reality and its corrective, chastening limitations (and did not Babbitt insist that the imagination be "disciplined to the facts"?<sup>10</sup>); and mere matter, including other people, shorn of transcendent significations, and hence of any grounds for a constraining piety. That the two nations whose philosophical life was most captivated by radical dualism, Kantian Germany and Cartesian France, spawned the radically impious horrors of, respectively, Nazism and the French Revolution, and that the latter inspired a third horror, the Soviet regime, must stand as a cautionary tale of the consequences of this bad idea.

Montgomery's critique in no way diminishes Weaver's greatness. Rather, as Nietzsche wrote of Schopenhauer, "The errors of great men are venerable because they are more fruitful than the truths of little men."<sup>11</sup> Here, they have occasioned Montgomery's critical sifting, sorting, correcting, and refining that advance the cause of truth which Weaver himself so nobly served.

Drawing on fresh scrutiny of Weaver's published and unpublished writings, as well as offering illuminating exposition and searching critical engagement, *Steps Toward Restoration* is the finest work of Weaver scholarship to date. With its learning, discernment, and seriousness,

it points the way to and sets a high standard for future efforts at explicating and assessing the man to whom conservatism—and Western civilization—owe so much.

1. Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago, 1948; 1959 ed.), vi. 2. *Ibid.*, 18. 3. *Ibid.*, 2-3. 4. Richard M. Weaver, *The Southern Tradition at Bay* (Washington, 1989), 375. 5. Telephone call of Professor Smith to this reviewer, March 15, 1999. Per a March 22, 1999, letter to this reviewer from David Bovenizer at Liberty Fund, this volume will probably appear in September 2000. 6. *Ideas*, vi. 7. *Ibid.*, 1. 8. See the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, chs. 7-8. 9. *Ideas*, 130. 10. Irving Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership* (Indianapolis, 1979), 258. 11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1954), 30.

## ***The True Meaning of the Bible***

PETER E. HODGSON

**The Bible and Science**, by Stanley L. Jaki, *Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1996. 211 pp.*

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN the Bible and science is one of the most sensitive and important questions of modern times. Millions of people revere the Bible as God's Revelation, and science enjoys immense prestige as the foundation of our modern civilization. Many people, especially among the young, think that, for example, the account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis is inconsistent with recent scientific discoveries of the evolution of the universe. Faced with this decision, they opt for science and abandon their faith.

It is therefore necessary to ask if in-

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deed science has disproved parts of the Bible, rendering the whole suspect. How should we interpret the Bible? Must it be interpreted literally, or can it be interpreted in a way consistent with modern science? It is certainly as important not to claim too much as it is to claim too little. If it is interpreted literally, according to the superficial meaning of the words, it readily runs counter to science, while if it is no more than picturesque imagery we have lost the word of God.

The true meaning of the Bible is what God intends it to mean, and this must be true because God is the author. It is certainly quite unacceptable to say that there can be two or more contradictory truths, those of the Bible and those of science. Thus if a certain question has been definitely settled by scientific investigation, the Bible must be interpreted to respect that truth. The living authority of the Church through the ages existed before the New Testament was written; it gathered together and confirmed the books that comprise the Bible and it continues to interpret it authoritatively today. That is why the problem of the Bible and science is much more severe for fundamentalists than it is for Catholics.

A characteristic of scientific statements is that they often have the sharpness of numbers, or are linked to scientific theories that have been confirmed numerically to high accuracy. Since truth is one, if there is any statement in the Bible that can be verified scientifically, either empirically or quantitatively, then the meaning of that statement must follow the scientific truth. This shows at once the absurdity and the danger of taking the Bible as a textbook for science, an activity directly contrary to the true relation. Equal justice must be done both to supernatural Revelation and to the results of scientific investigation.

In his book, Father Stanley L. Jaki considers two aspects of the relation of the

Bible to science: first, the interests and tendencies of the Bible to the extent that they are related to science; and, second, the possible historical role played by the Bible in sparking the rise of modern science.

It is evident that the world view of the Hebrews that forms the background of the Old Testament is quite different from that of modern science. The Hebrews were hardly interested in giving a consistent account of the relations of the earth and the heavens, and still less were they concerned with scientific investigation. They thought of the earth as a flat disk and the sky as a tent or a hard bowl. Such views were common among other nations at that time, but the Hebrews differed in ascribing the earth not to many gods but to a single God who rules all the forces of nature. God ensures the stability of the earth and the sky, and is directly responsible for all ordinary and extraordinary events, for the wind and the rain as well as for volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. It is all God's doing, and His wisdom is beyond the scrutiny or understanding of men.

The Hebrew Bible is mainly about God's unfailingly efficacious actions in history. The references made in the Bible to nature are made to emphasize God's power over the whole world, a world that He alone designed, created and holds in being. It is here that we begin to see the natural theology that is implicit in Biblical teaching. Since God designed the world to be eternal, it must be well-designed. His works are to be trusted, and He is not capricious. The cosmos shows the rationality of a purposeful coordination of parts. The works of God show stability, coherence, regularity, and permanence. The stability of the world is so taken for granted that it is used as a sign of the stability of God's plan for salvation. The fixity and the stability of nature show the permanence of God's moral laws. Jeremiah's account of God's

direct involvement in nature is interpreted as the result of laws that nature must obey. The God of the Bible is infinitely faithful and rationally consistent and creates entities that share these qualities; creation is the imposition of regularity, the enacting of a law.

The biblical emphasis on God's love for us prevents us from ascribing the many physical and moral catastrophes to an evil principle, and assures us that nothing can influence any event in heaven or on earth independently of Him. Hence the strong warnings against all fortune-tellers and diviners, and especially astrologers. No other ancient nation was wise enough to see this. The biblical struggle against idolatry and astrology made it possible to see nature as free of capricious forces and thus a proper object for scientific study. Only if nature is free of such forces can it be studied objectively without it being necessary to resort to magic to ensure its co-operation.

The idea of eternal recurrence, of a circular time where everything is repeated again and again without end, is endemic in all ancient cultures, and is a principal reason why science in its modern form never developed in any one of them. This concept of time is radically alien to the notion of biblical time, which has a beginning and an end. The Bible begins by affirming that "in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth." Linked with this is the idea of an absolute end, the "new heaven and new earth." Between the beginning and the end is God's plan of salvation.

Eternal recurrence breeds the despondency and despair that characterizes the literature of ancient China, India, Egypt, Babylon, and Greece. Strikingly different is the hope pervading the Bible, the confident expectation that, in spite of all calamities, God's plan will prevail. Although much of the Bible derives from Egypt and Babylon, the vital distinctions

are always made. The animism of those cultures treated the world as an organism, capricious and wilful; in stark contrast the Bible has a quite different purpose, namely, to stress the complete and utter dependence of nature on God.

The prophets continually emphasize God's faithfulness to his promises. The book of Sirach, written in Alexandria, continues the biblical tradition in spite of the attractions of Hellenism. God is praised as the creator of nature, and all His works are good. God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. Since "the Most High possesses all knowledge and sees from of old all the things that are to come" nature must be fully rational. The power of nature shows forth the wisdom of God. Great is the Lord's majesty, and "only a few of His works have we seen." This contains no science and gives no encouragement to scientific reflections. But then, speaking of God's moderation in dealing with the Egyptians, the Bible adds: "But you have disposed everything according to measure, number and weight" (Wis 11.20), a phrase that reverberates down the ages. The lawfulness of nature implied in these words is also to be found in Christ's words on its regularities.

By calling Christ the only-begotten, John implied a fundamental change in the conception of the universe, demoting it from the divine status it held in pantheism to that of a created being, thus making it a proper subject for scientific study. This distinction between God and the universe implies a total dependence of the universe on its Creator, implying creation out of nothing. This shows a dependence far deeper than that of an ordinary artifact, and this is of decisive significance for the origin of science.

The Bible thus embodies a very special view of the universe and thus provided the basis for the eventual rise of modern science. These implications un-

folded gradually. Hellenistic culture mixed science with magic and astronomy with archaeology, and it is hardly surprising that the Church Fathers saw in this a spiritual threat. Socrates had seen that the mechanistic physics of the Ionians excluded purpose from the world, and to restore purpose he suggested that all material bodies try to achieve what is best for them by seeking their natural place. Thus the world was conceived as a huge organism and venerated as the supreme pantheistic being, and in this perspective science was inevitably still-born. Greek science had lost its creativity by the time of Christ's birth.

The early Christians were too preoccupied with preparing for eternal life to be much interested in science. Their struggle with the Arians and the gnostics made them clarify the Christian understanding of existence, and this was invaluable as a preparation for science and for a balanced understanding of its relation to the Bible. Irenaeus's insistence that John's words that "through Him all things were made" meant that the whole universe is created out of nothing, a crucial difference from all Greek cosmology.

Arius, eager to facilitate the integration of Christians into the prevailing Hellenistic culture of the Roman world, proposed that Christ is the noblest of God's creations. Only one expression stood in the way, and it was creedal, not biblical: Christ is of the same substance as the Father. Without that phrase, Athanasius might not have prevailed, a consideration that should be impressed on those for whom the Bible is the sole rule of faith.

None of the protagonists in that crucial battle realized that the arguments of Athanasius contain the view of the universe that made science possible. The universe made by the divine logos had to be fully rational, admitting no disorder. Totally unacceptable to Athanasius was the Greek idea that God was not free to

create any kind of world provided it is fully ordered and rational. Furthermore, God has full domination over the world that he created out of nothing. Orthodox theology emphasized a fully ordered universe and provided the conceptual matrix essential for the rise of science.

The implications of this were realized quite early by Philoponus, who argued that celestial and terrestrial matter must obey the same laws, a belief essential for the development of Newtonian physics. He anticipated the essence of inertial motion, contrary to Aristotle and all the philosophers of antiquity. These remarkable innovations are attributable to Philoponus's firm belief in creation in time, that had by then become a Christian belief.

The first sentence in the Bible played a crucial role in the first viable rise of science in the High Middle Ages. John Buridan, a professor at the Sorbonne, rejected Aristotle's teaching on the eternity of the world as contrary to Christian belief in creation in time. Considering the cause of motion, he proposed that God, when He created things, gave them an impetus that keeps them in motion. He thus formulated what became the concept of momentum and so laid the foundations of the science of motion and hence of all physics. This work of Buridan soon spread through Europe and made possible the discoveries of Galileo and Newton.

The Reformation increased the authority of the Bible at the expense of the authority of the Church. Luther insisted that Genesis 1 be interpreted literally, even if it required belief in absurdities. He ridiculed Copernicus for maintaining that the earth moves round the sun, as this is clearly contrary to Joshua's command to the sun to stand still. Galileo claimed, incorrectly, to have demonstrated the earth's motion, and proceeded to lecture the theologians on the interpretation of Scripture. Quite cor-

rectly, he reiterated Augustine's dictum, but this did not prevent his condemnation though not, fortunately for the doctrine of infallibility, by the Pope himself.

As the inspired word of God, the Bible has a higher purpose than to teach us science. Nevertheless, in teaching the truths necessary for salvation, it created a set of beliefs about the world that made possible the only viable birth of science in human history. This is a momentous and most instructive story, told in a masterly way by the author of this book.

## *The Elegant Exiles*

CARL GULDAGER

**Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London**, by Alex Zwerdling, *New York: Basic Books, 1998. 383 pp.*

DESPITE THE PASSAGE OF TIME, the question persists, still unanswered, still perplexing. Why, as American society was attaining world stature, did four of the finest minds and talents—Henry Adams, Henry James, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot—seek artistic fulfillment and fame abroad? Alex Zwerdling, a professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, ponders this puzzlement in *Improvised Europeans*, bringing to the task literary criticism of the highest order, an impressive grasp of intellectual and cultural history, and a narrative style of clarity and subtlety.

In the preface, the author admits "a sense of bewilderment" was his starting point, but extensive literary and bio-

graphical research, including "letters, early drafts, manifestos, suppressed works, ephemeral journalism and other commentaries both by the writers themselves and by their contemporaries," led him to a degree of certainty in dealing with *this quartet of emigrés*, a group Adams himself characterized, sardonically, as "improvised Europeans." Zwerdling notes that while the four careers spanned more than two generations, there were strong links between them. Adams and James were lifelong friends, James's example influenced both Pound and Eliot, while Pound was instrumental in first focussing Eliot's poetic talent.

The author's first three chapters offer an overview of "the gradual shift in power from Britain to the United States," a look at the fantasy of British-American reconciliation, and a consideration of the change in the American populace through sweeping, diverse immigration. Zwerdling then provides "career narratives" of the four men, the "elegant exiles" as one Englishman described impressive newcomers. This approach is marked throughout with exemplary detachment and acute judgments. Zwerdling understands, as did his subjects, the unique status of an American in England, standing outside the entrenched class system. He also appreciates, as did they, how the cultured and cosmopolitan American can become European in a sense that no Englishman, Frenchman, or German can, given the persisting national loyalties, the cultural and language barriers. And, while frankly admitting to the biases of the four against differences in race, color, creed, and gender, Zwerdling treats such views objectively, though hardly condoning them, as typical of the prejudices prevalent at the time.

Other key ideas established in the stage-setting chapters are, first, that the cultural exchanges between Britain and

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