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# Universe: God, Science and the Human Person

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of the right because the two were formally too similar, a hypothesis at least partially borne out by my own research into Tillich and Hirsch. According to Scholder, it is only Barth's theology, which saw theology not as unpolitical or apolitical but as in some sense pre-political, that was able to rally elements of the churches against the German Christian forces. Ironically, Barth's attempt to develop independent theological criteria for Christian faith and action in the world was the most effective politically.

Scholder does admit that Barth's theology had its shortcomings. His most incisive critique is:

... Barth's objections to any political theology remain theologically valid, as does his assertion of the theological clarification needed "first of all" before the church expressed itself on political questions. But for the church there is certainly not only the preaching of reconciliation but also the act of reconciliation, which expresses itself in a helping and compassionate solidarity with the victims of this and every age. Perhaps the fact that Barth did not perceive and did not ponder this possibility was the only real weakness in his position (435).

Barth's theology and that of the Confessing Church in general was too concerned with theological orthodoxy and not concerned enough with the atrocities outside the boundaries of the church. The challenge for the church today, as then, is to combine sound theological thinking with astute political analysis in which it declares itself unambiguously for the victims of all political ideologies, whether of the left, centre, or right.

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## **Universe: God, Science and the Human Person**

Adam Ford

Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1987

228 pp. U.S. \$9.95 paper

I have heard that, when the first nuclear device was exploded over the New Mexico desert, Albert Einstein said, "Now everything is different, except the way people think." This volume by Adam Ford, chaplain to St. Paul's Girls' School, London, England, priest in Ordinary to the Queen at London's Chapel Royal, *and* an avid amateur astronomer, is a fine attempt at enabling women and men of faith to think differently in a technological, nuclear age, informed by scientific inquiry into the structure of the whole of the universe.

The prevailing mood of the book is wonder. In the spirit of the Psalmist, Ford sees the whole of the creation bearing witness to the glory of God. Scientific investigation into microscopic *minutae* and vast cosmic reaches is

not, to Ford's way of thinking, in conflict with faith in the God revealed to us in Christian Scripture. Rather, he writes, "Science, the dispeller of mysteries, becomes the proclaimer of mystery, while theology reveals meaning" (22). Theories of cosmic origins (such as the "Big Bang" theory) reflect the primary agency of a personal God; and the claims of astrophysics concerning the vastness and antiquity of the universe add a sense of awe to our consideration of the "ancient of days". The theories of evolution, modified only slightly from the original proposals of Charles Darwin, do not suggest a chancy and mechanistic development of life in a godless universe. Rather, they bear witness to the guidance of a divine spirit in the development of life from its most primitive forms to the human image of God as physical, rational, and spiritual being. The miracle of the incarnation is a constant theme in this book, testifying to the deeper reality of the relationship of spirit and matter. From this, Ford derives a mandate for theologically grounded environmental ethics.

I very much appreciate Ford's attempt to balance scientific discovery with faithfulness to the concerns of Christian tradition, especially spirituality and christology. However, I am not convinced that he has dealt adequately with the radicality of evil in the universe. He holds optimistically to a future when human beings have matured spiritually, provided we survive what he calls our "spiritual adolescence". He considers much suffering in the world to be the suffering of growth, and a necessary consequence of the exercise of human freedom. The suffering that is indeed unjust he refers to the cross, the symbol of God's own incarnational participation in the suffering of the whole of creation. In a world of massive injustice and natural disasters, I am not convinced that this is adequate. But I am not surprised that this is a problem for him: it is a difficult theological task to balance vast cosmic splendor with the particularities of human suffering.

This is not a book of doctrine but a book that seeks to relate historic Christian doctrine to the discoveries of modern science. It could be a good text for a college class in science and religion, or for a zealous adult study group. The book includes recommendations for further reading and discussion questions for each chapter. It is likely to raise a few eyebrows; but its purpose has been to help make dialog between Christian faith and modern science possible on a popular level. In this it has succeeded nicely.

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