

as merchandise—never as messages”. It is odd to me that Douglas Woodruff is presented as having no interest in the books. So the firm went into voluntary liquidation, to be bought by Herders. After three years Herders went “into a disorderly retreat” and apparently the assets of Burns and Oates were scattered.

In 1967, Tom Burns inherited the editorship of *The Tablet* after Woodruff's thirty one years. Woodruff, we are told here was not a great editor. I remember the Dominican, Bede Jarrett, who presided over “the vintage years of that ancient Order in England”, telling me in 1933 that before anyone disagreed with Woodruff they should carefully review their evidence. Let me only say that I do not recognise the Douglas Woodruff presented in these pages, (though, of course, Tom knew Douglas Woodruff far better than I), nor the statistics of *The Tablet's* history under his editorship. They appear fundamentally to differ from those presented by Michael Walsh in his “*The Tablet*”, published in 1990. For example, we are told (p. 145) that the average age of readers of *The Tablet* when Douglas Woodruff left was “over seventy years”. But in Michael Walsh's book (p. 63) we are told that “no less than 72% of them were under 55 years old or more”. That, of course is old enough. Michael Walsh wrote that there was little obvious need for Woodruff to retire in 1966; “he was still running a paper that, at least judged by its circulation figures, was as successful as it had ever been”. Yet Tom Burns (p. 167) writes that “today the list of subscribers is more than double what it was when I took over from Douglas Woodruff”. Michael Walsh says that the average age of readers is much as it was. Now the circulation is about double that which the present editor inherited from Tom Burns, who had presided over “a steep and steady decline to a nadir of not quite 8500 in 1978”. (“*The Tablet*” p. 68). I presume these anti-Wodruff passages were written before Michael Walsh's book was published. There have been two years or so in which to make the corrections. *The Tablet* reviewer called this book, even with its sharp edges, “a gem”; he also referred to Douglas as “the great and cultivated Douglas Woodruff”. I go along with that description; surely he was greater than any of the historic editors of *The Tablet*, even though he himself seems to have disappeared for a time into a vanished world. Tom Burns has tried to re-create his version of that vanished world in *The Use of Memory*.

BEDE BAILEY OP

**ETHICS IN AN AGE OF TECHNOLOGY** by Ian Barbour, *The Gifford Lectures Volume 2*, SCM Press 1992, 312 pp, £17.50.

This book is a serious attempt to come to terms with the multiple ways in which new technologies are changing our lives, and to sort out the good from the bad. Rejecting both the optimism of Technology as Liberator, and the pessimism of Technology as Threat, Professor Barbour wants to provide human and environmental standards by which modern technologies may be judged. Scenarios of future technological heavens or

hells have been avoided in favour of balanced judgments and cautious optimism about the possibilities of political control.

It could not, however, be described as a good read. The main reason for this is the mind-numbing succession of facts and comments, a good many of them scarcely rising above the level of platitude. Do we really need to be told that, 'Private autos are decentralised in ownership, use, and servicing, but their production must be centralised'; or that, 'The insatiable wants of a consumer society create an ever-expanding demand for resources, which the richest countries have the greatest power to secure'? There are many such obvious points made on every page. In conclusion to a quite interesting section on genetic engineering—in which by far the most alarming information concerns the patenting of life forms which is going in the USA—we are solemnly told that, 'The new power to modify living things must be used with caution because its effects are so far reaching'. Well, yes, but to whom is this warning addressed—the worried reader who knows this already but can do nothing about it, or the transnational companies who are busy doing the patenting? The style too is an obstacle to perseverance. It is methodical and dull, but at the same time cursory. This is probably a result of the vast range of topics on the author's agenda, from genetic engineering to nuclear wars, from pest control to office computers. Even the section on values suffers from the same concern not to leave anything out of the picture. How, for instance, do we benefit from a page and a half on Eastern religions, or a mere three pages out of three hundred on 'Christian ethics'? In the end we hardly get a picture—more of a catalogue. A picture could only come about through a sense of restraint about what should be included.

But perseverance brings some rewards. In particular I would recommend the sections on agriculture and energy. Barbour's discussion of nuclear power at least caused me to reconsider my long-maintained hostility to it. It is a matter for urgent debate whether it is worse to risk a quick catastrophe from some nuclear breakdown, or to tolerate the slow catastrophe resulting from the escalating consumption of fossil fuels—of which we have only seen the early stages so far. What if none of the alternative and renewable sources of energy ever prove generally usable? Before any irrevocable decisions are made on this however, Barbour insists that we should at least demand that a lot more money is spent on energy conservation and development of alternatives. But that would depend on a political control of corporate activities which governments have so far resisted.

The control of technology is not a purely technical matter, but one of social justice. It has always been the case that 'low income families bear a disproportionate share of the burden of environmental degradation', and that 'the exploitation of nature and the exploitation of workers are . . . products of the same economic and political forces'. The author's concept of justice is best described as communitarian-liberal, as in his frequent restatement of the Rawlsian principle that the justice of a policy can be judged by its impact on the least advantaged members of society. This, he

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