

However, Oliver's real interest remains social reform rather than scriptural exegesis; hence his sympathies lie with the social aspirations of the millennialists rather than with their spiritual anticipations. This leads him to portray Robert Owen, the agnostic social reformer, as being in the tradition of millennialist exposition. Certainly Owen's vocabulary and imagery reflect the millennial milieu in which he lived, although the goals in which he believed and for which he struggled clearly differentiate him from traditional millennialists.

Unfortunately, Oliver has written for the specialist rather than for the general reader. Both individuals and events are mentioned without any clarification or detail provided; and when detail is provided, it is often much later in the text. E.g., the Albury group is mentioned seven times before an explanation of the membership and ideology of the group appears on p. 107. While this will not trouble those familiar with English history during this period, it may frustrate those who are interested in the development of millennial ideas and know little of English history. Furthermore, Oliver's analysis of millennial preaching is sometimes complicated and difficult to follow — though that is possibly the fault of the preachers themselves rather than of the analyst. Oliver's frustration with their methods of expression is occasionally apparent as when he points out, after one complicated analysis, "It is a little hard to say what all this is about" (pp. 122-123).

Nevertheless, Oliver has provided a succinct account of the significant individuals and the main ideas of English millennialism during the first half of the nineteenth century. In so doing he has increased our understanding of the religious currents which influenced those decades.

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Peters, Ted. *Futures—Human and Divine*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1978. 192 pp. \$10.95.

This volume is a somewhat unusual work in that it endeavors to grapple very seriously with human future both in the light of the biblical message and in the context of meaningful dialogue with the scientific, sociological, ecological, and other basically or, at least, ostensibly secular concerns of today. Peters points out that just as there was a ferment near the year A.D. 1000 for a sort of "millennialism," so in our own day "the secular and scientific communities are just as concerned about the year 2000" (p. 9). He speaks of "a new academic profession" — "futurology," which "is the science that seeks to understand the future and to provide the tools whereby humans can obtain greater control over their own destiny" (*ibid.*). The author further proposes that future consciousness "is religious," by which he means two things: "First, in some cases it is explicitly religious because overtly religious groups from time to time express distinctive concern for the future. . . . Second, there are implicit religious dimensions to much of even avowedly secular futuristic thinking" (p. 14). The second dimension requires, says Peters, a "principle of interpretation," and the "method I intend to use for studying this dimension is a *hermeneutic of culture*" (*ibid.*).

It is difficult in a short review to give the reader an adequate concept of what this volume is all about, and my normal reviewing practice of including an indication of main chapter titles does not in the case of this book seem particularly useful. Rather, I would simply summarize by indicating that Peters discusses both biblical concepts (such as apocalypticism) and the scientific and humanistic assessments and proposals for solving critical ecological, population-growth, etc., problems which face the world of the late twentieth century. Among concepts noted are those of Charles Reich in *The Greening of America*, Robert Heilbroner's treatment of our current

"civilizational malaise," John R. Platt's technological-progress theory that utilizes concepts from behavioristic psychology, Victor Ferkiss's anticipation of "a new stage in human development" in what may be called "technological man," etc. (see esp. pp. 70-97, though further treatment of various "secular" approaches are given *passim* elsewhere).

As for Peters himself, he finds no hope in the humanistic approach, which may be called *futurum*. Rather he looks for something greater than man, in which the future is not simply molded by the present but speaks to the present — *adventus*. The last comprises the theological dimension which brings God into the picture.

The author's last two chapters — 8, "Toward a Proleptic Theology of the Future" (pp. 150-164), and 9, "Concluding Nonscientific Prescript" (pp. 165-181) — bring us, it seems to me, to the heart of his own thesis. The earlier material is more in the nature of background and analysis. In chap. 8, Peters deals with "Values, Ontology, and the Future"; with "Ontology and the Kingdom of God"; and with what he captions as "God is Not Yet God." In the last of these three sections he proposes several theses: (1) "God is absolute freedom"; (2) "God creates from the future, not the past"; (3) "God is not yet God"; and (4) "Jesus Christ is truly God." In chap. 9, the author proposes that the eschatological vision "is not pie-in-the-sky-take-me-to-heaven-when-I-die escapism. Rather, once our hope embraces the vision of God's love at work in the creation and redemption of the world, our own love is triggered into action aimed at transforming the present in behalf of our image of the new" (p. 166). He concludes the chapter with "six basic things the Christian church can do that will make a significant contribution to our planning for the new world of tomorrow." These, as listed on p. 170, are as follows (on pp. 170-181 they are discussed briefly): "(1) First and most important, it can *prophecy* visions of God's coming kingdom. In addition, the church should (2) *promote* a sense of global *Gemeinschaft* (community); (3) *provide* for our posterity; (4) *produce* programs; (5) *propose* alliances between Christians and non-Christians who share visions of a truly human future, and (6) *proclaim* pardon and comfort in the face of our failures to achieve by ourselves all that those visions require of us."

Although in the present reviewer's opinion, the book does not articulate as well as it could the solutions to today's problems and to the "human dilemma" generally, it nevertheless provides a useful summary of today's secular futurism, plus suggesting provocative concepts and insights that stimulate thought. In endeavoring to bridge a certain gap or cleavage that has arisen between the secular and religious worlds, the author endeavors, of course, a herculean task, complicated by almost overwhelming complexities. His very attempt to grapple with the matter is noteworthy and praiseworthy.

However, from a reviewer's point of view, to evaluate an approach so different from the common ordinary attention given to the present "civilizational malaise" is virtually impossible. The fruitage of the author's continuing interest and work in this field will probably in the long run provide the best test; and for its accomplishment I would suppose that the author would recognize indeed the need of the divine *adventus* which he describes.

The volume contains endnotes (pp. 182-190) and an index (pp. 191-192). There is no bibliography.