Poetry, Perception and Metaphor

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her disposal more than 250 documents, all of them dealing with her
precise subject: Philippine nationalism.

Miguel A. Bernad

POETY, PERCEPTION AND METAPHOR

A POEM OF THE NEW CREATION. By Peter Milward S.J. The Hokusaido

Peter Milward is a very competent critic whose works have already
been reviewed in the pages of Philippine Studies. From his profes-
sorial chair at Sophia University have issued two of the best com-
mentaries on the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, one on T. S.
Eliot’s Quartets, an anthology of Chesterton’s essays and remarks on
Shakespeare, and several books dealing with English literary history.
In the book under review Father Milward puts aside criticism and
literary history to don the cap of the poet. His subject is as grand
and as profound as could be imagined. As the title suggests, it is
about “the new creation”: namely, the supernatural destiny which
God has given to man; man’s fall from that destiny through sin; man’s
redemption by Christ; the new supernatural life which that redemption
brought to man, whereby man becomes a living image of God and a
partaker in His divine life.

It is in fact the subject that Milton himself had attempted to
treat in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Milton of course was
much greater poet, but he was an un instructed theologian. If
Milton had the theological learning — and the theological panoramic
viewpoint — that Peter Milward has, Paradise Lost and its sequel
might both have become far greater poems than they actually are.

Milward is a far better theologian than Milton: but it is not
degrading to anyone to be informed that he is not as great a poet
as Milton. Nor is Milward as good a poet as his great English fellow
Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins. The difference lies in the ability
to embody an abstract perception in a concrete and brilliantly per-
ceived deeply felt metaphor.

Yet Milward’s poetic essay is full of insights. Paraphrasing T.S.
Eliot’s “Teach us to care and not to care, teach us to sit still”, Milward
says, in lines reminiscent of the Quartets:

Prayer ascends from earth to heaven
Rising from restlessness to rest
Moving from dissipation to pure action
BOOK REVIEWS

Drawing the powers of the soul within
To concentrate all attention on One.

By alluding to such well-known terms as "the cloud of unknowing" and the "dark night of the soul", Milward attempts a theological synthesis:

Hidden from us in a cloud of unknowing
Hidden in a dark night of the soul
Hidden under a veil of mystery
He is the mystery of Divine Love.

What Milward's poem needs is an organic structure of metaphor that would have given his insights not only a theological but also a poetic (i.e. an imaginative) synthesis. Such a structure of metaphor is evident in the poetry of Hopkins, who sees in the flashing wings of a dragon-fly, and hears in the sound of a pebble hitting the sides of a deep well, an image of the Divine Life by which Christ lives "in ten thousand places".

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

THE BIBLE: A CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATION


The New English Bible is the latest translation of the Scriptures by British scholars which has been planned and directed by representatives of eleven churches, councils and Bible Societies in Great Britain. The book jacket enhances its official status by terming it an "authoritative translation" but does this refer to the competence of the translators or its ecclesiastic patronage? It is not a revision of the prestigious King James version, like the British and American editions of 1885 and 1901 and the new universally popular Revised Standard Version (RSV) of 1952. Scholars have made a new translation from the original Hebrew and Greek texts, utilizing the latest findings in the textual, linguistic and historical fields. A panel of literary advisers helped the translators in literary and stylistic questions to insure a modern and literate English and not merely an accurate, scholarly rendering of the ancient texts. The presence of Roman Catholic observers at the final stage of the work is a sign of the times in ecumenical courtesy. The labors lasted for almost twenty-five years, with the