

I9I *David Konstant raises the question of miracles in a scientific age. Let's hear from our resident scientist: John Polkinghorne is a Fellow of the Royal Society and a former Professor of Mathematical Physics at Cambridge University.*

JP: The theological problem about miracle is that God must be consistent. I do believe that there are laws of nature, and I believe that their regularity expresses God's will in fact. And God doesn't act *against* the laws of nature, for that would be for God to act against himself. But equally, God is not controlled by the laws of nature and in unprecedented circumstances God may do quite unexpected things. So if God wants to do a new thing, that he's never done before, like becoming a man in Jesus Christ, then nothing that science can tell us about the regularity of the world rules out that possibility.

I10I *If modern science doesn't rule the virgin birth out of court, what would it make of details like the Angelic Choir and the Guiding Star? We asked David Hope and John Polkinghorne again.*

DH: Well, I'm rather intrigued by them and I'm rather excited by them and I'm rather interested in them and it kind of draws me more into the story. I will admit that there will be many of those who probably find those sorts of features questionable and would have difficulty with that. But again, that should not deflect us, I believe, from the basic statement that in Jesus Christ God himself has actually come among us, has come alongside and is with us and alongside us forever and always, through thick and thin. And that seems to me to be the key thing.

JP: There's obviously a lot of symbolism in the story and the heavenly choir I don't think necessarily means exactly what you see on an imaginative Christmas card. It means that somehow or other God communicated to the shepherds and said, 'Something wonderful is happening, go and see what it is.' You have to recognise the Bible is often written in symbolic language that symbolises things that actually happened, but not necessarily exactly literally as described. The same is true I think for the moving star – it may not be precisely as described, because the symbols come in and colour the presentation of it. I mean, we all know there are moving stories, but there's something special about a true story. I mean, take Thomas Keneally's novel about Schindler's List, about this man who rescued all these Jews from being killed. It's a very moving story in itself – but it's more moving because we know there actually was an Oskar Schindler, and he really did take those risks, and save those people's lives.

I11I *Well, that's it then for this first part of 'Great Events, Deep Meanings'. Finally, we go over to Canon John Young, who wrote the text for the course, for his concluding comments.*

JY: Geoffrey Bull was an English missionary in Tibet in the late 1940's. When the Communists came to power in China he was taken captive and forced to