astronomer and a pure mathematician of note, but also a chemist who laid many
of the basic foundations of photography, as well as taking an active scientific
interest in meteorology, geomagnetism, metrology, and the phenomena of
fluorescence and colour blindness. Clearly this poses difficulties, and the note
here evades them by restricting itself primarily to astronomy. Admittedly there
is a reference to his taking the first photograph on glass but nothing, for instance,
about his crucial discovery of 'hypo', used in one form or another by photo-
graphers ever since. As to slips, one concerns John's education, and another
states that he "Built the 20' telescope" (my italics); but since this was not the
famous 20-foot used by William, confusion may arise. In themselves these slips
are not serious, though both give somewhat the wrong impression, and perhaps
one can be forgiven for having slight reservations about general accuracy.
Moreover, the 'biographical & bibliographical references' are certainly not
complete, but in his Introduction Luther does warn his readers that this will
happen.

Yet it is easy to be too critical, and although scholars will want more
information—for instance, that there is an important collection of John
Herschel's letters in the archives of the Royal Society—and some librarians
need further details, both collectors and antiquarian booksellers should find
much of value. — COLIN RONAN.

New Windows to the Universe, edited by F. Sanchez & M. Vazquez
10 × 7 inches. Price £45/$60 each (hardbound).

These two volumes contain the invited reviews and general lectures presented
at the XIth European Regional Astronomy Meeting of the IAU. The meeting
was hosted by the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias and was held at the
University of La Laguna, Tenerife in 1989 July. As befits such a general
meeting, the nearest Europe gets at present to anything like the AAS, a broad
range of topics are included in the reviews: the Sun and solar-like stars, stellar
structure and evolution, astronomical instrumentation, structure and evolution
of galaxies, active galaxies and cosmology, and the interstellar and intergalactic
medium. The choice of topics was no doubt influenced by the rôle the host
institution plays in the La Palma Observatory, but a fair fraction of astronomy
seems to be covered nevertheless.

So how good are the papers? Overall I was disappointed. It does contain some
very good reviews which might, for example, be a good starting point for
someone trying to bring themselves up to date in a particular area, but many of
the others probably aren't that useful now, and will be even less valuable in a few
years time. I hesitated before making what have become almost the traditional
critical noises about the usefulness of conference proceedings. Such reservations
are, I am afraid, valid here, despite the fact that these volumes contain only
invited review papers. This may, in part, be due to the fact that the conference
covered such a broad range, but one might have hoped for a little better from
Europe's only general astronomy meeting.

Such conference proceedings rarely contain any great surprises, so I was
pleased to find it contained one paper whose title alone will please aficionados
of the esoteric. 'Birth of the myth of the birth of the universe' by H. Reeves is
remarkable for both its typography and its off-beat content. If your library
obtains these volumes you might like to see if you agree. — MIKE WATSON.

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