For the past several years the General Editor, Professor Tibor Horvath, has been on a sabbatical from his URAM involvements. He has now returned to them. In the present issue he explores the URAM implications of two articles by John Davenport and Kevin Sharpe published last year in this Journal. At the same time he is editing the papers presented last summer in Budapest for a special theme issue on 'Central European Studies'. We feel confident that all those involved with the URAM project will want to say: 'Welcome back, Tibor'.

The first article in the present issue deals with two ancient Christian texts, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. Its author, Professor Frank Carpinelli of St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto, introduces intelligent readers from other disciplines than his own into the complexities of modern critical study of the Christian Bible in order to tease out from the first century Greek texts the notion of ultimacy that the 'implied author' wanted to convey to his or her 'implied reader'. 'Ultimate experience and existence in Luke's works mean living now and forever with God as children of the resurrection, the equal to angels'.

The second major article propels us from first century Palestine to eighteenth century England. Using canons of scholarship as sophisticated as those employed in scripture studies Professor Dave Leigh of Seattle University places the poet Alexander Pope in his historical and literary context as a prelude to his study of Pope's masterpiece, An Essay on Man. Professor Leigh presents Pope as an ethicist defending the notion of a natural and supernatural order of the universe against a countervailing eighteenth century force of scepticism in the form of deism and empiricism.

The political developments in South Africa have benefitted URAM research. Scholars from this formerly isolated nation can now attend the biennial URAM conferences and the fruit of their studies can now be published in this journal. The first of these post-apartheid contributions is by Prof. J.J. (Ponti) Venter and is entitled 'Mechanistic Individualism Versus Organismic Totalitarianism: Toward a Neo-Calvinist Perspective'. In it, Professor Venter studies two metaphors commonly used to describe human commu-
nity, society as a machine and society as a body. He then argues that these metaphors or paradigms have moved from the levels of description and explanation to metaphysical reality with deleterious effects on South Africa and other nations. In addition to these two there are other possible metaphors, and this plurality 'points to something beyond language, namely the plurality of possible relationships between human beings and their environment'. Professor Venter then proposes a third metaphor drawn from his neo-Calvinist Afrikaner tradition, namely social differentiation and juxtaposition, commonly referred to as 'sovereignty in its own sphere'.

If the transition from a Christian literary text of the first century, Luke-Acts, to one from the eighteenth century, An Essay on Man, challenges the diligent reader, then the shift from individualism and totalitarianism as social metaphors to that of the 'big bang' at the origin of the universe may prove to be equally engaging. In 'The Origin of the Big Bang Universe in Ultimate Reality with Special Reference to the Cosmology of Stephen Hawking', Professor Kevin Sharpe of the Union Institute in Cincinnati presents the outlines of a theistic riposte to contemporary cosmological theory. Using the notion that a mathematical, logical 'subuniverse' must be the 'condition for the possibility' of the 'Big Bang' Professor Sharpe then develops traditional arguments for a personal Creator of the universe. In his review of this article Professor Alexander Berezin of McMaster University in Hamilton confirms the utility of the notion of a subuniverse and urges Professor Sharpe to synthesize and develop his thinking about this ultimate reality and meaning in systematic ways.

With the publication of this issue we begin our twentieth year of URAM studies. We believe that the notion of ultimate reality and meaning offers a unique entry point for interdisciplinary studies and for the pursuit of contemporary metaphysics. It is therefore with vitality and optimism that we begin our next decade of URAM research.