

and the Nazi press were turning out vitriolic articles under such headings as 'Jews-Czechs-Karl Barth'. Nor did he prove a very comfortable presence for the Swiss churches; Barth felt that these showed notable solidity, but wished that they had a worthier cause to be solid about (275). In his attitude to the Munich agreement, even his friends were worried by his lack of 'realism'; but such 'realism', as he complained, amounted merely to recognition and acceptance of the facts created by Hitler (289). Years later, he was to make himself equally unpopular over his attitude to the Soviet invasion of Hungary. 'Why is Karl Barth silent about Hungary?' He seems to have felt that the episode had been used too much as a pretext for self-righteousness by Western democrats in general, and by theologians in particular. He explained that Soviet communism 'had pronounced its own verdict on itself' in Hungary and that 'it did not need ours'. His reticence on the matter enabled

him to help some Hungarians in their own country by interceding with their government for them. (427).

I am sure that the health in the next few decades of Christian theology depends on its assimilation of what is to be learned from Barth's compelling genius, together with an avoidance of his mistakes. His principal mistake is surely his entirely hostile attitude to 'natural theology'. It seems to me clear that Christian intellectuals ought to engage both in dogmatic and in natural theology; the former that the implications of Christian faith for theory and practice should be clearly and consistently drawn out; the latter that good reason may be provided why anyone should believe it when he does not yet do so. Short of 'natural theology' in this sense, it is difficult to see Christian faith as essentially distinct from any obscurantism or fanaticism whatever.

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THE VIRTUES by P.T. Geach *Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977. 173 pp. £4.95.*

I read Professor Geach's new book (part of his Stanton Lectures) straight through with only a short break for lunch. It is that kind of entertaining and constantly interesting book, though the suspicion does occasionally arise that it was written in much the same way as I read it, for there are a number of easily avoidable mistakes.

It is a popular essay in the altogether welcome new style of moral philosophy which instead of agonising about the 'meaning of ethical sentences' or the significance of 'right' or 'good' in general, analyses the particular virtues that men and women need: the four cardinal virtues that 'are needed for any large scale worthy enterprise' and the three theological virtues that are needed if we are to attain God, our final end. It seems to be the latter that interest Geach most, the only cardinal virtue that really gets him going is courage; temperance he finds frankly boring (since a large part of his treatment of it is devoted to disagreeing with St. Thomas's view that chastity is part of temperance, this is perhaps not altogether surprising) and a man who finds it doubtful whether one should preach rationality indiscriminately to the common herd (p 8)

may not be expected to be very eloquent about prudence. In fact most of the prudence chapter is taken up with an attack (a good attack) on consequentialism. Geach's materialism and his anti-liberal insistence on the corruption of present age should make him congenial reading to marxists but his chapter on justice shows no interest in a scientific analysis of society and in fact is largely taken up with his familiar hobbyhorse about lying. Incidentally he envisages at least the possibility of a state of society short of heaven in which 'though death, the last enemy, has not been overcome, sin lies crushed. In such a world where evil rulers and perverse laws and corrupting mass media and oppression of the poor had been done away for ever, nightmares of the past never to return and trouble men, those who grew up to mortal life would predominantly be saved' but now, 'the world lies in wickedness, and only those who deliberately swim against the current can hope to be saved' (p 95). Possibly a more promising starting point for a theology of liberation than some humanistic progressive Christian thinking.

Geach rejects (rightly, I think) an ethics based on a sense of duty or obliga-

tion but substitutes a basis of human needs. This would be well enough did he not quite explicitly (p 9) distinguish between such needs and human desires. Any ethics which does not in the end appeal (as does St Thomas's) to the good as what is desired (however tricky it may be to distinguish your genuine desires) has to pose bogus problems of the form 'Why should I be good anyway?' Geach doesn't have to answer the man who asks why he should be expected to do his 'duty', but he is surely still left with the man who is not interested in the large scale worthy enterprise. The discussion of human needs is indeed important, but only because it is a major part of the exploration of our desires.

A large and interesting part of the chapter on faith is devoted to a discussion of original sin. Having shown that some difficulties concerning this are rooted in a Platonic view of the soul, he proposes to be more materialist (and indeed more aristotelean) than either Aquinas or Aristotle and argues that 'the *appetitus naturalis* that expresses itself in all the teleology of life, and the will that expresses itself in deliberate voluntary action, are not ascribable to different principles of life but only to one.' In this he is surely being faithful to the whole tendency of Aquinas's thought, but it is, to put it gently, obscure to go on: 'The movement of generation ascribable to the will of fallen Adam, continues itself in the very root of the will, the *voluntas ut natura*, in any new human individual.' (p 29) We are not, however, given any clarification of this. It is a weakness, perhaps due to the form of these lectures, that at crucial points the argument simply disappears. For example, when he wants to assert against mechanistic reductionisms of all kinds that 'there is no logical bridge from the propositions of natural science constructions that we naturally use to describe our own and our fellows' attitudes and meanings.' He simply refers us to an article by Quine. Similarly utilitarianism is disposed of by an appeal to an article by Lars Bergstrom.

As to specific mistakes in the book: I hope readers will not be put off by the bad argument at the very beginning by which the author tries to show that no proposition 'except one explicitly about the meaning of words' is true in virtue of

what the words employed mean. I happen to think this is correct but would hardly be convinced of this by Geach's argument in which he shows concerning 'Any father is male' not that it is true in virtue of something other than the meaning of the words, but merely that it is untrue (because fathers may undergo subsequent sex-changes). All that this suggests is that we have to be careful about words and their meanings; it has no tendency to show that e.g. "Wednesday comes between Tuesday and Thursday" is true by reason of anything other than the meaning of its terms.

Again Geach, maintaining rightly that faith is a matter of individual decision, goes on: "I believe", not, as fashionable re-writers of the Creed' (he means the English speaking Catholic hierarchies) 'would have it. "We believe"; and faith on someone else's behalf is a difficult notion.' (p 47) Overcome by his desire to take a crack at the bishops, he has so far deserted logic as to forget that 'We believe' is a true statement only if 'I believe' is a true statement, and even to fantasise that when I say 'We are eating supper' I am somehow claiming to eat supper on someone else's behalf.

On page 55 there is an elementary confusion about the immortality of the soul. Those who maintain that the human soul is immortal do not, as Geach imagines, suppose the existence of the soul to be independent of the will of God. What God has created, whether mortal or immortal, he could, of course, uncreate (and perhaps this is what damnation would be). By immortality St Thomas, for example, simply meant imperishability, independence of the physical processes of generation and corruption— that just as sometimes for the soul to operate (in understanding, for example) is not in itself for the body to operate, so for the soul to exist is not in itself for the body, whose life it is, to exist. The soul, for St Thomas, is indeed the life of this body but this is not all that can be said of it.

On page 68 he seems to suppose that to investigate the literary genre of a New Testament passage is to question its 'reliability'.

Geach objects to what he usefully calls 'theistic rule utilitarianism' (the view that although we should not act on our own estimate of the greatest good of the great-

est number because we don't know enough, divine law is based on God's well-informed calculation of this end and for this reason should be obeyed) on the grounds that God might judge that a false revelation would work out for men's good. (p 96). I hold no brief for the doctrine Geach is attacking but because of what must count as man's good (and not because of anything to do with the benevolence of God) it does not, I think, make sense to say that Man's good might be achieved in his being fundamentally deceived about himself. We can only think so by a careless extrapolation from the evident truth that a man may occasionally be advantaged by being deceived about particular matters. It involves the same kind of logical ineptitude as supposing that because I would be better off if I owned some perfectly forged pound notes, everybody would be much better off if we all owned lots and lots of forged pound notes.

Geach is refreshingly permissive about the breaking of promises (which at one time seemed to be the only serious crime known to English moral philosophers). For him it is simply a matter of letting someone down, but 'if the circumstances come to be such that A's fulfilment of his promise to B will injure C more than non-fulfilment will injure B, then whatever B may feel about the matter A is released, and it would be preposterous for B, knowing the circumstances, to reproach A for breaking his promise and letting B down.' Then, however, he goes on inconsistently to make an exception of vows. He is, course, aware that you can't let God down by breaking a vow, but then he simply states that 'it would be a great and manifest sin to fail of performance'. Precisely why? Geach's theory offers no reason whatever for this and must therefore be inadequate.

Geach, happily, has now joined the majority of Catholic moralists in no longer

CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH, by Paul Badham, *Macmillan*. 1976. 174pp. £8.95.

The resurrection of the body is a fundamental piece of Christian belief, and basis of Christian hope. In a vague way, Christians take it for granted as a kind of background for their whole existence, without thinking about it very clearly or deliberately. Maybe this is just as well: for when

holding the view once held by Pope Paul VI (*Hum. Vit.* 10 and 12) that traditional christian sexual morality can be justified by an appeal to the teleology of the generative organs (p 138) but he is likely to depart much further from them in the justification he himself provides: this is that sex in our fallen world is a manifestly evil and corrupting thing to which the only antidote is marriage: "Apart from the good of marriage that redeems it, sex is poison." (p 147). Like *Playboy* and so many modern writers, Geach seems to believe that it is possible to discuss, and characterise morally, something called 'sex' in the abstract, as though it named a specific piece of human behaviour. The proper starting point is, of course, the complex sexual, social, linguistic activity called marriage which is not an 'antidote' for anything, but a necessary human sphere of occupation like house-building, transport, teaching, and civil authority. (It would be odd to speak of London Passenger Transport as an antidote to being stranded in Upminster by the Tube breaking down.) From there you can, if you like, go on to consider the defective or fake variations on marriage; fornication, sexism, adultery, 'deviant behaviour' and the rest, and assess them in terms of the teleology not of bodily organs but of the natural human relationship of marriage.

But, all in all, an enjoyable book with some good arguments and insights and jokes as well, (do not miss the biblical warrant for believing that $\pi = 3$, on page 159), and a refreshing change from the prevailing moralising amongst both philosophers and theologians.

On page 95 'through' should be 'though' and there is a comma to be omitted.

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you do think about it, and what it implies, you are bound to come up against some pretty awkward problems which can sometimes only be overcome by extremely bizarre solutions. Paul Badham's book confronts some of these, in an amiable and unassuming way (though relying heavily