

WORDS ABOUT GOD: THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, edited by Ian T. Ramsey. SCM Press, London, 1971. 244 pp. £1.50.

The difference between this and other Readers in the Philosophy of Religion is made clear by the editor at the outset. It is not his intention to offer 'a general panorama' of the Philosophy of Religion in history, but to assemble materials that bear on a philosophical discussion of theological and religious language. It is a collection that should be especially welcomed by the theologian, since it puts his finger on the pulse of contemporary British philosophy with judicious selections from the major figures. It will also be of value to the philosopher: to the beginner, obviously, but also as a reminder to all of the need for historical perspective in a discussion which has often been guilty of historical naiveté.

The Editor's general introduction is devoted to what he calls 'a broad background survey of the development of empiricism over the last half century and more'. The bulk of its thirteen pages, however, is taken up with the broadening of empiricism that comes with the second phase of Wittgenstein's work. Of particular interest here are the suggestions of similarity which Bishop Ramsey purports to find between his own emphasis on the disclosure basis of understanding, and such remarks of Wittgenstein's, about coming to understand, as that 'the flashing of an aspect on us seems half visual experience, half thought' (p. 11. cf. *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 197e). Unfortunately the reader is left to make what he can of the suggestion; later, when introducing selections from the *Tractatus*, he hints tentatively at another possible link, this time with remarks of a rather different nature, about 'things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.' (p. 92. cf. *Tractatus* 6.522.)

It would probably have been inappropriate, however, to digress on this point, since the Introduction and editorial comment throughout the book are intended to help the general reader to pick his way through the philosophical material. In this respect the editor's contributions are well judged. Not only does he take care to relate the different discussions to the main theme of the book—especially useful when the selections are from such as Russell,

Waismann, Strawson, etc.—but he will also, on occasion, take issue with the argument, or give an indication of how he thinks the discussion should develop.

The Readings are conveniently grouped in four sections. The first, entitled 'The Language of Religious Belief: Some Classical Discussions', makes unmistakably clear how perennial is 'the contemporary' problem of religious language. A generous allotment of space to Maimonides and Aquinas (*Summa Q. 13*) are particularly helpful here. The remainder of this section is a useful source for Bishop Ramsey's own thinking, drawing as he does on Berkeley's *Alciphron*, H. L. Mansel, and Bradley, to underline particularly the importance of what he likes to call 'first person language' and 'theological reticence'.

The next two sections, constituting almost half the book, should prove invaluable to theologians and to any reader unfamiliar with contemporary British philosophy. Besides predictable selections from Russell, Wittgenstein (*Tractatus*), Ayer, Ryle and Austin, there is a goodly portion of Waismann's important paper 'Language Strata', and an extract from Max Black's *Models and Metaphors*. These latter selections, coupled with his own remarks on Wittgenstein in the Introduction, provide an excellent preparation for the final section which takes up, once more, the theme of 'The Logical Character of Religious Language'.

The editor has wisely limited himself, in this final section, to one of the most fruitful themes in the present discussion, a theme which he himself did much to highlight, viz. the role of metaphor in theological thinking, and the possibility of delineating the logical character of such thinking. Papers by Hepburn and himself are usefully offset by a glimpse of Evans-Pritchard's discussion of the same question with respect to Nuer Religion.

One inaccuracy, in the Introduction, should be noted: Wittgenstein's connection with the Vienna Circle is complex, but he did not at any time 'belong' to the circle. There is also a misspelling, on page 168, of H. Feigl's name.

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ST THOMAS AQUINAS: SUMMA THEOLOGIAE. Vol. XVIII: Psychology of Human Acts (Ia IIae vi-xvii), Thomas Gilby, O.P. *Blackfriars*; London: *Eyre and Spottiswoode*; New York: *McGraw-Hill*. xvi + 236 pp. £2.10.

St Thomas's discussion of the psychological composition of a human voluntary act, which

is based partly on Aristotle and partly on the work by Nemesius attributed to Gregory of

Nyssa, is both less outmoded and less complicated than might appear at first sight. Two things need to be remembered if one is to avoid confusion. The first is that, strictly speaking, it is not the intellect that knows and the will that wills, but the man who knows by his intellect and wills by his will; the second is that the twelve 'partial acts' into which the human act is analysed, and of which Fr Gilby gives a lucid scheme in his first appendix, are not really separate acts at all but are distinguishable constituents in the one human act. Only if this is recognized is it possible to escape some form of psychological determinism.

Fr Gilby's rendering of the Angelic Doctor's text is, as we should expect, both free (sometimes perhaps too free!) and sprightly, and his notes are illuminating and striking; cf., e.g., the references to anovulants and Ulster on page 57, to the life-history of bees on page 127 and to Aston Villa Football Club on page 193. He is ready to admit that some of the articles are not altogether helpful and he makes an important comment on page 207 that St Thomas's theory of original sin is not St Augustine's, a point which Fr T. C. O'Brien

had also stressed in vol. xxvi, appendix 6. This is in some respects a key volume in the series and Fr Gilby has handled it brilliantly.

There are, however, rather more uncorrected slips than one would have hoped; of these the following have been noted. Page 22, line 29, for first 'est' read 'ex'. Page 29, line 4, for 'voluntary' read 'involuntary'. Page 40, last line, for 'circumstantiis' read 'circumstantiae'. Page 42, line 8, for 'auxilus' read 'auxiliis'. Page 43, line 18, 'when you pause over its importance' is an odd rendering of 'cum consideratur quid aliquis fecerit'. Page 53, line 13, for 'volition' read 'nolition'. Page 69, line 1, for 'to be good and fitting' read 'to seem good and fitting'. Page 81, line 3, omit 'though'. Page 84, line 17, for 'divitur' read 'dividitur', and line 20, for 'domini' read 'domina'. Page 85, line 12, 'quae convenit intellectui' is not translated. Page 89, line 20, for 'any lack of a not good' read 'any lack of a good'. Page 93, line 23, after 'universal good' add 'apprehended by reason'. Page 112, line 24, for 'fruito' read 'fruitio', and line 26, for 'decimur' read 'dicimur'. Page 131, line 13, for 'practice' read 'theory'.

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ALIVE TO GOD. Muslim and Christian Prayer. Compiled with introduction by Kenneth Cragg. O.U.P., 1970. £1.50.

This is a pretentious and tiresome book. Designed to draw Christians and Muslims together in prayer, it is more likely to put people off prayer altogether. The introductory essay begins with pages of rolling Victorian humanism, in a prose worthy of Dickens at his very worst; and then moves into a maze of sophistry and more modern platitude, presumably intended as theological argument—though, since Dr Cragg appears to cherish at least three totally different ambitions in this book, which he shows no signs of being able to distinguish, the general drift is unclear (as are many of the individual sentences, for that matter). And this is not just a matter of literary style; there is a crucial theological and political point. Cragg offers us one version of 'prayer without getting your hands dirty'. In one of his own compositions, he prays for a 'hallowing of science by the poetry of worship' (prayer being, as he says, 'the poetry of the soul'). And it is fairly clear what he means by poetry; reduced to its essentials, it is a way in which complacent clergymen and intellectuals can exploit the anguish of men to their own emotional and 'creative' satisfaction. Of course,

Cragg doesn't tell us this. He knows all about being involved in the world's history—in fact, he tells us that religious faiths claim to 'comfort and interpret' history (sic!). But, if you read between the lines, the whole tone of his introduction, and the principle of his selection, is a radical denial of the reality of the world's problems (including the divisions between religions), by way of the said Victorian humanism, and a bland assertion of the brotherhood of man, which is considerably less plausible than, say, St Paul's view of the matter. It is equally a denial of the reality of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ—and, in different terms, I believe Muslims are just as committed as we are to the particularity of God's action within real human history. It is hardly surprising, then, that we are invited to a style of prayer typical of Anglicanism at its most repugnant; we are to find words we can all agree to, everyone being free to *mean* whatever he pleases by them. This really is prayer with the guts left out! If prayer is only the icing upon a world and a dialogue otherwise unaffected by it, then why bother? If—true to the real tradition of Islam and Chris-