

Denys Turner's article on atheism and idolatry argues that St Thomas's description of God as *ipsum esse subsistens* allows him to avoid both these extremes. He also shows convincingly that the 'Five Ways' are intended to be rigorous proofs of God's existence. However his exposition of St Thomas's discussion of idolatry seems mistaken: St Thomas does not say that the Catholic and the idolater are using the word 'God' analogously, but that the Catholic is when he uses this word to refer both to the true God and to an idol.

A final article on Flannery O'Connor aims to show the Thomist, or, at any rate, Catholic, inspiration of her stories. Frederick Bauerschmidt argues that the shocking nature of her writings was intended not to encourage nihilism, but to make her readers feel the inadequacy of a life without divine grace.

This eclectic volume will not really serve as an introduction to St Thomas, but will no doubt be of interest to those who are already interested in the various subjects discussed.

THOMAS CREAN OP

A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF PLACE by John Inge, *Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003, Pp. 161, £15.99 pbk.*

The author makes his position clear. 'Our existence as embodied beings means that place is as necessary to us as the air we breathe but, more than that, it seems to me that our human experience is shaped by place' (p. ix). Yet from Aristotle onwards, place has not been an important category for Western thought. More contemporary philosophical reflection is devoted to space, in its abstract generality, than to place in its contemporary particularity. It is a pity that consideration of place has not had the benefit of the abundant modern thought on corporeity: it shows little interest in this link between the body and its place in space.

Moreover, modern society is undergoing change in its relationship to place: contemporary humanity is structured by mobility, communication technology, globalisation and relocation, not to mention migrants and refugees. These elements do not cut us off from the places we belong to, but make us inhabit them differently. There too, according to Inge, philosophy is largely absent. In Christian thought, we see the same lack of interest: theological tradition, both historically and today, seems to repeat this deficiency. This weakness is all the more harmful when we observe that in the Bible, by contrast, there is keen interest in places and a rich crop of references.

Inge, indeed, urges us to read the Old Testament as the narrative of a three-way interaction between God, a people and a place. It is the story of a land, promised, hoped-for, inhabited, lost and found (and which was to be lost again, outside Scripture, for twenty centuries). Traces remain of this story in Christian life. For instance, the Exile: this was God's means of destroying perverse forms of attachment of the people to their place, by deporting them elsewhere; this metaphor of relocation endures in Christian spirituality, as the *Salve Regina* bears witness. Inge says that 'for Jews it is as if Yahweh himself has an address on earth' (p. 45). The same does not seem to be true of Christians. Their relationship to God is no longer channeled through a land. It even seems unduly spiritualised in Jewish eyes. Indeed St Paul in his epistles gives no space to places (*Acts* is quite different in this respect). For St John, God's place on earth becomes a person, the Word made flesh, in whom the meeting with man occurs. But in spite of this 'Christification' every meeting, having a sacramental quality, is a human reality and thus situated in space. Eschatology too gives value to places: Jesus tells us that he is 'going to prepare a place for us' (Jn 14:2), while the *Apocalypse* sings of the heavenly Jerusalem, the place where all the elect will come together.

Theologians may have paid little attention to these aspects of revelation, but the practices of the faithful were certainly different. Early on, certain places were felt to be significant, and Catholicism especially developed attention to sacred places by means of shrines and pilgrimages. The Reformation, on the other hand, distanced itself from them, in its attempt to destroy particular features not only of race but also of place. Even so, Inge makes a plea for the rediscovery of the importance of our stone churches, as anchor-points for the faith of the laity and signs, if they are alive, for a society that longs for points of reference.

Thus, this book contains many original insights. It is not convincing when it claims that no attention has been paid to places in Western thought. There is plenty of philosophical reflection on the subject, for example Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* deserves more than a passing mention. The contribution of human sciences is also not given its due. Another example: the discussion of space in Peter Brown's book *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (which is cited) has superb analyses of the development of Christianity in the West as if in 'pools' around the tombs of saints. Maurice Halbwachs's important book, *La Topographie Légendaire des Evangiles en Terre Sainte* would have provided useful distinctions between real places and imaginary places.

Yet one hesitates to mention other works, for Inge's book comes across to a large extent as a multiplication of references to authors, almost always 'relocated' out of all context, from whom he borrows an idea or quotation before passing on to another. This makes reading him difficult. Perhaps the subject is, all things considered, less neglected than Inge says, but what we need is a more synthetic reflection. This book has the merit of preparing the way for such an undertaking in the future.

ANTOINE LION OP

KIERKEGAARD'S ETHIC OF LOVE: Divine Commands and Moral Obligations by C. Stephen Evans, Oxford University Press, Oxford, Pp. ix + 366, £55.00 hardback.

Recently, as the dust cover of this book reminds us, Oxford University Press has published a handful of remarkable books about Kierkegaard: by M. Jamie Ferreira, David R. Law, Stephen Mulhall, Murray Rae and Anthony Rudd, to which this makes a fine addition. Professor of philosophy at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, a Baptist foundation dating back to 1845, the author has published about fifteen books, including *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History* (Oxford University Press, 1996) and *Faith Beyond Reason* (Edinburgh University Press, 1998). As regards Kierkegaard, besides his book *Passionate Reason: Making Sense of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments* (Indiana University Press, 1992), Professor Evans served as Curator of the Howard and Edna Hong Kierkegaard Library, while at St Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

Obviously, the primary readership for this book is scholars who are interested in Kierkegaard. The thesis for them is that they have not paid enough heed to the place the related role of divine command and divine authority play in Kierkegaard's work. God's commands should be obeyed, on this account, not because of fear of divine punishment, but out of love and gratitude for the good that God has bestowed on human beings by creating them and giving them eternal life with God as their destiny. The relation human beings have with God makes possible this ultimate human good, thus creating those unique obligations we call moral.

The other audience, as Evans hopes, is philosophers and theologians interested in divine command theories of ethics. Classically, the discussion is traced back to Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro*: 'Do the gods love holiness because it is holy, or is it holy because they love it?' Does God will the good because it is good, or is it good