

and wood remain longer than human life, and Eric Gill has left a vast amount of beauty in those materials. If I may conclude on a personal note, I have a vivid recollection of Eric Gill at Pigotts. Father Bede Jarrett, who had shortly ceased being Prior Provincial of the English Dominicans, had taken me, a young Dominican priest, as a possible bridge between two original friends and collaborators, Gill and my father, by then for some years at variance. Eric had been at my ordination, and the two had met there. On the occasion at Pigotts we stayed for lunch and talk. I remember the warmth and friendliness of Eric's welcome. He treated me with the deference one might expect from a Socrates, listening to my youthful utterance with interest and consideration. But the gap remained unbridged.

CONRAD PEPLER OP

BELIEVING IN GOD. A PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAY by Gareth Moore OP.
T & T Clark, 1989 Edinburgh, p vii + 289. £14.95.

Gareth Moore has explored a number of ideas that are central to the Christian faith. He covers, for example, what it is to love God, to fear him, to be rewarded or punished by him, what is meant by a miracle, and so on. Throughout, he is greatly influenced by the writings of Wittgenstein. In particular, he is influenced by Wittgenstein's view that to believe in God is not to entertain a hypothesis but to enter into a form of life and he is especially concerned to deny that God can be construed as a thing or an object. In that respect, he often does us a service in helping to remove false images that may enter into our thinking about God. Moreover the book is delightfully written, having that simplicity and clarity which is so easily underrated and so rarely achieved.

For all that, the book seems to me to have severe weaknesses. They may be roughly expressed by saying that, whilst Moore is not of course a logical positivist, he seems determined to confine himself only to those categories that a logical positivist would allow. In a short review, that point cannot be developed in the detail it deserves. The following, however, are examples of what I mean.

1. Moore works throughout his book with a distinction between the logical and the empirical which is of the most rigid kind. For example, he says that our understanding of God is of one who is absent. He then concludes that to speak of God as not absent is to commit a logical blunder which is comparable with speaking of a square circle. But that would be true only if the aspects under which we conceive God were entirely exhaustive of him. That is to treat the concept of God as if it were fixed in the manner of a concept in geometry. It is the characteristic of an abstract study, such as geometry, that we pin down our concepts, allowing nothing to come under them which we have not allowed already. There are other concepts of a similar type. For example, at any time or place, no one is to count as a bachelor unless he is male and unmarried. The point is, however, that these concepts are not typical of concepts in general. It is the characteristic of the concepts that we apply to living reality that they have shifting aspects and admit of no sharp distinction between the logical and the empirical. The point may be illustrated by reference to an ordinary name. It is essential to

the understanding of 'Mrs Thatcher' (at least for most of us) that she be a woman having such-and-such an appearance who is Prime Minister of Britain. In a manner, that description is definitive of her. Yet it is no contradiction to suppose that the woman thus defined might not have been or may no longer be Prime Minister or might not have had her present appearance. That is because it is also part of our understanding of 'Mrs Thatcher' that the aspects under which we conceive of her at present are not exhaustive of the woman herself. The point applies not simply to proper names but to our concepts in general. And it applies especially to our concept of God. Thus St. Paul certainly does conceive of a transformation of understanding such that God no longer appears under the aspect of one who is absent. 'For now we see as through a glass darkly; but then face to face—now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known (1 Corinthians 13).

2. Throughout, Moore uses a notion of the factual which excludes the idea of God as that of a factual object. What counts as factual, according to this notion, is, roughly, that it can be an object of direct experience. For example, Moore denies that 'God' is the name of an object, on the ground that we do not teach the meaning of the name by pointing to the object for which it stands. Indeed, he argues further that there can be no such thing, properly speaking, as evidence for God's existence, since there can be no question of confronting God independently of the evidence. The trouble with those criteria for the factual is that they would eliminate, not simply 'God', but some nine-tenths of what ordinarily falls under the notion. Indeed it is not easy to see what would remain, apart from the simplest reports of immediate experience. For example, no one explains the meaning of 'Napoleon' by pointing to the person for whom it stands. As in the case of any historical name, it is not clear what would be meant by saying that one could. Moreover whilst there would seem to be considerable evidence for the existence of Napoleon, no one has proved the validity of the evidence by producing the person himself. Yet a claim about Napoleon would be taken, in the ordinary sense, to be factual. Again, the theory of evolution is normally taken to be about the facts and it is supported by evidence that many take to be conclusive. Yet who has witnessed the process of evolution independently of the evidence provided for it? What, indeed, could be meant by supposing that one could witness a process involving innumerable details and covering many millions of years? Moreover Moore's criteria would lay waste not simply to history and biology but to the sciences in general. No scientist, for example, would be allowed to formulate an atomic theory of matter nor, indeed, any law that passes beyond immediate experience, ie any law at all.

3. The poverty of his idea of the factual gives to a number of Moore's remarks an odd quality; they appear to shift before one's eyes back and forth between the platitudinous and the obscure. For example, we are told, as an exposition of orthodox Christian faith, that God is nothing or that he does not exist. The remark strikes one as obscure. Then it occurs to one that by 'existence' Moore has in mind the world of large-scale physical objects as they appear in ordinary experience and that what he is telling us is that God is not a physical object such as a tree. At that point, however, it

occurs to one that a man of his intelligence would hardly make so platitudinous a remark. The remark then returns to obscurity.

I here resort to caricature. I have already acknowledged that Moore often does us a service in helping to strip us of false imagery. Nevertheless there seems to me a real obscurity at the centre of the book. The difficulty is to determine whether or not Moore wishes to analyze religious statements into the simply expressive. For example, at one point he attempts to illuminate statements about God by contrasting a physical line with the line of the Equator. His idea is that God stands to an object (a 'something') as the Equator stands to a physical line. Now the line of the Equator, I had always thought, is entirely imaginary. It is a device for expressing certain facts which can be appreciated as accurately, if not as conveniently, without using the notion at all. Is the same point supposed to apply to the notion of God? Later, he shifts his comparison, using the idea of a sensation, such as pain. His point in making the comparison is, again, to show that God is not a something. For pain is not a something. Possibly; but neither, in the manner of the Equator, is it a nothing. The pain of another is plainly for me an objective fact. Or, to put it another way, it is an *object* of my thought, not simply in the sense that I think about it but also in the sense that it would exist whether I thought about it or not. Moreover some of us would hope, if our faith is not to be in vain, that the same, at least, might be said of God. The difficulty is to see whether Moore agrees.

H.O. MOUNCE

THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION, BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, EUCHARIST by Liam G. Walsh OP, *Geoffrey Chapman Theology Library*, London. 1988. Pp. 303.

This book is everything that an up-to-date text-book of theology should be. Excellent; both readable and systematic, with full bibliography and useful index. What's more, it's a text-book that deliberately declares its own insufficiency, so to say. At the end of each chapter, as in all the volumes of this series, are a number of 'Study Questions'. But Fr Walsh's study questions are in a class of their own; real; stern examination questions, which cannot be answered simply from a reading of the chapter to which they are appended. That chapter, like the book as a whole, simply points the student to areas to be explored by further research and study. At the same time, if you are only an interested reader, with no intention of cudgelling your brains over the study questions, the successive chapters will tell you all you want (or need) to know about baptism, confirmation and eucharist.

In his Introduction Fr Walsh puts the sacraments in the wider anthropological context of religious cultic symbolism. His three key words, introduced here, and structurally controlling the whole book, are 'rite', 'word' and 'life'. The interaction of these, he says, is a common object of study by the anthropological sciences, and in our present world these sciences have to be noticed seriously by theology. However, the author in no way subordinates his theology of the sacraments to anthropological categories. His book remains a work of Catholic theology, not one of religious studies investigating the phenomenon of Catholic Christian cultic