

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION by Brian Davies *Opus Books, Oxford University Press, 1993. 260 pages. £8.99*

When I held the Chair of the Philosophy of Religion in London University, I recommended many introductions to the subject to my students. However, the clear favourite which they found most helpful and readable was one by Brian Davies. He has now reissued his book in new form bringing in material which has occurred in the philosophical literature since the first edition. The book deals with the traditional arguments for the existence of God, with the question of experience and God, with the problem of evil, with morality, miracle and life after death, and with one or two of the main attributes of God. The treatment throughout is scrupulously fair and refers to a reasonable range of relevant philosophical discussions. Father Davies defends basically a Thomist concept of God with a number of allied positions that might be expected to go with this. He does it very well and his own views never obtrude. In fact he usually invites the readers to make their own decisions on the topics he mentions and provides them with enough material to make this possible. So, while this is far from being "the standard account of the subject", as the blurb ridiculously asserts, (I know that is not the author's fault) nevertheless, this is an extremely good introduction which can be strongly recommended for anyone beginning a study of the philosophy of religion.

It is of some sociological interest to note that the philosophy of religion is understood to be the philosophy of the Christian religion. Nothing is said about anthropological or sociological definitions of religion or about the phenomena of religion other than the Christian. I find it very surprising that Christian philosophers assume that theirs is the only faith worth philosophising about. But, it is a fact that most philosophers of religion are Christian. Another feature of the same sort is that an introduction to the philosophy of religion can be written which shows very little interest in issues of feminism, process philosophy, European traditions of existential phenomenology or movements of post-modernist thought. In this respect Father Davies reflects the state of the discipline in Oxford and like-minded universities. I am not intending this as a criticism, since to include all of these things would be to write a very unwieldy or very different book. It is more a sociological observation which, as co-editor of the main academic journal on this subject, I simply register. As far as the book which Father Davies has actually written goes, it is an extremely good introduction to the subject as it is studied in analytical philosophy of religion, with illuminating insights into the revival of Thomist studies. I am happy to think that my own students will continue to rely upon it.

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