

it is usually, here, a result of his expressing the *extreme* consequence of some truth. For example: 'Real humility makes a man conscious of his nature; a something created out of nothing . . . he is now as little able to attribute to his own credit the good actions which God works in him as he was before he was created.'

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

NEW ESSAYS IN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY. Edited by Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre. (S.C.M. Press; 21s.)

METAPHYSICAL BELIEFS. By Stephen Toulmin, Ronald Hepburn and Alasdair MacIntyre. (S.C.M. Press; 25s.)

MYSTERY AND PHILOSOPHY. By Michael Foster. (S.C.M. Press; 12s. 6d.)

Among the most interesting volumes of this *Library of philosophy and theology* are those in which English philosophers have turned their attention to the analysis of theological statements. Of course no new movement is ever entirely new, and some of the problems now being faced were put and answered in the middle ages, which shared our inclination for linguistic analysis: but every age that is to avoid sterility must find its own formulation of the questions, and its own version of the answers. If the modern questioning sometimes seems rather radical, we may remember that a well-known article of the *Summa Theologica* begins 'videtur quod Deus non sit'.

Mr Foster's book is itself an attempt to assess the worth of the movement. He suggests that linguistic philosophy has more in common with Christian thought than had the Greek-inspired philosophy of former days. The contrast of Jew and Greek is an old theme, but is not overplayed; unfortunately Mr Foster prefers to present even the simplest ideas in other people's words, which makes his work rather indigestible.

The essays of *Metaphysical Beliefs* put the problem which is central to any theology. Since the mysteries of God's kingdom cannot be directly expressed, how can we get outside the closed circle of irreducibly 'mythological language'; how can we show the validity of the parables we are bound to use? In essays called *Poetry and religious belief* and *The logical status of religious belief*, Mr Hepburn and Mr MacIntyre are not so much offering a solution as displaying the complexity of the problem and eliminating false approaches—which is in some ways a more valuable thing to do.

*New Essays* is now some two years old, pioneer work on which the later books partly depend. The central theme is the same: how can we locate God in revelation? Mr Crombie, in an interesting study, suggests that 'statements about God are in effect parables which are referred out of our experience in a certain direction'; the subject of these statements

is given by natural theology, and only the predicates are parabolic in character. The trouble is that 'God' is not a proper name, it functions logically as a predicate (*S.T.* 1.13.9), so that I do not think natural theology can have this privileged position: it asserts the same mystery as faith does, only faith 'presents us with more and better effects' (1.12.13 ad 1) in which to see that mystery.

The best of the other essays in the volume can be grouped round this one. Mr Hepburn's criticism of Bultmann, for example, or the collection that deals with natural theology itself—the articles of Professor Hughes and Mr Rainer usefully clear up the muddles in the earlier ones. The theme recurs in Professor Flew's examination of the problem of evil; the 'free-will defence' at which he tilts is perhaps really a windmill, but one that flaps its sails vigorously and deserves to fall. *New Essays* is an uneven book, containing contributions it is kinder not to mention, but it is vigorous and alive, and worth bringing to the attention of those who do not know it.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

A LETTER TO HIS SISTER. By St Aelred of Rievaulx. Edited by Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker. (Mowbrays; 5s.)

MEDITATIONS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. By an Augustinian. Translated and edited by a religious of C.S.M.V. (Mowbrays; 4s.)

Two further works in this attractively produced and priced series of devotional works. The middle-English version of St Aelred's letter has been modernized with the success that can be expected of these competent translators. In the main it is a meditation on the gospel, which they rightly call 'one of the most moving ever written'. For example:

'Now after this, go up with your Lady to the hill where Elizabeth and the blessed Mary met together with many a sweet embrace. And here watch carefully, Sister, how John the Baptist hopped for joy in his mother's womb. See how he knew and saluted his Lord like a servant, his King like a knight, and the fount of all righteousness as a crier salutes a judge. And blessed were those wombs, and blessed shall they always be, from which the salvation of the world sprung out with mirth and joy to drive away the darkness of woe and sorrow which hitherto had reigned.'

This is completely felt, not emotionally bogus like its numerous nineteenth-century descendants, from which so many souls still have to try and work up their devotion. For all that it seems to me that medieval piety does have more in common with that of the nineteenth century than with our own; that even in its first Cistercian freshness this psychological approach is less congenial to us than the impersonal