

through miracles to the problem of freedom of choice to prayer-to-change-things); 'the eternal triangle', on the Trinity; 'being human', which concentrates upon the body-soul problem, on the question what happens to their relation at death, and on the operations of desire and action through body and soul; 'how to be happy' takes virtue and natural law under its heading; 'how to be holy', which explores the questions of the nature and purpose of human beings, and the roles of law and grace in making them what they ought to be; 'the heart of grace', which deals with faith, hope and charity; 'God incarnate', which conveys elegantly the shadings of interest in the implications of Chalcedonian Christology for thirteenth century minds; 'the life and work of Christ', which deals with sin, satisfaction for sin, merit, justification and the resurrection and ascension; 'signs and wonders', which places the sacraments in context.

In two areas of current concern it would have been valuable to have rather more. Aquinas was interested in the nature of theology as an academic discipline, and more importantly, as a discipline in its own absolute right. He was also writing at a time when elements of an ecclesiology which was both to reflect and to influence the events which divided the Church in the West in the sixteenth century were being made explicit. On the latter there are useful points on the Eucharist as 'the reality which constitutes the Church as the Church' (p.363), but that is only part of the contemporary story. It would also be helpful here and there to have a clearer indication how far Aquinas' ideas are those of his contemporaries or immediate predecessors, and where he is saying something new.

One might perhaps also wish for a little more on the effects upon Aquinas' mind of teaching within the confines of sequential lecturing on texts and of treating questions within a formal structure which tends to reduce all issues to the appearance of being much the same size. Dr. Davies has himself had to stand away from these structural limitations in order to discuss what Aquinas has to say, and makes excellent use of the difference it makes to be free to do so.

But these are quibbles, this is a comprehensive book, and it achieves balance in the areas of its great strengths, the analysis and presentation of Aquinas views on what Aquinas himself put in the forefront of his teaching. It should establish itself as a definitive study.

G.R. EVANS

THE REALITY OF TIME AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD: THE PROJECT OF PROVING GOD'S EXISTENCE by David Braine, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1988. Pp.383.

This book is without doubt a serious contender for the title of the most important contemporary work of metaphysics: and if metaphysics is the first philosophy, for the title of the most important contemporary work of philosophy, *tout court*.

Braine tells us that his project is to show that God exists from the

existence of things as really temporal, which is shown to include their real contingency towards the future, 'the temporality whereby their continuance is not yet fixed or settled'. This is to be done without appeal to any special feature of human experience or cognition, without presuming that the world has to be intelligible, and is to include a demonstration that the God thus shown to exist is indeed God and not some intellectually constructed godling: creative, sustaining, living and active, personal, great, good and holy. It seems that this ambitious project is triumphantly achieved. It can be judged as at least the best attempt at such a project since the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*. That such a task should be conceived and carried out in our time is astounding.

Braine is conscious of the parallel between his work and Aquinas's: he regards his book as an argument of the same kind as the First Way. But it goes beyond that: his understanding of the First Way clearly demands an understanding of its context as preceding the next few questions of the *Summa*: an exceptionally good way of reading Aquinas, unfortunately rare.

But this is not a commentary on Aquinas: rather it is a carrying through of that Thomistic project (and, as Braine points out, patristic and Scriptural project), in the context of post-Kantian philosophy. This involves Braine in discussions of the reality of time against reductivists and phenomenologists; of the notion of causality, and how it relates to explanation in general—with the exploration that this involves of the relationship between the first-order questions of metaphysics and the second-order questions of some other favoured candidates for the post of 'first philosophy' such as epistemology or the theory of meaning; of the notion of causal agency and of substance; of existence and actuality.

The argument is briefly that time is real, and thus there is real contingency towards the future. Time and contingency, according to Braine, are in some sense presupposed by causality: a causality that is not to be understood as the instantiation of laws that state relations between events, but in terms of agency, the exercise of actuality by some agent. Existence is an actuality, and substances are the primary agents in our experience: but substances cannot be the agents of their own existence, considered as an actuality. Still more, no substance can be the agent of the continued existence of another. This is because everything for which there is a real distinction between 'being of a nature' and 'exercising a nature'—any temporal thing—is 'composite': thus, all and only temporal things are composite. Compositeness is the basis of real contingency. That which is contingent and composite can no more be the causal agent of the continuity of another any more than it can be of its own. Thus the continuity of substances in the world of time, given their real contingency towards the future, needs to be grounded on the causal agency of some incomposite existent: and this, Braine goes on to show, all men call God. That which is composite is derivative: but also, that which is incomposite is underivative. Only a personal agent can be

the ground of the existence of personal agents: consideration of incompositeness shows that there can be only one God, who transcends the world but is immediate to the action and existence of each creature, and that God is fittingly called holy, great and good.

The main stages of the argument, though elegant, convincing, and excellently signposted, are swift. I found myself anxious for more detail at a number of stages: but it is the sign of a good book that it leaves one hungry for more. Braine's understanding of his key notions is so appealing that one sometimes wants—wrongly—to see him giving more attention to refuting possible objections. This is an illegitimate demand to make on this book, but not an illegitimate plan for the future of metaphysics: and this book seems to set an excellent programme for metaphysical work. One is inspired to hope that others will take up the development and defence of Braine's concepts.

The breadth and depth of Braine's work is such that there is room for a full book in defence of his views on the concepts he uses at each stage, as his argument involves an understanding of central concepts that implies the rejection of views that seem to be an intrinsic part of the contemporary practice of philosophy in English-speaking countries. There could be full books in defence of his account of realism, of the relations between first- and second-order questions, of causality, of agency, of substance, of existence, of contingency, etc. etc. Braine wisely does not try to justify his views fully here: he merely gives what he takes to be the conclusive argument against rival conceptions, and pushes on. This will disappoint some readers, but will surely provide an inspiration for many more. These topics need work in their own right: but how important they are is shown by Braine's use of them. Braine's accounts of these concepts is unfamiliar and will, I fear, be unwelcome to many: indeed, I fear they may be yet more unwelcome precisely because of Braine's use of them.

A review such as this cannot do justice to such a work. May it at least communicate to some the enthusiasm which Braine's book has inspired. It is an essential work for anyone interested in either metaphysics or in natural theology, and contains valuable material for those involved in logic and the philosophy of science.

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

THE PROPHETIC GOSPEL by A.T.Hanson, *T. and T. Clark*, 1991. pp.393.

In this study of the Fourth Gospel, Professor Hanson develops the theses explored in his earlier book, *The New Testament Interpretation of Scripture*, 1980, and draws out implications. He argues that the Fourth Gospel is dominated and conditioned by scripture. In twelve chapters, he examines the scriptural background to sections in each of the chapters of the Johannine text, except chapter 21, which he regards as an editorial appendix. Discussions of the gospel's scriptural quotations and obvious