Letter from America

Brian Davies OP

Gareth Moore and I joined the Dominicans at exactly the same time. We were clothed in the habit together. We made profession together. And we were ordained to the priesthood on the same day. In spite of all that, however, we became good friends, though our friendship during his last years of life had to be sustained at a distance and with only occasional meetings. Gareth and I worked together for many years at Blackfriars, Oxford. But, almost at the same time, he became Prior of Froidmont, in Belgium, and I took up a teaching position in New York. While Gareth was in Belgium (from which he returned shortly before he died), he often asked me what American philosophers have to say about God. It strikes me now that I never answered his question in any detail. So here, in an argumentative and lecturing style, of which Gareth might have approved (though I am not sure of that), is my report to him.

A letter from America to Gareth.

I

Dear Gareth,

The great English philosopher Bertrand Russell had views on the morality of war. And for these he spent time in prison. On one occasion a jailer asked him what his religion was. Russell said: 'Agnostic'. The jailer replied: 'Well, there may be many religions, but we all worship the same God'.

But do we? It is often said that everyone who honestly professes belief in God worships the same God. It is sometimes said that *bona fide* members of all the major world religions do this. The idea is that, though people may have very different beliefs, their good intentions can somehow bring it about that they are all doing the same thing. 'There may be many religions, but we all worship the same God'.

Yet this view seems to me to be false. The verb 'to worship' is an intentional one, like 'to support', as when we say that so and so supports a particular political leader. And just as one can be mistaken about the object one supports, so one can be mistaken about the object one takes oneself to worship.

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Suppose I say that I support President Bush and the Republican Party. Suppose you question me about Bush and the Republicans. Also suppose that subsequent discussion proves that I am confusing Bush with someone like Bill Clinton, and Republicans with Democrats. In that case I do not support Bush and the Republicans. For my beliefs about them are wildly off the mark. In saying that I support them I might well be speaking in good faith. But I do not support what people who support them support. By the same token, it could emerge that I do not worship the one true God, if there is such a thing as the one true God. If my beliefs about the one true God are sufficiently off the mark, if I am sufficiently confused and in error about the one true God, then the object of my allegiance will be something else. That is why idolatry is a serious possibility. One may worship as God that which is not God.[1]

So if we are concerned with the one true God it matters that we are right in what we believe about divinity, which brings us to the question 'How has God fared at the hands of American philosophers?'.[2] More specifically, has he survived as the one true God? Or has he turned into something else—something more like a creature, perhaps? As we shall see, the picture is a complex one.

II

To start with, however, we need to go back to basics. For how should we think of the one true God? Indeed, should we suppose that there is a God at all?

Those who believe in God mostly started to do so because they believed those who told them that God exists. And what, we may ask, is wrong with that? The greater part of what we take for knowledge derives from what we have been taught in one way or other.[3] The notion that I am only within my rights in believing what I have verified or confirmed for myself rests on a concept of knowledge and justified belief which is quite at odds with the way we actually learn.[4] It also fails to allow for the fact that, when we have done with reasoning and the production of evidence or grounds for beliefs, we are left with belief that is not based on reasons, evidence, or grounds. But this is not to say that our talk of God has to be described as grounded in nothing but faith. Nor do I think that there is nothing but faith in which it may be grounded. On the contrary, I argue that, whatever else may be said about it, belief that there is a God is a natural consequence of basic human curiosity. Or, to put things another way, it is what you end up with if you allow yourself to be sufficiently inquisitive or questioning. As Thomas Aquinas used to say, it is something that can derive from *admiratio*, from puzzlement, from wondering 'How come?'.

In asking 'How come?', of course, the objects of our concern will be fairly specifiable for the most part. We may, for example, wonder how it comes to be that some local phenomenon obtains. Why, for example, are

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there mountains to the east of Seattle? Or why do I have brown hair? Sometimes, however, the range of our inquiry may be wider. Someone might explain why there are mountains to the east of Seattle. But we might then wonder why there should be any mountains, whether east of Seattle or anywhere else. And we might wonder how there come to people, whether brown-haired or otherwise. And if these questions are answered we might deepen the range of our inquiry. Mountains and people are there for reasons to be documented and explored by physicists, chemists, astronomers, and so on. These will tell us how it comes to be, not that this and that individual is there, but why things of certain kinds are there. And in telling us this they will be invoking levels of explanation which run deeper and deeper.

In doing so, however, they will always presume a background of things, a world or universe, in the light of which explanation is possible. Mountains east of Seattle are explicable on geological grounds. And my brown hair is explicable in genetic terms. So explanation here involves reference to things which can be analyzed in geological terms and to things explicable in genetic terms. And if we ask why geology is possible and why genetics is possible, we shall again be looking for things of a kind behaving in certain ways. But we might deepen the level of our inquiry. For we might ask, not 'What in the world accounts for this, that, or the other?', but 'Why any world at all?'. How come the whole business of asking and answering 'How come?'.

Now you may say that this is a question which should never be asked. You might side with Bertrand Russell in his famous debate with Fr Frederick Copleston.[5] Copleston asked Russell if he would say that the universe is something 'gratuitous'. Russell replied 'I should say that the universe is just there, and that's all'. But this seems to me as unreasonable a position as it is possible to maintain. Confronted by cats, Russell would never have said 'Cats are just there'. He would have said that we can always ask why something is there unless it is intrinsically absurd to do so. And, so it seems to me, there is nothing intrinsically absurd in asking how it comes to be that there is a universe in which we can ask 'How come?'. Some questions are intrinsically absurd. An example occurs in a dialogue reported by Professor Peter Geach.[6] Two rabbis were debating Genesis 1:1 ('In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'). The Hebrew for 'earth' is *eretz*, which does not contain the Hebrew letter 'gimmel", just as 'earth' does not contain a 'g'. The debate proceeds as follows:

First Rabbi 'Why should there be a gimmel in *eretz*?'
Second Rabbi 'But there isn't a gimmel in *eretz*!
First Rabbi 'Then, why isn't there a gimmel in *eretz*?'
Second Rabbi 'Why should there be a gimmel in *eretz*?'
First Rabbi 'That's what I just asked you!'

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But 'Why should there be any universe?' is not intrinsically absurd. Indeed, and as I have implied, to ask the question is simply to carry on doing what we naturally do.

Or is it? In a sense it is, for asking 'How come?' is familiar enough. In particular, it is because people got into the habit of asking this question that science, as we understand it, ever got going at all. And, as we understand it, science advances as people continue to ask the question. But the 'How come?' question which I have now raised is clearly not a scientific one. For it is partly asking how come that science itself is possible. And its answer cannot be anything which a scientist could investigate or analyze. Scientific questions concern objects or events which are part of the universe. And their answers refer us to other things of the same kind, to more objects or events which are part of the universe. But the universe itself is not an object or event within itself. And whatever accounts for there being a universe cannot be this either. In asking how there comes to be any universe, we are raising what Aquinas would call the topic of creation. And, as Aquinas rightly insists, to say that something is created is not to locate it in historical terms or in terms of things having effects within the universe. It is to speak of it as derived, not because it has come from something equally derived, and not because it has come to be because something has been transformed, but because its existence as such is derived.[7] To view the universe as created is not to place it in a context of scientific causes. It is to see that there is a question to ask when science has done any work it can possibly do.

In the language of Aquinas, there is a puzzle concerning the *esse* of things—the fact that they are there to be identified and spoken about and explained in terms of scientific or transforming causes.[8] And Aquinas was not the only philosophical genius to see that there is a puzzle here, albeit one which is hard to articulate. The question that I am now talking about is sharply raised by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. 'Not how the world is, is the mystical', says Wittgenstein, 'but that it is'[9] For Wittgenstein, how the world is is a scientific matter with scientific answers. But, so he insists, even when the scientific answers are in, we are still left with the thatness of the world, the fact 'that it is'.

As readers of Wittgenstein know well, that there is a world is not, for him, a factual matter. And that there is a world is not material for a question or answer that we can understand. As he puts it: 'We feel that even if all possible scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all. Of course there is then no question left, and just this is the answer'.[10]

But, as interpreters of Wittgenstein now generally admit, he does not mean that asking about the thatness of the world is unequivocal nonsense. He means that it is seeking to go beyond familiar questions and answers in a way that leaves us at sea—at the limits of what can be said and understood.[11] And that is precisely what Aquinas thinks when he speaks of

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esse and creation. For him, the reason why there is any universe at all (the answer to 'How come any universe?') is radically incomprehensible to us. We can, he asserts, say that it is. But we cannot say what it is.[12]

For Aquinas, of course, God is the reason why there is any universe. His teaching, therefore, is that we cannot say what God is. And this teaching seems to me to be true. I do not mean, and neither does Aquinas, that we can make no true statements about God. I do not even mean that we cannot speak of God in positive terms, by saying that he can certainly be called such and such—good or powerful, for instance. What I mean is that in speaking of God we must be careful not to attribute to him anything which is essentially creaturely, anything which cannot be true of whatever it is that accounts for there being any universe at all.

To put it another way, I am saying that, if we are to latch on to the one, true God, we must learn to develop a kind of ignorance—an ignorance of the kind envisaged by Nicholas of Cusa in *De Docta Ignorantia* (*On Learned Ignorance*), whose main point is that, though we have positive knowledge of God, it is also true that God is incomprehensible.

To put it yet another way, if our thoughts are to latch on to the one, true God, we need to become agnostics, though not in the usual, modern (Russellian) sense of 'agnostic'. The modern agnostic says 'We do not know, and the universe is a mysterious riddle'. Along with Aquinas, I want to say: 'We do not know what the answer is, but we do know that there is a mystery behind it all which we do not know. And if there were not, there would not even be a riddle. This Unknown we call God. And if there were no God, there would be no universe to be mysterious, and nobody to be mystified.'

III

Now what precisely might be meant by saying that in speaking of God we must be careful not to attribute to him anything which is essentially creaturely, anything which cannot be true of whatever it is that accounts for there being any universe at all? The question needs a lot of discussion. But one can still, I think, make a few point briefly.

We cannot, for example, suppose that God is part of the world of space and time. Nor can we suppose him subject to the limitations and changes which affect things spatial and temporal. So it will be nonsense to speak of God as being *here* as opposed to *there*, or as being *now* as opposed to *then*. And it will be nonsense to speak of God as being *first* like this and *then* like that. It will be nonsense to say that divinity is something passing through successive states. And it will be even more nonsense to think of God as changing because other things have an effect on him. So it will be wrong to say that creatures can do something to modify God somehow. It will be wrong to say that they can, for instance, inform him or cause him pain.

It will also, of course, be wrong to say that God has a character in any

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sense we can understand. Or, to put it another way, it will be wrong to assert that God is an individual—in the familiar sense of 'individual' where to call something an individual is to think of it as a member of a class of which there could be more than one member, as something with a nature shared by others but different from that of things sharing natures of another kind, things with different ways of working, things with different characteristic activities and effects. To conceive of God as the reason why there is any universe at all is to conceive of him as the source of diversity and, therefore, as the source of there being classes with different members, classes containing things with characteristic activities and effects. Or, as we may put it, *who* God is cannot be something different from *what* God is. Mary and John are both human beings. But Mary is not John and John is not Mary. They are individual people. And, though they are human, they do not, as individuals, constitute human nature. Along with many others, they exemplify it. Suppose we express this by saying that they are not, as individuals, the same as their common nature, that who they are and what they are can be distinguished. Then, so I am arguing, who God is and what God is are not distinguishable. We cannot get a purchase on the notion of a class of Gods or on the notion of God in a class.

Finally, if God is the answer to our 'How come any universe?' question, then God is the answer to the question 'How come the whole universe?'. By this I mean that God cannot be the source of some things and not others. In the language of Aquinas: 'We must unequivocally concede that God is at work in all activity, whether of nature or of will'.[14]

If we are concerned with God as the source of things being there rather than getting modified, if we are concerned with God as Creator rather than transformer, then the dependence of creatures on God is total and whatever is real in them derives from him. And 'whatever is real' must mean precisely that. It must mean that what there is and what things do both derive from God. As Aquinas, again, puts it, God 'causes everything's activity inasmuch as he gives the power to act, maintains it in existence, applies it to its activity, and inasmuch as it is by his power that every other power acts'.[15]

Aquinas goes on to say that God, as Creator, 'exists within everything, not as a part of its being but as holding it in existence'. He naturally and rightly concludes, therefore, that God 'is at work without intermediary in everything that is active'.[16] This thesis, and others I am endorsing, clearly raise problems. We might ask, for example, how a human free choice can be free while also caused by God. But the problems, I am suggesting, need to be discussed on the assumption that certain things cannot be true—e.g. that it cannot be true that any human choice can be uncaused by God.

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IV

With all of that behind me, let me now return to the questions I raised earlier on. How has God fared at the hands of American philosophers? Has he survived as the one true God? Or has he turned into something else—something more like a creature, perhaps?

The picture, as I have said is a complex one. For American philosophers have been as varied as philosophers of any country. And I could cite many American philosophers writing in recent years who talk excellent sense about God, or, at least, have a sound grasp of what we cannot say about God. I think, in particular of authors such as David Burrell, Michael Dodds, Germain Grisez, Mark Jordan, Brian Leftow, Norman Malcolm, Ralph McInernry, and James Ross.[17]

In their different ways, all these people keep clearly in mind the difference there must be between creature and Creator. All of them show themselves sensitive to what I have called the need for 'learned ignorance' when it comes to discussion of God. And they all have colleagues with the same sensitivity (though of different opinions) working in the context of Europe. Here I think especially of authors such as Cyril Barrett, David Braine, Ian Crombie, Peter Geach, Herbert McCabe, and D.Z. Phillips. I also think of what you, Gareth, have written about God.[18] But in recent years there has emerged in American philosophy an approach to God of a quite different kind from that to be found in these authors. For in much modern, American, philosophical writing we find it supposed that almost everything I have been arguing so far is false. It is false, so we are told, that God is incomprehensible. He is, in fact, something very familiar. He is a person. And he has properties in common with other persons. He changes, learns, and is acted on. He also has beliefs, which alter with the changes in the objects of his beliefs. And he is by no means the source of all that is real in the universe. He is not, for example, the cause of my free actions. These come from me, not from God. He permits them, but they stand to him as an observed item stands to its observer. He is not their maker. He is only their enabler.

In terms of American authors, such notions can be traced in the work of writers as far back as William James, who is seriously prepared to countenance the idea of God being distinguished by his relentless activity against the forces of evil and limitation. According to James, God struggles constantly, even with limited resources, to make the world a better place in which to live.[19] 'The superhuman consciousness', writes James, 'however vast it may be, has itself an external environment, and consequently is finite'.[20] At a later time than James, we find Edgar Sheffield Brightman defining God as 'a Person supremely conscious, supremely valuable, and supremely creative, yet limited by both the free choices of other persons and by restrictions within his own nature'.[21] So views with which I take issue have been present in American thinking for a long time. But they have

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recently become something more. They have become common currency.

A wonderful illustration of the fact comes from a book called *The Logic of God* by the Californian author Stephen T. Davis. He raises the following questions:

> Suppose God knows the answer to any question that can be asked except this: What colour shoes did Martha Washington wear on the day of her wedding to George? Suppose God has somehow forgotten this fact and has forgotten how to deduce it from other facts he knows. Is it so clear he would then no longer be God?.

One might hope that these questions are raised in a spirit of levity. But not so. For, so Davis continues, in all seriousness and, apparently, with no sense of saying something which his readers might find unusual: 'I believe that God is in fact omniscient—he does know the answer to this question. But I am not prepared to grant that if he didn't he would no longer be divine.'[22] In other words, God can engage in deduction. He can also fail in his powers of deduction. He can also have lapses of memory (implying that he has a life history to remember).

Davis, I fear, is not a voice crying in a wilderness. He is echoed, for example, by Professor Richard Rorty, who, though he has no belief in God, assumes that those who believe that the world is created must believe that creation is the work of someone who 'Himself spoke some language in which He described His own project'.[23] Davis is also echoed by one of the most prominent contemporary American philosophers of religion, Professor Alvin Plantinga of the University of Notre Dame. Plantinga is a particularly interesting example of the trend to which I am now referring. For he writes in a polemical manner, and he presents himself as a philosophical spokesperson for the Christian community. But what does he mean by 'God'?

He does not mean what Aquinas, for instance, meant. According to Plantinga, Aquinas could not really have believed in God at all. Why not? Because, says Plantinga, Aquinas taught that we cannot distinguish between God and his nature. And that, says Plantinga is absurd. Why? Because, says Plantinga, it entails that God is a property, which cannot be true. In Plantinga's own words: 'No property could have created the world; no property could be omniscient, or indeed know anything at all. If God is a property, then he isn't a person but a mere abstract object; he has no knowledge, awareness, power, love or life.'[24]

As exegesis of Aquinas, Plantinga's commentary is a terrible travesty.[25] But we can let that point pass. What I want to emphasize now is that the crucial thing for Plantinga is that God is a person. And, if we read Plantinga in general, we shall see that this proves to mean what, for instance, it seems to have meant for the late Professor Peter Bertocci, of Boston University,

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whose views can be readily gleaned from his book *The Person God Is*.[26]

It means that God is a conscious individual in the same class as you and I.[27] It also proves to mean that, just as is the case with us, God frequently has to put up with things which derive from a source distinct from himself. For, in Plantinga's view, only if this is so can we think of God as good. On Plantinga's account, the occurrence of evil in the world raises a question about God's moral integrity. Given the presence of evil, how can God be thought to be a good person? How might God's attorney get a verdict of 'Not Guilty' if God were in the dock in a court of law, and if the evidence against him were the evils in the world? Plantinga's answer is that much evil is the result of the free choices of creatures. And these choices, says Plantinga, cannot be attributed to God. They are permitted by God, but they originate in creatures. And, so Plantinga argues, it might be the case that there is nothing God could do to ensure that any world created by him should be lacking evil deriving from creaturely choice. Possibly, 'It was not within God's power to create a world containing moral good but no moral evil'.[28]

Two assumptions are central to Plantinga's discussion of God and evil. The first is that those who believe in God are committed to the notion that God is a morally good person. The second is that much that exists is not caused to exist by God. And, as far as I can determine, these assumptions are now something of an orthodoxy among many American philosophers of religion.

Take, for example, the picture which emerges in William Hasker's *God, Time and Knowledge*. Here we are told that God has a 'reliable character' though he also 'takes risks' in creating. He is reliable because his purposes do not vary. But he cannot be sure how things will go, so he therefore takes risks.[29]

Or again, consider the writings of the influential author Charles Hartshorne and the account of divinity which these advance. According to this, God is a supremely morally worthy person because he is continually struggling against evil. God is also supremely sympathetic. He undergoes joy as we flourish. And he grieves as we suffer. For Hartshorne this means that God actually undergoes development, that quality and value get added to the divine life. He improves as time goes on.[30] It also means that people can be said to create themselves.[31]

To improve as time goes on, is, of course, only possible for something temporal. As a final illustration of the trend which now concerns me, let me therefore add that divine temporality is also currently much in vogue among American philosophers writing about God. In 1970 Professor Nelson Pike argued that since God is a person he cannot be non-temporal. Indeed, so Pike maintained, God could not even create unless he occupied time.[32] And this line of thinking has been much taken up and approved of. It is clear, for example, that God as depicted by writers like Steven Davis and Alvin

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Plantinga is thoroughly temporal. The notion of divine temporality has also been defended in a number of book-length studies. It is defended, for instance, in Professor Richard Creel's *Divine Impassibility*. According to this, God must be temporal because, as Creel puts it, 'God must be affirmed as a privileged observer', and because, if God cannot observe things as we do, he must be in error.[33]

Reaching the same conclusion by a different route, Nicholas Wolterstorff, lately of Yale, explains that when I come to refer to God it follows that a change occurs in God and that God is therefore temporal.[34] Not surprisingly, Wolterstorff has no problem with the suggestion that God 'changes with respect to his knowledge, his memory, and his planning'.[35] If there is anything characteristic of modern American philosophy of religion it is the view that God is temporal.

V

Many people, of course, feel it important to insist that God is temporal. And these people would say that the theses I have just reported are vastly appealing. They are, I think, easily refutable in their details, but I can only reply by referring you to what I argued above. In my view, philosophy of God begins in wonder about the existence of things and it cannot, therefore, end with a finite and mutable divinity. Nor can it think about God as one among many of the same kind. In the language of Matthew Arnold, it cannot think of God as if he were 'a magnified and non-natural man'.[36] In the verse of Sir William Watson, it cannot end with 'A god of kindred seed and line,/ Man's giant shadow, hailed divine'.[37]

That, of course, is hardly a novel conclusion. It squares with the way in which God has been spoken about for centuries. I am complaining about a modern trend, one which would have seemed very strange to the majority of classical theistic writers. It would have astonished classical Jewish and Islamic thinkers such as Maimonides and Avicenna. It would also have astonished most of the Christian patristic writers. And it would have seemed wholly curious to people like St Augustine, St Anselm, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, and many other Christian thinkers of the middle ages. But we might also note that it would have seemed strange to many American authors of a previous generation. It would have seemed strange, for example, to the figure who is now commonly deemed to be the father of American philosophy.

Here, of course, I am thinking of Jonathan Edwards, the eighteenth-century Puritan divine. In his writings we find some curious and counter-intuitive judgements. For example, he shares with Malebranche, and with certain medieval Arabic thinkers, an occasionalist view of God and creation.[38] On his account, only God is a true cause.[39] Also, and famously, Edwards is inclined to dwell on divine retribution in a way which many would now want heavily to qualify.[40] At the same time, however, Edwards is

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a splendid example of someone able to recognize what it must mean to believe in God as Creator rather than Transformer.

Should we think of God as a comprehensible one among other? Or as a person, perhaps? No, says Edwards.

> God is infinitely above us ... However great and glorious the creature apprehends God to be, yet if he be not sensible of the difference between God and him, so as to see that God's glory is great, compared with his own, he will not be disposed to give God the glory due to his name. If the creature in any respects sets himself upon a level with God, or exalts himself to any competition with him, however he may apprehend that great honour and profound respect may belong to God from those that are at a greater distance, he will not be so sensible of its being due from him.[41]

Should we suppose that God is good because he is a morally good agent, like a morally good person? No, says Edwards. God stands under no kind of obligation. And he does not share what Edwards calls 'the moral Agency of created intelligent beings'. God, says Edwards, is a moral agent, but that is because he is 'the source of all moral ability and Agency, the fountain and rule of all virtue and moral good'.[42]

Should we suppose that there are things which derive from God and things which he merely permits? Once again, Edwards is unequivocal. If it exists, then God is at work in it as a maker. Hence, of course, Edwards's famous teaching that our freedom is part of what God is doing. For some curious reason, this teaching is often taken to be something unique to Edwards and to like-minded Calvinists. As far as I can see, it is the same as what one can find in writers like Aquinas, and it is grounded in the same considerations. According to Aquinas, my actions are as real as Mount Everest, so if Mount Everest is made to be by God, the same applies to my actions. And Edwards argues likewise. What it is that makes the difference between God and creatures? It is, says Edwards, the total dependence of creatures on God.

> By reason of our so great dependence on God, and his perfections and in so many respects, he and his glory are the more directly set in our view, which way soever we turn our eyes ... If we had our dependence partly on God, and partly on something else, man's respect would be divided to those different things on which he had dependence. Thus it would be if we depend on God only for a part of our good, and on ourselves, or some other being, for another part: or, if we had our good only from God, and through another that was not God, and in something else distinct from both, our hearts would be divided between the good itself and him from whom, and him through whom we received it. But now there is no occasion for this, God being not only he from or of whom we have all good, but also through whom, and is that good itself, that we have from him and through him.[43]

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St Catherine of Siena, whose whole thinking is governed by the notion of God as source of everything, repeatedly says that only God is and she herself is not.[44] In a similar vein, Edwards explains that 'our having all of God' means that creatures are, in a sense, 'empty'. 'By the creature being thus wholly and universally dependent on God', writes Edwards, 'it appears that the creature is nothing, and that God is all'.

VI

So, Gareth, American philosophy is rich in sound philosophy of God. I have been complaining only about a trend. And I have singled it out only because it is now a prevailing one. Against it, we may set thinkers of such stature as Aquinas, Wittgenstein (whom you especially admired) and Edwards. So I hope it is nothing more than a trend. I have no doubt that you would have shared my hope. I only wish that you could reply to me to say so.

Love,

Brian

1 For development and defence of this thesis see P.T. Geach, 'On Worshipping the Right God' in P.T. Geach, *God and the Soul* (London and New York, 1969). Cf. also P.T. Geach, 'The Meaning of God' in Martin Warner (ed.), *Religion and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1992).

2 I should stress that I am not implying that there is any easily identifiable entity properly called 'American philosophy'. That there is not is well argued by, among others, Bruce Kuklick in 'Does American Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?' in Marcus G. Singer (ed.), American Philosophy (Cambridge, 1985).

3 Cf. G.E.M. Anscombe, 'What Is It to Believe Someone?' in C.F. Delaney (ed.), *Rationality and Religious Belief* (Notre Dame and London, 1979).

4 Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty,* ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1974), paras. 160-167. See also Norman Malcolm, 'The Groundlessness of Belief' in Stuart C. Brown (ed.), *Reason and Religion* (London, 1977).

5 'A Debate on the Existence of God', reprinted in John Hick (ed.), *The Existence of God* (London and New York, 1964).

6 P.T. Geach, *Logic and Argument* (Oxford, 1976).

7 This is not to say that there is some property called 'existence' which needs to be explained, though some have thought that there is such a property. Cf. my 'Does God Create Existence?', *International Philosophical Quarterly*

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(June 1990). Also see C.J.F. Williams, *Being, Identity and Truth* (Oxford, 1992). For good accounts of Aquinas on *esse* see Stephen Theron, 'Esse', The New Scholasticism LIII (1979) and Herbert McCabe, 'The Logic of Mysticism' in Martin Warner (ed.), *Religion and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1992).

8 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C.K. Ogden (London, 1933); 'Wittgenstein's Lecture on Ethics', *The Philosophical Review* LXXIV (1965).

9 Tractatus 6.44.

10 Tractatus 6.52.

11 Cf. Cyril Barrett, *Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief* (Oxford, 1991); 'The Logic of Mysticism', in Martin Warner (ed.), *Religion and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1992).

12 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Introduction to Ia,3.*

13 Cf. Victor White, *God the Unknown* (London, 1956), pp.18 f.

14 De Potentia III,7.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Cf.: David Burrell, *Aquinas, God and Action* (London and Henley, 1979); David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1986); Michael J. Dodds O.P., *The Unchanging God of Love: A Study of the Teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on Divine Immutability in View of Certain Contemporary Criticism of this Doctrine* (Fribourg, 1986); Germain Grisez, *Beyond the New Theism* (Notre Dame, Ind., and London, 1975); Mark Jordan, *Ordering Wisdom* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1986); Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca, 1991); Norman Malcolm, 'The Groundlessness of Belief' in Stuart C. Brown (ed.), *Rationality and Religious Belief* (Notre Dame, Ind., and London, 1979); Ralph McInerny, *Being and Predication* (Washington D.C., 1986); James Ross, *Portraying Analogy* (Cambridge, 1981); 'Creation II', in Alfred J. Freddoso (ed.), *The Existence and Nature of God* (Notre Dame, Ind., and London, 1983).

18 Cf.: Cyril Barrett, 'The Logic of Mysticism', in Martin Warner (ed.), *Religion and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1992); David Braine *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God* (Oxford, 1988); Ian Crombie, 'Eternity and Omnitemporality' in William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (ed.), *The Rationality of Religious Belief* (Oxford, 1987); P.T. Geach, *Providence and Evil* (Cambridge, 1977); Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (London, 1987); Gareth Moore, *Believing in God* (Edinburgh, 1989); D.Z. Phillips, *Faith and Philosophical Enquiry* (London, 1970); *Faith after Foundationalism* (London and New York, 1988).

19 Cf. John E. Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (Revised Edition, Albany, N.Y., 1983), p.41.

20 *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York, 1909), p.309 f.

21 Cf. Andrew J. Reck, *Recent American Philosophy* (New York, 1962), p.331.

22 Steven T. Davis, *Logic and the Nature of God* (London, 1983), pp.4 f.

23 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge, 1989), p.21.

24 Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have A Nature?* (Milwaukee, 1980), p.47.

25 For what Aquinas is saying in those texts which seem to be Plantinga's

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target, see my *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford, 1992).

26 London, 1970.

27 I discuss the formula 'God is a person' in *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion,* Revised Edition (Oxford, 1993), Chapter 8. Cf. also my 'Classical Theism and the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity', in Brian Davies (ed.), *Language, Meaning and God* (London, 1987).

28 Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca N.Y., 1967), Chapters 5 and 6; *God, Freedom and Evil* (New York, 1974), Part I; *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford, 1974); 'Advice to Christian Philosophers', *Faith and Philosophy 1* (1984).

29 William Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge* (Ithaca and London, 1989), Chapter 10.

30 Hartshorne's books are listed in Santiago Sia (ed.), Charles Hartshorne's *Concept of God* (Dordrecht/Boston/London, 1990). Hartshorne is criticized in this book by Norris Clarke S.J. along lines I approve of. In this volume, too, he replies to Clarke.

31 Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (New York, 1983), pp.17 ff.

32 Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (London, 1970).

33 Richard Creel, *Divine Impassibility* (Cambridge, 1986), p.96.

34 Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'God Everlasting' in Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz (ed.), *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (New York and Oxford, 1982), pp.95 f.

35 Ibid.

36 Matthew Arnold, *God and the Bible* (New York, 1901), pp.34 f. Arnold's targets in Chapter 1 of *God and the Bible* bear a striking resemblance to some modern American philosophers of religion.

37 'The Unknown God', in *The Poems of William Watson,* Volume 1 (London and New York, 1905), p.132.

38 For Malebranche, see *Entretiens sur la métaphysique et sur la religion,* trans. Willis Doney (New York, 1980), 7.10. Arabic occasionalists include Al Ash'ari (d. 936).

39 Edwards's occasionalism is neatly expounded in Hans Oberdiek, 'Jonathan Edwards', in Marcus G. Singer (ed.), *American Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1985). For a more detailed account see John E. Smith, *Jonathan Edwards* (Notre Dame, Ind., and London, 1993).

40 See, for example, his sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God'.

41 *God Glorified in the Work of Redemption.* I quote from Ola Elizabeth Winslow (ed.), *Jonathan Edwards: Basic Writings* (New York, 1966), pp.118 f.

42 *Freedom of the Will,* quoted from Winslow, p.222.

43 *God Glorified in the Work of Redemption,* quoted from Winslow, p.119.

44 Cf. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue* (trans, Suzanne Noffke O.P., New York, 1980), p.56.

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