

Reviews

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND TRUTH: a symposium, edited by Sidney Hook; Oliver & Boyd, 30s.

No student of the philosophy of religion should fail to notice the published record of this symposium held at the New York University Institute of Philosophy. Its papers, often short in compass, are concerned with three absolutely central and closely related groups of problems, viz. the meaning and justification of religious symbols, the nature of religious faith, and meaning and truth in theology; and participants include men and women of widely differing philosophical and religious outlooks and attachments.

If the discussion of religious symbols is largely dominated by Professor Paul Tillich's interesting but highly idiosyncratic doctrines, the argument in this section is allowed to raise the crucial questions of the relation of theology (both natural and revealed) to ontology, and of the kind of relations to be looked for between alleged representations of religious truth and the reality represented by them. Into the discussion men as different as Fr I. M. Bochenski, O.P., Professor Blanshard and Professor Hook himself enter; and there is also a tantalizing fragment in the shape of an elaborate allegory (it would be a mistake to call it a parable), by Professor Virgil Aldrich. The themes raised in this part of the symposium are in fact resumed in the third, and although the brevity and independence of the various contributors may distract the inexperienced reader, at least four crucial issues are being continually raised:

1. Granted that anthropomorphism is theologically and metaphysically inadmissible, whether 'finite' or 'infinite' anthropomorphism (to mention a useful distinction made by the avowedly atheistic symposiast, Professor Paul Edwards), what alternative is open to the theist who would allow intelligible and recognizable distinction between true and false in *rebus divinis*? The consensus of opinion among the symposiasts who believe that such an alternative can be found, is that the obvious way of escape from the unacceptable paradoxes of the anthropomorphist is by ontology; but it is quickly recognized that in the currently fashionable styles of Professor Paul Tillich, the attempt to purge theological utterance of the taint of the sheerly anthropomorphic by appeal to a notion of 'being as such' is speedily to risk at once intelligibility and relevance to our human situation. (Hence indeed Tillich's own continual complementary appeal to the psychological notion of 'ultimate concern'). Unfortunately, apart from an interesting, if compressed, development of the 'way of analogy' by a Jesuit symposiast, Fr W. N. Clarke, there is no whole, indeed hardly any, examination or even acknowledgment of the history of ontology as such. Tillich's ontology (and indeed Heidegger's) are only a comparatively short chapter in a part of the *corpus philosophicum* whose historical origins go back at least as far as Aristotle's *Categories* and *Metaphysics*, and to which philosophers as different in their inspiration from Tillich as Frege, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein and

Quine have recently made contributions. It is surely significant that the notion of substance is not mentioned in the index; in this omission resides possibly one reason why this section of the discussion, admirably pointed and continually illuminating though it is, leaves the solution of its problems as far away as ever.

2. Symposiasts constantly advert to the questions raised by Anselm's so-called 'ontological proof'. This proof, continually refuted, is yet an 'unconscionably long time dying' and has recently been roused from a death-like coma by Professor Norman Malcolm of Cornell, to whose article in the *Philosophical Review* for 1960 several symposiasts refer. To ask whether on the whole the proof is accepted or rejected is to ask a misleading question; rather there is a pervasive sense that we have here a place where the domains of adoration, of self-examination, of metaphysical enquiry and of logic touch, and that if we probe what it is that led men so often to return to this kind of argument, our understanding of what theism is will be enlarged, and our grasp of its characteristic 'logic' deepened.

3. It is clearly realised (in spite of a plea by the late Professor H. Richard Niebuhr in an otherwise excellent paper) that the conflict between the authority of scientific methods and the claims of faith cannot be resolved, e.g. by facile apologetic suggestion that the 'principle of induction' is a 'matter of faith'! The discussion of the nature of faith contains much that is excellent in the way of comment on the relative roles of e.g. assent and trust; but its authority as a contribution to its topic is enhanced by its clearly recognizing that the man committed to the way of faith has to reckon continually with the searching interrogation of a largely triumphant empiricism.

4. The work is a symposium, not a treatise. Therefore the reader must seek not simply to read and notice, but also to overhear. It is hard therefore from constant reference, and frequent sidelong glance, to fail to perceive the cruciality, for the modern empiricist, of the so-called 'problem of evil' and of theodicy.

The form of the book makes it one for the professional, not for the amateur. But the fact that this lay symposium took place and is now published is evidence of the keen interest taken in problems of the philosophy of religion, and also of the extreme difficulties facing the subject.

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CHRISTIANS IN CONVERSATION; Newman Press, \$3.

Of the four papers read at an episcopally sponsored and papally approved meeting at St John's Abbey, Minnesota, and here printed, two are by Protestants and two by Catholics. Conversation requires a certain sympathy of mind, even a community of style; here three of the contributors talk well together while one remains stubbornly foreign in tone. For this, as for all the best conversations,