

Hyma's volume is a worthy contribution to the recent literature on Erasmus which has been appearing in celebration of the 500th anniversary of that famous humanist's birthday (given variously between 1466 and 1469, with Hyma choosing—most likely correctly—1469).

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Kaufman, Gordon D. *God the Problem*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972. xx + 276 pp. \$10.00.

The persisting Biblical emphasis upon God as acting has been an embarrassment to many theologians who wished to retain this way of speaking but could not really find a place for it in their thinking. *The "problem,"* I take it, is to speak of God as agent in an intelligible way. That this is possible is the fundamental thesis of the book.

"Act of God" is a comprehensible concept. The book explores the analogy of "personal action," attempting a metaphysic of agency so as to fill the gap between Biblical imagery and modern understanding of the world. The difference between historical and personal knowledge (does Kaufman overlook it elsewhere?) is that the reality of God is now accessible whereas the reality of history is not, or at least, is accessible in a manner in which the reality of history is not. So the analogy from historical knowledge to theological knowledge is less adequate than that from personal knowledge to theological knowledge. How careful must one be to qualify the term "historical" in different contexts to make precisely clear what one wants to say!

God is "ultimate cosmic agency" (p. 106) and as such provides the ground for human agency. What sort of ground? Correcting Braithwaite and contradicting Whitehead's disciples, the author suggests an alternative to traditional conceptions of God. "I believe in God" needs translation from "I am convinced that God is" to "I am acting as if the world is what I think it to be as grounded metaphysically in personal Being." In defence of such grounding the concept of transcendence (revelation is explicable best on the analogy of the personal act of making known what would otherwise remain unknown) is defended against a pan-en-theistic doctrine of immanence. The totality "world" is purposive, but "agency" better describes the teleological movement than does the impersonal term "process." Such agency is met at the limits of our world and our experience. So the experience of limitation (contingency, dependence) is the locus within human existence of theological meaning. The essay on Transcendence makes the important and careful distinction between meaning and truth, prolegomenon to theology and theology proper.

What is revealed is reality, "the real God," "ultimate reality," "the transcendent God," the ultimately real (pp. 151, 261). But for Kaufman there must be a final agnosticism, and here further clarification is called for in order to explain the antithesis, "historical knowledge is not personal," "personal knowledge is historical." The God revealed is the "available God" in contrast to the "real God." The idea of the "available God" is based on the analogy with historical knowledge which we are told is not the fundamental analogy. The "object" in history is *unknown* if knowledge means "having direct and personal acquaintance with." I could not encounter Wash-

ington *in this way*, even if I wanted to. But if the historical-knowledge analogy is not fundamental, that is, if there are other ways to knowledge, then there is a serious *non sequitur* in the second and third sentences on p. 85. Kaufman elsewhere wishes to modify this agnosticism, tempering it with dialectical statements (p. 251) by pressing aspects of the person analogy. The other alternative is a thorough-going anthropomorphism which sees *all* images of God as subjectivistic, and this is not what Kaufman wants. I do not see that he has avoided it. I have not found here a satisfying answer to the question: If the real God is unknowable, how can the available God be "objective" and not simply a cultural product? If the real God is not available, how can I make the statement to that effect? That is already an approach to God à la *via negativa* which carries many further implications for statements about the real God once one starts on it.

I agree that it is in the realm of our presuppositions that faith is to be placed, *if* one makes a sharp distinction between presuppositions and experience, or data of experience. But the distinction must not be pressed so that it becomes an improper divorce. Here again the tendency to draw lines somewhat too sharply is evident. It is an oversimplification to argue: Revelation is *nothing else than* (p. 240) the appearance in history of a way of seeing human life, and the appearance (=acceptance?) of a decisive paradigm within the context of that seeing. Once again, this is to fail to press the analogy Kaufman wants to make central—that of personal revealing.

The book is interesting, illuminating, and somewhat fragmentary; hence the more than usual number of self-references in footnotes.

The following errata were noted: p. 94, "fundamentally" for "fundamentally"; p. 249, "possible" for "possibly"; p. 259, "multilated" for "mutilated."

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Meland, Bernard E., ed. *The Future of Empirical Theology*. Essays in Divinity, Vol. 7. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969. x + 387 pp. \$11.00.

"Empirical Theology" is a name given to theologies of various approaches which share in common the insistence that any fruitful theology *must* both recognize that it has its roots in what is experienced, and make the account of that experience an essential ingredient in its treatment of religion. Theology has frequently succumbed to extremes: an over-confident rationalism that lays so much stress on the object that it has no time to speak about the subject, and on the other end of the scale an excessive subjectivism. Empirical theology is the only proper way to steer between excessive subjectivism and pure rationalism.

Hardly a word is more confusing nowadays than "empirical," and it is the merit of this collection of essays that it clarifies matters by exhibiting for us what the term may mean. If theology must be based upon "experience," it must fill in the content of the term by pointing to and describing what such experience is and how it manifests itself. The reader can then put the theology to the test by asking, "Does the range of my experience encompass the proposed basis of this suggested theology?" The very fact that we may be driven to interpret our experience may be therapeutic. We may then come