

which Richards calls 'silly'. 'It is silly', he says, 'to pretend that prayers to which the answer is no are "answered"' (p 58). If I can only answer you by giving you whatever you ask, that is, of course, correct. But it does not take away from the fact that 'No' is every bit as much of an answer as 'Yes', as any reader of dictionaries will tell you.

There is more to say about Richards' new book, but to say it here would divert attention from the points I want to emphasize. Suffice it, then, to conclude at this stage that *What Happens When You Pray?* just does not go far enough. If the book is treated to a second edition, maybe the defect can be remedied. In the meantime, we must make our own corrections.

- 1 SCM Press Ltd 1980. pp 96. £2.50.
- 2 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a,3,3.
- 3 'God: I – Creation', *New Blackfriars*, October 1980, pp 411-412.
- 4 See J. W. Cross, *George Eliot's Life as Related in her Letters and Journals* (Edinburgh and London, 1885), Vol. I, p 302.
- 5 *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, 83,2. Cf Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, pp 95-96.

## Reviews

**UNDERSTANDING MYSTICISM** edited by Richard Woods O P Image Book *Double-day*, New York. pp xi + 586 \$7.95.

The editor in his valuable Introduction points out that 'to date there has been no attempt to provide a selection of critical studies [of mysticism], both "classical" and contemporary, particularly those written from a comparative viewpoint and exhibiting a wide range of enquiry'. Certainly this book performs that service. He also tells us that 'most of the essays were gathered as reference material for students in university courses on the psychology and theology of mysticism'. All that is possible in a review is to draw attention to a certain number of these essays. In Part I, on the various ways in which the word 'mysticism' is understood, Margaret Smith and Evelyn Underhill are represented, followed by Louis Bouyer's essay of 1952, some characteristic passages of Zaehner's, a criticism of him by Ninian Smart and a somewhat enigmatic discussion of the distinction between mystical experience and 'superstructures' by Fritz Staal.

In Part II, on mysticism in world religions, a (for me) unilluminating paper by Suzuki ('The Basis of Buddhist Philosophy') is more than compensated for by W E Hocking's essay 'The Mystical Spirit and Protestantism' (1944) – this philosopher has been too quickly forgotten, at least over here. Happily he reappears in Part III ('Scientific Investigations'), following an attractive paper by William James; the other essays under this heading may prove at times too much for some readers, but it should be easy to pick out their conclusions. Among the 'Philosophical and Aesthetic Evaluations' of Part IV there is a condensation of Bergson's Part III in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, a most readable, if at times amateurish, essay of Auden's, a useful confrontation of John Hick with Terence Penelhum and an impressive paper on the Self by Louis Dupré. Part V ('Theological Appraisals') is a little disappointing. Maréchal has a few magisterial pages, but after that there is

rather too much Thomism of the mid-century or earlier: the last chapter of Bouyer's *Introduction to Spirituality* would have been more to the point (the book is not included in the otherwise excellent bibliography). But some six

hundred closely printed pages – thirty six essays, mostly of high quality – are good value for the money, and Fr Woods is to be congratulated on completing his mammoth task with so much success.

ILLYD TRETHOWAN

**REFLECTIONS ON THE BEATITUDES:** Soundings in Christian Traditions, by Simon Tugwell O.P. Darton, Longman & Todd, London 1980. pp 180 £4.50.

One of the most popular devotional works of recent times was an English Dominican's 'study in the social implications of the Beatitudes', the late Fr Gerald Vann's *Divine Pity*. Fr Simon Tugwell has now given us his own *Reflections on the Beatitudes*, which in its turn promises to become a classic of modern Catholic spirituality.

Fr Tugwell presents us, first of all, with the strange and paradoxical picture of the man whom Jesus pronounces blessed: he is a hungry, down-trodden pauper, but at the same time a peacemaker and son of God, the inheritor of heaven and earth. Such a paradox is, of course, only a consequence of the greatest paradox of all – the mystery of the Incarnation, whereby God in his omnipotence came to us in weakness. The paradox of Our Lord's life and teaching is, according to Fr Tugwell, a challenge to us to learn the 'sublime art of weakness', to face up to poverty, helplessness and dependence on God. The Beatitudes encourage us in honesty of vision, seeing ourselves for what we are: 'God never says to us, "I want you to become something else" without also saying, "I love you as you are" (p 15); "The gospel is proclaimed to what we really are, whether we like it or not. God's call to us now is, as it was to Adam, to come out of hiding" (p 130). Such honesty of vision, though, comes not from mere introspection but from contemplation of the Crucified. There we are, in a double sense: 'his agony, his helplessness, his dying, they are all ours. But even worse, that is what we are: we are the people who do that, who kill and torment, who react to love, even to God's love, with that kind of fury' (p 62).

As he discusses each of the Beatitudes, Fr Tugwell returns, time and again, to this theme of honesty and realistic self-acceptance.

In a most moving chapter, he tells us that 'Blessed are those who mourn' is 'an apologia for authentic emotional responses' (p 60); Christ pronounces his benediction precisely on 'those searing and humiliating times when we are too distressed to accommodate ourselves to the requirements of our unsympathetic world, when even the church tends to confront us with its wooden-faced puritanism of "joy".' (p 61). When discussing hunger and thirst, Fr Tugwell tells us that the point of Christian asceticism is its fundamental realism: we have to discover our real needs and appetites. Evagrius, in the *Praktikos*, says that gluttony is a bogus hunger, a hunger in the mind, the product of daydreaming. 'Hunger must be restored to the stomach, it does not belong to the imagination' (p 72). Again, in connection with peacemaking, Fr Tugwell says that authentic peace comes only through the acceptance of truth: 'if we accept the truth of ourselves . . . and constantly give it over into the truth and peace and wholeness in Christ, to which we have access in the church, then we shall be in fact in peace, whether or not we feel ourselves to be at peace' (p 114).

I felt myself personally addressed by this book, struck in a new way, *compunctus*, by the familiar words of the Beatitudes. In these admirable *Reflections* Our Lord's teaching is mediated to us as much by the author's compassion and humour as by the wisdom of the Christian traditions upon which he draws. Fr Tugwell's English is limpid and a pleasure to read; he has also happily solved the vexed problem of notes and bibliography: for every author we are given details of both critical edition and English translation (where available). All in all, here is a book for every Christian to read and make his own.

JOHN SAWARD