

[1972. *Review of Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion*, Keith E. Yandell, *Christian Scholars Review* Vol. 2 No. 2: 191-192.]

KEITH E. YANDELL, *Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971, ix + 238 pp., \$8.50.

Review by Gordon Clark, Butler University

This book as a whole can be taken as a negative defense of theism. It collapses all objections, sometimes disintegrating them with the cumbrous meat-grinding machinery of modern logic.

This method gets the book off to a bad start. If it is intended to appeal to students, there must surely be an introduction better than this intricate analysis of the positivistic verifications principle. Unfortunately, too, the refutation depends on the fallacy in a disjunction ($x + y$), what is true of the whole must be true of its parts. In spite of some very clever arguments, especially against Flew, this error occurs at least twice (pp. 5, 13). Emerging from symbolic logic, however, the author in the remainder of chapter one gives clear and cogent reasons for rejecting Cox and Braithwaite and still more extensive reasons for rejecting Wisdom and Ramsey.

The analysis of Aquinas, himself a distressingly intricate logic-chopper, not only takes apart the medieval theologian's argument, but also reformulates it and proceeds to further exercises in logic. The result is better than the process, for the author decides that "the dispute is not capable of empirical test. ... The criteria of consistency, coherence, and simplicity ... are non-empirical in character." Had the author stressed this rejection of empiricism, he could have skipped over the later empirical views and could have shortly arrived at his conclusion though we his readers would have been deprived of his many interesting remarks on later writers.

From chapter four on there is less clanking of machinery, and the author shows himself able to undermine Freud and Otto in good English. A section of thirteen pages on Ninian Smart, however, is disproportionately long, even though it contains several keen observations.

The chapter on *Religion and Morality* opposes the definition of good as "x is good means God wills x." The reason is that God is good. If *good* means, God will it, then "God is good"

means “God wills God,” “which is unintelligible.” The author, however, gives no reason for saying that this is unintelligible. Several theologians have asserted that God is his own cause—*casua sui*. That a self-existent being wills himself seems plausible. If it is in fact false, a book with so many intricate arguments should not dismiss it so pontifically.

Further, the author in the footnote assigns this theory to me. Though his quotation marks probably do not indicate a verbatim quotation, he clearly attaches the view to G. Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*. He does not give the page, but probably he has pp. 221-222 in mind. These pages, however, reject the view in question. They give an argument against, not for, the view that a morally good action is defined as one that God wills. No doubt he would judge my actual view to be as bad as the one he incorrectly assigns to me; but an author appreciates at least understanding, when there can be no agreement.

There is also a question about Dr. Yandell's understanding of Kant. On page 156 he says, “Kant remained a theist.” How this could be true in view of Kant's definition of God as a regulative, not constitutive, principle, the author does not explain. Nor does his quotation at the bottom of page 159 support the interpretation give to it.

The final chapter bears the title *Faith and Reason*. His long analysis of Hick (after Locke, Thomas, James, and Tennant) is most interesting; but on a question of faith, would it not have been more appropriate to discuss Augustine, Luther, or Calvin instead? Though the author expresses a degree of approval of Hick's construction, the conclusion is essentially skeptical. There seems to be some hesitation in saying right out that nothing constructive remains; but this surely is the result. With this result, the author might then have proceeded to a constructive view as in Luther and Calvin.