

Michael F. Palmer. *Philosophy of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. 2011. 605 pp. Paperback \$55.

This anthology of the philosophy of religion represents a successful attempt to introduce the reader to key Western religious thinkers and their heritage. The author's intention to create a "user-friendly and digestible" book finds its fulfillment in the well-structured and historically contextualized volume which elucidates all essential aspects of philosophy of religion. To the reader's surprise, this volume, arranged by topic, extends its content beyond the narrow scope of traditional anthologies heavily geared toward a few key themes of philosophy of religion to the exclusion of many other relevant topics. Thus, beyond common themes associated with the attributes of God, the arguments for God's existence, and the nature of evil, the author introduces philosophical works on miracles, religious language, and the diversity of world religions, among others. The most distinctive features of this book are its carefully crafted introductions to each chapter's problems; biographical and philosophical summaries of each thinker; and the list of primary and secondary sources that will allow the reader to pursue the further studies on the subject.

Readers will not find a number of key philosophical texts in this anthology. For example, one will find neither Frege's nor Godel's elucidations of the ontological argument, nor Kant's essays on moral religion. It seems that the choice of excluding many valuable texts due to their complexity was an uneasy one for the author. Moreover, a complete absence of Byzantine thinkers in the volume raises a question mark. Still, the absence of certain thinkers is compensated by the presence of other names that are not often heard. The range of texts extending from antiquity through the medieval and modern periods to the present establishes a historical continuity and should definitely be credited.

It should be noted nevertheless that it is sometimes unclear where a particular excerpt comes from. Some titles are taken after articles, books, dialogues; others designate the subject matter instead. For example, in Chapter 6, the author reviews issues of Life after Death and presents Plato's theory of immortality. A small introductory section which includes philosophical and biographical summaries mentions different dialogues. The excerpt is entitled as "The Theory of Immortality." One might assume that this title is the name of a dialogue not mentioned in the introductory section. This might not be the case and thus the reader seems to have no choice but to guess which dialogue he

or she is about to read. A way out of this difficulty might be sought in the “key texts” part of the section where one can expect to find the list of primary texts relevant to the chapter. However, this expectation might not be satisfied either. Finally, the references are found in the Notes section which some might find difficult to navigate. It appears that in some cases the text’s titles are broadly conceived and in other cases are drawn from the titles of books, articles, or dialogues. These inconsistencies, however, do not diminish the educational value of this superb book which should be read from cover to cover by all students interested in philosophy of religion.

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