

God and the Ethics of Belief

New Essays in Philosophy of Religion

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The Ethics of Religious Belief: A Recent History

ANDREW CHIGNELL AND ANDREW DOLE

We begin with some truth in advertising: our title's *and* is really the logician's *inclusive or*. In other words, not all the essays in this book are strictly about God *and* the ethics of belief (where "the ethics of belief" refers to a specific research program in epistemology). Rather, some are mainly about God, whereas others are about God and belief; some focus on the ethics of belief, whereas still others are about *both* God and the ethics of belief. Most were first drafted for a 2002 conference in honor of Nicholas Wolterstorff upon his retirement from teaching; thus, the range of topics reflects his research interests as well as those of the authors.

The subtitle echoes the title of an edited volume published exactly fifty years ago: *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.¹ The goal of that volume was to offer a sampling of a newly active research program in analytic philosophy, a program that the editors referred to as "philosophical theology" rather than "philosophy of religion" because of the latter term's association in those days with Hegelian thought.² The first *New Essays* dealt with religious topics of philosophical interest ranging from the nature of God and the rationality of theism to the metaphysical possibility of an afterlife and the status of religious language. This volume, likewise, provides a snapshot of the field – fifty years along – and addresses many of the same topics. Because Hegel's grip on the term has loosened in the interim, we have reverted to "philosophy of religion."

In what follows, we will first characterize the "ethics of belief" debate in epistemology, and then discuss how it relates to questions about *religious* belief and practice in particular. This will set the stage for a brief sketch of the history of philosophy of religion since *New Essays*, and of how these essays fit into it. We will conclude with a description of each essay individually and make a case for including them all under the rubric of the ethics of belief *broadly* construed.

THE ETHICS OF BELIEF

Narrowly construed, the ethics of belief debate revolves around the issue of whether there are norms governing our various practices of belief formation and, if there are, whether they are genuinely *moral* norms or norms of some other sort. Is it always *wrong* (or irrational, or impractical) to hold a belief without having sufficient evidence for it? Is it always *right* (or rational, or prudent) to hold beliefs on the basis of evidence, and to withhold them in the absence of evidence?

The *locus classicus* is an essay called “The Ethics of Belief” by William Kingdon Clifford – the nineteenth-century philosopher/mathematician whom William James dubbed “that delicious *enfant terrible*” of doxastic abstemiousness. In epistemological circles, Clifford is chiefly remembered for two things: a story and a principle. The story is that of a shipowner who is planning to sell tickets for a transatlantic voyage. It strikes him that his ship is old, and doubts creep into his mind about its seaworthiness. Knowing that repairs would be costly and cause a delay, he manages to push these doubts away and form the “sincere and comfortable conviction that his vessel is thoroughly safe and seaworthy.” He sells tickets, bids the passengers farewell, and then quietly collects the insurance money when the ship goes down in a mid-Atlantic squall.

According to Clifford (who himself once survived a shipwreck, and must have found this behavior particularly deplorable), the owner in this case is “verily guilty of the death of those men” because even though he sincerely believed that the ship was safe, “he had no right to believe on such evidence as was before him.” After making this diagnosis, Clifford changes the example: the ship doesn’t meet a watery demise, but rather makes it safe and sound into the New York harbor. Does that affect the shipowner’s culpability with respect to his belief? “Not one jot,” says Clifford: he is equally guilty – equally blameworthy – for having believed something on insufficient evidence. Then Clifford gives us his famous principle: “It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence.”³

In his response to Clifford, James famously sniffs at the impracticable stringency of this principle, plumping instead for the more liberal policy that we often have the “right to believe” even when we lack sufficient evidence (and even when we *know* that we lack it).⁴ In places, James goes further and suggests that in certain cases, it is not merely permitted but *positively commendable* or even *rationally required* that we believe on insufficient evidence.⁵ He concludes

by upbraiding Clifford for his demurrals about religious belief in particular:

When I look at the religious question as it really puts itself to concrete men, and when I think of all the possibilities which both practically and theoretically it involves, then this command that we shall put a stopper on our heart, instincts, and courage, and *wait* – acting of course meanwhile more or less as if religion were *not* true – till doomsday, or till such time as our intellect and sense working together may have raked in evidence enough, – this command, I say, seems to me the queerest idol ever manufactured in the philosophic cave.⁶

Although the phrase “ethics of belief” may be of Clifford’s coinage, there were obviously ethics of belief well before the nineteenth century. Descartes says in the *Meditations* that when forming a judgment, “it is clear by the natural light that perception of the intellect should precede the determination of the will.” In the search for certain knowledge (*scientia*), at least, there is an obligation to withhold assent from any proposition the truth of which is not clearly perceived by the intellect.⁷ In other contexts, it may be both appropriate and advantageous to hold a mere “opinion” (*opinio*) whose truth is not clearly and distinctly perceived. Even then, however, we need to have some sort of evidence before giving our assent: “Though we cannot have certain demonstrations of everything, still we must take sides, and in matters of custom *embrace the opinions that seem the most probable*, so that we may never be irresolute when we need to act.”⁸

Locke is at least as stringent: in the search for scientific knowledge as well as in other contexts, he says, it is to “transgress against [one’s] own light” to believe on insufficient evidence or to fail to proportion one’s degree of belief to the amount of evidence that one has. In his discussion of the concept of “Faith,” Locke writes:

He that believes without having any Reason for believing, may be in love with his own Fancies; but neither seeks Truth as he ought, nor pays the Obedience due to his Maker, who would have him use those discerning Faculties he has given him, to keep him out of Mistake and Error. He that does not this to the best of his Power, however he sometimes lights on Truth, is in the right but by chance and I know not whether the luckiness of the Accident will excuse the irregularity of his proceeding.⁹

To believe without good reason or evidence is not only to misuse one’s faculties and risk error, says Locke; it is also to violate a God-given duty to follow the dictates of reason. Given his divine command theory of moral rightness, it looks as though, for Locke, the duty to follow evidence is a *moral* as well as an *epistemic* one.¹⁰

This brings out an important point: there are different *kinds* of obligation that govern our practices generally, and there are also different *kinds* of obligation that govern our practices of belief-formation in particular. The ethicist of belief will typically try to specify which kinds, if any, he or she means to ascribe to us. Clifford and Locke claim that the question of whether one has done one's doxastic best is not only an epistemic but also a moral question. In other words, they think that to violate an epistemic norm is, by implication, to violate a moral norm.¹¹ Others claim that there are *only* epistemic norms in the neighborhood of belief. Consider this injunction from Kant, for instance:

Friends of the human race and of what is holiest to it! Accept what appears to you most worthy of belief after careful and sincere examination, whether of facts or of rational grounds; only do not dispute that prerogative of reason which makes it the highest good on earth, the prerogative of being the final touchstone of truth.¹²

Although there is a whiff of a merely hypothetical imperative here (if you want to get to truth, then you should follow your evidence), in general for Kant it is the *categorical* and *epistemic* imperative to be reasonable that should lead us to be evidence followers. To “think for yourself” and “free yourself from the self-incurred tutelage of others” is the epistemic duty of every enlightened subject.¹³ It is an offense against reason – a degrading capitulation to cognitive heteronomy – to do otherwise.

A third general type of norm relating to our practices of belief formation is *pragmatic* or *prudential*. In some cases, it is the better part of wisdom to believe that *p* even in the absence of sufficient evidence for *p*. In other cases, it is pragmatically *necessary* to believe that *p* in order to accomplish some worthy goal. For example: Suppose you would like to retain a good relationship with your teenage son, and you are aware that this requires believing the best of him whenever possible. You have no conclusive evidence either for or against the proposition that he turns your house into an opium den of Edwardian proportions when you are away (he claims that he has recently taken up meditation, and that the funny smell when you come home is just incense). Because you think that your relationship will be seriously damaged if you come to think of your son as a hardcore opium user, you would violate a pragmatic norm if you were to go ahead and believe that he is.

The types of norms governing belief are often taken to be related, and in at least two ways. First, they may be conceptually or theoretically connected: That there is a *pragmatic* norm to follow evidence may serve as a premise in an argument to the effect that there is also an *epistemic* norm to follow evidence. And, as we saw with Locke and Clifford, that there is such an epistemic norm may be the basis for an argument that there is an analogous *moral* norm.¹⁴ Second,

the norms may conflict. The pragmatic norm that advises you to believe that your son is not turning the house into an opium den may eventually conflict with the epistemic norm to follow your olfactory evidence. A full-blown ethics of belief will say something about the connections between types of norms, and will also tell us which sorts of situations the various norms govern and what to do when norms conflict.

The type of theory that ascribes to rational people the obligation to *follow their evidence* when forming beliefs often goes by the name *Evidentialism*. Given that there are different kinds of obligation, there will also be different versions of Evidentialism: at the very least, we can distinguish pragmatic, epistemic, and moral versions. In general, it is incumbent on Evidentialists to specify the sorts of norms they are putting forward, as well as to provide some account of what can count as evidence (is it only propositional attitudes, or is there also non-doxastic evidence?), what it means to “have” evidence, and what the support relations between evidence and a belief are like. These issues are exceedingly complex, but it is not obvious that any of them can be the basis of a fatal objection to all forms of Evidentialism.¹⁵

Another major issue in the ethics of belief debate has to do with whether or not acts of belief formation are in any way under our control. If an act is not voluntary in at least *some* sense, it is hard to see how anyone could be genuinely *blameworthy* for having performed it. In response to this objection from “doxastic involuntarism,” some ethicists of belief have developed accounts of *indirect* ways in which belief-formation can count as voluntary and thus be susceptible to moral evaluation.¹⁶ Others take the objection to motivate a shift of focus away from belief and toward other positive propositional attitudes that are by definition voluntary – “acceptances,” for instance.¹⁷ Still others seek a position that supports talk of obligations on belief while absorbing the (putative) empirical datum that much belief-formation is not under the control of the will.¹⁸

THE ETHICS OF BELIEF IN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

It should be clear from this brief survey of the ethics of belief debate in epistemology that the positions on offer will have implications for speculative metaphysical and religious belief formation. That’s because metaphysical and religious doctrines often refer to entities that are empirically unavailable (deities, causal connections, wills, souls, possible worlds, universals), and the question naturally arises of how we can locate evidence for beliefs about such exotica. The shipowner’s belief has nothing to do with the supersensible, of course, but it is clear in later parts of the essay that Clifford’s principle is

primarily targeted at *religious* belief that is not formed on the basis of sufficient evidence.¹⁹

Locke, too, explicitly emphasizes religion when discussing the import of his version of Evidentialism. *Pace* Clifford, Locke thinks that there *is* good evidence for belief in God, and thus that such belief is (when based on that evidence) both permitted and commendable.²⁰ Those unfortunate working-class folks who don't have much time, Locke says, may be excused from across-the-board duties to check their evidence. But they should at least use their Sabbaths to consider the evidence for their beliefs about "matters of maximal concernment."

Besides his particular calling for the support of this life, everyone has a concern in a future life, which he is bound to look after. This engages his thoughts in religion; and here it mightily lies upon him to understand and reason right. Men, therefore, cannot be excused from understanding the words, and framing the general notions relating to religion, right. The one day of seven, besides other days of rest, allows in the Christian world time enough for this (had they no other idle hours) if they would but make use of these vacancies from their daily labour, and apply themselves to an improvement of knowledge with as much diligence as they often do to a great many other things that are useless.²¹

Locke builds these claims about the duty to seek evidence for religious belief into his overall Evidentialist picture. By contrast, another early ethicist of belief, Blaise Pascal, takes religious belief as a primary focus. His famous "wager" argument (which is actually a last-ditch effort to encourage theism in his readers if all else fails) says that such belief is *pragmatically* justifiable even without sufficient evidence. Thus Pascal's is an anti-Evidentialist position, at least when it comes to pragmatic norms governing religious belief formation. He also offers advice about how to overcome the apparently involuntary nature of belief (use indirect methods to generate belief in God, he says, such as going repeatedly to Mass and taking holy water). And, of course, it is this proto-pragmatist line that James takes up in developing an *apologia* for religious belief in his response to Clifford.²²

Whereas philosophers up through the nineteenth century worried most about the moral, epistemic, and pragmatic *justification* of belief, early twentieth-century philosophers focused primarily on questions about the *meaning* of the propositions believed. The dreaded "verifiability criterion of meaning" championed by many logical positivists claimed (in some of its versions) that statements that are neither *analytic* nor *empirically verifiable* are, strictly speaking, meaningless. An implication of this doctrine is that there is not much semantic room for synthetic judgments about supersensible entities.²³

This strict verificationism had important ramifications for the ethics of belief. Theories of meaning are often and quite naturally accompanied by implicit epistemic, moral, or pragmatic principles according to which we should shun statements that are deemed meaningless by the theory, and verificationism was no exception. But the implicit status of such principles sometimes obscures the fact that they aren't *entailed* by the relevant theory of meaning. Clearly it *would* be pointless and irrational to try to accept statements like "All mimsy were the borogoves, and the mome raths outrabe" or "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously." But even a strict verificationist might admit that though religious statements are equally meaningless from a cognitive point of view, something of pragmatic or moral value is expressed by them that isn't expressed by the foregoing balderdash.

The arch-positivist A. J. Ayer, for example, does not dispatch religious (and ethical) language as *mere* nonsense in his twentieth century classic, *Language, Truth, and Logic*. It is nonsense for Ayer, of course, but it also has an important "emotive" function distinct from the "descriptive" functions of ordinary and scientific language.²⁴ Perhaps a cognitively meaningless statement like "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord" succeeds in expressing courageous hope for an amelioration of the human condition, or defiance in the face of our own finitude, or an affirmation of our absolute dependence on something that transcends our cognitive grasp. If so, says Ayer, then it may be pragmatically or morally valuable to utter this statement in various contexts; it may even be important for some of us to try to accept it if possible. And this may be true even though from an *epistemic* point of view, the statement is a miserable nonstarter.

THE FIRST *NEW ESSAYS*

Logical positivism and the verificationism underpinning it collapsed around mid-century.²⁵ This development, too, had important implications for the ethics of belief, and for the ethics of religious belief in particular. Indeed, the story of the "revival" of philosophy of religion within the Anglo-American tradition in the latter part of the century is in part the story of the reopening of lines of inquiry that had been blocked by the positivists. The publication of *New Essays* is viewed by many as a watershed in this process, decisively inaugurating a postpositivist period in the philosophical treatment of religion. As we will see below, however, *New Essays* was in fact more of a transitional document than an articulation of something entirely new.

In the preface to *New Essays*, editors Antony Flew and Alisdair MacIntyre explicitly deny that their contributors could be considered logical positivists

“if this is taken, as it is and should be, to imply a toeing of the party line of the now defunct Vienna Circle.”²⁶ But while the verifiability criterion is nowhere advanced with full confidence, positivism’s deep influence on the collection is unmistakable.²⁷ One of the most prominent vestiges in *New Essays* is the shared assumption that religious language presents a particularly acute philosophical problem. None of the authors adopts Ayer’s response to the problem exactly, but many pursue the project of salvaging an important but nondescriptive function for such language.

The most widely anthologized of the pieces from the collection – the “University discussion” among Antony Flew, R. M. Hare, and Basil Mitchell – is typical in this regard. In his part of the discussion, Flew substitutes Karl Popper’s “falsifiability criterion of meaning” for the verifiability criterion, and then argues that because there is no fact or discovery or event that religious people would take to falsify their creedal statements, those statements don’t succeed in asserting anything.²⁸ Hare responds by suggesting that religion consists not in “systems of assertions” that can be falsified by evidence, but rather in the articulation of a *blik* – a view of the world (like the conviction that nature is regular) that determines what counts as evidence and whether certain evidence is admitted, and so is not itself defeasible by evidence.

Similarly, Thomas Macpherson, reflecting on the closing pages of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, classifies religion as simply “the inexpressible” and notes that “perhaps positivistic philosophy has done a service to religion. By showing, in their own way, the absurdity of what theologians try to utter, positivists have helped to suggest that religion belongs to the sphere of the unutterable.”²⁹ Flew concludes the volume in the same Wittgensteinian spirit, arguing that if the semantic and logical problems inherent in talk of “surviving death” cannot be resolved, then we must simply accept the Tractarian doctrine that “death is not lived through. Outside the visual field nothing is seen, not even darkness: for whatever is seen is within the visual field. When we are dead nothing is experienced, not even emptiness: for there is no one to experience. For each of us ‘the world in death does not change, but ceases.’”³⁰ If we cannot make empirical sense of talk of the afterlife, Flew is saying here, then we must conclude that no substantive claims – and hence no claims about personal survival – are made by such talk.

This makes it clear, again, that although the editors of *New Essays* announced their departure from positivism, the verdicts expressed by the contributors turn out to be in substantial agreement with those of their predecessors. Still, *New Essays* also contains early strains of three new and distinct themes in the analytic treatment of religion – themes that would become prominent over the half-century to follow.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION SINCE *NEW ESSAYS**Further Problems concerning Religious Language*

The first theme, the one most discernable within *New Essays* itself, retains the positivists' focus on language but abandons their strict criteria of meaning. The theme is expressive of the broader mid-century movement in analytic philosophy that is sometimes called "linguistic analysis."³¹ Two years after *New Essays*, Basil Mitchell described that movement as follows:

Philosophers who adopt this approach (they are sometimes called "Linguistic Analysts") differ from the Logical Positivists in this characteristic way: in place of the dogmatic assertion that those statements alone have meaning which are empirically verifiable, they ask the question – of any class of statements – "what is the logic of statements of this kind?" that is to say, "how are they to be verified, or tested or justified? What is their use and function, what jobs do they do?"³²

In the late 1950s, this kind of linguistic analysis was applied to theological utterances, and a "religious language obsession"³³ seized many philosophers of religion over the two subsequent decades. The obsession was most acute in Britain; this was due in part to the powerful influence of Wittgenstein there and in part to the prominence of a distinct "Oxford school" of linguistic analysis.³⁴ Many of the Wittgensteinians, then as now, tended to follow the positivists in denying that religious language makes substantive claims about the world (a tendency that earned this movement the sobriquet "therapeutic positivism"³⁵). Members of the Oxford school, on the other hand, tended to engage in detailed analysis of religious language of the sort Mitchell describes, in an attempt to understand the various functions that such language serves. An account of the actual functions or uses of religious language, it was thought, could itself provide a guide to its meaning.³⁶

A pervasive assumption in work from this period is that since questions about meaning are logically prior to questions about its truth or justification, the latter cannot profitably be pursued until the former are settled. Thus the American philosopher William Blackstone argued in 1963 that:

[u]ntil the content of a belief is made clear, the appeal to accept the belief on faith is beside the point, for one would not know what one has accepted. The request for the meaning of a religious belief is logically prior to the question of accepting that belief on faith or to the question of whether that belief constitutes knowledge. This point the philosophical analysts have driven home with a vengeance.³⁷

The prevalence of this way of thinking led to the so-called Problem of Religious Language becoming a staple in textbook and classroom surveys of philosophy

of religion, and often being treated as *the* major problem in the field. By the early 1970s, however, this model no longer enjoyed unquestioned dominance. Wittgensteinians were slowly being marginalized in analytic philosophy as a whole, and Oxford-style linguistic analysis suffered both from the deaths of J. L. Austin and Ian Ramsey and from ongoing attacks on the idea that linguistic meanings are stable enough to support anything like an analytic-synthetic distinction.³⁸ Although philosophy of language has remained a core area of analytic philosophy, the last thirty years have witnessed its transformation from “first philosophy” into one area of specialization among others. Alternative types of philosophy of religion slowly emerged from under the shadow of linguistic analysis, largely as a result of this development in the field of philosophy more generally.

The conviction that it makes sense to speak of *the* Problem of Religious Language also eventually came under attack by philosophers who had themselves been working on it. Blackstone, for example, professed to be following the positivists and the later Wittgenstein in his initial investigations into the nature and status of religious language.³⁹ The results of his work, however, tended to highlight the multifarious character of such language: “Sentences which perform a religious function,” Blackstone wrote, “are of many different kinds. They include descriptions, predictions, explanations, exclamations, exhortations, prayers, questions, ejaculations, blessings, historical statements, and autobiographical statements. There are also sentences, we have seen, which purport to refer to something outside human experience – something in principle unverifiable.”⁴⁰ In the end, Blackstone largely agreed with the positivists in taking the latter sort of religious assertion to be cognitively meaningless. But like the linguistic analysts, he observed that there is a considerable variety of uses to which religious language is typically put; he also noted that there are *some* statements central to certain religions – “Pharaoh let the Israelites go,” for example, or “Mohammad engaged in ministry in Mecca” – that undoubtedly *do* make claims about the world. Moreover, for many of these statements there *is* considerable (though not conclusive) evidence.⁴¹ The worry that such observations raise should be obvious: the more that religious utterances are seen as performing a variety of very different functions – some of which are shared with nonreligious utterances – the more *the* Problem of Religious Language dissolves into a multiplicity of problems in the philosophy of language generally.⁴²

Traces of the religious language obsession and its aftermath can still be detected in contemporary philosophy of religion, and in at least two ways. First, as mentioned above, there is an ongoing tradition of reflection on religion that takes its cues from Wittgenstein’s “Lectures on Religious Belief,” “Remarks on

Frazer's 'Golden Bough,' and 'Culture and Value.' Typical of this movement is a focus on religious language games and "forms of life" as cultural-linguistic entities, and a repudiation of the notion that religious utterances make genuine "descriptive" claims about the world in the way that everyday and/or scientific utterances do. Although the leading lights of this movement were analytic philosophers (Wittgenstein himself, Norman Malcolm, D. Z. Phillips), most of the people currently working in that field are now in departments of religious studies or divinity. This is largely due to the fact that the focus on social history, interpretation, and cultural forms in the academic study of religion (as well as its strong anti-metaphysical bias) makes it more hospitable than contemporary analytic philosophy to the neo-Wittgensteinian program.⁴³

Another result of the move away from a focus on language in analytic philosophy of religion was the slow return to optimism about substantive metaphysics. The fact that the positivist program had faltered, together with the fact that subsequent linguistic analysts were able to open up a place for religious language that was not wholly "emotive," allowed for a return to traditional discussion of the *entities* referred to by such language. Talk of the nature and attributes of God conceived as a genuine metaphysical entity, for instance, began to supplant discussions of the nature of "God-talk" and its capacity to refer. Not everyone has celebrated this development or shares the new metaphysical optimism (the neo-Wittgensteinians, for instance, are very much opposed to it). But it is a visible trend, and metaphysics is now a much more important subfield in philosophy of religion than is the study of language. As a result, no full-bore treatments of religious utterance have been included in this volume (although Alston's contribution is somewhat in this vein); instead, it opens with a section on substantive metaphysical questions about the nature of God, freedom, and immortality. Still, the postpositivist program just described – with its suggestion that some objects of theological speculation are tractable to descriptive language – was clearly an important precondition of the projects pursued here.

Problems concerning Rationality

The second thematic trajectory in *New Essays* leads away from a preoccupation with language and towards a re-engagement with older lines of thought in philosophy of religion. C. B. Martin's "A Religious Way of Knowing" and Alasdair MacIntyre's "Visions," for example, are both concerned with the question of whether certain types of experience can provide evidence for religious beliefs. Flew's "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom" raises objections to the free-will defense to the problem of evil, and advocates John Stuart

Mill's position that the problem of "reconciling infinite benevolence and justice with infinite power in the Creator in such a world as this" is impossible.⁴⁴ Finally, Patrick Nowell-Smith's "Miracles" deals with the question of whether events for which no scientific explanations are forthcoming provide evidence for the existence of a supernatural order. These essays are thus concerned with evaluating the *rationality of religious beliefs* through examining either the *evidence* for them or their *logical compatibility* with one another and with commonsense and scientific knowledge.

Two years after the publication of *New Essays*, Ronald Hepburn offered a succinct articulation of the central issue in this region: "If we are convinced that Hume and Kant and their successors have once and for all refuted the arguments of rational apologetics, we are faced with a choice between agnosticism (or atheism) and the discovery of an alternative method of justifying belief."⁴⁵ Worries about the justification or rationality of religious belief were thus seen as an inheritance of the Enlightenment rather than of positivism. The success of the positivist program would have rendered Hume's and Kant's criticisms of rational apologetics otiose, of course, but in the wake of positivism's demise and outside the ambit of the later Wittgenstein, material of this sort once again received serious consideration.

Hepburn's remark suggests that there was a general consensus that "Hume and Kant and their successors" had discredited traditional theistic proofs.⁴⁶ Such a consensus has, in fact, never existed; on the contrary, the adequacy of the Humean and Kantian objections has been debated – sometimes quite hotly – over the past half-century. Quite a few theistic arguments enjoyed favorable attention from prominent philosophers during that period: a case in point is Norman Malcolm's widely influential reconstruction in 1960 of the Anselmian ontological argument – a reconstruction that had, according to Malcolm, the twin merits of remaining untouched by Kant's criticisms and of being sound.⁴⁷ Another example is the design argument which, though often thought to have been maimed by Hume and given the deathblow by Darwin, has received a latter-day resuscitation in the form of the so-called fine-tuning argument.⁴⁸

Thus, even during (and certainly after) the period when linguistic analysis was dominant, questions regarding the rationality of religious belief were beginning to receive significant attention from philosophers (even those who were primarily focused on linguistic issues⁴⁹). And because the traditional theistic arguments have their roots in the history of philosophy, many of these philosophers started engaging materials from that history. As a result, the decline of the Problem of Religious Language went hand in hand not just with the return of metaphysics, but also with a revival of serious interest in the

history of philosophical discussions of religion (which paralleled a revival of serious interest in the history of philosophy generally). The second section of this volume includes three essays that exhibit the ongoing importance that questions concerning rationality and justification have in contemporary philosophy of religion.

The Advent of “Christian Philosophy”

A third important thematic trajectory coming out of *New Essays* is only hinted at within the collection itself. In his reply to J. N. Findlay’s contention that theism is no longer a viable option for those who have a “contemporary philosophical outlook,” A. C. A. Rainer noted that not all of those who think of themselves as “contemporary” agree. In a prophetic vein, Rainer wrote:

But supposing that there were a consensus of contemporary thinkers about the theological implications of their interpretation of logic, or that the negative implications for theology of this interpretation had been demonstrated, what should the believer do? Accept the result without demur, and apply to a psycho-analyst for help in adjusting himself emotionally to a godless world? Not if he were a philosophical believer. It would be his responsibility, rather, to direct discussion onto the adequacy of the interpretation of logic assumed by contemporary thinkers. Precisely what form this interpretation should take is, and will continue to be, a matter for debate on purely logical and epistemological grounds. A critical examination of the presuppositions of thought and communication will help to clarify theological as well as scientific and philosophical thought.⁵⁰

Here Rainer anticipates an approach to philosophy of religion that, though scarcely visible at the time, would come to characterize one of the more energetic parts of the field within an academic generation. The movement now referred to under the rubric “Christian philosophy” (the term, of course, has a much longer history⁵¹) emerged rather quietly during the 1960s and 1970s in Britain and the United States, and it was only toward the end of this period that references to a “revival” of philosophy of religion began to appear in the literature.⁵² In its early stages, this movement was largely concerned with defending theism against a variety of philosophical objections. A hallmark of the approach was to direct critical attention to the assumptions motivating such objections – assumptions that, although often taken for granted by their proponents, could be seen as “matter for debate” on philosophical grounds. Rainer’s injunction to the philosophical believer to question the “interpretation of logic assumed” by her opponents was thus a harbinger of what became a common strategy.

It's true of course, that philosophically tinged "apologetics" could be found in earlier theology – particularly in the Reformed tradition.⁵³ But "Christian philosophy" originated within the discipline of philosophy proper. Many of the prominent figures in this movement were trained in the nonreligious academic climate of the 1950s and 1960s. A common theme in subsequent descriptions of the period is that the pronouncements against the intellectual viability and interest of religion seemed in many cases to stem from a kind of allergic reaction to all things religious, rather than from well-grounded conviction.⁵⁴ Some of these younger religious philosophers thus spied an opportunity to turn the philosophical tools with which they had been equipped against what they saw as the secular biases of their own discipline. The goal, however, was emphatically *not* to traffic in fundamentalist apologetics or anti-intellectual fideism. Rather, it was to solicit a seat at the seminar-room table for philosophers who were explicitly committed to both reason and faith.

The example of Nicholas Wolterstorff (to whom this volume is dedicated) is emblematic in this regard. Wolterstorff was trained at Calvin College as an undergraduate, and then at Harvard, where he wrote a dissertation on Alfred North Whitehead. He soon turned away from process philosophy, however, in order to work on developing religion-friendly arguments in analytic metaphysics and epistemology. In an essay called "Can Belief in God Be Rational If It Has No Foundations?" he de-emphasized direct arguments for theism and instead took issue with the claim that the burden of proof in controversies concerning the existence of God rests squarely on the theist. Wolterstorff argued instead that in some cases, theistic belief can be "immediate" (i.e., based on no evidence at all) and yet still count as rational. This anti-Evidentialist suggestion – that "a person's being in the situation of believing immediately that God exists represents no failure on his part to govern his beliefs as well as can rightly be demanded of him" – struck many readers as outrageous. But it galvanized some to continue exploring the assumptions that had made philosophical atheism or agnosticism seem superior.⁵⁵

Other participants in the movement took this idea one step further by challenging the thought that only claims acceptable to believers and nonbelievers alike could be used, without argument, as philosophical resources in public debate. Many saw nothing amiss in taking traditional religious doctrines as premises in philosophical arguments, and thereby explicitly locating the starting point for their projects "within" the religious sphere.⁵⁶ The distinction between "philosophy of religion" and "philosophical theology" slowly evolved to accommodate this development: it now rests on whether the premises of the arguments involved are supposed to be available to everyone (philosophy of

religion) or just to those already located in a doctrinal tradition (philosophical theology).⁵⁷

Within “Christian philosophy” there are more specific movements that are affiliated with particular denominations or theological traditions. The movement known as “Reformed Epistemology” is perhaps the most prominent of these. The Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper is commonly cited as the intellectual grandfather of the movement, and the philosopher William Harry Jellema, who taught for thirty years at Calvin College and influenced many members of the movement, is considered its immediate forebear. The term “Reformed Epistemology” was not coined until 1980 or so, but even during the 1960s, scholars influenced by Jellema published a number of pieces that were important antecedents both of this movement and of “Christian philosophy” more generally.⁵⁸

Reformed Epistemology itself is not easily defined (Keith DeRose simply calls it “that Alston-Plantinga-Wolterstorff stuff” in his contribution to this book), but it seems safe to say at least two things about it. First, it is primarily aimed at defending theistic belief against charges that it is impermissible, unjustified, or irrational. The later, more ambitious, and more controversial varieties also try to show that theistic or even specifically Christian belief is positively justified or warranted. Second, Reformed Epistemology bears little resemblance to classical Reformed theology: many of its leading practitioners are libertarians about free will, reject Calvin’s doctrines of original sin and eternal damnation, and have little use for Reformed theories of predestination. (Many are universalists.)

The Roman Catholic tradition has also played a major role in the development of “Christian philosophy.” In the early part of the recent century, philosophy in the Catholic tradition was predominantly Thomist in its orientation, and tended to view both the Continental and analytic (then largely positivist) traditions with suspicion. The second half of the century, however, saw expansion by explicitly Catholic philosophers into both major traditions (and, to a lesser extent, into the tradition of American pragmatism).⁵⁹ Some of them began to engage the philosophy coming out of the Reformed school, and thus to give Christian philosophy a more latitudinarian and ecumenical character.⁶⁰

One tradition that has not been as visible as it might within recent philosophy of religion is liberal Protestantism. Although many philosophers of religion are Protestants of this sort, there has been little effort to develop a self-consciously “liberal” wing of the field. This is unfortunate, because the liberal Anglican, Lutheran, and Wesleyan traditions (for instance) arguably have as much to offer by way of philosophical resources as the Reformed and

the Catholic traditions. Moreover, the pluralistic and ecumenical tendencies of liberal Protestantism would make a philosophy based in it *much* more palatable to nonreligious philosophers than some of the more conservative strains of Christian philosophy. Evangelical Protestants and Mormons, by comparison, have been very proactive, even founding their own journals and professional societies in recent years.⁶¹

In addition to the contributions of Christian philosophers, analytic philosophy of religion has also benefited from people working in other religious traditions, and in the other “Abrahamic traditions” (Judaism and Islam) in particular. Of course, these traditions have always been home to eminent scriptural scholars, theologians, and philosophers, but the explicit incorporation of the tools of analytic philosophy is (as it is within Christianity) a novel development. There has also been much discussion among philosophers of the problems raised by religious pluralism, discussions that have led in turn to debates about the place of religion in the public sphere and the social-political aspects of religious belief and practice. Some aspects of the latter debates are discussed in our third group of essays.

Obviously we have not tried to survey the entire field in what follows, or even to include samples of each of the active subfields.⁶² That choice was motivated partly by concerns about thematic unity and partly by the desire to honor Wolterstorff, whose own recent work has been in metaphysics, epistemology, and social-political philosophy. In effect, then, we have followed the example of the first *New Essays*, and offer this volume as an updated sampling of the work being done in a few (albeit very important) parts of a large and varied field.

THE PRESENT ESSAYS

The book is divided into three main sections. Essays in the first section are concerned with metaphysical topics in the philosophy of religion; essays in the second deal with epistemology proper; and essays in the third address social-political issues. Each group of essays, however, can be seen as part of a discussion of the “ethics of religious belief” broadly construed. The Metaphysics group considers questions of coherence: Are the concepts involved in religious beliefs (God, the soul, the afterlife) intelligible, and do they refer to metaphysically possible entities? If not, then those beliefs will be ruled out by the (largely uncontroversial) epistemic obligation not to hold beliefs involving incoherent or unintelligible concepts. The Epistemology group deals directly with questions about the epistemic norms governing religious belief. The essays in the Social-Political section address the communal aspects and ramifications

of religious belief and practice. Issues about the role of religious belief in social and political relations, particularly in a global context, are perhaps closest to being Lockean “matters of maximal concernment” for philosophy of religion at present and comprise an area of new interest and growth in the field. In the current political climate, it may be there – in the area of social and political thought – that reflection on the ethics of religious belief bears some of its most important fruit.

Metaphysics: God and Creatures

In the first essay (“Can God Break the Laws?”), Alvin Plantinga argues that theistic belief is not in any essential tension with a commitment to the fundamental project of natural science, where the latter is conceived as the attempt to discover and describe the natural laws. Plantinga does this by suggesting, not that there are no such laws, but rather that we can still think in terms of laws even if, as some theists claim, God is able to operate in special ways within nature. We simply have to view the natural laws themselves as statements of the “ordinary policy” guiding God’s action in the world, rather than the “extraordinary policies” that God might adopt in the course of special intervention. Subscription to the project of natural science is thus not in conflict, at least in this respect, with sympathy for supernaturalism.

Linda Zagzebski (“Sleeping Beauty and the Afterlife”) also seeks to demonstrate the compatibility of contemporary commitments (in this case, about the validity of causal laws and the essentially embodied nature of human persons) with traditional religious doctrines (in this case, about the afterlife). Although the survival of embodied persons after death might require a miraculous intervention of some sort, Zagzebski’s thought-experiment-*cum*-fairy-tale is intended to show that there is no *conceptual* barrier to thinking that such survival is metaphysically possible.

Derk Pereboom (“Free Will, Evil, and Divine Providence”) considers the nature of divine agency in the world as well. Starting with the assumptions that freedom is not compatible with determinism and that we are *not* free,⁶³ his goal is to argue that there is still room for accepting religious doctrines that appear at first face to require commitment to genuine human freedom. Pereboom focuses in particular on some perennial questions about God’s relation to evil. His central and controversial claim there is that all events are directly willed by God. Events that appear to be evil are willed by God in order to promote a greater good (a good that may, however, be epistemically inaccessible).

William Alston's essay ("Two Cheers for Mystery!") falls squarely on the borderline between metaphysics and epistemology. His main thesis is that taking seriously the otherness and mysteriousness of the divine – as encapsulated in one or another version of what he calls "the Divine Mystery Thesis" – can be combined with saying and thinking things about God that are "close enough to the truth" to be a useful guide in the religious life. Alston is thus opposed to those who claim that the mysteriousness of the divine – and the resulting inadequacy of our religious concepts – prevent us from ever speaking truthfully about God. One of Alston's assumptions here is that rationally acceptable theistic belief can be based on "mystical" experiences and, conversely, that God is the sort of being that can put in an appearance – albeit of a nonstandard sort – to the intellectual faculties of normal human beings. This draws on the argument Alston articulated in his seminal work, *Perceiving God*.⁶⁴

Epistemology: God and the Ethics of Belief

The second section of the book focuses directly on questions about the rationality of religious belief. Richard Swinburne ("The Probability of the Resurrection") is sympathetic to the Evidentialist picture of rationality (though not the vestigial positivism) we find in the first *New Essays*. The Evidentialist challenge to religion, again, says that because the available evidence for important doctrines is woefully inadequate, religious belief is epistemically irrational (think of Bertrand Russell in this regard, who remarked that if he were to survive death and confront God in the afterlife, he would defend his unbelief by saying, "Not enough evidence, God, not enough evidence!"). Although many philosophers have since argued that the Evidentialist standard of adequacy is inappropriate for evaluating epistemic rationality, Swinburne claims that the standard is by and large appropriate and, strikingly, that the evidence in favor of not only theism generally but also the death and resurrection of Christ is very strong. Given Swinburne's assumptions about the relative probabilities of the case, which he makes a case for here, it turns out that the likelihood of someone like Jesus of Nazareth being raised by God from the dead is in fact very high. Indeed, although he stresses that it is impossible to give precise values to the probabilities of most theories or hypotheses, Swinburne claims that when we assign *artificially* precise (but still quite defensible) values to various theological hypotheses, the probability of the resurrection turns out to be an eye-popping 97%! Here we see, then, an extension of Plantinga's and Zagzebski's efforts to show that it is metaphysically possible for God to intervene in nature and to do so by

resurrecting a person from the dead. This is not only metaphysically possible, according to Swinburne – it is in fact *very likely* to have happened already.

Peter van Inwagen (“Is God an Unnecessary Hypothesis?”), by contrast, is explicitly anti-Evidentialist.⁶⁵ In this paper, he considers the claim that religious belief operates as an explanatory hypothesis of some set of data, and that it has been supplanted by more economical naturalistic hypotheses. Van Inwagen claims not only that those naturalistic explanations are inadequate to explain the relevant data set, but also that theism is rarely accepted as an hypothesis anyway. On the contrary, theistic belief is more like belief in the existence of external material objects, or other minds, or the intellectual equality of the sexes. These are beliefs for which (van Inwagen says) it is notoriously difficult to state conclusive arguments or provide adequate evidence; most people simply find themselves accepting such beliefs, even though they can cite no cogent or compelling arguments for them. Still, these beliefs are not (we all agree) irrational, and something similar can be said about belief in God. Most religious people do not prefer theism on the basis of the fact that it is, as an hypothesis, the best explanation of a certain data set. It may be, as van Inwagen says, a “hard-wired illusion,” but it is not an hypothesis, and, *a fortiori*, not an unnecessary hypothesis.

Finally, Keith DeRose (“Direct Warrant Realism”) continues in the same vein by describing and partially defending an anti-Evidentialist way of thinking about the structure and rationality of belief in general. DeRose takes his cues from Thomas Reid, the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher and *éminence grise* behind many contemporary defenses of “Direct Realism” about both perceptual and religious belief. But DeRose rejects the Direct Realist claim (which is also typical of many Reformed Epistemologists) that perceptual and religious beliefs can obtain warrant *sufficient* for knowledge without enjoying some positive coherence with other beliefs that the subject holds. DeRose’s “Direct Warrant Realism” says that beliefs get *some* of their warrant directly when produced by appropriate perceptual or religious belief-forming mechanisms, but they only get warrant *sufficient for knowledge* when additional warrant is “transmitted” to them by way of positive coherence.

Social-Political Philosophy: God, Ethics, and Belief

The third group of essays takes up questions about the interpersonal and socio-political aspects of religious belief. Robert Audi (“The Epistemic Authority of Testimony and the Ethics of Belief”) continues the previous section’s emphasis on the rationality of religious (among other sorts of) belief, but emphasizes the role that *social* or *communal* testimony plays. It is not the case (*pace*

many in the Evidentialist tradition) that, in order to be rational, testimony-based beliefs require independent support from other justified beliefs about the reliability of the source and the likelihood of the testified proposition to be true. Rather, Audi argues (also following Reid) that a plausible theory of testimony will make sense of what is often our absolute dependence on others in our social and political communities – a dependence that comes without these adjacent supporting beliefs. Moreover, testimonial chains as a whole need not be weaker than their weakest link, and this is true even if the chain extends indefinitely and without any outside corroboration. This general theory of testimony underwrites Audi's final conclusion that some religious beliefs based on scriptural and/or communal testimony can be rationally acceptable within a sophisticated ethics of belief.

John Hare's essay ("Kant on the Rational Instability of Atheism") is part historical exegesis of Kant, and part positive recommendation for contemporary moral philosophers. His goal is to breathe new life into Kant's claim that there is a place within a proper ethics of belief for theism based not on epistemic but rather on *moral* and *social* considerations. We have a "need" for religious belief, Hare's Kant says, in order to make sense of the demands placed on us by the moral law, and to ground an ongoing commitment to morality in the public as well as the private sphere. Atheists, by contrast, are at a disadvantage in that their commitment to moral principles is rendered "rationally unstable" by their inability to meet that need. They will thus be less likely (or at least less motivated) to seek to promote the Kingdom of Ends.

Nicholas Wolterstorff ("Does Forgiveness Undermine Justice?") engages contemporary ethical and political theory more directly by articulating some fundamental tenets of what he calls "a single, unified account of justice and human rights."⁶⁶ The account is "unified" in that it characterizes both divine justice and human justice, divine rights and human rights. The essay thus connects with the issues about the relationship between divine and human agency that were raised in the first section of this collection. Wolterstorff's primary focus is the concept of forgiveness and the rights and duties that it involves. His aim is to characterize forgiveness in a way that makes sense both of our basic intuitions and of the Scriptural account of the way in which God "forgives" those who have faith in him.

Finally, Philip Quinn ("Can Good Christians Be Good Liberals?") critically examines what he calls "Christian liberalism" in the "Johannine tradition" of John Locke and John Rawls. According to Quinn, people in this tradition (including Wolterstorff) neglect the fact that there are *two* major traditions of liberalism in Western political theory and, by drawing on only one of them, significantly impoverish their accounts. Quinn himself tries to correct for this

neglect by sketching an account of liberalism that is both friendly to religion and yet not based in the language of rights and distributive justice.

Quinn's is the most forward-looking of all the essays here, commending to religious people a theory that has genuine application in the contemporary political context. In conclusion, we wish to reiterate our own convictions that this area of reflection holds a great deal of promise for the continued flourishing of the "new" philosophy of religion, and for its ability to make a positive contribution outside the academy. It may be that philosophers, especially those who understand and participate in religious traditions, have a crucial role to play in defending liberal institutions and their commitment to tolerance in the face of the threats posed by individuals, groups, and governments operating in the name of God and religion. Quinn himself was inspired by this vision, and intended to spend part of the remainder of his career writing about these issues (sadly, he passed away as this volume was going to press). He opens his contribution with a quotation from Wolterstorff which encapsulates the vision. We think it fitting to conclude our Introduction with that same quotation:

Yet we must live together. It is to politics and not to epistemology that we shall have to look for an answer as to how to do that. "Liberal" politics has fallen on bad days recently. But to its animating vision of a society in which persons of diverse traditions live together in justice and friendship, conversing with each other and slowly altering their traditions in response to their conversation – to that, there is no viable alternative.⁶⁷

NOTES

1. Antony Flew and Alisdair MacIntyre, eds., *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1955).
2. Flew and MacIntyre, *New Essays*, x.
3. W. K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," in *The Ethics of Belief and other Essays*, ed. Timothy J. Madigan (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999), 77.
4. James called his response to Clifford *The Will to Believe*, but later said that this sounded too voluntaristic. In fact, he said, the essay should have been called "The Right to Believe" thus emphasizing that the debate was over deontology rather than psychology.
5. Cf. James, *The Will to Believe* (New York: Dover, 1956), 11: "Our passionate nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds."
6. *Ibid.*, 30.
7. René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II, trans. and eds. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 41. See also Rule 2 of the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* in vol. I, 10ff.

8. Descartes, Letter to Elizabeth, 15 Sept. 1645, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. III, trans. and eds. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothof, D. Murdoch, A. Kenny, 267, our emphasis. Cf. *Discourse on Method*, vol. I, 123.
9. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 687–8.
10. This is the way that Wolterstorff interprets Locke in his *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). It may also be possible to read Locke as claiming that epistemic obligations arise simply out of reflection on the nature of our faculties and their proper use, and that they are *not* also moral obligations. Martha Bolton has suggested this in conversation with Andrew Chignell.
11. It is worth noting, without going into the details here, that the moral norm to follow evidence can be spelled out in different ways. Clifford seems to have thought of it as wholly deontological, and formulates his principles in terms of permissions and requirements. A distinct but related Evidentialist tradition thinks in terms of “intellectual virtues” instead – what guides us, on such a view, is the more general goal of becoming the sort of cognitive agent who would not believe on insufficient evidence.
12. Immanuel Kant, “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8 (Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1902), 146; and in Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology* trans. and eds. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18.
13. Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” in *Gesammelte Schriften* 8:33–42 and *Practical Philosophy* trans. and eds. Mary Gregor and Allen Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–22.
14. The latter sort of argument would presumably go like this:

(P1) We have an epistemic obligation not to believe on insufficient evidence;

(P2) We have a moral obligation to uphold our epistemic obligations;

(C) Thus, we have a moral obligation not to believe on insufficient evidence.

This keeps the kinds of obligations conceptually distinct while forging a strong link between them in the form of (P2). For an argument that Clifford himself didn’t have a clear distinction between moral and epistemic obligations in mind, and thus didn’t really defend (P2), see Susan Haack, “‘The Ethics of Belief’ Reconsidered” in *The Philosophy of Roderick M. Chisholm*, vol. xxv of *The Library of Living Philosophers* ed. Lewis E. Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1997).

15. Recent defenders of versions of Evidentialism include Allen Wood, Richard Feldman, Earl Conee, and Jonathan Adler. See Wood, *Unsettling Obligations: Essays on Reason, Reality, and the Ethics of Belief* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 2002); Feldman and Conee, “Evidentialism,” *Philosophical Studies* Vol. 48 (July 1985): 15–34; Feldman, “The Ethics of Belief,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. LX, No. 3 (May 2000): 667–95; and Adler, *Belief’s Own Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002). See also Conee and Feldman’s new collection, *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology* (New York: Oxford Press, 2004).
16. See, for example, Michael Stocker, “Responsibility Especially for Beliefs,” *Mind* Vol. 91, No. 363 (1982): 398–417, and Richard Feldman, “The Ethics of Belief,” esp. p. 675ff.
17. See L. Jonathan Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Michael Bratman, “Practical Reasoning and Acceptance in a Context,” *Mind* Vol. 101, No. 401 (Jan 1992): 1–15.

18. See Feldman, "The Ethics of Belief," and Adler, *Belief's Own Ethics*, especially chs. 1–3.
19. Clifford goes on to discuss religious beliefs such as the Muslim's that "there is one God and we shall live forever in joy or misery," or the Buddhist's that "there is no God and we shall be annihilated by and by if we are good enough." Clearly these are stalking-horses, at least in part, for the Christian beliefs that were prevalent in Clifford's own nineteenth century context (Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," 85).
20. See John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity: as Delivered in the Scriptures*, ed. J. C. Higgins-Biddle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999). Also see *Essay*, Book IV, chapter 18, 688ff.
21. John Locke, *Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Thomas Fowler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), section 8. Clifford, likewise, quotes someone protesting with respect to an important belief, "I am a busy man; I have no time for the long course of study which would be necessary to make me in any degree a competent judge of certain questions, or even able to understand the nature of the arguments." Clifford's riposte: "Then he should have no time to believe" ("The Ethics of Belief," 78).
22. See Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1976). The most recent major English translation is *Pensées and other Writings*, trans. and ed. Honor Levi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). For a discussion of the connection to William James, see Jeff Jordan, "Pascal's Wagers," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 26 (2002): 213–23.
23. C. J. Misak, *Verificationism: Its History and Prospects* (New York: Routledge, 1995), especially chapter 2.
24. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, (London: Gollancz, 1936), ch. 6.
25. This is much too simple, of course. But there was, in any case, a major and sustained attack on positivism around mid-century. One of the most influential briefs against it, Carl Hempel's "Problems and Changes in the Empiricist Criterion of Meaning," was published in 1950 in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4, 11 (1950): 41–63. For more of the story, see Misak's *Verificationism*.
26. Flew and MacIntyre, *New Essays*, ix.
27. A fact that led some later commentators to claim that in some of the essays, there was "an insufficiently critical acceptance of a positivistic view of meaningfulness." See the introduction to *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment* eds. Robert Audi and William Wainwright (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 10.
28. Flew explains his view as follows: "[O]ne way of trying to understand (or perhaps it will be to expose) [a religious person's] utterance is to attempt to find what he would regard as counting against, or as being incompatible with, its truth. For if the utterance is indeed an assertion, it will necessarily be equivalent to a denial of the negation of that assertion. And anything which would count against the assertion, or which would induce the speaker to withdraw it and to admit that it had been mistaken, must be part (or the whole) of the meaning of the negation of that assertion. And to know the meaning of the negation of an assertion, is as near as makes no matter, to knowing the meaning of that assertion. And if there is nothing which a putative assertion denies then there is nothing which it asserts either: and so it is not really an assertion." Flew and MacIntyre, *New Essays*, 98.
29. Thomas Macpherson, "Religion as the Inexpressible," in Flew and MacIntyre, *New Essays*, 140–1.

30. Antony Flew, "Death," in Flew and MacIntyre, *New Essays*, 272. Flew is citing Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.431 and 6.1411.
31. Some historians of the period identify an intermediate stage ("logical empiricism") between logical positivism proper and the period of "linguistic analysis." See, for example, Jerry Gill, *Ian Ramsey: To Speak Responsibly About God* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1976), 21 ff.
32. Basil Mitchell, *Faith and Logic: Oxford Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), 5.
33. Peter Byrne, "Contemporary Philosophy of Religion in Britain," in *Perspectives in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Tommi Lehtonen and Timo Koistinen (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2000), 11.
34. For a contemporaneous assessment of the differences in method between "Oxford philosophy" and what has come to be known as "neo-Wittgensteinianism," see J. O. Urmson, "The History of Analysis" in *The Linguistic Turn*, ed. Richard Rorty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 294–311.
35. Urmson mentions Gilbert Ryle, John Wisdom, and Friedrich Waismann as early practitioners of "therapeutic positivism" (Urmson, "The History of Analysis," 299). There are now, of course, many different versions of neo-Wittgensteinianism on the market. The most visible current example of Wittgenstein-inspired critiques of "realism" about religious language is found in the work of D. Z. Phillips. See, for example, "Where We Are: at the Mercy of Method," in his *Recovering Religious Concepts: Closing Epistemic Divides* (London: MacMillan, 2000), 1–15.
36. Examples of this approach are Willem F. Zuurdeeg's *An Analytical Philosophy of Religion* (1956); Richard Braithwaite's *An Empiricist's View of Religion* (1955); the work of Ian Ramsey, displayed in both his early *Religious Language* (1957) and the posthumous *Christian Empiricism* (1974); and the papers by R. M. Hare collected in *Essays on Religion and Education* (1992).
37. William Blackstone, *The Problem of Religious Knowledge: The Impact of Contemporary Philosophical Analysis on the Question of Religious Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 2.
38. See, most notably, W. V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in *From a Logical Point of View: Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).
39. Blackstone, *The Problem of Religious Knowledge*, 4.
40. *Ibid.*, 166.
41. *Ibid.*, 166. For another influential argument from the same period to the effect that "descriptive" truth-claims are often made within religious discourse, see William Christian, *Meaning and Truth in Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964).
42. Jerry Gill sees Ramsey's work in leading in exactly this direction as well; see his *Ian Ramsey*, 44.
43. See, for example, Norman Malcolm and Peter Winch, *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); D. Z. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), and George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1984).
44. Flew and MacIntyre, *New Essays*, 144f.

45. Ronald Hepburn, "Poetry and Religious Belief," in *Metaphysical Beliefs*, ed. Alisdair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press, 1957), 89.
46. Claims to the effect that Hume and Kant had a decisively negative effect on religious speculation have persisted to the point where they are something of a commonplace. In 1988, Tom Morris commented on the prevalence of such views within theological circles in particular: "In a strange way, [Hume and Kant] have become the unlikely patron saints of current academic theology, as the popular appraisal of their work has shifted the whole theological enterprise into its now common non-metaphysical directions. . . . But we rarely, if ever, see an account of precisely which arguments . . . are supposed to have accomplished the alleged demolition of cognitivism, and exactly how they may be supposed to have had that effect." Morris, "Introduction," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas Morris (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 3.
 Wolterstorff, similarly, responds as follows to the charge that historical ignorance accounts for the fact that some philosophers continue to discuss the sorts of issues which Kant (for example) is supposed to have resolved: "[T]he situation is not that we have failed to consider the Kantian alternative, and are consequently still wandering around in unenlightened naiveté; the situation is rather that we have considered the Kantian arguments and found them wanting." Wolterstorff, "Analytical Philosophy of Religion: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Perspectives in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Lehtonen and Koistinen, 160. With regard to Kant, see John Hare's essay in the present volume.
47. Norman Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," *Philosophical Review* 69 (Jan. 1960): 41–62.
48. For recent overviews of this debate, see Neil Manson, ed., *God and Design: The Teleological Argument and Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 2003), and Niall Shanks, *God, the Devil, and Darwin: A Critique of Intelligent Design Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
49. In his preface to *The Justification of Religious Belief* (London: MacMillan, 1973), Basil Mitchell notes that "this book was originally to have been entitled *The Language of Religion* but at an early stage, like some characters in fiction, it took on a life of its own, and assumed a different subject which in turn dictated a different title" (vii).
50. A. C. A. Rainer, "Can God's Existence be Disproved?" in Flew and MacIntyre, *New Essays*, 71.
51. Many of the early modern philosophers used the term, for instance. In the early twentieth century, it typically referred to a movement in Roman Catholic circles led by Émile Bréhier, Étienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, and Maurice Blondel. For a further summary of the history of "Christian philosophy" (and an argument against construing the movement too narrowly), see Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Does Philosophy Tolerate Christening? Thomas Aquinas and the Notion of Christian Philosophy," in *Philosophy of Religion for a New Century: Essays in Honor of Eugene Thomas Long*, eds. Jeremiah Hackett and Jerald Wallulis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004) 37–61.
52. For example, in 1972, Charles Conti cited "the present revival of interest in philosophical theology" as a reason for issuing a collection of essays by Austin Farrer. See Conti ed., *Reflective Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), ix.

53. In a survey of early "Philosophy and Reformed Theology," Colin Brown focuses on the work of Cornelius Van Til, Karl Barth, and Francis Schaeffer. Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (London: Tyndale Press, 1969), 245–67.
54. This aspect of academic culture at mid-century is mentioned in several places by contributors to Tom Morris, ed., *God and the Philosophers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
55. Wolterstorff, "Can Belief in God Be Rational If It Has No Foundations?" in *Faith and Rationality*, eds. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 176. In addition to *Faith and Rationality*, another book from the mid-80s which showcased the growing prominence of the "new" philosophy of religion was *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment*, eds. Robert Audi and William Wainwright (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).
56. For a good example of contemporary work that takes certain tradition-specific doctrinal claims not as *problems* requiring a philosophical defense but as *resources* for solving other philosophical problems, see Marilyn McCord Adams' work on the problem of evil, in particular, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999). Adams deploys doctrines specific to the Christian tradition against the problem of evil, rather than staying within the bounds of "restricted standard theism." She defends this practice at length in Adams, "Problems of Evil: More Advice to Christian Philosophers," *Faith and Philosophy* 5 (April 1988): 121–43. Wolterstorff also defends it in his debate with Robert Audi in *Religion in the Public Square* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).
57. Given this usage, and given the contents of the essays that follow, a completely accurate (if completely unwieldy) title for the present volume would be *God and/or the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion and/or Philosophical Theology*.
58. See, for example, Wolterstorff's essay in the 1964 *Festschrift* for Jellema (Plantinga ed., *Faith and Philosophy* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964]); Plantinga's *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); and Arthur Holmes's *Christian Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1969).
59. For an informative survey of Roman Catholic philosophy during this period, see Arthur Madigan, S. J., "Catholic Philosophers in the United States Today: A Prospectus," *Occasional Papers of the Erasmus Institute* (2001–2), 1–24. Thanks to Philip Quinn for this reference.
60. There is even a collection of essays by Catholic philosophers responding to Reformed Epistemology: Linda Zagzebski, ed., *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).
61. The Evangelical Philosophical Society was founded in 1974 and publishes the biannual journal *Philosophia Christi*. The Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology was founded in 2003; it currently sponsors an annual meeting and the electronic journal *Element*.
62. One important subsection of the field that we have had to neglect entirely here is the Continental part. For an overview and discussion, see Philip Goodchild, ed., *Re-thinking Philosophy of Religion: Approaches from Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), especially the essays by Goodchild and Matthew C. Halteman.
63. Assumptions defended in his recent *Living without Free Will* (New York: Cambridge, 2001).

64. Alston, *Perceiving God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).
65. See his assault on Clifford's Principle in "It Is Wrong, Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone, to Believe Anything upon Insufficient Evidence," in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today*, ed. Jeff Jordan (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).
66. One that he articulates at more length in a forthcoming book, *Justice: Divine and Human*.
67. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 246.