

Preface

As the first chapter makes clear, the discussions in this book arose from competing contemporary claims about various accounts of religious belief offered by philosophers. Many analytic philosophers of religion have included appeals to orthodoxy in their accounts of religious belief, asserting, confidently, that other analyses, for example, those offered by Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion, obviously do not do justice to the nature of religious belief. If one listened to these voices alone, one would not realize that the accusers have been accused of the very fault they see in others, and that *they* are the ones who distort the nature of religious belief. These accusations have come from Thomistic and Calvinist sources. By giving these voices a major hearing in this book, issues concerning religious belief and philosophical enquiry are opened up in such a way that their outcome can certainly not be taken for granted. The fact that this situation is introduced from a Wittgensteinian point of view, and responded to, at the end of the collection, from the point of view in analytic philosophy being criticized, means that the reader is offered a creative engagement between major traditions in contemporary philosophy of religion.

The papers in the collection were read at the 2005 annual Claremont Conference on the Philosophy of Religion. The conference is supported by the financial generosity of Claremont Graduate University, Claremont McKenna College and Pomona College. Administratively, the conference benefits from the work of Helen Baldwin, Secretary to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Wales, Swansea and Jackie Huntzinger, Secretary to the School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University. The conference also benefits from the support of graduate students at Claremont, ably organized by my research assistant Ray Bitar, to whom I am also grateful for preparing my contribution and the 'Voices in Discussion' for publication from my handwritten manuscripts. The 'Voices' consist of notes taken by me during the conference. They do not claim to be verbatim reports, hence the absence of names, but do claim to give a fairly accurate account of the discussions. Readers, as usual, will have little difficulty in identifying many of the speakers, but contributions from the audience have, on occasions, also been included.

Fergus Kerr was unable to attend the conference due to ill health. I am grateful to my colleague at Claremont, Anselm Min, for introducing his paper, an introduction which led to his valuable contribution to the discussion. Stephen T. Davis's response to criticisms during the conference also enhances the scope of the collection.

No matter which philosophical viewpoint one holds, the present collection should teach philosophers to exercise greater caution in taking for granted that they are always doing conceptual justice to the complexity of religious belief.

D.Z. Phillips
Claremont, May 2005

Postscript

D.Z. Phillips died suddenly on July 25, 2006, before this work went to press. He is responsible for the editing of this work as it appears here. However, special thanks are due to his graduate assistant, Ray Paul Bitar, for completing the various tasks needed to finally publish this work. His diligent commitment to this project proved invaluable.