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BOOK REVIEWS

Philosophy and the Christian Faith by **Thomas V. Morris**, editor. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988. xiv + 300 pp. $31.95, cloth; $12.95, paper.

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This volume represents an important tendency in the philosophy of religion. It makes a turn away from problems in 'the philosophy of religion' as that discipline was invented by Hume (*Dialogues; Natural History*) and Kant (the *Critiques* and *Religion within the Limits*), and brings philosophical skills once again to bear upon the intrinsic thought problems of the way of life shared by Christian believers. This collection deserves to be judged as such a bellwether (rather than merely for the sterling merits of some of its essays), and it is in that role that I will try to appraise it here. It will come out that individual philosophers, in adjusting to the new demands, have retained preoccupations more attuned to the old, or have not sufficiently appreciated the changed world in which they work. But it will also come out that almost despite itself, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* signals a definitive turn in contemporary philosophy of religion.

The editor, Thomas V. Morris, generated the volume by promoting a conference at the University of Notre Dame. Morris believes that metaphysics, natural theology, and "cognitive propositional theology" (George Lindbeck's term) have never been refuted by modern thinkers such as Hume and Kant. Since respected academic theologians have nevertheless taken this modernity as definitive for their task, Morris sees the Christian philosophical challenge to be the recovery of "theological realism" instantiated in the "classical Christian doctrines" (pp. 4f.). Lindbeck (*The Nature of Doctrine*) has supposed without adequate argument that Christian doctrines as such are 'grammatical' rules governing Christian discourse. Morris sees Lindbeck as a reductionist, and intends by presenting these essays (in tandem with his *Logic of God Incarnate*) to defend instead a cognitive-propositional view of doctrine.

If this account of the editor's purpose is accurate, his view of the significance of this collection differs from that of the reviewer. The editor believes that Hume and Company failed, and so believing philosophers must (if theologians will not) resume the interrupted doctrinal task. My beliefs about the role of Hume and Company are too complex to present here, but I, too, think it is time to resume the doctrinal task, and think philosophers can help. Only the new task will necessarily be different, because it will be a postmodern one. So both the editor and the present reviewer turn away from modernity. The editor reverts to the premodern; the reviewer (and George Lindbeck) turn to the postmodern. Whether the essays under review fulfill the editor's project or the reviewer's (or, by remaining 'modern,' fulfill neither) remains to be ascertained.

All the essays address doctrinal or moral themes in Christian theology, and all but one (Ross's) are interested primarily in doctrinal content rather than justification or backing. Most develop one or another aspect of soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, but one treats suffering as an aspect of God's love and human love, while another is on the Trinity. To particularize: *Richard Swinburne* (Oxford) writes about the "Christian Scheme of Salvation"; he intends to show how the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have made salvation available, i.e., to set forth a theory of atonement. This theory turns out to be Anselmic, though with a Grotian twist at the end. *William Wainwright* (Wisconsin-Milwaukee) discusses "Original Sin," providing an exposition and critique of Jonathan Edwards' version of that doctrine: only those features of the doctrine that are implied by God's offer of grace should be retained. *Eleonore Stump* (Virginia Polytechnic) writes on "Atonement According to Aquinas." She presents a popular version of atonement theory and shows it to be a debased version of a more coherent account. While she bases the latter on Aquinas, her restatement owes much to Abelard. *Marilyn McCord Adams* (UCLA) offers a straightforward biblical study, "Separation and Reversal in Luke-Acts," designed to show that Luke-Acts steers a middle course between (on the one hand) the melodramatic salvation history of early apocalyptic and (on the other) theological universalism with its concept of a God who has nothing to lose. *William Alston* (Syracuse) writes on "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit"; he attempts to say how the Spirit modifies a believer's life in order to make it more christlike. Steering between a mere "fiat" model and a mere "communication" model, he opts for a "sharing" model in which the barriers between self and Spirit are increasingly broken down in the course of Christian practice. *Robert Merrihew Adams* (UCLA) explores "Christian Liberty." Even from the standpoint of the modified divine command theory of ethics it is possible to construe the Christian moral life as more than simple obedience to God's prior choices for us, provided we construe that life partly along aesthetic lines. The woman who poured ointment on Jesus' head has done a "beautiful" thing. In "Warring Against the Law of My Mind: Aquinas on Romans 7," *Norman Kretzmann* (Cornell) explores the theory of human nature implied there by Paul. The Apostle's professed inability to do what he wills to do is attributed by Aquinas to the moral trouble that is "part of the human condition"; namely, that even redeemed people are sometimes controlled by a "*fomes*" or spark of unreason within human nature. But if so, their action then is not human action (since for Aquinas humanity is defined by "reasonable"). *Nicholas Wolterstorff* (Calvin and Amsterdam), pursuing a long and subtle exploration of "Suffering Love," argues that to attribute impassibility to God is a mistake, being based on a Stoic not a biblical model; he concludes that suffering love is a necessary and costly part of God's being and is meant to be part of our own. This forces a revision of the low Augustinian estimate of the value of life in this present world. *Peter van Inwagen* (Syracuse) treats the doctrine of the Trinity summarized in the (so-called) Athanasian Creed: "And Yet They Are Not Three Gods But One God." Relative-identity logic permits a coherent formal statement of that doctrine. *James Ross* (Pennsylvania) writes on "Eschatological Pragmatism," arguing that the truth of Christian teaching about the "Second Coming," etc., consists in "cognitive consonance" between the believer's current belief and cognition "in the end." He defends this view by a brief but complex analysis of various sorts of "truth-making" claims, and finds that in this case the relevant consonance is compatible with a wide set of present Christian imaginings (as well as of unimaginable beliefs).

If theology and philosophy are indeed two disciplines not one, then when philosophers set out to do theology they are in a sense (but not a pejorative sense) amateurs, and it is interesting to see what light these learned theological amateurs have shed on the theological task. It is difficult to see that any one philosophical skill or tendency governs all the work. Marilyn Adams' biblical study does not depend upon her philosophical skills; Bill Alston's piece seems (to me) to presuppose no philosophical bias whatever. Certainly, from essay to essay one detects characteristic bits of skill or presupposition, some more common than others. Peter van Inwagen makes extensive use of symbolic logic; William Wainwright and Bob Adams presume their own or others' work in philosophical ethics; Jim Ross deploys current epistemology. In the end I failed to find the heavy employment of metaphysics that Thomas Morris's introduction had led me to expect, and I believe that David Hume, were he to read the book, would find fuel for his philosophical flames only in those few places in the essays that not only refer to, but seem also to presuppose, the assumptions of medieval theologians (see especially Swinburne, Stump, and Kretzmann), while all the essayists engage those "matters of fact" and "abstract reasoning" that Hume positively defended.

In fact, the philosophers in this collection seem to me to treat their chosen doctrines very much as many present day theologians would. Today atonement theories are widely seen to fall into three main classes or groups: those that see Christ's work aimed at God (or God the Father), those that see it as aimed at man-the-sinner, and those that see it aimed at evil and its powers (or at the devil). The modern period saw a shift from 'Godward' to 'manward' (or Abelardian) theories, and the 20th century witnessed a renewal of 'evilward' theories (Aulén, Yoder). The atonement theorists in this volume (Swinburne and Stump) both begin with classic Godward theories, but the changes they propose reflect the 'manward' shift that marked 19th century theologians such as Schleiermacher and Bushnell. Again, Wainwright's discussion of original sin modifies Edwards in just the directions that characterize modern theology generally, where the original doctrine of original sin with its inherited guilt is (and ought to be) in a lot of trouble.

Why is this so? Why do these philosopher-theologians, Americans most, Christians of independent judgment and obvious intellectual gifts, tend toward the 'liberal' theological drift of recent centuries, despite their express conservative intent? I think the answer can be first seen by noting a method most of them share—that of explanatory examples drawn from contemporary common life. For example, Swinburne invokes a case of personal injury (your best vase broken), while Stump weaves in the story of "Susan and David." But, without naming the characters in their respective episodes, the same thing is done by Alston (e.g., p. 134) and Bob Adams (p. 169), and Kretzmann (p. 175), and Wolterstorff (p. 224), and Ross (p. 286). If asked why they employ such examples, I think most of these philosophers would say it is to make their concepts clear—concepts of guilt, or sharing, or freedom, or passion, or self-awareness, or 'fit.' I do not reject the practice; indeed, it is my own. I only note that by thus anchoring concepts in present-day life, we inevitably give them a contemporary coloring—which means they will do contemporary work but perhaps fail to do other work. Consider the difference between anchoring our concepts in contemporary stories *versus* anchoring them in biblical ones, though of course the contrast can't be a black and white one, because the biblical stories themselves must be told in our language—and thus depend heavily upon our own conceptual scheme. My point is this: the philosophers who write these doctrinal essays are willy nilly so anchored, themselves, in modernity. When they set out to give theological accounts of themselves, even those who reject Hume and Kant and the entailed modernity will make themselves clear only by invoking a conceptual world that displays many of the features they wish to reject. No wonder their project partly fails to reach the editor's formal goal. Despite him, metaphysics is played down and matters of fact are played up. Despite him, doctrines come out looking as much like Lindbeckian rules as they do like Morrisian cognitive propositions. Despite him, the contributors, in the *content* of their doctrines, often sound as contemporary as contemporary theology itself.

And yet something new is happening here, nevertheless. It is displayed not so much in the content of the doctrines explored as in the form in which they are explored. I have already referred to this in a general way: here philosophers explore the particular contents of a faith, rather than laying down a procrustean bed of principles and then forcing the object of their religious desires into it. I would like to illustrate this point by examining briefly one sample essay—perhaps not the most impressive (is that Wolterstorff's?) or most persuasive (Wainwright's?), but one that clearly exhibits the contemporary features I find interesting. This is Peter van Inwagen's essay on the Trinity.

As already mentioned, van Inwagen sets out to defend the classic, creedal doctrine he finds in the *Quicunque Vult*: God is one Being but three Persons. Van Inwagen's discovery, following some work of Peter Geach, is that the Trinitarian paradox can be resolved by restating the doctrine in the formal language of relative-identity logic. I will suggest that the structure of van Inwagen's paper has characteristic postmodern features, but before doing so let me concede that it also displays marks of *pre*modern thinking. Van Inwagen clearly intends to reaffirm the historic faith of the Christian church. The Trinity is an essential and not an optional doctrine of Christian faith. That Christian faith, as the pope has said, is no human invention. Faith is for van Inwagen prior to knowledge (pp. 242f.). He is determined with his tradition to avoid both tritheism and modalism. Moreover, his doctrinal formulations seem almost naive: While he has heard that "person" in Trinitarian theology does not mean what it means in everyday English (as in fact it does not), he is content to brush this aside with a remarkably ahistorical quotation from Geach (p. 248). Thus if van Inwagen's essay does display postmodern tendencies, they will apparently be in some tension with his own theological predelictions.

Now to the structure of the argument. There is a development within formal logic called relative-identity logic (RI-logic). One of the features of this logic is that predicates in its language cannot be "count-nouns," nouns that can be pluralized and can be modified by the indefinite article. Thus in this language one cannot say, "A is an apple"; one must instead say "For some B, A is the same apple as B" (pp. 248f.). The reason for the circumlocution will appear in due course. Once van Inwagen has laid down the vocabulary, formation rules, and rules of inference of RI, it appears that what he calls "classical identity" (a=b) has no role to play. It is necessary neither to acknowledge or to exclude its existence. Perhaps classical identity is a special case within a larger world of relative identities, much as Euclidian geometry is a special case in the world of geometries. Now the goal is near: if the Christian believer, having relinquished with RI language the old luxury of singular reference, can instead make do with *relative* singular reference (a substitution suggested by Russell), then ordinary referential English can successfully be translated into RI language. But in that language, as the reader anticipates, it is also possible to express without contradiction the principal theses of Trinitarian theology, and in the remainder of the paper, van Inwagen spells out this result.

I note here three very broad, general features, one linguistic, one epistemological, and one metaphysical-ethical, that I believe underlie this exercise, with some (tentative) evidence for each. The evidence (and thus the conclusion) is necessarily tentative, for van Inwagen's is not an essay in the theory of language or epistemology or metaphysics or ethics. Nevertheless, like all intellectual work, it displays dimensions of each, and it may be that we can detect these features.

First, what about the linguistic feature? The *formal* language, RI, in which van Inwagen elects to express his traditional faith is neither the word-object language of modern empiricism nor its contrary, the expressive language of modern subjectivism. RI language might instead be characterized as a *relational* language—one in which the meaning of each part is indeterminate apart from its relation to the other parts. The words we use, and what there is, are not connected by a word-thing correspondence only, far less by the mere connection of what we say to our inner dispositions or tendencies. Rather our words do their work by way of their partnership in a logical structure—in this case, RI-logic. Van Inwagen draws a useful analogy between applying RI-logic to the trinitarian doctrine of God and applying quantum field theory to particle physics: how can electrons be both waves and particles? ("How can something be both a disturbance and a lump of stuff?") Physicists believed both were true, but could not say how they were until Dirac formulated quantum field theory (pp. 243f.). The illustration, though not novel, is apt; so consider the implied theory of language: Is what makes appropriate the application of quantum theory to particle physics (or the application of RI-logic to the Trinity) just the bare linguistic correspondence of modern empiricism, or the effluences of modern expressivism? Or is it not rather the adequacy of a relational structure of language (namely, quantum theory) to the 'world' of physics (or in the analogous case the adequacy of RI-logic to the 'world' of faith)? The question is not merely whether RI-logic (RI-language) is formally consistent, but whether it can tell us something about God. As van Inwagen puts it, "One man's 'showing how something can be both X and Y' is another man's 'constructing a formalism that allows you to treat something as both X and Y without getting into trouble.'" As I read van Inwagen, he leans strongly to the former alternative; he is interested in RI-logic because it may count as "*really* having 'shown how something can be'" (p. 273, note 4, quoting Polkinghorne).

The second broad feature, the epistemic, is closely related to the first, van Inwagen's epistemic principle being neither the bare coherences of RI-logic, nor merely the tradition of his church, but these in relation to one another and to what there is. He is not a fideist saying "the Church says it, I believe it, that settles it" or a rationalist who reserves all religious belief until it has been established by rigorous argument, but one who bases knowledge upon these (and perhaps other) elements *in relation to one another*. If this is correct, van Inwagen's theory of knowledge can be called (following Quine) "wholistic": the truth of the parts is inseparable from the truth of the whole set of his beliefs and convictions. A clue here is van Inwagen's remark (p. 253) that a chief interest of a logic such as RI is "such applications as it may have"; I take him to mean the interest or value arising from our knowing what is so by means of these applications.

The third broad feature underlying the paper is metaphysical-ethical. Here there are more clues to van Inwagen's thinking. The first task in constructing RI-logic is to free its user from the employment of 'count-nouns' (such as "horse" or "god"—items that could be counted) that by their use *commit the user to there being the things it counts.* For van Inwagen this is a prophylactic measure: "If one says, 'The box weighs four pounds,' one does not lay oneself open to the following sort of ontological interrogation: 'Just what is a "pound"? What properties do these "pounds" have? You say the box weighs four of them; but how many of them are there (in all, I mean)?'" (p. 249). Yet this metaphysical caution does not signal any pervasive skepticism about our access to what there is. For example, the construction of RI-logic involves the consideration and rejection of a certain too-sweeping logical rule (the Proposed Rule). And van Inwagen explains that "in refusing to add the Proposed Rule (or any restricted version of it) to RI-logic, we are in effect saying that each dominance sentence [a technical term of the logic] embodies a...*metaphysical* thesis—one that ought not to be underwritten by the formal logic of relative identity" (p. 253). What is that mischievous metaphysical thesis? To put the matter over-simply, it is that as it is with anything (e.g., that if x is an apple, and green, and y is x, then y is a green apple also), so it is with everything (e.g., that if x is divine, and a Father, and y is x, then y must be not only divine, but a Father, not a Son or Spirit). In brief, *what is, is generic*; that is the mischievous thesis in four words. An alternative to the generic view of reality (so Alexander Blair has suggested to me) is a corporate view: On it, each member of the whole exists and functions exactly in and because of his or her relation to other members, and the whole is thus not the mere assembly of units, but is itself relationally constituted. Van Inwagen gives us a clue that his own metaphysics is of this corporate sort in his explication of Trinitarian doctrine itself. Indeed, he underlines the primacy of this metaphysical assumption: only if the love *between* the persons of the Godhead is real can there be a real destiny for the church constituted by her members' love one to another: "*Vita venturi saeculi* is a corporate life...the whole Body of Christ coming to be an undistorted image of God" (p. 242).

Now since premodern and postmodern views of metaphysics and ethics both stand in contrast to the modern view, someone may think that here Peter van Inwagen tends rather toward editor Thomas Morris's "Introduction." But as metaphysics is an area of overlap between pre- and postmodern thinking, that is probably a matter that the clues and hints I have indicated cannot settle.

The point, as my wife Nancey Murphy and I have claimed in a preliminary way (see "Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies," in April, 1989, *Modern Theology*), is that relationality in the theory of language, wholism in epistemology, and a corporate metaphysics and ethics are together features that identify authentic postmodernism and distinguish it not only from premodernity, but also from the merely modern age now ending. That van Inwagen (and in varying degree other contributors to the Morris volume) should so naturally display some of these postmodern features is an impressive fact. This is not to deny that all of them retain, as noted above, many 'modern' features in their work, and that some retain premodern features as well. Perhaps most impressive is that almost to a man or woman they eschew one of the chief features of the modern age, its foundationalist appeals to one or another kind of unquestionable datum. Their attending instead to the particularities of Christian practice and its doctrines seems to me telling (though not decisive) evidence of this crucial shift. If so, that is good news for Christian faith in the world today and tomorrow.

Divine Nature and Human Language, by **William P. Alston**. Essays in Philosophical Theology. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989. Pp. xi and 279. Cloth $34.95; Paper $12.95.

RICHARD SWINBURNE, Oxford University.

This volume contains William Alston's main recent essays on the philosophy of religion, apart from those concerned with religious experience (the material of which later he plans to incorporate into a book on that subject). Five of the present essays are concerned with religious language, how we can use words whose meaning is given by their application to mundane contexts, for talking about God. Alston holds that a functionalist account of such mental concept words as "knowledge" and "purpose" allows us to apply these words literally to God in virtue of the effects of his activity. Just as talking about human beliefs and purposes is talking about the causes of our public behaviour, according to the functionalist, so, according to Alston, talking about God's knowledge and purposes is talking about the causes in him of the effects in the world which he produces. That is so even if what divine knowledge and purposes are in themselves is utterly different from what human knowledge and purposes are in themselves. Four further essays are concerned with God's nature. Alston espouses what I would regard as a basically classical doctrine of God, while denying some of the more extravagant backing which Aquinas provided for that doctrine—that God is not related to the world, is pure actuality, is identical with his properties, and is such that every