

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 4 | Issue 2

Article 12

4-1-1987

C. Stephen Evans, PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: THINKING ABOUT FAITH

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Recommended Citation

Obitts, Stanley (1987) "C. Stephen Evans, PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: THINKING ABOUT FAITH," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 , Article 12.

DOI: 10.5840/faithphil19874221

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol4/iss2/12>

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also suggestions for alternate concrete categories. Without a self-conscious, historically understood, practice of moving between abstractions and concrete phenomena, it is impossible to avoid the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. Guilt is too concrete, I believe, to be generalizable as an essential characteristic of religion.

To accept the protection of abstraction against bias and dogmatism may well be to abandon phenomenology of religion as a discipline with its own integrity. Westphal makes no exclusive claims for it, and his practice here is very helpful for its purpose. I would hope, however, that he would now turn his considerable talents and erudition to a more inclusive philosophy of religion.

Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith, by C. Stephen Evans. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985. Pp. 191. \$6.95.

STANLEY OBITTS, Westmont College.

This book is one of the "Contours of Christian Philosophy" series of which Prof. Evans is also the editor. The series describes itself as consisting of "short, introductory-level textbooks," a description which accurately fits this book. Yet the book is far from superficial, is up-to-date, is very readable, and is remarkably thorough for its size.

The thrust of the book is a Christian justification of religious belief. Right from the beginning the stance of the book on the relation of faith and reason is made clear. Fideism is rejected because it denies the common ground with the nonbeliever required for genuine reflection on religion. The presuppositionless approach of neutralism is found equally unsatisfactory for it ignores what weak foundationalism recognizes, namely, that reason is "a willingness to test one's commitments." The approach said to be taken in the book is that of a "critical dialog" with the nonbeliever, always open to his objections.

Little more than an "impasse" is promised in the dialog, however. For example, in Malcolm's version of the ontological argument the weak premise is said to be the one holding that God's existence is possible (not impossible), because the nonbeliever supposedly would not accept it. And since the criterion of rational conviction is "person relative," the dialog breaks down. But is the theistic God's existence impossible? If not, then it must be possible, which is all Malcolm's argument needs. If the nonbeliever refuses to admit this, then at least he should be made to feel the onus of breaking off the dialog for no good reason. Perhaps the success of an argument should not be so tightly linked with its being convincing to a given individual. One could be so intent on maintaining the posture of

“critical dialog” with the nonbeliever that the significance for truth of the soundness of an argument is underplayed.

The diffidence displayed in natural theology vanishes when an appeal is made to religious experience and special revelation. Non-mystical, psychologically immediate, experiences of God mediated through his creation, his acts in history, a hymn, etc., are held to provide prima-facie evidence, which, having been checked against overrides, can be considered ultima-facie evidence. A similar confidence comes through the receipt of special revelation, with its ““authenticating miracles.”” Where such appeals leave the dialog with the nonbeliever is not clear.

The book concludes with a balanced, sensitive treatment of the role one’s personal faith plays in the “critical dialog” with the nonbeliever and his objections. The believer is advised to make a cumulative case *a la* Basil Mitchell, based on “less-than-algorithmic evidence” admitting of logical, and a modicum of existential, doubt.

Given the limitations in length and readers’ background, the treatment of the religious language problem could have been shortened in favor of the chapter on objections to theism. Not only would this have made a somewhat compressed chapter more understandable to the neophyte, but it would impress the nonbeliever with the seriousness with which the dialog with him is being taken. Nonetheless, the book is an authoritative, concise survey of the subject which should be unusually effective in making the Christian faith more “rationally convincing.”

Reason Within the Bounds of Religion, by **Nicholas Wolterstorff**. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1984. Pp. 161.

GARY GUTTING, University of Notre Dame.

The first edition (1976) of Nicholas Wolterstorff’s *Reason Within the Bounds of Religion* dealt with the intellectual integrity of Christian scholarship. Its main thesis was that Christian doctrine may and should act as a constraint on the sorts of positions a Christian scholar holds in his area of expertise. This thesis conflicts with the standard modern view of inquiry as the unrestricted pursuit of truth wherever evidence and argument lead. Wolterstorff maintained that the ideal of unrestrained inquiry is defensible only on the basis of epistemological foundationalism; only, that is, if there is available a body of certainties (the foundation of knowledge) from which all valid knowledge claims can be derived. He attacked foundationalism, arguing first that foundationalists have given no adequate explanation of how knowledge claims are derived from the foundations and, second,