

Preface

When Gene Long, editor of Kluwer's *Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* Series, first invited me to write the volume on *Analytic Philosophy of Religion*, I accepted with great enthusiasm. My only explanation for that enthusiasm now is that I was younger and more naive at the time. Soon after starting work on the volume, my enthusiasm was dampened by the daunting magnitude of the task. I began as a sprinter and quickly settled into the pace of a long-distance runner. Although I considered myself well read in the subject, I soon discovered that I had a great deal of research to do to be confident that I had considered all of the major contributions to the various discussions, issues, and problems found within analytic philosophy of religion. As I read more and more books and articles, I realized that I had rushed into a territory already well trodden by the angels. I am greatly impressed by the sophistication and subtlety of philosophical argument that characterize the different debates in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion.

This volume covers a vast amount of material. I have endeavored to provide the fairest possible reading of different authors, and, in cases where I include my own critical evaluations and develop my own positions, I have endeavored to provide the strongest possible interpretations of the positions I criticize. I am greatly indebted to several colleagues who have read different portions of the manuscript and offered various suggestions and comments. Their influence has made this a much better book than it would have been otherwise. My gratitude goes to Paul Davies, Paul Draper, Laura Ekstrom, Antony Flew, Michael Gettings, Steven Hales, George Harris, William Hasker, Earl McLane, D. Z. Phillips, Philip Quinn, William Rowe, Charles Taliaferro, Hans von Bauer, and John Whitaker. I am especially grateful to the advice and support of Gene Long. Of course, I remain responsible for the final product and whatever mistakes or omissions it contains. Finally, I must thank my secretary, Debra Wilson, without whose cheerful and able assistance completing this book while balancing my responsibilities as a department chair would have been impossible. My greatest fear is that I have omitted or mis-characterized the work of some important contributor to one of the many debates taking place within contemporary analytic philosophy of religion. My greatest hope is that this volume will prove to be valuable to those interested in

analytic philosophy of religion in helping them to understand the sophistication and subtlety of those debates and in helping to advance philosophical inquiry.

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