PHILOSOPHERS WHO BELIEVE

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS OF 11 LEADING THINKERS

edited by
KELLY JAMES CLARK

INTERVARSITY PRESS
DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS 60515

BR
102
.A1
P551
1993

© 1993 by Kelly James Clark

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515.

InterVarsity Press® is the book-publishing division of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship®, a student movement active on campus at hundreds of universities, colleges and schools of nursing in the United States of America, and a member movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. For information about local and regional activities, write Public Relations Dept., InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, 6400 Schroeder Rd., P.O. Box 7895, Madison, WI 53707-7895.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Portions of Alvin Plantinga's essay are from James E. Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, eds., Alvin Plantinga (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985). Used by permission.

"A Philosopher's Religious Faith" is reprinted with the permission of Macmillan Publishing Company from A Second Look in the Rearview Mirror by Mortimer J. Adler. Copyright © 1992 by Mortimer J. Adler.

Cover illustration: Roberta Polfus; Background: Cowgirl Stock Photography

ISBN 0-8308-1851-0

Printed in the United States of America ♾

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Philosophers who believe: the spiritual journeys of eleven leading thinkers/
edited by Kelly James Clark.
p. cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8308-1851-0
1. Christian philosophers—Biography. 2. Christianity—
Philosophy—History—20th century. I. Clark, Kelly James, 1956-
BR102.A1P55 1993
190—dc20 93-36196
CIP

15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 93

A Christian Life Partly Lived

ALVIN PLANTINGA

Alvin Plantinga holds the John A. O'Brien Chair of Philosophy and is director of the Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame. Prior to his Notre Dame appointment he taught at the universities of Yale, Wayne State, Harvard, Chicago, Michigan, Boston, Indiana, UCLA, Syracuse and Arizona and, for twenty years, at Calvin College. Called by Richard Swinburne "the leading philosopher of God," Plantinga has led the revival in Christian philosophy for the past thirty years. He has delivered the prestigious Gifford and Wilde lectures and was granted an honorary doctorate from Glasgow University. He has also been elected president of the Society of Christian Philosophers and the American Philosophical Association. His influential works include over ninety articles; among his many books are God and Other Minds, The Nature of Necessity, God, Freedom and Evil, *and* Warrant.

When Kelly Clark asked me to write a spiritual autobiography, my first impulse was to decline. That was also my second impulse, and my third. For I have at least three good reasons not to do such a thing. First, I have already written something called an "intellectual autobiography";[1] the rule "At most one to a customer" seems to me an excellent one for autobiographies—more than one is unseemly. Second, my spiritual life and its history isn't striking or of general interest: no dramatic conversions, no spiritual heroism, no internal life of great depth and power, not much spiritual sophistication or subtlety, little grasp of the various depths and nuances and shading and peculiar unexplored corners of the spiritual life. It is very much an ordinary meat-and-potatoes kind of life. (It is also, I regret to say, a life that

hasn't progressed nearly as much as, by my age and given my opportunities, it should have.)

Third, writing any kind of autobiography has its perils; but writing a spiritual autobiography is particularly perilous.[2] The main problem has to do with truthfulness and honesty: there are powerful temptations toward self-deception and hypocrisy. According to Psalm 51, the Lord desires truth in our innermost being; but according to Jeremiah, "the human heart is deceitful above all things; it is desperately sick; who can understand it?" Truth in our innermost being is not easy to achieve. It is hard to see what the truth *is;* it is also hard to *tell* the truth, to say what you see without imposing some kind of self-justificatory and distorting framework. (For example, you find good or at least coherent motives where in fact there was really no discernible motive at all, or perhaps a confusing welter of motives you can't really sort out, or don't *want* to sort out; or maybe you subtly slant and shift things for no better reason than that it makes a better tale.)

Still further, there are elements of my life before the Lord that might be of interest and of use to others, and where I might even be able both to see and to say what is at least fairly close to the truth, that I don't propose to make public. For most of us, I'd guess, the whole truth about ourselves would be (from one perspective, anyway) a sorry spectacle we wouldn't want completely known even by our best friends—who in any event wouldn't particularly want to know. (Jeremiah is right, even if there is more to the story.) For most of us also, I suspect, there are sides of our lives with respect to which complete and public candor would cause others considerable pain. This is certainly so with me.

I shall therefore make a compromise. Much of what follows is taken from my "intellectual autobiography" in the Profiles volume; I am interpolating comments here and there of a more personal nature. I do not propose to say everything that may be of possible interest, yet I shall try (but probably fail) to be honest about what I do say. What follows, accordingly, is certain selections from the Profiles autobiography, along with some additions.

Roots and Early Days

I was born November 15, 1932, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where my

father, Cornelius A. Plantinga, was then a graduate student in philosophy at the University of Michigan. My mother, Lettie Plantinga (née Bossenbroek), was born near Alto, Wisconsin. On her mother's side her family had come to the United States about the time of the Civil War; her father's family came some twenty years later. Both groups came from the villages of Elspeet and Nunspeet in the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands, then distinguished for prosperous dairy farms and now also for the Kröller-Muller Museum. My father was born in Garijp, a small village in Friesland. The Dutch think of Friesland as their northwesternmost province. Frisians, however, know better. Friesland has its own culture, its own flag, and its own language closer to Old English than to Dutch (in fact, of all the Germanic languages, Frisian is closest to English).

Both sets of my grandparents—Andrew and Tietje Plantinga and Christian and Lena Bossenbroek—were reared in Calvinist churches originating in the so-called Afscheiding or secession of 1834. During the 1830s there was a religious reawakening ("The Reveille") in the Netherlands, as in much of the rest of Europe. Thoroughly disgusted with the theological liberalism, empty formalism and absence of genuine piety in the Dutch state church (the Hervormde Kerk), many congregations seceded from it to create the Gereformeerde Kerken, dedicated to the practice of historic Calvinism. The Seceders underwent a good deal of punishment and persecution at the hands of the established authorities; they were ready to risk their livelihoods and even their freedom for what they believed to be right worship of God.

Participating in the life of the seceding churches was a strenuous matter. The idea that religion is relevant just to one's private life or to what one does on Sunday was foreign to these people. For them religion was the central reality of life; all aspects of life, they thought, should be lived in the light of Christianity. They also held (rightly, I think) that *education* is essentially religious; there is such a thing as *secular* education but no such thing as an education that is both reasonably full-orbed and religiously *neutral*. They therefore established separate grade schools and high schools that were explicitly Christian, schools in which the bearing of Christianity on the various disciplines could be carefully and explicitly spelled out. Later, under the leadership of the

great theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper (premier of the Netherlands from 1901 to 1905), they established a Calvinist university in Amsterdam: the Free University—so called not, as one might expect, because it is free from the state, but because it is free from ecclesiastical control.

My mother's parents owned a farm in Wisconsin, between Waupun and Alto, and as a small boy I spent most of my summers there. Going to church, of course, was an extremely important part of life; there were two services on Sunday, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and in those days the afternoon service was in Dutch. Some of my earliest memories are of long, hot Sunday afternoons in church, dressed in my sweltering Sunday best, listening to the minister drone on in a language I could barely understand, counting the tiles in the ceiling, while all along the cicadas outside were setting up their characteristic summertime din. As I saw it then, just getting outside would have been heaven enough. After church, the main topic was often the minister's sermon; and woe unto the preacher who got his doctrine wrong or was guilty of a "wrong emphasis"! Although most of the members of the church were rural folk who hadn't had the benefit of much formal education (my grandfather was lucky to finish the sixth grade), there was an astonishing amount of theological sophistication about. Many had read their Kuyper and Bavinck, and a few were considerably better at theology than some of the ministers in charge of the church.

What was preached, of course, was historic Calvinism. When I was eight or nine I began to understand and think seriously about some of the so-called five points of Calvinism[3] enshrined in the TULIP acronym: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and the Perseverance of the saints. I remember wondering in particular about total depravity. I do indeed subscribe to that doctrine, which, as I understand it, quite properly points out that for most or all of us, every important area of our lives is distorted and compromised by sin. When I first began to think about it, however, I took it to mean that everyone was completely wicked, wholly bad, no better than a Hitler or a Judas. That seemed to me a bit confusing and hard to credit; was my grandmother (in fact a saintly woman) really

completely wicked? Was there nothing good about her at all? That seemed a bit too much. True, I had heard her say "Shit" a couple of times: once when someone came stomping into the kitchen, causing three cakes in the oven to drop, and once when I threw a string of firecrackers into the fifty-gallon drum in which she was curing dried beef (they began exploding in rapid-fire succession just as she came to look into the drum). But was that really enough to make her a moral monster, particularly when so much else about her pointed in the opposite direction? I spent a good deal of time as a child thinking about these doctrines, and a couple of years later, when I was ten or eleven or so, I got involved in many very enthusiastic but undirected discussions of human freedom, determinism (theological or otherwise), divine foreknowledge, predestination and allied topics.

During junior-high and high-school days we lived in Jamestown, North Dakota, where my father was a professor of philosophy, psychology, Latin and Greek (with an occasional foray into sociology and religion) at Jamestown College. We attended the Presbyterian church in Jamestown; but I heard about as many sermons from my father as from the minister of the church we belonged to. He often preached in churches in nearby villages that were without a minister, and I often accompanied him. I went to church, Sunday school, a weekly catechism class my father organized, and weekly "Young People's" meetings. I also remember a series of midweek Lenten services that were deeply moving and were for me a source of spiritual awakening. In addition, we young people also went to summer Bible camps sponsored by the church. I'm sure these were spiritually useful for many and perhaps for me; and we were certainly stirred up emotionally. By and large, however, I found the girls more interesting than the sermons, and for me (and others) the stimulation was by no means exclusively spiritual. As I remember those camps, there was a sort of fervid, febrile atmosphere, shimmering and throbbing with energy and excitement that was as much sexual as spiritual.

Apart from my parents, perhaps the most important influence in high school was my association with Robert McKenzie (now a Presbyterian minister in the San Francisco Bay area). Bob was a couple of years my senior, and we spent an enormous amount of time together.

One summer we spent twelve hours a day, six days a week (and eight hours on Sunday), working for a construction company, putting in a city water line in Westhope, North Dakota, a tiny village six miles or so from the Canadian border. Bob was (and is) enormously full of enthusiasm, idealism and energy; he laughed often, infectiously and loudly; he and I hatched a whole series of adolescent fantasies about how he would be a minister and I a professor in the same town and what great things we would accomplish. (At the same time we were also planning to run a construction company in the Colorado mountains; how this was supposed to mesh with our ministerial and professorial jobs is no longer clear to me.)

In the fall of 1949, a couple of months before my seventeenth birthday, I enrolled in Jamestown College. During that semester my father was invited to join the psychology department at Calvin College; he accepted the offer and took up his duties there in January of 1950. I reluctantly went along, having no desire at all to leave Jamestown and Jamestown College, where I had very strong attachments. During my first semester at Calvin I applied, just for the fun of it, for a scholarship at Harvard. To my considerable surprise I was awarded a nice fat scholarship; in the fall of 1950, therefore, I showed up in Cambridge.

I found Harvard enormously impressive and very much to my liking. I took an introductory philosophy course from Raphael Demos in the fall and a course in Plato from him in the spring. I still remember the sense of wonder with which I read *Gorgias*—its graceful language, absorbing argumentative intricacy and serious moral tone relieved now and then by gentle, almost rueful witticisms at the expense of the Sophists. I also took a splendid course from the classicist I. M. Finley, and in a large social science course (as it was called) my section leader was Bernard Bailyn, now a distinguished Harvard historian. I attended a Methodist church where the Sunday-school class for people my age was conducted by Peter Bertocci, the philosopher from Boston University. (He was the last of the series of three great Boston personalists whose names began with *B:* Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Bordon Parker Bowne and Bertocci.)

At Harvard I encountered serious non-Christian thought for the first time—for the first time in the flesh, that is; I had read animadversions

on Christianity and theism by Bertrand Russell *(Why I Am Not a Christian)* and others. I was struck by the enormous variety of intellectual and spiritual opinion at Harvard, and spent a great deal of time arguing about whether there was such a person as God, whether Christianity as opposed to Judaism (my roommate Herbert Jacobs was the son of a St. Louis rabbi) was right and so on. I began to wonder whether what I had always believed could really be true. At Harvard, after all, there was such an enormous diversity of opinions about these matters, some of them held by highly intelligent and accomplished people who had little but contempt for what I believed. My attitude gradually became one of a mixture of doubt and bravado. On the one hand I began to think it questionable that what I had been taught and had always believed could be right, given that there were all these others who thought so differently (and were so much more intellectually accomplished than I). On the other hand, I thought to myself, what really is so great about these people? Why should I believe *them?* True, they know much more than I and have thought much longer: but what, precisely, is the *substance* of their objections to Christianity? Or to theism? Do these objections really *have* much by way of substance? And if, as I strongly suspected, *not*, why should their taking the views they did be relevant to what *I* thought? The doubts (in that form anyway) didn't last long, but something like the bravado, I suppose, has remained.

The two events that resolved these doubts and ambivalences for me occurred during my second semester. One gloomy evening (in January, perhaps) I was returning from dinner, walking past Widenar Library to my fifth-floor room in Thayer Middle (there weren't any elevators, and scholarship boys occupied the cheaper rooms at the top of the building). It was dark, windy, raining, nasty. But suddenly it was as if the heavens opened; I heard, so it seemed, music of overwhelming power and grandeur and sweetness; there was light of unimaginable splendor and beauty; it seemed I could see into heaven itself; and I suddenly saw or perhaps felt with great clarity and persuasion and conviction that the Lord was really there and was all I had thought. The effects of this experience lingered for a long time; I was still caught up in arguments about the existence of God, but they often seemed to me merely aca-

demic, of little existential concern, as if one were to argue about whether there has really been a past, for example, or whether there really were other people, as opposed to cleverly constructed robots.

Such events have not been common subsequently, and there has been only one other occasion on which I felt the presence of God with as much immediacy and strength. That was when I once foolishly went hiking alone off-trail in really rugged country south of Mt. Shuksan in the North Cascades, getting lost when rain, snow and fog obscured all the peaks and landmarks. That night, while shivering under a stunted tree in a cold mixture of snow and rain, I felt as close to God as I ever have, before or since. I wasn't clear as to his intentions for me, and I wasn't sure I approved of what I thought his intentions might be (the statistics on people lost alone in that area were not at all encouraging), but I felt very close to him; his presence was enormously palpable.

On many other occasions I have felt the presence of God, sometimes very powerfully: in the mountains (the overwhelming grandeur of the night sky from a slope at thirteen thousand feet), at prayer, in church, when reading the Bible, listening to music, seeing the beauty of the sunshine on the leaves of a tree or on a blade of grass, being in the woods on a snowy night, and on other kinds of occasions. In particular I have often been overwhelmed with a sense of *gratitude*—sometimes for something specific like a glorious morning, but often with no particular focus. What I *ought* to be most grateful for—the life and death and resurrection of Christ, with the accompanying offer of eternal life—is harder, simply because of its stupendous and incomprehensible magnitude. You can say "Thank you" for a glorious morning, and even for your children's turning out well; what do you say in response to the suffering and death and resurrection of the Son of God? Or to the offer of redemption from sin, and eternal life?

The second event that semester at Harvard was as follows. During spring recess I returned to Grand Rapids to visit my parents; since Calvin's spring recess did not coincide with Harvard's, I had the opportunity to attend some classes at Calvin. I had often heard my father speak of William Harry Jellema, who had been his philosophy professor at Calvin in the late twenties and early thirties. Accordingly I attended three of Jellema's classes that week—it was a course in ethics, I believe.

That was a fateful week for me.

Jellema was obviously in dead earnest about Christianity; he was also a magnificently thoughtful and reflective Christian. He was lecturing about modernity: its various departures from historic Christianity, the sorts of substitutes it proposes, how these substitutes are related to the real thing and the like. Clearly he was profoundly familiar with the doubts and objections and alternative ways of thought cast up by modernity; indeed, he seemed to me to understand them better than those who offered them. But (and this is what I found enormously impressive) he was totally unawed. What especially struck me then in what he said (partly because it put into words something I felt at Harvard but couldn't articulate) was the thought that much of the intellectual opposition to Christianity and theism was really a sort of intellectual imperialism with little real basis. We are told that humankind come of age has got beyond such primitive ways of thinking, that they are outmoded, or incompatible with a scientific mindset, or have been shown wanting by modern science, or made irrelevant by the march of history or maybe by something else lurking in the neighborhood. (In this age of the wireless, Bultmann quaintly asks, who can accept them?) But why should a Christian believe any of these things? Are they more than mere claims?

I found Jellema deeply impressive—so impressive that I decided then and there to leave Harvard, return to Calvin and study philosophy with him. That was as important a decision, and as good a decision, as I've ever made. Calvin College has been for me an enormously powerful spiritual influence and in some ways the center and focus of my intellectual life. Had I not returned to Calvin from Harvard, I doubt (humanly speaking, anyway) that I would have remained a Christian at all; certainly Christianity or theism would not have been the focal point of my adult intellectual life.

Calvin

What I got from Jellema that week and later on was the limning of a certain kind of stance to take in the face of these objections; one could take them seriously, see what underlies them, see them as in some ways profound, understand them at that level, sympathize with the

deeply human impulses they embody, and nonetheless note that they need have little or no real claim, either on a human being as such or on a Christian. All that chronological talk about "man come of age" and what modern science has shown is obviously, in the final analysis, little more than bluster. These claims and arguments are not the *source* of modern Enlightenment turning away from God; they are more like *symptoms* of it, or ex post facto justifications of it; at bottom they are really intellectual or philosophical developments of what is a fundamentally religious or spiritual commitment or stance. If so, of course, they don't come to much by way of objection to Christianity. They really proceed from a broadly religious commitment incompatible with Christian theism; taken as arguments against Christianity, therefore, they are wholly inconclusive, because they are clearly question begging.

Jellema's way of thinking about these matters (as he said) goes back to Abraham Kuyper and other Dutch Calvinists and ultimately back through the Franciscan tradition of the Middle Ages, back at least to Augustine. Jellema's thought was in many respects "postmodern" long before contemporary postmodernism announced itself with such cacophony and confusion (and foolishness); his thought was also incomparably deeper, more subtle, more mature than most of the current varieties.

Jellema was by all odds, I think, the most gifted teacher of philosophy I have ever encountered. When I studied with him in the early fifties, he was about sixty years old and at the height of his powers; and he was indeed impressive. First of all, he *looked* like a great man—iron gray hair, handsome, a vigorous, upright bearing bespeaking strength and confidence, a ready smile. Second, he *sounded* like a great man. Although he had grown up in the United States, there was a trace of European accent—Oxford, I thought, with perhaps a bit of the Continent thrown in. Jellema lectured in magisterial style, with the entire history of Western philosophy obviously at his fingertips. He seemed to display astonishing and profound insights into the inner dynamics of modern philosophy—the deep connections between the rationalists and the empiricists, for example, as well as the connections between them and Kant, and the contrast between their underlying presuppositions and those underlying earlier medieval and Christian thought. Although he

was a man of razor-sharp intellect, Jellema wasn't first of all a close or exact thinker; his métier was the method of broad vistas, not that of the logical microscope. I came deeply under his spell; had he told me black was white I would have had a genuine intellectual struggle.

And of course I wasn't the only one. In the early days in particular, an extremely high proportion of the serious students at Calvin wound up either majoring or minoring in philosophy. This phenomenon was due in part to a widespread grassroots interest in theology and theological argumentation. Many Christian Reformed students in those days came to college with an already highly developed taste for theological disputation and a strong interest in philosophical questions. But much was due to the intellectual power and magnetism of Harry Jellema. Given the size of Calvin—three hundred students when my father was there as a student, thirteen hundred when I was—a remarkable number of graduates have gone on to careers in philosophy. Many had Frisian names ending in *a:* Bouwsma, Frankena, Hoitenga, Hoekema, Hoekstra, Mellema, Pauzenga, Plantinga, Postema, Strikwerda, Wierenga and more. This has given rise to the lawlike generalization that if an American philosopher's name ends in *a* and is not Castañeda, Cochiarella or Sosa, then that philosopher is a graduate of Calvin College.

Calvin was a splendid place for a serious student of philosophy. At Calvin then (as now) the life of the mind was a serious matter. There was no toleration of intellectual sloppiness and little interest in the mindless fads (deconstruction, Lacanian/Freudian literary theory) that regularly sweep academia; rigor and seriousness were the order of the day. What was genuinely distinctive about Calvin, however, was the combination of intellectual rigor with profound interest in the bearing of Christianity on scholarship. There was a serious and determined effort to ask and answer the question of the relation between scholarship, academic endeavor and the life of the mind, on the one hand, and the Christian faith on the other. We students were confronted regularly and often with such questions as what form a distinctively Christian philosophy would take, whether there could be a Christian novel, how Christianity bore on poetry, art, music, psychology, history and science. How would genuinely Christian literature differ from non-

Christian? Obviously Christianity is relevant to such disciplines as psychology and sociology; but how does it bear on physics and chemistry? And what about mathematics itself, that austere bastion of rationality? What difference (if any) does being a Christian make to the theory and practice of mathematics? There were general convictions that Christianity is indeed profoundly relevant to the whole of the intellectual life including the various sciences (although not much agreement as to just *how* it is relevant).

This conviction still animates Calvin College, and it is a conviction I share. Serious intellectual work and religious allegiance, I believe, are inevitably intertwined. There is no such thing as religiously neutral intellectual endeavor—or rather there is no such thing as serious, substantial and relatively complete intellectual endeavor that is religiously neutral. I endorse this claim, although it isn't easy to see how to establish it, or how to develop and articulate it in detail.

Harry Jellema (as well as Henry Stob, another gifted teacher of philosophy at Calvin) saw the history of philosophy as an arena for the articulation and interplay of commitments and allegiances fundamentally religious in nature; in this they were following Kuyper and Augustine. Jellema spoke of four "minds"— four fundamental perspectives or ways of viewing the world and assessing its significance, four fundamentally religious stances that have dominated Western intellectual and cultural life. These are the ancient mind, typified best by Plato; the medieval and Christian mind; the modern mind; and last and in his judgment certainly least, the contemporary mind, whose contours and lineaments, though not yet wholly clear, are fundamentally naturalistic. He therefore saw all philosophical endeavor—at any rate all serious and insightful philosophy—as at bottom an expression of religious commitment. This gave to philosophy, as we learned it from Jellema and Stob, a dimension of depth and seriousness. For them the history of philosophy was not a record of humanity's slow but inevitable approach to a truth now more or less firmly grasped by ourselves and our contemporaries, nor, certainly, a mere conversation with respect to which the question of truth does not seriously arise; for them the history of philosophy was at bottom an arena in which conflicting religious visions compete for human allegiance. Philosophy, as they saw

it, was a matter of the greatest moment; for what it involved is both a struggle for human souls and a fundamental expression of basic religious perspectives.

Jellema and Stob were my main professors in philosophy; I also majored in psychology, taking some six courses in that subject from my father, from whom I learned an enormous amount inside the classroom as well as out. My father was trained as a philosopher, although at Calvin he taught only psychology courses. (True to his Dakota form, however, he taught a large number of different psychology courses, in fact all the courses offered except the introductory course.) The sort of psychology course he taught, however, had a strong philosophical component. He was wholly disdainful of contemporary reductionistic attempts to make psychology "scientific," to try to state laws of human behavior that more or less resembled those of physics, to study only that which can be quantified, to declare, with Watsonian behaviorists, that there really aren't any such things as consciousness or mental processes, on the grounds that if there were, it wouldn't be possible to study them scientifically. That was forty years ago; contemporary efforts along these lines don't do much better.

One prominent example: we all think that one's actions and behavior can be understood or explained in terms of one's beliefs and desires, and in particular in terms of the *content* of those beliefs and desires. (It is the fact that I believe my office is south of my house that explains why I go south when I want to go to my office; that content enters essentially into the answer to the question, Why did he go south?) But contemporary naturalistic philosophy of mind has enormous difficulty seeing, first, how it can be that my beliefs *have* content; how could that work, from a naturalistic perspective? How could a neural process of some kind wind up being the belief that the South won the Civil War? And second, there is if anything even greater difficulty in seeing how the content of a belief, or its having the content it does, should play some kind of causal or explanatory role in explaining behavior.[4]

There is another legacy of those days at Calvin, however, that isn't quite so beneficent. This was a sort of tendency to denigrate or devalue other forms of Christianity, other emphases within serious Christianity. For example, there was a bit of an inclination to ridicule pietists and

"fundamentalists." We Calvinists, we thought, were much more rigorous about the life of the mind than were fundamentalists, and as a result we were inclined to look down our Reformed noses at them.[5]

This took many forms; I remember, for example, attending the first of Wheaton College's series of philosophy conferences with the late Dirk Jellema (son of Harry Jellema and for many years professor of history at Calvin); this was in the fall of 1954, nearly a year after I had left Calvin, when I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan. The conference seemed to us pretty weak tea after what we had been used to at Calvin (and in fact it wasn't anywhere nearly as good as the conferences later on, when they became an extremely distinguished and valuable part of the Christian philosophical community). Dirk and I found ourselves feeling smugly superior (that's really not the way to put it: we felt so smug and superior that we didn't know that we *were* feeling smug and superior); from our lofty heights we regarded these poor benighted fundamentalists with a certain amused but benevolent disdain. Further, Dirk and I were both smokers at the time; it was a point of honor among Calvinist types to sneer at fundamentalist prohibitions against smoking and drinking.[6] Smoking and drinking were forbidden on the Wheaton campus; every hour or so, therefore, Dirk and I had to dash over to his car, drive off the campus and smoke a cigarette. After the conference ended, we went barhopping in Chicago, listening to Dixieland jazz, amusing ourselves by sneering at fundamentalists and dreaming up various scurrilous fantasies about Wheaton and Wheatonians. Not our finest hour.

Since the Enlightenment, we Christians have had *real* enemies to fight and real battles to win; why then do we expend so much time and energy despising or fighting each other? Why don't we treat each other like the brothers and sisters in Christ we are? This is something the Christian community will have to answer for, and it is not going to be pleasant. Indeed, the whole of modern apostasy in the West is due (so I think) in considerable part to the unedifying and indeed appalling spectacle of Christians at each other's throats in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We aren't now literally at each other's throats, but we still have nothing to boast of along these lines. Evangelicals in South and Central America claim that Catholics aren't really Christians

at all; some Catholics return the favor. Many fundamentalist Christians deeply disapprove of those Christians who accept some form of theistic evolution and propose to read them out of the whole Christian community; those on the other side return the favor by joining the secular scientific establishment in declaring those of the first part ignorant, stupid, dishonest or all of the above.[7] Not a pretty picture.

Family Life

In the fall of 1953 I met Kathleen DeBoer. She was then a Calvin senior and had grown up on a farm near Lynden, Washington, a village fifteen miles from Puget Sound and just four miles south of the Canadian border. Her family, like mine, was of Dutch Christian Reformed immigrant stock, having come to northwest Washington in the early days of the twentieth century. I'm not sure what she saw in me, but I was captivated by her generous spirit and mischievous, elfin sense of humor. We were engaged the following spring and married in June 1955. She has had need of that sense of humor. Over the years she has had to put up with my idiosyncrasies (and worse) and also with a rather nomadic lifestyle: during the thirty-six years of our married life we have moved more than twenty times. She has also had to bear a great deal of the burden of rearing our four children,[8] particularly when they were small; my idea of a marriage in those days, I regret to say, involved *my* having a career and spending what I now see as an inordinate amount of time on my work, and *her* taking care of the children and family.[9] (But that isn't exactly right either, although it contains a lot of truth; this is another of those places where it is hard to see the truth straight. I also loved [and love] the children with a passion, and did spend a lot of time caring for them; and I immensely enjoyed playing, talking, arguing, wrestling, singing, hiking and just being with them. Our dinnertimes were often a kind of rich but wacky discussion of ideas ranging over theology, philosophy, psychology, physics, mathematics, literature and what dumb thing someone's teacher had said today. [Since all of our children took courses from me at Calvin, the teacher in question was sometimes me.])

Kathleen has been a wonderful mother, a wonderful wife and a wonderful ally and support. Some will see this as a monumentally banal

sentiment, a conventional cliché; furthermore, of course, in many quarters being a wonderful wife and mother is not a recommendation but a condemnation, something she should perhaps confess shamefacedly, with the earnest intention of doing better. I say they are dead wrong. I was myself dead wrong in assuming early in our marriage that men had careers outside the home and women were to stay home and be housewives; that was unjust and unfair. Nevertheless, being a housewife (or househusband) is as important and honorable a career as there is. Can anything we do really be more important, more weighty, than rearing our children?

Kathleen has gone willingly with me to all sorts of places she had no real interest in, often with several small children. During the decade of the 1960s, for example, I taught at Wayne State University in Detroit, Calvin, Harvard and the University of Illinois; I also spent a year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, California. A couple of years later we spent the academic year 1971-72 in Los Angeles, while I was a visitor at UCLA. All of these moves were for my benefit, or for the benefit of my career, or at any rate for doing something I thought I needed to do. All of this was also despite her sometimes being less than overwhelmed with the worth of some of my philosophical projects. (I remember that on first hearing she thought the thesis of *God and Other Minds*—which might be summarized as the idea that belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat—was one of the sillier things she had heard.)

She has also had to put up with my relationship with mountains and mountaineering. In the summer of 1954 I accompanied her and her parents to Lynden, Washington, where her parents lived. I had never been west of Minot, North Dakota, and my first sight of the mountains—the Big Horns of Wyoming, the Montana Rockies, the Washington Cascades—struck me with the force of a revelation from on high. Splendidly beautiful, mysterious, awe-inspiring, tinged with peril and more than a hint of menace—there was nothing I had ever seen to compare with them. Thus began a lifelong love affair with mountains. Mountains have been an important part of my life ever since. I've climbed in many of the main ranges of the United States, perhaps concentrating on the Tetons and the Cascades and Sierras; I've also

climbed a bit in Europe (the Matterhorn, Mt. Blanc, a bit of rock climbing in Great Britain). The last few years I have turned more to rock climbing, which is less prodigal of time and energy than mountaineering, and in each of the last few summers have climbed with my friend Ric Otte in Yosemite. Among my favorite rock climbs would be the Black Quacker on Mt. Lemmon (just north of Tucson), the Exum route on the Grand Teton and Guide's Wall, also in the Tetons; in Yosemite my favorites are the Nutcracker, a beginner's set piece; Snake Dike, the easiest (5.7) technical route on Half Dome; and Crest Jewel, a long (ten pitches or so) and splendid moderately difficult route on North Dome.

Mountains have been a blessing: for many years anyway, the *Sensus Divinitatis* seemed to work most strongly for me in the mountains. I mentioned above the time I was lost in the mountains; but on dozens of other occasions I have strongly felt the presence of God in the mountains—although on some occasions what I also felt was guilt and divine disapproval. For if mountains were a blessing for me, they were also a bane. The problem was that (particularly during the first couple of decades of our marriage) I was positively obsessed with mountains. At home in Grand Rapids during the close, humid Michigan summer, I would think of the dry, cool, delicious air of the Tetons; that marvelously blue sky pierced by those splendid towers; the wind, the rough feel of Teton granite, the sweep of a steep, exposed ridge below my feet—and I would almost weep. *Why* was I in Grand Rapids rather than in the mountains? I would be overcome with a sort of yearning, a desperate longing, a *Sehnsucht* for which the only remedy was going to the mountains. So to the mountains I went. Kathleen had two choices: she could stay home in Grand Rapids and take care of the children alone, or she and the children could come along. The only accommodation we could afford in the Tetons (or for that matter anywhere else away from home) was camping: so she and the children camped in a tent while I assaulted the heights. This was not her idea of a good time; and once more, it was wholly unfair. Her reaction to all this was one of Christian grace; but my part would have to be judged as self-centered. Fortunately, this sort of thing no longer happens; but it isn't as if I can take much credit for it. With the passage of the years (and the cooling of the hot blood of youth) my obsession with the mountains has

gradually dissipated, leaving behind a more reasonable if less fierce love for them.

Michigan and Yale

In January of 1954 I left Calvin for graduate work at the University of Michigan, where I studied with William P. Alston, Richard Cartwright and William K. Frankena. The first semester I enrolled in a seminar in the philosophy of Whitehead and a course in philosophy of religion, both taught by Alston; his careful, clear and painstaking course became a model for the courses I was later to teach in the same subject. Coming from Calvin, however, I was struck and puzzled by the diffidence he displayed toward the essential elements of the Christian faith.[10] I also learned much from William Frankena—much at the time and much later on. I admired his patient, thoughtful and considerate way of dealing with students almost as much as his analytical powers. Again, however, I was puzzled by the extremely low profile of his faith.

At Michigan, as earlier on, I was very much interested in the sorts of philosophical attacks mounted against traditional theism—the ancient claim that it was incompatible with the existence of evil, the Freudian claim that it arose out of wish fulfillment, the positivistic claim that talk about God was literally meaningless, the Bultmannian claim that traditional belief in God was an outmoded relic of a prescientific age and the like. These objections (except for evil) seemed to me not merely specious but deceptive, deceitful, in a way: they paraded themselves as something like discoveries, something we moderns (or at any rate the more perceptive among us) had finally seen, after all those centuries of darkness. All but the first, I thought, were totally question begging if taken as arguments against theism.

I conceived a particular dislike for the dreaded Verifiability Criterion of Meaning; it seemed to me that many believers in God paid entirely too much attention to it. Although I wasn't then aware of the enormous difficulties in stating that criterion,[11] I could never see the slightest reason for accepting it. The positivists seemed to trumpet it as a *discovery* of some sort; at long last we had learned that the sorts of things theists had been saying for centuries were entirely without sense. We had all been the victims, it seems, of a cruel hoax—perpetrated, per-

haps, by ambitious priests or foisted upon us by our own credulous natures; they had somehow got us to think that what we believed was in sober fact sheer nonsense. At the same time, however, the positivists seemed to regard their criterion as a *definition*—in which case, apparently, it was either a proposal to use the term *meaningful* in a certain way, or else an account of how that term is in fact used. Taken the second way, the Verifiability Criterion of Meaning was clearly wide of the mark; none of the people I knew, anyway, used the term in question in accord with it. And taken the first way it seemed even less successful. Clearly the positivists had the right to use the term *meaningful* in any way they chose; but how could their using it in some way or other show anything so momentous as that all those who took themselves to be believers in God were fundamentally deluded? If I proposed to use *positivist* to mean "unmitigated scoundrel," would it follow that positivists everywhere ought to hang their heads in shame? I still find it hard to see how the positivists could have thought their criterion would be of any *polemical* use. It might have a sort of *pastoral* use; it might be useful for bucking up a formerly committed but now flagging empiricist; but what sort of claim would the verifiability criterion have on anyone who had no inclination to accept it in the first place?

This interest continued at Yale, to which I went from Michigan because I wanted to study metaphysics in the grand style. I have little to add to what I say in the Profiles volume about life at Yale, except that already then some of the habits of mind that led to the demise of that department were evident.[12] Already there was that sort of paranoia with respect to the rest of the philosophical world, coupled with the self-serving idea that Yale was the last bastion of proper diversity; and already there were the beginnings of the sorts of personal animosities and the turning of all of one's energies to internecine warfare that eventually destroyed the department.

Wayne Days

I left Yale, shiny new Ph.D. in hand (or nearly in hand), in the fall of 1957 for Wayne State University in Detroit. The philosophy department at Wayne in the late 1950s and early 1960s was a real phenomenon and for me enormously valuable; I have already said most of what

I have to say about it in the Profiles volume. Here I add a couple of further reflections. At Wayne, the late Hector Castañeda, George Nakhnikian and Edmund Gettier confronted me with antitheistic arguments of a depth and philosophical sophistication and persistence I had never encountered before. Both Gettier and Nakhnikian were sons of the clergy; both had resolutely turned their backs upon Christianity; and both attacked my Christianity with great verve and power. They were joined by Castañeda, who was raised as a Catholic in Guatemala but had long since given up the religion of his youth (and indeed displayed a sort of bitter resentment against it). Nakhnikian was our chairman; he thought well of my powers as a budding young philosopher, but also thought that no intelligent person could possibly be a Christian. He would announce this sentiment in his usual stentorian tones, whereupon Robert Sleigh would say, "But what about Al, George? Don't you think he's an intelligent person?" George would have to admit, reluctantly, that he thought I probably was, but he still thought there had to be a screw loose in there somewhere.

This sort of atmosphere at Wayne was in one way extremely good for me. My colleagues were people I loved and for whom I had enormous respect; there was among us a close and happy camaraderie unmatched in my experience of philosophy departments. It was us against the world, and the world was in real trouble. We worked closely together, forging a kind of common mind. My Christianity, however, didn't fit into this common mind at all. As a result, my thought was influenced in two ways. On the one hand, I encountered antitheistic argument at a level and of a caliber unequaled by anything I've seen published (with the possible exception of parts of the late John Mackie's *The Miracle of Theism*); this was a great stimulus to rigor and penetration in my own work. In those days I was writing *God and Other Minds;* I still remember the winter evening in a dingy parking lot at Wayne when the central idea of the free will defense—that even if God is omnipotent, there are nonetheless possible worlds he could not have actualized—struck me. (It literally *struck* me; it felt like a blow.) I also remember the first seminar in which I presented this idea; it was subjected to merciless criticism by Larry Powers, then the most philosophically gifted sophomore (or maybe junior) I have ever seen. (As an undergraduate Pow-

ers was regularly the best student in our graduate seminars.)

This stimulation was enormously valuable; on the other hand, however, I was never able to get beyond a sort of defensive posture. I concentrated on arguing (contrary to my colleagues' claims) that theism was not wholly irrational—that, for example, there wasn't, contrary to received philosophical opinion, any contradiction in the propositions "God is omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good" and "There is evil." I often felt beleaguered and, with respect only to my Christianity, alone, isolated, nonstandard, a bit peculiar or weird, a somewhat strange specimen in which my colleagues displayed an interest that was friendly, and for the most part uncensorious, but also incredulous and uncomprehending. It wasn't that this atmosphere induced doubt about the central elements of Christianity; it was more that my philosophical horizons were heavily formed by my colleagues and friends at Wayne. It was hard indeed to go beyond interests that we shared; it seemed out of the question, for example, to take it for granted that Christianity or theism is true and proceed from there. That requires the support of a Christian philosophical community; and that, for all the benefits I received from the Old Wayne department, was something wholly unavailable there.

In 1963, at the age of seventy, Harry Jellema retired from Calvin's philosophy department. I was invited to replace him. I was flattered to be asked to be his successor but timorous at stepping into shoes as large as his; after considerable agony I decided to leave Wayne for Calvin. Many of my non-Calvin friends found it hard to see this as a rational decision. Wayne had a splendid philosophy department; I had found it educational and stimulating *in excelsis;* I immensely liked the department and my place in it and had rejected several attractive offers in order to stay there. Why, then, was I now proposing to leave it for a small college in western Michigan? In point of fact, however, that decision, from my point of view, was eminently sensible. I was and had been since childhood a Christian; I endorsed the Calvinist contention that neither scholarship nor education is religiously neutral; I was therefore convinced of the importance of Christian colleges and universities. I wanted to contribute to that enterprise, and Calvin seemed an excellent place to do so. Calvin, furthermore, is the college of the Christian

Reformed Church, a church of which I am a committed member; so there was an element of ecclesiastical loyalty at work. Most important, perhaps, I realized that scholarship in general and philosophy in particular is in large part a communal enterprise: promising insights, interesting connections, subtle difficulties—these come more easily and rapidly in a group of like-minded people than for the solitary thinker. The topics I wanted to work on were the topics to which I'd been introduced in college: the connection between the Christian faith and philosophy (as well as the other disciplines) and the question how best to be a Christian in philosophy. Calvin was the best place I knew to work on these questions; nowhere else, so far as I knew, were they as central a focus of interest, and nowhere else were they pursued with the same persistent tenacity. I therefore went to Calvin.

Apart from frequent leaves, I spent the next nineteen years at Calvin. There is much to be said about Calvin and about the marvelously stimulating and formative years I spent as a faculty member there, and the people, in particular Paul Zwier and Nicholas Wolterstorff, from whom I learned. I went to Calvin in part because of a long-term interest in Christian scholarship and Christian philosophy, the sorts of topics and questions raised at Calvin when I was a student there. And at Calvin, in one way, I found the very sort of communal Christian scholarship I was hoping for, as I say in the Profiles volume. In another way, though, what I say there is much too rosy; we certainly didn't make nearly as much progress, for example, on the question how in fact to be a Christian philosopher, as could reasonably be hoped. Partly this was due, of course, to the fact that this question of how to be a Christian philosopher, the question of the bearing of one's Christianity on one's philosophy, is extraordinarily difficult, and there isn't much by way of guidance or precedent or (recent) tradition with respect to it.

In my own case, furthermore, during most of the first decade of my stay at Calvin, I was working on the metaphysics of modality, writing parts and versions and drafts of *The Nature of Necessity*. After finishing that I returned to the topics and concerns of *God and Other Minds* (although that isn't how I thought of the matter then); if there aren't strong arguments either for belief in God or for belief in other minds, how is it that we are justified in believing as we do? My answer was

that both are properly basic (which in a way isn't much of an answer: it is simply the declaration that one doesn't need propositional evidence in order to be justified in believing propositions of this sort). This project culminated in "Reason and Belief in God";[13] it occupied much of my time during the second decade of my time at Calvin. (I wish to remark parenthetically that I regret having referred to this project, half in jest, as "Reformed Epistemology" or "Calvinist Epistemology"; some didn't realize this was supposed to be just a clever title, not a gauntlet thrown at the feet of Catholic philosophers.)

Calvin Again and Notre Dame

In 1982 we left Calvin for Notre Dame (and it is at this point that the Profiles "intellectual autobiography" stops). And what can I say about my spiritual life since leaving Calvin? For me as, I suppose, for most others, spiritual life is an up and down proposition, with what one hopes are the consolidation of small but genuine gains. Sometimes I wake in the wee hours of the morning and find myself wondering: Can all this really be true? Can this whole wonderful Christian story really be more than a wonderful fairy tale? At other times I find myself as convinced of its main lineaments as that I live in South Bend.

For me, church and Sunday school play a very important role in the life of faith. Again, this is no doubt insipid, boring, banal, bourgeois and conventional; I wish I could report something more exciting. When I was in college, the idea that at some future time (at any rate prior to complete senility) Sunday school and church would be the high point of my week (even the spiritual high point) would have seemed laughable; but there it is: what can I say? When I was growing up, Sunday school was the sort of thing one did only because one's elders insisted on it. I remember almost nothing about any Sunday school from my childhood and youth, except that I once had a teacher whose name was Ethel; with typically incisive fifth-grade wit we called her "High Test," which in those days was the way one referred to premium gasoline. As an adult, on the other hand, I was astonished, one year, to find Sunday school a genuine occasion for learning and spiritual growth; this was an adult Sunday-school class in the Christian Reformed Church in Palo Alto, California (where in 1968-69 I was a fellow in the Center for Advanced

Study in the Behavioral Sciences). This class was led by Glen vander Sluis, whose decision to become an architect deprived the world of a terrific theologian. More recently, Sunday school in our present church (the South Bend Christian Reformed Church), often led by John Van Engen, a professor of medieval history at Notre Dame, has played the same role for me—as it did, not so surprisingly, the years I led it myself.

I've gone on at length, oddly enough, about Sunday school; but I have also benefited enormously from the rest of what goes on in our church. First, from regular church services and wonderful preaching. Preaching has always been a matter of paramount importance in Reformed Christianity. This emphasis has its downside: what do you do when you have a really poor preacher? the kind who, like one of the preachers I heard as a child in Waupun, spends about fifteen minutes explaining that the blind man Christ healed could not, as a matter of fact, see? By the same token, however, excellent preaching can be, and at my church has been and is, of absolutely enormous value.

And second, I must mention, of course, people: the people in my church and more generally other Christians I know—colleagues, friends, students—who in a thousand ways, ways far too numerous to tell, have offered spiritual support and upbuilding. Here I must also mention especially my mother, from whom in some ways I have learned as much recently as when I was a child. My father has suffered from manic-depressive psychosis[14] for fifty years and more; and of course this has placed enormous burden on my mother, who has cared for him and helped him with magnificent generosity and unstinting devotion. She has done this day after day, year after year, decade after decade; and she has done so, furthermore, with (for the most part) a sort of cheerful courage that is wonderful to behold. And I must also mention especially my youngest brother (fourteen years younger), Neal. As we all know, relationships with parents constantly change; eventually the parent becomes the child and the child the parent. Something similar can go on with relationships between siblings; and in recent years I am sure I have learned more from Neal than he from me.

God and Evil

One of my chief interests over the years has been in philosophical

theology and apologetics: the attempt to defend Christianity (or more broadly, theism) against the various sorts of attacks brought against it. Christian apologetics, of course, has a long history, going back at least to the Patristics of the second century A.D.; perhaps the main function of apologetics is to show that, from a philosophical point of view, Christians and other theists have nothing whatever for which to apologize. I can scarcely remember a time when I wasn't aware of and interested in objections to Christianity and arguments against it. Christianity, for me, has always involved a substantial intellectual element. I can't claim to have had a great deal by way of unusual religious experience (although on a fair number of occasions I have had a profound sense of God's presence), but for nearly my entire life I have been convinced of the *truth* of Christianity.

Of course the contemporary world contains much that is hostile to Christian faith: according to much of the intellectual establishment of the Western world, Christianity is intellectually bankrupt, not worthy of a rational person's credence. Many of these claims strike me as merely fatuous—the claim, for example, that "man come of age" can no longer accept supernaturalism, or Bultmann's suggestion (mentioned above) to the effect that traditional Christian belief is impossible in this age of "electric light and the wireless." (One can imagine an earlier village skeptic taking a similarly altitudinous view of, say, the tallow candle and the printing press.)

Three sorts of considerations, however, with respect to belief in God, have troubled me and have been a source of genuine perplexity: the existence of certain kinds of evil, the fact that many people for whom I have deep respect do not accept belief in God, and the fact that it is difficult to find much by way of noncircular argument or evidence for the existence of God. The last, I think, is least impressive and no longer disturbed me after I had worked out the main line of argument of *God and Other Minds*. The second has remained mildly disquieting; its force is mitigated, however, by the fact that there are many issues of profound importance—profound *practical* as well as theoretical importance—where such disagreement abounds.

But the first remains deeply baffling, and has remained a focus of my thought after moving to Notre Dame.[15] Evil comes in many kinds; and

some are particularly perplexing. A talented young woman is invaded by a slow and horrifying disease—so long-lasting that she gets to explore each step down in excruciating detail; a young man of twenty-five, in the flood tide of vigor and full of bright promise, is killed in a senseless climbing accident; a radiant young wife and mother, loved and needed by her family, is attacked by a deadly cancer; a sparkling and lovely child is struck down by leukemia and dies a painful and lingering death: what could be the point of these things? As I said, my father has suffered from manic-depressive psychosis for the last fifty years; in his case the manic but not the depressive phase is satisfactorily controlled by drugs—yet the suffering involved in serious clinical depression is almost beyond belief. What is supposed to be the good in that? Why does God permit these things? The sheer *extent* of suffering and evil in the world is appalling. In one extended battle during the Chinese Civil War, six million people were killed. What about Hitler and Stalin and Pol Pot and a thousand lesser villains? Why does God permit so *much* evil in his world?

Sometimes evil displays a cruelly ironic twist. I recall a story in the local paper a few years ago about a man who drove a cement mixer truck. He came home one day for lunch; his three-year-old daughter was playing in the yard. After lunch, when he jumped into his truck and backed out, he failed to notice that she was playing behind it; she was killed beneath the great dual wheels. One can imagine this man's brokenhearted anguish. And if he was a believer in God, he may have become furiously angry with God—who, after all, could have forestalled this calamity in a thousand different ways. So why *didn't* he? And sometimes we get a sense of the demonic—of evil naked and pure. Those with power over others may derive great pleasure from devising exquisite tortures for their victims: a woman in a Nazi concentration camp is forced to choose which of her children shall be sent to the ovens and which preserved. Why does God permit all this evil, and evil of these horrifying kinds, in his world? How can it be seen as fitting in with his loving and providential care for his creatures?

Christians must concede that we don't know. That is, we don't know in any detail. On a quite general level, we may know that God permits evil because he can achieve a world he sees as better by permitting evil

than by preventing it; and what God sees as better is, of course, better. But we cannot see *why* our world with all its ills would be better than others we think we can conceive, or *what*, in any detail, is God's reason for permitting a given specific and appalling evil. Not only can we not see this, we often can't think of any very good possibilities. Christians must therefore admit that we don't know why God permits the evils this world displays. This can be deeply perplexing, and deeply disturbing. It can lead believers to take toward God an attitude they themselves deplore; it can tempt us to be angry with God, to mistrust God, like Job, to accuse him of injustice, to adopt an attitude of bitterness and rebellion. No doubt there isn't any logical incompatibility between God's power and knowledge and goodness, on the one hand, and the existence of the evils we see on the other; and no doubt the latter doesn't provide a good probabilistic argument against the former. No doubt; but this is cold and abstract comfort when faced with the shocking concreteness of a particularly appalling exemplification of evil. What the believer in the grip of this sort of spiritual perplexity needs, of course, is not philosophy, but comfort and spiritual counsel. There is much to be said here, and it is neither my place nor within my competence to say it.

I should like, however, to mention two points that I believe are of special significance. First, as the Christian sees things, God does not stand idly by, coolly observing the suffering of his creatures. He enters into and shares our suffering. He endures the anguish of seeing his Son, the second person of the Trinity, consigned to the bitterly cruel and shameful death of the cross. Some theologians claim that God cannot suffer. I believe they are wrong. God's capacity for suffering, I believe, is proportional to his greatness; it exceeds our capacity for suffering in the same measure as his capacity for knowledge exceeds ours. Christ was prepared to endure the agonies of hell itself; and God, the first being and Lord of the universe, was prepared to endure the suffering consequent upon his Son's humiliation and death. He was prepared to accept this suffering in order to overcome sin and death and the evils that afflict our world, and to confer on us a life more glorious than we can imagine. So we don't know why God permits evil; we do know, however, that he was prepared to suffer on our behalf,

to accept suffering of which we can form no conception.

The chief difference between Christianity and the other theistic religions lies just here: according to the Christian gospel, God is willing to enter into and share the sufferings of his creatures, in order to redeem them and his world. Of course this doesn't answer the question, Why does God permit evil? But it helps the Christian trust God as a loving father, no matter what ills befall him. Otherwise it would be easy to see God as remote and detached, permitting all these evils, himself untouched, in order to achieve ends that are no doubt exalted but have little to do with us, and little power to assuage our griefs. It would be easy to see him as cold and unfeeling—or if loving, then such that his love for us has little to do with our perception of our own welfare. But God, as Christians see him, is neither remote nor detached. His aims and goals may be beyond our ken and may require our suffering; but he is himself prepared to accept much greater suffering in the pursuit of those ends. In this regard Christianity contains a resource for dealing with this existential problem of evil—a resource denied the other theistic religions.

Second, it is indeed true that suffering and evil can occasion spiritual perplexity and discouragement; and of all the antitheistic arguments, only the argument from evil deserves to be taken really seriously. But I also believe, paradoxically enough, that there is a *theistic* argument *from* evil, and it is at least as strong as the *antitheistic* argument from evil. (Here I can only sketch the argument and leave it at an intuitive level.) What is so deeply disturbing about horrifying kinds of evil? The most appalling kinds of evil involve human cruelty and wickedness: Stalin and Pol Pot, Hitler and his henchmen, and the thousands of small vignettes of evil that make up such a whole. What is genuinely abhorrent is the callousness and perversion and cruelty of the concentration camp guard taking pleasure in the sufferings of others; what is really odious is taking advantage of one's position of trust (as a parent or counselor, perhaps) in order to betray and corrupt someone. What is genuinely appalling, in other words, is not really human suffering as such so much as human wickedness. This wickedness strikes us as deeply perverse, wholly wrong, warranting not just quarantine and the attempt to overcome it, but blame and punishment.

But could there really be any such thing as horrifying wickedness if naturalism were true? I don't see how. A naturalistic way of looking at the world, so it seems to me, has no place for genuine moral obligation of any sort; a fortiori, then, it has no place for such a category as horrifying wickedness. It is hard enough, from a naturalistic perspective, to see how it could be that we human beings can be so related to propositions (contents) that we believe them; and harder yet, as I said above, to explain how that content could enter into a causal explanation of someone's actions. But these difficulties are as nothing compared with seeing how, in a naturalistic universe, there could be such a thing as genuine and appalling wickedness. There can be such a thing only if there is a way rational creatures are *supposed* to live, *obliged* to live; and the *force* of that normativity—its strength, so to speak—is such that the appalling and horrifying nature of genuine wickedness is its inverse. But naturalism cannot make room for that kind of normativity; that requires a divine lawgiver, one whose very nature it is to abhor wickedness. Naturalism can perhaps accommodate foolishness and irrationality, acting contrary to what are or what you take to be your own interests; it can't accommodate appalling wickedness. Accordingly, if you think there really *is* such a thing as horrifying wickedness (that our sense that there is, is not a mere illusion of some sort), and if you also think the main options are theism and naturalism, then you have a powerful theistic argument from evil.

Evidence and Theistic Belief

One focus of my thought since moving to Notre Dame has been evil; a second has been continued concern with the issues surrounding the evidentialist objection to theistic belief—the issues that were the focus of *God and Other Minds*. The atheologian claims that belief in God is *irrational*—because he thinks it conflicts with such obvious facts as the existence of evil, perhaps, or because there is evidence against it or because there is no evidence for it. When he makes this claim, just what property is it that he is ascribing to theistic belief? What is rationality and what is rational justification? What does it mean to say that a belief is irrational? The central topic of *God and Other Minds* is "the rational justification of belief in the existence of God as he is conceived in the

Hebrew-Christian tradition" (p. vii). I was really considering the evidential objection to theistic belief, without explicitly considering or formulating it. I argued, in brief, that belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat; since belief in other minds is clearly rational, the same goes for belief in God. What I wrote there still seems to me to be substantially true, although now I see the issues in a broader context and (I hope) more clearly. But even though the topic of the book is the rational justification of theistic belief, there is almost no consideration of the protean, confusing, many-sided notion of rationality.

In *God and Other Minds* I assumed that the proper way to approach the question of the rationality of theistic belief is in terms of argument for and against the existence of God. Following contemporary fashion, furthermore, I thought a *good* argument (either theistic or antitheistic) would have to be more or less conclusive, appealing to premises and procedures hardly any sensible person could reject. This assumption is part of a larger picture, total way of thinking of the main questions of epistemology, which has come to be called "classical foundationalism." Like everyone else, I imbibed this picture with my mother's milk; and the conclusion of *God and Other Minds* is really that from the perspective of classical foundationalism, belief in God and belief in other minds are in the same epistemological boat.

Returning to the topics of *God and Other Minds* after an excursis into the topics of *The Nature of Necessity*, I began to consider more explicitly the evidentialist objection to theistic belief—the objection that theistic belief is irrational just because there is no evidence or at any rate insufficient evidence for it. (This objection, of course, has been enormously influential. In the 1950s and 1960s I heard it a thousand times.) In 1974 I argued in "Is It Rational to Believe in God?" that belief in God can be perfectly rational even if none of the theistic arguments works and even if there is no noncircular evidence for it; my main aim was to argue that it is perfectly rational to take belief in God as *basic*—to accept it, that is, without accepting it on the basis of argument or evidence from other propositions one believes.

Again, I didn't look at all deeply into the question of what this notion of rationality *is*. Just what is it that one is objecting to when one claims

that belief in God is irrational? This question had and has received little attention, either from the detractors or the defenders of theism. But by the time I wrote "Reason and Belief in God" (see n. 13) in 1979-80 it was becoming clear that the evidentialist objector should be construed as holding that the theist who believes without evidence thereby violates an intellectual *obligation*, flouts some epistemic *duty* and is unjustified in the core sense of having done something one has no right to do. This, once more, is just another facet of classical foundationalism; for according to this picture one has an intellectual obligation, of some sort, to believe a proposition only if it is at least probable with respect to what is certain for you (and according to the [modern] classical foundationalist, the propositions that are certain for you are those that are self-evident or incorrigible for you).[16]

Once one sees clearly that this is really the issue—that is, the issue is really whether the theist without propositional evidence is violating an intellectual duty or obligation—the evidentialist objection no longer looks at all formidable; for why suppose there is any such obligation, an obligation to believe such propositions only on the basis of evidence from other propositions?

In *God and Other Minds* and "Is It Rational to Believe in God?" I failed to distinguish rationality in the sense of justification—being within one's intellectual rights, flouting no intellectual duties or obligations—from rationality in the sense of *warrant:* that property, whatever precisely it is, that distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief;[17] and in "Rationality and Belief in God" I was groping for this distinction. (It is one of the achievements of contemporary epistemology to rediscover a clear distinction between justification and warrant—a distinction known to some of the medievals but lost later on in the triumph of modern classical foundationalism.) If we take rationality as warrant, an entirely different galaxy of considerations becomes relevant to the question whether belief in God is rational. Indeed, so taken, this epistemological question is not ontologically or theologically neutral; pursued far enough, it transforms itself into an ontological or theological question.

Reformed thinkers such as John Calvin have held that God has implanted in us a tendency or nisus toward accepting belief in God under

certain widely realized conditions. Calvin speaks, in this connection, of a "sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all." Just as we have a natural tendency to form perceptual beliefs under certain conditions, so, says Calvin, we have a natural tendency to form such beliefs as "God is speaking to me" or "God has created all this" or "God disapproves of what I've done" under certain widely realized conditions. And a person who in these conditions forms one of these beliefs is (typically) within her epistemic rights (justified) and also is such that the belief has warrant for her; indeed, Calvin thinks (and I agree) that such a person may *know* the proposition in question. In sum, on the Reformed or Calvinist way of looking at the matter, those who accept belief in God as basic may be entirely within their epistemic rights, may thereby display no defect or blemish in their noetic structure and, indeed, under those conditions may *know* that God exists.

This still seems to me to be correct; over the last few years, I have been thinking about the same question, but trying to put it into the framework of a broader theory of justification, rationality and warrant. I began to explore these matters in the Gifford Lectures given at the University of Aberdeen in 1987.[18] Since then I have been working on the written version of these lectures, and have now just finished the first two volumes of what looks like a three-volume project.[19]

Christian Philosophy

In 1982 I left Calvin College for the University of Notre Dame. In the Profiles volume, I say the following:

> Notre Dame, paradoxically enough, has a large concentration of orthodox or conservative Protestant graduate students in philosophy—the largest concentration in the United States and for all I know the largest concentration in the world. During my nineteen years at Calvin perhaps my central concern has been with the question how best to be a Christian in philosophy; and during that time my colleagues and I have learned at least something about that topic. I hope to be able to pass on some of what we've learned to the students at Notre Dame.

This is another case where it is hard *in excelsis* to determine what your motives for a given action really are and the ambiguity and difficulty

of seeing and speaking the truth on such matters (didn't that fat salary have anything to do with it?). However, I should like to think that passage describes my motives; and if, as Robert Nozick suggests, one can choose which motives to act from (or in this case to *have* acted from), then I choose these. But part of this passage is seriously misleading: it isn't really true (as became clear to me when rereading and rethinking the Profiles autobiography) that my central concern at Calvin was "with the question how best to be a Christian in philosophy." I spent the bulk of my time at Calvin thinking about the metaphysics of modality, the problem of evil and "Reformed epistemology." True, my colleagues and I learned *something* about being a Christian philosopher; how little, however, became apparent to me when at Notre Dame I began to teach a course entitled (immodestly enough) "How to Be a Christian Philosopher." This topic wasn't often something we thought about explicitly and in a focused way at Calvin; it was more like a constant background condition. In fact we didn't make a lot of progress with it, although we did make *some* progress, and were able at least to figure out some of the right questions. However, there is nothing like teaching a course or seminar in an area as a stimulus to learning something about it; I have, I think, made a bit of progress in this area since teaching courses in it at Notre Dame. (I also taught a course on this topic at Calvin, some seven years or so after I left there for Notre Dame; neither I nor anyone else taught a course of that sort at Calvin during the nineteen years I was there as a faculty member.)

This question has come to assume an increasingly large proportion of my time and attention. At Calvin we learned from Jellema and others that the popular contemporary myth of science as a cool, reasoned, wholly dispassionate attempt to figure out the truth about ourselves and our world entirely independent of religion, or ideology, or moral convictions, or theological commitments is just that: a myth. And since the term *myth* is often used in such a way as not to imply falsehood, let me add that this myth is also deeply mistaken. Following Augustine (and Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, Harry Jellema and many others), I believe that there is indeed a conflict, a battle between the *civitas Dei*, the city of God, and *civitas mundi*, the city of the world.

As a matter of fact, what we have, I think, is a three-way contest.

On the one hand is perennial naturalism, a view going back to the ancient world, according to which there is no God, nature is all there is, and humankind is to be understood as a part of nature. Second, there is what I shall call "Enlightenment humanism"; we could also call it "Enlightenment subjectivism" or "Enlightenment antirealism." This way of thinking goes back substantially to Immanuel Kant. According to its central tenet, it is really we human beings, we men and women, who structure the world, who are responsible for its fundamental outline and lineaments—its fundamental structure and value. Of course I don't have the space here to go into this matter properly; my point, however, is this: serious intellectual endeavor—including science—is by no means neutral with respect to this conflict. Science, philosophy and intellectual endeavor generally—the attempt to understand ourselves and our world—enters into this conflict in a thousand ways. And the closer the science in question is to what is distinctively human, the deeper the involvement.[20]

If Augustine is right about the conflict between the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas mundi*, and about the involvement of philosophy and scholarship generally in this conflict, then that is a matter of considerable importance, something very much worth knowing. As a matter of fact, his diagnosis has important implications for the question of how Christian philosophers should carry out their business. I've said most of what I have to say about these matters in the pieces mentioned in note 20; here I want only to emphasize one point together with a corollary. Christian philosophers are members of *several* communities: the Christian community, a local church community, the community of Christian scholars, the professional community of philosophers, the modern Western intellectual community and of course many others. The point I want to make is that Christian philosophers should *explicitly* and *self-consciously* think of themselves as belonging to the Christian community (and the community of Christian intellectuals); perhaps they should think of themselves *primarily* or *first of all* as members of the Christian community, and only secondarily as members of, say, the philosophical community at large, or the contemporary academic community. Our first responsibility is to the Lord and to the Christian community, not first of all to the philosophical community at large—although of course

that is also a very serious responsibility, and a serious responsibility in part because of its connection with the first responsibility.

In some cases this orientation may require a certain courage, or Christian boldness or confidence;[21] in the philosophical and academic world at large there is a good deal of disapproval and disdain for Christianity and Christians, in particular for those who publicly identify themselves as Christians (private Christianity is more likely to be indulgently regarded as a relatively harmless peccadillo or weakness, like being addicted to television or computer games) and propose to practice their scholarly craft in the light of their faith.

The corollary is this. A *successful* Christian philosopher is not first of all one who has won the approval and acclaim of the philosophical world generally, not someone who is "distinguished"; it is rather one who has faithfully served the Lord in the ways put before her. We philosophers are brought up to practice our craft in a sort of individualistic, competitive, even egotistical style; there is enormous interest among philosophers in ranking each other with respect to dialectical and philosophical ability, deciding who is really terrific, who is pretty good, who is OK, who is really lousy and so on. (Those who do well in this derby sometimes remind me of Daniel 8:8, "And the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly.") Your worth, at any rate *qua* philosopher, tends to depend on your ranking, as if your main job is to try to achieve as high a ranking as possible. (Just as a politician's main job, obviously, is to get reelected.) There is a corresponding tendency to value students in proportion to their philosophical ability, thinking that our best efforts ought to be reserved for our ablest students, and that weaker students aren't really worthy or as worthy of our attention. It is as if we were training a stable of would-be professional boxers, or potential Olympic competitors.

But all this is flummery, a snare and delusion. Philosophy is not an athletic competition; and success as a Christian philosopher is not an individualistic matter of doing well in the intellectual equivalent of a tennis tournament. This is not to say that a Christian philosopher ought not to hope to gain the respect of other philosophers; of course not. Recognition for one's work is a blessing to be enjoyed, and may furthermore be useful in doing the job Christian philosophers need to

do. But reputation and recognition are a mixed blessing, one which contains real spiritual pitfalls and traps; it is no measure of the success of a Christian philosopher, and the quest for it is vain foolishness. Christian philosophers are successful, not when they achieve a "reputation" but when they properly play their role in the Christian community.

This is of course a multifaceted role, but what I want to emphasize here is its *communal* side. Christian philosophers are engaged in a *common* project: a project they have in common with other Christian philosophers, but also and more generally with other Christian intellectuals and academics. This project has several different sides: apologetics, both positive and negative; philosophical theology; what we might call philosophical consciousness-raising, where the aim is to see how current cultural products (contemporary science, philosophy, literature and so forth) look from a Christian perspective; working at the sorts of questions philosophers ask and answer; and working at these questions from a Christian perspective, where that perspective is relevant (and it is relevant in more places than one might think). All of this and more constitutes the task of the Christian philosophical community. Part of the ground of this task (its justification, we might say) lies in the fact that it is necessary for the spiritual and intellectual health and flourishing of that community. Another part of its justification, however, is just that it is part of the task of developing a community of persons in which the image of God is communally displayed. This multisided project, then, is a communal project in which the whole Christian philosophical community must be engaged.

Of course this means thinking of other philosophers not as competitors for a scarce or limited commodity, but as colleagues, or teammates, or cooperators, or perhaps coconspirators joined in a common task. (The main idea isn't always to see what's *wrong* with someone's paper, but to see how you can help.) But then the attitude that what really counts—in institutions, as well as people—is philosophical excellence (whatever precisely that is) or, worse, prestige and reputation, is foolish and shortsighted; what really counts, of course, is the performance of the function Christian philosophers must fulfill in and out of the Christian community. (That involves philosophical excellence, but

it involves much more.) Then success is to be measured in terms of contribution to the proper performance of those functions. You carry out this project by way of teaching, writing, conversation and many other ways; it is a complex, multifarious task, and it is by no means clear that you contribute to it in proportion to the strength of your curriculum vita.

Another part of the corollary is that teaching must be taken really seriously. Teaching, for a Christian philosopher, isn't just a meal ticket, a tradeoff whereby you give up some of your time so that you can spend the rest of it doing "your own work"; it is a central and essential part of the task. At the undergraduate level, where students will not for the most part become professional philosophers, the teacher can contribute directly to the common task I mentioned. At the graduate level the aim is to help train our successors, those who will carry on the task in the next generation. It is hard to think of anything more important (or more baffling!) than bringing up your children properly; it is also hard to think of any task more important, for a Christian philosopher, than doing what one can to train and equip the next generation of Christian philosophers. This means seeing younger philosophers, fledgling philosophers and graduate students as of immense value. Their well-being and development as members of the community of Christian philosophers is a source of real concern: it requires our best efforts and any encouragement and help we can give. For it is they, after all, who will carry on this task of Christian philosophy after the current generation has left the scene.

When I left graduate school in 1957, there were few Christian philosophers in the United States, and even fewer Christian philosophers willing to identify themselves as such. Had there been such a thing as the Society of Christian Philosophers, it would have had few members. Positivism was very much in the ascendancy, and the general attitude among professional philosophers was something like George Nakhnikian's: an intelligent and serious philosopher couldn't possibly be a Christian. It looked as if Christianity would have an increasingly smaller part to play in the academy generally and in philosophy specifically; perhaps it would dwindle away altogether. This was of course discouraging. One does one's best and leaves the results to the Lord;

but the demise of Christian philosophy is not a happy prospect for someone who hopes to devote himself to it.

Now, some thirty-five years later, things look different indeed. There are hundreds of young Christian philosophers in the United States, many of them people of great philosophical power; much first-rate work is going on in Christian or theistic philosophy and allied topics; many have accepted the challenge to try to see precisely what being a Christian means for being a philosopher, who have tried to see what the Christian community must do in philosophy, and then tried to do precisely that. (A fair number of these people are or have been graduate students at Notre Dame, and I consider it a privilege to be involved in their growth and development.) Many of them are not only philosophers of real ability; they are also absolutely first-rate people—people with a deep loyalty to the Christian faith, who know how to treat each other with Christian love. Of course one never knows what the future will bring; but it looks as if Christian philosophy, for the next generation or two, will be in good hands indeed. For me personally this is a source of amazement, delight and gratitude.