

Preface

In the fall of 1994, Hendrik-Jan van Leusen, an acquisitions editor from Kluwer Academic Publishers, visited me in my home to discuss a proposal for a handbook in the philosophy of religion. He reported that he had been talking about this with philosophers of religion at several universities and that the response to the idea had been quite favorable. I suggested that given the different approaches to the philosophy of religion, it might be good for him to meet with philosophers representing different philosophical traditions at an up-coming meeting of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association. Jude Dougherty, Joseph Kockelmans, Robert Neville, William Rowe and Merold Westphal kindly agreed to attend that meeting. They made many substantial and helpful suggestions and a summary of the discussions was sent to van Leusen. Some months later, he wrote to inquire whether I might consider editing the series and writing the first volume which was to provide a historical map of twentieth century western philosophy of religion. Although I could imagine myself editing the series I was initially reluctant to undertake the task of writing a volume that would take me across the lines of many different philosophical traditions. By coincidence I had been asked some months earlier to contribute an essay on the philosophy of religion for a conference being held at the Catholic University of America on the general topic, "One Hundred Years of Philosophy." Working on that essay made me aware that writing such a book would be a daunting task. It also made me aware of vast gaps in my knowledge and stimulated me to think that writing such a book would be of value to me, and perhaps to others. I must admit that there have been days when I have thought that, but for the meeting with van Leusen, my journey over the past four years would have been more pleasant. In the end, however, it is a voyage that has taken me to many fascinating ports of call, and I am happy to have taken it. I only hope that I have been able to give a reasonably accurate story of the thinking of those whom I have met along the way, some for the first time.

Projects of this kind would not be possible without the help and advice of many persons. As Editor of the *Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, I am thankful for many valuable suggestions from members of

the International Advisory Board which, in addition to those persons mentioned above, includes Masao Abe, William Alston, David Burrell, John Caputo, Bowman Clarke, Ingolf Dalferth, Jamie Ferreira, David Ray Griffin, John Hick, John Macquarrie, Philip Quinn, James Ross, Kenneth Schmitz, Arvind Sharma, and Keith Ward. As author of this particular volume I am also indebted to many persons including in particular Frank Dilley, Jeremiah Hackett, Patricia Johnson, William Power, Calvin Schrag, Ignas Skrupskelis, William Wainwright and Jerald Wallulis who read portions of the book and made many helpful comments. It is a far better book because of their advice. Whatever errors and weaknesses remain are the result of my "leaving undone those things which I ought to have done, and doing those things which I ought not to have done." Margaret Weck, who is the editorial assistant for the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, has joyfully gone well beyond the call of duty, running many errands to the library and assisting with proof reading. To all of these persons, I express my deepest thanks. The list of persons to whom I am indebted would not be complete without mention of Lyn. This book is appearing on the fortieth anniversary of our marriage and the fortieth anniversary of our embarking on the *Britannic* for Scotland, where she taught school, commuted on a motor scooter, and provided me the leisure to study at the University of Glasgow. The book is dedicated to our four grandchildren, each of whom was born during the writing of it.

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