

Preface

JOHN MACQUARRIE'S PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY developed during a time of heightened secularism. He witnessed the reality that Christian theology was becoming less relevant to a scientific and technological age. Philosophically, Nietzsche's proclamation that "God is dead" was becoming more embedded in culture and theologically the legacy of Barth created a direction toward transcendence to the point of the absence of God; theologians argued for the "death of God," and "religionless Christianity," and a radical separation of philosophy and faith resolving to live by an extreme fideism. All of which allowed for theology to become absorbed in modern secularism as it compromised with the values of the age. Macquarrie developed his "dialectical theism" as a response to these trends. He argues for an existential-ontological relation between human existence and God, where God as (Holy) Being is disclosed through the phenomena of experience. In this sense, God is present and manifest in our experience, accessible through revelation and reason. He argues that the worldly context of secularism is best engaged through the incarnation and a sacramental view of the universe. Late in his life, Macquarrie explored these same themes in the context of postmodernism, finding that although offering some unique and creative observations, postmodernism is in many ways merely another form of modernism that is as challenged with the ongoing advent of secularism and atheism as the radical theology movement of the 1960s.

This book argues that Macquarrie's theology has much to say in relation to postmodern theology, and indeed shares many themes in common with postmodernism. His "dialectical theism" develops within the same historical and cultural context as postmodernism yet attempts a more constructive relationship with secular culture, taking seriously secularism and the need to found theology on concepts and language

that acknowledge a shared context of experience between religious and non-religious views.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One situates the development of Macquarrie's theology from his beginnings up to postmodern times. Here I argue for the continuity and difference between Macquarrie's theism and other theological movements. In relation to postmodernism, I lay the foundation for a conversation between "dialectical theism" and postmodernism, focusing on general themes present in postmodernism that Macquarrie himself has identified in his book *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought*.

Part Two deals with Macquarrie's ontotheology, his grounding theology in phenomenological ontology. I cover the themes that are problematic in postmodern thinking as outlined at the end of Part One. These are, natural theology, reason and revelation, truth and language.

I use the heuristic of conversation to show how Macquarrie's theology is at once a presentation of the possibility of theology in a secular postmodern world and to show that it is through conversation, dialogue, and discourse that we work out our own salvation in communal existence. The heuristic of "repetition" operates to show that theology is always in progress; needing to retrieve the tradition and rethink it in new and relevant ways.

For better or worse, postmodernism is a movement that challenges the very foundations of our deepest convictions about truth and reality. This book extends Macquarrie's own investigation of postmodernism, carried out late in his own life, in a direction he himself did not pursue; namely how his "dialectical theism" as a method for doing theology is an antidote, on the one hand, for the skepticism (even nihilism) found in many postmodern thinkers and, on the other hand, the extreme fideism found in others.

Although radical and controversial in its own right, Macquarrie's philosophical theology offers a "third way," or a *via media*, between the polarities of skepticism and fideism found in postmodernism. I argue that the questioning of the foundations to truth and reality that is at the heart of much of postmodernism can benefit from Macquarrie's approach to theology. An important reason for this is that a "family resemblance" exists, so to speak, in the formative factors shaping postmodern thinking and Macquarrie's own "dialectical theism," especially the shared reliance on the phenomenological method. This makes Macquarrie a natural conversation partner with postmodern thinkers. As well, I (implicitly) make

the (bold) claim that many of the innovative ideas found in postmodern thinkers have been anticipated in Macquarrie's "dialectical theism" in such a way as to allow for more constructive dialogue with (post)secular culture.

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