Foreword

Nicholas Wolterstorff is one of the foremost philosophical theologians of the last hundred years. Together with Alvin Plantinga, he was key to what has amounted to a sea-change in attitudes toward theism amongst academic philosophers, transforming attitudes towards the epistemic status of theism. His "Introduction" to the first volume of *Inquiring about God* opens with the observation, "the past several decades have seen an extraordinary flourishing of philosophy of religion within the analytic tradition of philosophy." What should be added is that his own contribution to this has been immense. One feature of his research, however, sets him apart from the rest of his peers. The range of his numerous monographs and other publications is unparalleled in the field, covering metaphysics, epistemology, theological ethics, political theology, aesthetics, and, more recently, liturgy.

The focus of his earliest research was in ontology and his first monograph on universals was inspired, in part, by his Harvard supervisor, D. C. Williams. This was followed by influential work in epistemology. He and Alvin Plantinga established what has come to be known as "Reformed Epistemology," which holds that religious belief can be rational without any appeal to evidence or arguments. Consequently, they opposed the widely held assumption that for theistic beliefs to be deemed rational they had to be shown to be grounded in other more foundational beliefs. The effect of their collaborative work has generated extensive research and numerous publications in the field over the last four decades. This, in turn, has inspired a root and branch rethink of how we approach the justification of Christian belief. In 1995, he published an influential monograph on the theological grounds of such belief, analyzing what is involved in the claim that God speaks.

Since 1980, he has published extensively in three fields of research that form the backdrop to the essays in this volume.

The first of these has been in the field of aesthetics. His first monograph in the field was entitled *Works and Worlds of Art* (Clarendon, 1980).

Over the four decades since, he has continued to publish extensively in this area, the most recent of his monographs being *Art Rethought: The Social Practices of Art* (Oxford, 2017).

The second focus of his research over the last four decades has concerned the overlapping issues in social ethics, political theology, and the nature of justice. This has also found expression in the publication of an extensive series of monographs. The first of these grew out of the Kuyper Lectures given in the Free University of Amsterdam in 1981 and was entitled *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. There then followed six further monographs, the most recent of which appeared in 2015 and was entitled *Justice in Love*.

The third field of expertise represented in this volume concerns liturgy. This research interest has come to the fore during the last decade and includes *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Eerdmans, 2015), which was adapted from his 2013 Kantzer Lectures in Revealed Theology (TEDS) and, most recently *Acting Liturgically: Philosophical Reflections on Religious Practice* (Oxford, 2018).

A notable feature of his work has been his ongoing interest in the history of ideas. This is evident in his extensive engagement with the works of John Locke and Thomas Reid.[1] Together with William Alston and Alvin Plantinga, Wolterstorff did a great deal to revitalize interest in Thomas Reid, whose ideas were influential in their establishment of Reformed Epistemology.

A long-standing feature of the Reformed tradition, which harks back to the Puritans, has been a commitment to education. This tradition has also found expression in Wolterstorff's pedagogical interests. His commitment to communication is apparent from the lucidity and clarity of his writing style, but it is made explicit in the topics of three of his other monographs, namely, *Educating for Responsible Action* (1980), *Educating for Life: Reflections on Christian Teaching and Learning* (2002), and *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education* (2004).

The book of his that has been most widely read, however, is not an academic book at all, namely, his diary of profoundly moving reflections written after the loss of his twenty-five-year-old son, Eric, who died in 1983 in a climbing accident. *Lament for a Son*, which belongs to a similar genre to C. S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed*, has proved a source of support and inspiration to a generation of people struggling with the loss of a loved one.

1. Reid was the "earliest and fiercest critic" of David Hume, his contemporary and fellow Scot. Cf. Bartholomew and Goheen, *Christian Philosophy*, 138.

Wolterstorff's academic standing in the field—across several fields, indeed—is evident not only in his many monographs but also in the prestigious endowed lectureships he has given. These include the Kuyper Lectures (Free University of Amsterdam), the Wilde Lectures (Oxford), the Gifford Lectures (St Andrews), the Stone Lectures (Princeton), and the Taylor Lectures (Yale).[2]

This book is a launch volume in a new and ambitious series in analytic theology. It is indicative of Professor Wolterstorff's perception of the importance of this series that he should have chosen this series in which to publish this key volume of essays. It is also a vote of confidence in its editors who, like him, are also analytic theologians with doctorates in analytic philosophy and who, it should be added, have impressive publication records in their own right.

Now to the volume itself. There are several features of this volume that make it particularly important. First, these are Professor Wolterstorff's culminating reflections on topics that have been the focus of his research over the last four decades, namely, justice, art, and liturgy. Half of its essays are new and, as yet, unpublished. All the essays, bar two, are the results of recent research. The second feature that makes it so important is that it provides unique insight into how he understands the relationship between justice, art, and liturgy.

The volume opens by discussing the "deep affinity" that unites justice, art, and liturgy and the distinctive way in which each of the three embodies that affinity. The springboard for his discussion is an analysis of five distinct forms of "love." This provides the setting for his account of the mutual relations between the three fields.

The central essay of the section on "Justice" opens with an analysis of social justice and the nature of rights. This leads into an analysis of the widespread unease with the notion of social justice. If, as he argues, social injustice is "injustice perpetrated on members of society by laws and public social practices," why would anyone speak out against a concern for social justice? First published in 2013, his analysis of attitudes is remarkably prescient of contemporary challenges confronting society at large and

2. It might be added that he has held visiting professorships in Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Oxford, Notre Dame, Texas, and Virginia and has served as president of the American Philosophical Association (Central Division) and of the Society of Christian Philosophers.

its conclusions could not be more pertinent. This chapter alone should be prescribed reading!

A preceding essay considers how far gratuitous generosity is compatible with the requirements of justice—a question that is relevant to the theology of divine mercy. Wolterstorff's analysis of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard serves to illustrate how a natural inclination to interpret gratuitous acts of mercy as unjust can be ill-conceived.

The next essay raises further questions on the relationship between love and benevolence on the one hand and justice on the other. What does justice bring to the table of morality that love as benevolence does not? For Wolsterstorff, "benevolence aims to enhance the quality of a person's life, justice pays due respect to a person's worth." The distinctions he makes are illustrated with reference to the former apartheid regime in South Africa where, he argues, Afrikaners were at times happy to talk about *their* moral status, their acting *benevolently*, while side-stepping recognition of the moral condition of the so-called blacks and coloreds and the fact that they were *being wronged*. What this demonstrates, he argues, is that "an ethic of pure benevolence is not sufficient for morality and can lead its adherents to perpetrate injustice."

The essay on religious intolerance develops further his interpretation of justice in terms of respect for a person's worth. No matter how much one may happen to dislike another person's religious beliefs, to be intolerant is to wrong that person and, given that she is beloved of God, to wrong her is to wrong God. In other words, there is a *theological* imperative to be tolerant towards those of other religious views. The section on justice concludes with a detailed and in-depth discussion of human rights and, indeed, "natural human rights." A person's rights are grounded not in some natural capacity that they possess but, rather, in the fact that "God loves redemptively all who bear the *imago Dei*—loves them equally and loves them perpetually. It is the worth we have on account of being so honored by God that grounds natural human rights." This is an approach that can affirm without qualification the rights and dignity of those who are not responsible for their actions due, for example, to advanced Alzheimer's or severe mental impairment.

At the heart of the second section on "Art" is Wolterstorff's argument that art contributes to our flourishing by enhancing our ordinary activities. Singing while working enhances the work; singing our praise and thanksgiving enhances our praise and thanksgiving. In this way, moreover, singing contributes to the shalom of those who participate in worship and musical liturgy.

The second essay focuses on the nature of music as art. In particular, it explores the implications of rejecting an instrumentalist view of art and music. For Wolterstorff, works of music have intrinsic, non-instrumental worth. So what does this mean for the relationship between the worth of works of music and our attentive listening to them? If music has intrinsic value, its worth does not lie in the satisfaction of the hearer in response to its being heard sonically. It can be enjoyed by a person reading a score and not "hearing" it physically at all.

The final two essays bring the discussion of art into relation with the discussion of justice and liturgy. When we appropriate the words of the Psalms in our worship, he argues, we are shaped and formed by those words to become lovers of justice. That is, music enhances our orientation towards God's just purposes for this world. Social protest art can be interpreted similarly, and Wolterstorff argues that Rouault's prints of nasty, arrogant, and self-satisfied human beings generate in us a sense of revulsion. The effect of protest art can be an enhancement of our sense and, indeed, recognition of injustice. In sum, when we view a visual expression of injustice in society, we find ourselves newly sensitized to such injustice.

The final section on liturgy uses speech-action theory to interpret Calvin's account of the sacraments and contrast it with that of Aquinas. The emphasis on God-action as opposed to sign-action opens the door to the recognition that, as he puts it, "to enter the liturgy, as Calvin understands it, is to enter the sphere not just of divine presence but of divine action." Here, "God is less a presence to be apprehended in the liturgy than an agent to be engaged." This raises the question as to the nature of divine agency in the reading of Scripture and the preaching of the Word of God. What exactly is meant by the acclamation in the liturgy, "This is the Word of the Lord?" Addressing this gives rise to a fascinating discussion of Karl Barth's views on the topic and what Wolterstorff perceives to be a tension between two different kinds of statements that Barth makes—a discussion that raises again the question of divine agency in and through the liturgy. In the next chapter, the focus moves from God's action in the liturgy to our participation in it. Liturgical address facilitates our knowledge of God in that it is a means of becoming attuned to the divine reality that we yearn to know.

So how precisely is the relationship between art and liturgy to be understood? For Wolterstorff, liturgical art is an *interpretation* of the liturgy where artistic interpretations of it actually change the liturgy itself, as well as our ways of understanding and experiencing the liturgy. When an architect designs a church building for a congregation, she does so in a manner that respects the congregation's understanding of the liturgy. At the same time, however, the building will have an impact upon the congregation's

understanding of the liturgy. This requires us, he suggests, to adopt an interactionist model for thinking about liturgical art. What this suggests is that Christian liturgy and the practices of the arts interact with each other, engaging one another. In this engagement, he argues, each practice must honor the authentic norms and values of the other. This concept of mutual honor paves the way for the concluding essay of the volume.

The themes of enhancement, mutual respect, and affirming and upholding the dignity of the other are key to Wolterstorff's exploration of each of the three fields represented in this volume. They are also key to the way in which he understands the interrelationship between them. It is appropriate therefore, that the volume should conclude with an essay on honouring the other. Those created in the image of God are created to honor others in the recognition that they too are created in the image of God and bear God's image. This means that we are called in every form of interaction and debate to recognize that and witness to it. He concludes by quoting the author of First Peter, who addresses his readers as a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people called out of darkness into the light" (1 Pet 2:9) and concludes with the exhortation that we honor one another. This is key to understanding God's relation to the world and purposes for it. It is also key to understanding not only the nature and significance of justice, liturgy, and art but also the interrelationship between them.

This tightly coherent and profoundly insightful volume of essays is the outcome of a lifetime of academic research and reflection by one of the finest Christian intellectuals of our day. The topics it addresses, moreover, are of the utmost relevance not only to our flourishing as individuals but also to the well-being of our society, our culture, and the Christian church.

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