



God and Ethics: On Learning to Speak Truthfully About Moral Failure

Prof Murray Rae, University of Otago, NZ

One of the claims commonly made by the 'New Atheists' is that the moral failure of religious people discredits their theological claims. It is often alleged, for example, that religion causes war, that it provides support for violent extremists of various kinds, that it is inherently and necessarily intolerant, and so on. It is then argued, or rather asserted, that such moral failures demonstrate that religions are not true. As a matter of logic, the inference from the moral failure of religious people to the falsity of religious beliefs is very weak indeed, but there are serious questions to be grappled with nevertheless. To what extent should true belief be supported by right moral action? What account can Christianity give of the moral failure of its adherents? Can religion serve, or does it inevitably impede the moral formation of human beings? This paper will offer a consideration of such concerns.