Reconsidering evil : confronting Reflections with Confessions
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The notion of evil is not undisputed in contemporary philosophy and theology. The reasons for this vary from aversion to the use of a vague, comprehensive term like evil to hesitation at the suggestion of an uncontrollable, non-human power of force that seems to cling to the idea of evil. On the other hand, in popular discourse speaking of evil prevails — one almost keeps stumbling over allusions to it. However, such language often seems to be incidental and not a natural part of a whole way of thinking. Thus the present situation demands a regauging of the notion of evil. Reconsidering Evil attempts this regauging by comparing the nature and status of the theme of evil in four different approaches. Paul Ricœur’s approach via symbols and myths of evil provides a focus that enables an analysis and comparison of the highly reflective views of Immanuel Kant, Karl Jaspers and Karl Barth — who represent an ethical, tragic and a non-theodician theological view respectively. This book sets out to determine whether one can claim that speaking of evil is most at home in a specific way of thinking. In the final chapter the notion of “the end of evil” turns out to be very important for understanding the specific character of a religious view of evil. In comparison with Kant’s ethical view and Jaspers’ tragic one, the broadest or richest understanding of evil is to be found in a religious context. However, the comparison of the different approaches also shows the possible dangers of this religious view. Thus, by means of an in-depth analysis and comparison of these thinkers, the relevance of the theme of evil for present day philosophy of religion is critically examined.