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**Philip L. Quinn, ESSAYS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, ed.  
Christian Miller**

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mind that interacts with the created cosmos is incoherent. G&T assess such critiques and argue persuasively that the charges of incoherence are either just overstated (as no problems of a strictly logical nature are evident) or involve an illicit assumption of naturalist or physicalist tenets.

An appendix to the volume briefly develops and defends the so-called "Argument From Reason"—a perhaps more rigorous heir of the argument presented by C. S. Lewis and others—with the conclusion that naturalism is ultimately self-defeating since the view has implications that would undermine the very arguments that might otherwise support it.

Overall, Goetz and Taliaferro have managed to explain and assess naturalism in a way that is at once concise, careful, and clear. I know of no other work engaging metaphysical naturalism that matches this one for these virtues. They allow leading naturalists to speak for themselves, sometimes at length, but mere "cut-and-paste" is avoided by skillful editing and lively interaction with the views discussed. The result is that the reader is likely to come away with a better understanding of the worldview itself as well as the most significant difficulties that confront it. And the book is a model of careful philosophical argumentation and worldview assessment. It should appeal to a wide audience that includes professional philosophers, undergraduates and graduate students, seminar-ians, pastors, and interested laypersons. And it should serve as a fine text for a number of courses, including introduction to philosophy, philosophy of religion, and apologetics. I have, for many years, taught a course titled Major Worldviews, which features naturalism and theism, among other views. This book should become a staple for such a course.

*Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, by Philip L. Quinn. Edited by Christian Miller. Clarendon Press, 2006. Pp. 315. \$49.95 (paper)

KEVIN MEEKER, University of South Alabama

This posthumously published collection of essays is the best of books and the worst of books. It is the best of books: Philip L. Quinn's influential and thought-provoking essays provide a scintillating tour de force of some of the most important topics in philosophy of religion in the past four decades. It is the worst of books: It hauntingly reminds us that he is no longer with us to help us think through these important issues. Despite reminding us of our loss, this volume furnishes us with a golden opportunity to consider the breadth and depth of Quinn's omnifarious interests in the philosophy of religion.

The book begins with a memorably poignant foreword by Eleonore Stump. Editor Christian B. Miller, a former Quinn student, next offers a fine survey of Quinn's life and work as well as the essays in the volume. The book reprints fourteen essays, divided into six sections that provide

a representative sample of much of Quinn's work; it naturally includes some of his famous development and defense of the divine command/will theory of ethics. Sadly, I do not here have the space to discuss every essay (for a survey that briefly summarizes every essay, see Robert Roberts's review at <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=11964>). So let me focus on some of the main motifs that run through many of the essays.

After reading this book, I was struck by the number of times that discussions of Kant or broadly Kantian issues occupied center stage. All three essays in the Topics in Christian Philosophy section discuss Kant extensively, with the last two advertising this focus in their titles: "Kantian Philosophical Ecclesiology" and "Christian Atonement and Kantian Justification" (which was selected by *The Philosopher's Annual* as one of the top ten philosophy papers of 1986). The section on Religion and Political Liberalism contains two essays that spend a great deal of time critically analyzing the ideas of John Rawls, arguably the most famous neo-Kantian of the twentieth century. Moreover, even the title of the second essay in this section gestures towards Kant: "Religious Citizens within the Limits of Public Reason." The last section on Religious Diversity contains "Towards Thinner Theologies: Hick and Alston on Religious Diversity," in which Quinn offers a limited defense of the rationality of adopting some suitably modified version of John Hick's neo-Kantian pluralism. Of course, Quinn's work on ethics and tragic dilemmas not only frequently discusses Kant but also promotes the Kantian primacy of the will over the virtues, most explicitly in his "The Primacy of God's Will in Christian Ethics" (for an Aristotelian response, see Roberts's review mentioned above).

Perhaps the most interesting and pervasive theme revolves around Kant's treatment of killing on the basis of a divine command. In *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* Kant argues, roughly speaking, that one is never justified in killing someone on the basis of what one perceives to be a divine command because one could always be mistaken about the source or content of such a command. Even in the famous story of Abraham and Isaac, Kant contends that Abraham (or anyone similarly situated) should have been so *certain* that it was wrong to sacrifice Isaac that he should have dismissed his experiences of God commanding him to do so as illusory or somehow mistaken. Quinn's reflections on Kant's discussion figure prominently in four of the six sections, including the first chapter "Religious Obedience and Moral Autonomy" as well as the last chapter "On Religious Diversity & Tolerance." Although Quinn is certainly no obsequious devotee of Kant on this point, he sees "promise in a chastened Kantianism that proceeds on a case by case basis to deploy moral beliefs of high epistemic status as levers . . . to move churches and their members in the direction of reforming ecclesiastical arrangements and reinterpreting scriptures" (p. 271). Along these lines he approves, to some degree, of fellow divine command theorist Robert Adams's general "methodology that allows for ethical sources independent of theology to exert critical leverage on theological ethics" (p. 271). As I understand it, a crucial feature of

*chastened* Kantianism is that independent moral beliefs that fall far short of epistemic certainty may still function as levers to counteract religiously based arguments for what would otherwise seem to be an immoral practice. But implementing this strategy requires one to work harder to show that the independent ethical beliefs possess a higher epistemic status than any contrary beliefs. In his "On Religious Diversity & Tolerance," Quinn interestingly applies this broad "piecemeal strategy" (p. 303) of *chastened* Kantianism to intolerant practices of any religion, drawing on the idea that the religious diversity of the world should significantly lower the justification one might have for believing that an intolerant practice is acceptable. This lowering of the confidence in one's own religious practices presumably could allow norms from ethical sources independent of one's theology to override one's commitment to the intolerant practice.

It is unfortunate that this suggestion appears in the last essay he completed before his death. Exploring the many issues raised by this argument could prove most fruitful indeed. Taking a broad view of this *chastened* Kantian strategy, it is clear that one question immediately requiring an answer is the following: What is the independent source of the ethical norms that are "to exert critical leverage on theological ethics"? Philosophical ethics seems a non-starter. After all, the Kantian hope of uniting rational agents of the world around a universally accepted form of practical reason that underwrites the epistemic strength of moral principles has fallen by the wayside, leaving us with what Quinn calls a "reasonable pluralism in moral theory" (p. 269). If it is reasonable to adhere to any number of these competing philosophical theories about morality, then some (particularly those within a particular theological tradition) may question whether any one of them could produce an ethical norm that has enough warrant to trump a contrary norm from theological ethics (or to make it rationally obligatory to abandon the norm from theological ethics). I take it that this problem is exacerbated if we consider Quinn's own divine command/will theory as one of the philosophical theories about morality that one could reasonably adopt.

Of course few people look to philosophy to ground their moral judgments. Many would contend that common sense can trump theological concerns by providing us with access to an independent source of basic ethical norms presumably shared by most ethical theories. More specifically, some could argue that the moral intuition that it is wrong, say, to sacrifice Isaac, is so strong that it can trump any purported divine command to the contrary (in a slightly different context Quinn seems to consider this way of arguing in his "Divine Command Ethics: A Causal Theory," pp. 49–50). Interestingly, Quinn himself defends the *possibility* of Kierkegaardian conflicts (in which, roughly speaking, one must choose between following an indefeasible divine command and a conflicting moral requirement which is not overridden) against "common sense" objections. As he puts it in his essay "Moral Obligation, Religious Demand, and Practical Conflict," "When philosophy succeeds in [bringing us to see

new possibilities], it teaches us that the world might be stranger by far than pedestrian common sense would allow" (p. 91). Moreover, Quinn also recognizes that one's thoughts on these possible conflicts can be surreptitiously influenced by one's culture. While he defends the possibility that one could be justified in believing that one is facing a Kierkegaardian conflict, he candidly admits that he cannot imagine being actually justified in believing that he is facing a Kierkegaardian conflict. He concedes that this skepticism might

show that, being situated as I am in a predominantly secular culture, I can conceive of certain possibilities for justified belief that I cannot quite imagine being actual for me. If it showed this, I would be under pressure to admit that my culture has the power to shut me off from understanding imaginatively and firsthand the kind of faith needed to play the role of Abraham. And I would be reluctant to concede so much influence in determining what I can imagine to the contingencies of my culture. Like many intellectuals, I am inclined to fancy I can transcend, if only in imagination, most of the limits of my culture. But perhaps the range of my imagination is severely constricted just because I am to a large extent the product of an incredulous culture. (p. 91)

If Quinn is correct about the extent to which culture *can* affect even one's imagination, then some might justifiably worry about the legitimacy of any independent moral leverage one tries to place on theological ethics.

In short, chastened Kantianism faces significantly high hurdles. Quinn himself has done such a tremendous job of *chastening* Kantianism that one might wonder if any meat remains on this theoretically thin skeleton of Kantianism that can nourish a research program. Moreover, his own defense of divine command/will theories of ethics at times appears to insulate certain kinds of theological ethics from any Kantian heat, especially in an environment of "reasonable pluralism in moral theory." Despite these high hurdles, I hope that philosophers of religion will further explore this topic, as well as many others that are broached by Quinn in these essays, even if they do not agree with all of his settled views.

To conclude with a succinct assessment: This is an excellent book. One can read it with great profit not only because of the important topics covered but also because of the way in which Quinn approaches these issues. Having offered this assessment, I should probably note, in the interest of full disclosure, that Quinn directed my dissertation. My interactions with him allowed me to experience his exemplary spirit: he was conscientious, forthright, helpful, honest, kind, and thoughtful, to name just a few of his virtues. Discussing philosophy with him was a cooperative enterprise, not a competitive one. Most happily, those who did not get a chance to interact personally with him can, in these essays, catch a glimpse of these and related virtues that are worthy of emulation: a piercingly clear writing style that effectively gets to the heart of a philosophical issue, personal engagement with and Socratic self-reflection on crucial issues (as seen in the quotation above), prioritizing intellectual honesty over argumentative

“one-upmanship” (see some of his gracious concessions in the debate with Plantinga on religious epistemology: “The Foundations of Theism Again: A Rejoinder to Plantinga”), and exhibiting the way in which crisp philosophical thinking can be informed by the history of philosophy and literature, perhaps best exemplified in Quinn’s riveting treatment of Shusaku Endo’s novel *Silence* in his “Tragic Dilemmas, Suffering Love, and Christian Life.” Surely these essays bear vivid testimony to the fact that the philosophical landscape is a richer place because of Philip Quinn.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thanks to T. Allan Hillman, Christian Miller and Ted Poston for comments on drafts of this review.

*Was Jesus God?*, by Richard Swinburne. Oxford University Press, 2008. 175 pp. \$24.95 (hardback)

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A little over ten years ago, Pope John Paul II urged philosophers to provide bold arguments to establish the preconditions of divine revelation: “Consider, for example, the natural knowledge of God, the possibility of distinguishing divine Revelation from other phenomena or the recognition of its credibility, the capacity of human language to speak in a true and meaningful way even of things which transcend all human experience.”<sup>1</sup> Other than being one of the world’s finest Christian philosophers and the author of many books and articles on various philosophical topics, Richard Swinburne has faithfully served the Church with an apologetic vision that is clear, courageous, and convincing. His most recent book on the subject is no different.

Although *Was Jesus God?* is not as philosophically rigorous as his trilogy on the philosophy of religion, it can be read as a sequel to any of his previous publications on natural theology. Because he focuses on the reasons to believe in Jesus’s divinity in this volume, he does not provide a new battery of arguments for God’s existence which can only show that a “bare” or “bland” theism is true. So long as one assumes that God exists, the reader will be able to benefit from Swinburne’s newest rationale to believe in Jesus. “Christian theism,” he rightly points out, “can be true only if bare theism is true” (p. 23).

The first prong in the overall argument for Jesus’s divinity consists of the pertinent reasons that can be utilized apart from the influence of divine revelation to show that God is the kind of God who would want to become a human and do the types of things that Jesus would do. Thus, Swinburne’s first goal is to describe and explain the “*a priori* reasons” for expecting God to become incarnate in human history. *A priori* reasons

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<sup>1</sup>John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, N. 67.