

## **Quinn's Philosophy of Religion**

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The publication of these selected papers by Philip L. Quinn is intended to honor one of the leading philosophers of religion in the twentieth century. Philip Quinn died on November 15, 2004 at the age of 64, leaving behind an immensely impressive legacy of publication, service, and intellectual achievement.

My goal in this brief introduction is twofold: first, to briefly sketch some of the life of this remarkable man; and second, to provide an overview of the papers that make up this collection. The papers themselves have been organized around the following central topics in Quinn's research: religious ethics, religion and tragic dilemmas, religious epistemology, religion and political liberalism, Christian philosophy of religion, and religious diversity.

### **A Brief Sketch of Quinn's Life**

Many who know Quinn's work may be surprised to learn that his philosophy training was actually in the philosophy of science. He graduated with a B.A. in philosophy from Georgetown University in 1962, and then studied at the University of Delaware, where he earned an M.S. in physics. The combination of his philosophy and science backgrounds led him to enroll at the University of Pittsburgh, where he earned an M.A. and then a Ph.D. in philosophy in 1969.

The first half of Quinn's professional career was spent at Brown University, where he rose from assistant professor to the William Herbert Perry Faunce Professorship in the span of

only 13 years. Perhaps surprisingly again, all of his early publications were in the philosophy of science, and ranged from such topics as continuous spatial manifolds to how best to interpret Duhem's work. It wasn't until 1975 that his first paper in the philosophy of religion appeared, an essay on religious obedience that is reprinted in this collection. In 1985, Quinn's career took a major turn as he moved from Brown to the University of Notre Dame, where he would remain for the rest of his life. At Notre Dame he became the John A. O'Brien Professor of Philosophy, a title he would hold for the next 19 years.

During his 35 years of active research, Quinn published over 200 papers and reviews in many areas of philosophy, including metaphysics, epistemology, literature, aesthetics, history, and ethics, as well as the philosophy of religion and science. He published *Divine Commands and Moral Requirements* with Oxford University Press in 1978, and also edited *A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion* (with Charles Taliaferro) and *The Philosophical Challenges of Religious Diversity* (with Kevin Meeker). As a side pursuit, Quinn authored 193 review papers for the journal *Mathematical Reviews*, which required him to be well versed in the latest technical work in central areas of physics and mathematics.

Quinn was also renowned for his service to his home universities, to the American Philosophical Association, and to the discipline of philosophy as a whole. In his 19 years at Notre Dame, he served on a total of 53 separate committees, reviews, or councils. Similarly, his work for the APA is well-known; there he served in 55 different official capacities, including most notably as president of the Central Division from 1994-1995 and as chair of the National Board of Officers from 1996-1999. And it almost goes without saying that Quinn was extremely dedicated to the profession of philosophy in general. He refereed multiple times for over 20 journals, 26 book publishers, and 17 grant providers. He was on the editorial board of several

journals, and was the editor for five years of *Faith and Philosophy*, the leading journal in philosophy of religion.

While I knew him only during his time at Notre Dame, Quinn always struck me as the epitome of a traditional academic. He refused to use e-mail, and indeed avoided computers of any kind. As a result, each of his 200 published papers was first written out in long hand and was finally sent to a typist only after multiple revisions. Quinn had not owned a car for many years and walked to campus every day from a nearby apartment complex. Although I never visited his apartment, it allegedly was filled from floor to ceiling with books.

This last fact would not come as a surprise to anyone who knew him. In many ways Phil Quinn's life was all about books. A shy and somewhat reclusive person, he spent most of his time each day reading. He was greatly helped in this regard by his speed-reading ability, and could easily finish a dense philosophy book or several novels in a single day. His office was filled with his philosophy collection; he even had additional bookshelves installed in the middle of the room to help organize the thousands of volumes he wanted to have around him, which left very little room for seating visitors. And his reading interests extended well beyond philosophy—he was extremely well versed in history, literature, religion, and science. Most intriguing, perhaps, was his love for mysteries; Phil subscribed to all the mystery book clubs, and every night he would read one or two brand new novels.

Despite his knowledge of the medical risks, Quinn was a heavy smoker for much of his life. His smoking finally caught up with him in the summer of 2004, when he was diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus. After a three month struggle, Phil Quinn passed away in the company of friends and caretakers. He died a year before his planned retirement, when he had hoped to move to a warmer climate and try his hand at writing mystery novels of his own.

## **Overview of the Papers in this Collection**

This section provides some background on each of the papers in this collection. In some cases, I supplement the presentation of a position to which Quinn was directly responding. In other cases, I try to note instances where Quinn's own view evolved over time in ways that may not be readily apparent from the papers reprinted here. At no place in what follows, however, do I attempt to critically evaluate Quinn's views or arguments, a task which in my opinion is best left for another occasion.

### *Religious Ethics*

Perhaps Quinn's most significant contribution to philosophy is his attempt to revitalize divine command theory as a legitimate position in meta-ethics and normative theory. Along with Robert Adams, Quinn can be considered one of the two foremost philosophical proponents of divine command theory in the twentieth century. He made important contributions to the theory's formulation, to its justification, and to its defense. Let us take each of these in turn.

Formulating Divine Command Theory. The central idea behind divine command theory is that morality, or at least certain central aspects of morality, depend on God. Given this basic starting point, however, divine command theories can be developed in a number of different ways depending on how the following schema is fleshed out:

(9) Moral status M stands in dependency relation D to divine act A.<sup>1</sup>

In most of his work, Quinn construes M as deontological moral status, i.e., moral requirement (obligation), moral permission (rightness), and moral prohibition (wrongness). The one

exception is his 1978 book, *Divine Commands and Moral Requirements*, where he also attempts to account for moral axiology (goodness, badness, and indifference) in such a framework.<sup>2</sup>

Quinn seems to have changed his mind several times when it came to construing the dependency relation D. In his early work, divine commands and moral requirements were treated as necessarily coextensive. Such a view allows for *being commanded by God* and *being morally required* to be distinct properties, while still mandating that they necessarily co-vary as do other properties such as a triangle's being equilateral and equiangular.<sup>3</sup> But in the paper reprinted here entitled "Divine Command Ethics: A Causal Account," Quinn offered a second proposal according to which divine commands are asymmetrically related to moral requirements in virtue of the latter's being causally related to the former. Finally, in his most recent work Quinn argued that the dependence relation should best be construed as one of 'bringing about.'<sup>4</sup>

When it comes to divine act A, Quinn initially held that moral status is related to divine *commands*. However, due in part to recent work by Mark Murphy,<sup>5</sup> Quinn came to adopt a divine *will* theory according to which, at least roughly, it is God's divine will and in particular his intentions that ground the deontological status of actions. The commands themselves, in turn, serve merely as expressions of the divine will.<sup>6</sup>

Supporting Divine Command Theory. When Quinn first started publishing on divine command ethics, he took his main task to be that of responding to extant objections to the view given its almost uniformly perceived implausibility at the time. Eventually, however, he began to address the need for positive arguments in favor of a divine command approach. At first he tried his hand at constructing a logically deductive argument from theistic premises for his preferred divine command theory.<sup>7</sup> Later, though, he switched strategies and attempted to offer a cumulative case

argument using a variety of considerations which theists in general, and Christians in particular, would be inclined to accept. A nice example of this more recent approach can be found in the paper, “The Primacy of God’s Will in Christian Ethics.” Here Quinn offers three independent arguments from assumptions widely shared by Christians – an argument from divine sovereignty, an argument from the immoralities of the patriarchs, and an argument from the Biblical commands to love God and to love our neighbors.<sup>8</sup>

Defending Divine Command Theory. As mentioned already, Quinn viewed much of the challenge involved in revitalizing divine command theory to be responding systematically to the leading objections in print at the time. In his book he carefully addresses 10 such objections, and considers four more in the paper “Divine Command Ethics: A Causal Theory.”<sup>9</sup> But it is in his first publication on divine command theory, and indeed his first publication in philosophy of religion in general, that we find Quinn at his best in carrying out this task, as he slowly and carefully tries to undermine an objection offered by James Rachels. The paper, “Religious Obedience and Moral Autonomy,” is also reprinted here, and centers on the following argument by Rachels:

- (i) If any being is God, he must be a fitting object of worship.
- (ii) No being could possibly be a fitting object of worship, since worship requires the abandonment of one’s role as an autonomous moral agent.
- (iii) Therefore, there cannot be any being who is God.<sup>10</sup>

Quinn’s paper is significant not only for his critical discussion of this argument, but also because it contains his first published treatment of the story of Abraham and Isaac, a story with which he would spend a great deal of time and effort trying to come to grips in the remainder of his career.

## *Religion and Tragic Dilemmas*

We read in the Old Testament book of Genesis that:

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."<sup>11</sup>

While God would eventually intervene and command Abraham not to kill his son, it should be clear enough why this story, if accurate, poses a problem for divine command theorists. Robert Adams has formulated the problem nicely as three logically inconsistent propositions:

(10) If God commands me to do something, it is not morally wrong for me to do it.

(11) God commands me to kill my son.

(12) It is morally wrong for me to kill my son.<sup>12</sup>

A number of attempts have been made to resist the inconsistency here by rejecting one of the propositions; Adams himself, in the course of helpfully summarizing and evaluating the most prominent such attempts, argues that we should reject (11).<sup>13</sup> Quinn's own discussion of the case of Abraham and Isaac in his paper "Moral Obligation, Religious Demand, and Practical Conflict" is original and intriguing; he accepts the *possibility* of cases like Abraham's, but rejects the actuality of this particular case. Let us separate these two claims.

Quinn argues for the possibility of what he elsewhere calls ‘tragic dilemmas,’ namely situations with the following structure:

- (i) There are requirements for an agent to adopt two alternatives.
- (ii) It is wrong to violate either requirement.
- (iii) The agent cannot adopt both alternatives together.
- (iv) The agent can adopt each alternative separately.<sup>14</sup>

For Quinn tragic dilemmas need not be limited to moral dilemmas - in the abovementioned paper, he argues that moral values do not exhaust the normative realm and can conflict with other realms of value. More specifically, he claims that possible cases such as Abraham’s can be understood as tragic dilemmas in which a moral requirement has come into conflict with a religious requirement. How does this help with the original puzzle that was raised by the Genesis story and is represented in (10) through (12)? Quinn wants to argue that since this case would be an instance of a tragic dilemma, the moral requirement not to kill an innocent child would still be in place and would not be overridden by the religious requirement to obey God’s commands. Thus it *would* be morally wrong for Abraham to do the thing which God has commanded him to do. Hence proposition (10) is false.

Recall, though, that Quinn is only arguing for possibility claims here. He maintains that it is possible for tragic dilemmas to obtain, and furthermore that it is even possible for a person to be justified in believing that he or she is in such a dilemma.<sup>15</sup> But what about actuality? In other words, have there ever actually been any such situations? Concerning the Genesis story of Abraham, Quinn denies, “the scriptural literalist’s claim that the narrative of Genesis 22 is in all details sober historical truth. It is a price I am willing to pay.”<sup>16</sup> And in general, he voices a deep-seated skepticism that we will ever be justified in thinking ourselves in actual tragic

dilemmas in which one of the conflicting requirements is religious.<sup>17</sup> Quinn's struggle to reconcile the apparent tension between his views about the possibility and actuality of tragic dilemmas forms the basis of the final paragraphs of the paper.

The story of Abraham and Isaac is not the only example of a possible tragic dilemma that Quinn discusses in his published work; another notable case is the Greek story of the gods' command that Agamemnon kill his daughter.<sup>18</sup> And yet a third concerns the main character of Shusaku Endo's famous novel *Silence*. In his paper "Tragic Dilemmas, Suffering Love, and Christian Life," Quinn provides a moving discussion of the apparent conflict that this character confronts at the very heart of his Christian faith between manifesting love for God and love for his fellow human beings. Those who have not read Endo's book should not be deterred from Quinn's paper as he first provides a long and careful summary of the central plot elements. And this paper is not to be passed over lightly; in my view, it is the deepest, the most stimulating, and indeed the best piece that Quinn ever wrote.

### *Religious Epistemology*

The next two reprinted papers present Quinn's well-known critique of Alvin Plantinga's 'Reformed Epistemology.' Ideally, they should be read together with Plantinga's work in the following order:

Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff (eds.), *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 16-93.

Quinn, "In Search of the Foundations of Theism."

Plantinga, "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply." *Faith and Philosophy* 3:3 (1986): 298-313.

Quinn, "The Foundations of Theism Again: A Rejoinder to Plantinga."

Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). (esp. pages 358, 366-367, 369-373).

Here I briefly summarize Plantinga's original position and Quinn's four central objections.<sup>19</sup>

In his 1983 paper, Plantinga is concerned with the question of whether belief in the existence of God can be properly basic. A belief is *basic* if, at least roughly, it is a belief which is not based on any other beliefs or evidence.<sup>20</sup> Familiar examples of basic beliefs might include a person's beliefs that  $2+2=4$ , that he is identical to himself, that there is a computer in front of him, and that he ate cereal for breakfast, all of which may be beliefs he typically forms immediately and not as a result of making inferences or weighing evidence in their favor.

Some basic beliefs, however, might be formed improperly. While under the influence of a hallucinogen, the person might come to believe that there is a ghost in front of him, but such a belief would be epistemically defective. *Properly* basic beliefs, then, are basic beliefs that satisfy the relevant epistemic norms governing belief formation. For Plantinga's purposes in his paper, the norms are those of 'rational acceptability.'<sup>21</sup>

Plantinga's question, then, is whether belief in the existence of God can be both basic and rational. According to those philosophers whom he labels evidentialists, the answer is a decided no. The central claim of evidentialism that interests Plantinga is the following:

(1) It is irrational or unreasonable to accept theistic belief in the absence of sufficient evidence or reasons.<sup>22</sup>

Thus the evidentialist is making an evaluative claim about the epistemic propriety of forming basic theistic beliefs.

Plantinga's strategy for rejecting evidentialism is to argue that the view depends upon a more general normative position in epistemology that he calls 'classical foundationalism.' On this view,

(2) A proposition  $p$  is properly basic for a person  $S$  if and only if  $p$  is either self-evident to  $S$  or incorrigible for  $S$  or evident to the senses for  $S$ .<sup>23</sup>

Since belief in God allegedly does not meet any of these requirements, it cannot be rational to hold it in the basic way.

In response, Plantinga raises two objections to classical foundationalism. First, it would render a tremendous number of our beliefs irrational, such as our beliefs about the past, about material objects, and about other minds. Second and more importantly for the subsequent exchange with Quinn, Plantinga argues that classical foundationalism is self-refuting since the view itself does not meet any of the above criteria, nor does it seem that there are any basic beliefs meeting one of the criteria in (2) that could be used in an evidential pathway to classical foundationalism.<sup>24</sup>

For Plantinga, then, it can be perfectly rational for someone to start with belief in God and use that belief itself as a premise in various religious arguments.<sup>25</sup> Yet Plantinga in this paper does not provide his own account of proper basicity; instead he claims that we should proceed inductively by starting with what we take to be central examples of basic beliefs, and then try to infer from them general criteria of rationality. The 'we' here will be important – Christians, for example, will include belief in God among their central examples of basic beliefs,

while atheists will not. But this is entirely appropriate since “[t]he Christian community is responsible to *its* set of examples, not to theirs.”<sup>26</sup>

To Plantinga’s claims in his 1983 paper, Quinn raises four main objections. Let us briefly take them each in turn:

Justifying Epistemic Criteria. The first objection is directed at Plantinga’s inductive method for arriving at epistemic criteria for proper basicity, and specifically at the passage just quoted about the Christian community’s appeal to its own examples. According to Quinn, the “difficulty is, of course, that this is a game any number can play. Followers of Muhammad, followers of Buddha, and even followers of the Reverend Moon can join in the fun. Even the modern foundationalist can play.”<sup>27</sup>

Classical Foundationalism. Quinn is also not convinced that classical foundationalism has been refuted. While he agrees that (2) is neither self-evident nor incorrigible nor evident to the senses, Quinn argues that Plantinga has not shown that (2) cannot be derived from other propositions it countenances as properly basic. In fact, the classical foundationalist might use Plantinga’s own inductive method against him by starting with examples such as:

(3) The belief that I am being appeared to redly is properly basic in conditions optimal for visual experience in which I am being appeared to redly.

And

(4) The belief that Jove is expressing disapproval is not properly basic in conditions optimal for auditory experience in which I am being appeared to thunderously.<sup>28</sup>

Both (3) and (4), or suitably revised versions of them, can plausibly be regarded as self-evident, and thus along with other such examples can be used as the building blocks for an inductive procedure which could yield and thereby justify (2).

The (Un)importance of Proper Basicity. According to Plantinga, the beliefs that a theist is likely to arrive at in the properly basic way will not typically be beliefs like *God exists* or *theism is true*, but rather beliefs like the following:

(5) God is speaking to me.

(6) God disapproves of what I have done.

(7) God forgives me of what I have done.<sup>29</sup>

Quinn, however, notes that what might instead happen is that a belief in a proposition like (5) is arrived at indirectly as a result of first believing that:

(8) It seems to me that God is speaking to me.<sup>30</sup>

But such an indirect belief in (5), Quinn claims, can be justified to the same degree that it would be if it were arrived at directly by way of an experience of God speaking. Given this, Quinn concludes that with respect to (5) through (7), “it is epistemically unimportant whether such propositions actually are properly basic for that person at that time.”<sup>31</sup>

Intellectually Sophisticated Theists. Perhaps the most important objection and the deepest source of disagreement between Plantinga and Quinn concern the epistemic responsibilities of what Quinn calls ‘intellectually sophisticated adult theists’<sup>32</sup> who might form a properly basic belief in God but then are confronted with one or more putative defeaters for that belief, such as the problem of evil or Freudian projection theories of religion. According to Quinn, the degree of

justification which the basic belief has is not high enough, at least in many cases, to outweigh the justificatory status of a defeater like the problem of evil. What the theist then needs to do is to appeal to some kind of non-basic justification for theism to help supplement her original religious belief. This additional justification is likely to come in the form of evidential considerations offered by natural theology for the truth of theism. With these evidential considerations in place, however, the theist's belief will no longer continue to be a basic belief.

### *Religion and Political Liberalism*

Towards the end of his life, Quinn participated in debates in political philosophy about the legitimacy of appeals to religious considerations in public political discourse and decision making. His central contribution was his 1995 presidential address to the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association, "Political Liberalisms and their Exclusions of the Religious." Much of the paper is devoted to attacking views in political philosophy that exclude certain kinds of religious appeals in the public square. In particular, Quinn first carefully summarizes and then criticizes Robert Audi's principles of secular rationale and motivation, as well as John Rawls' claims about public reason in *Political Liberalism*.

Also noteworthy are the final pages of the paper in which Quinn, following Michael Perry, outlines his own positive proposal. Roughly, on Quinn's inclusivist theory citizens in a given society should be allowed to participate in political discussions and decision making even if the only reasons they have for their views stem from their own particular religious traditions. Quinn takes there to be at least two considerations supporting this view. First, given his skepticism about the likelihood of secular political arguments to reach an overlapping consensus, Quinn argues that allowing religious considerations into political debate is unlikely to preclude

possibilities for agreement that would have otherwise been realized. And second, Quinn claims that being confronted with new and sometimes radically foreign modes of political discourse, in this case modes that stem from divergent religious traditions, can sometimes enhance a person's thinking about his or her own position or even lead to its justified rejection. By way of conclusion, though, Quinn is quick to note that his inclusivist approach needs to put some limits on discourse, namely moral norms aimed at protecting free speech, equality, and mutual respect.

Six years later, in "Religious Citizens within the Limits of Public Reason," Quinn reverses roles. After again carefully and systematically laying out the heart of Rawls's political philosophy as it pertains to the role of comprehensive religious and philosophical doctrines in questions of constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice, Quinn this time opts to defend Rawls from objections raised by Nicholas Wolterstorff. As Quinn presents them, Wolterstorff's criticisms revolve around three central themes:

- (i) Rawls's ideal of public reason would require an implausibly high level of agreement in matters of political morality.
- (ii) Rawlsian political liberalism would violate the free exercise of religion.
- (iii) Rawlsian political liberalism, and indeed many other liberal positions as well, would violate the integrity of many religious persons and hence would be unfair if implemented.

Quinn is not very sympathetic to any of these lines of criticism, and mounts a sustained defense of Rawls against each of them.

This leaves the reader with a puzzle: Is Quinn merely defending a view against what he takes to be bad objections, even though he himself does not accept the view in question? Or has he had a change of heart since his presidential address and converted to something like Rawls's

position? The final two paragraphs of “Religious Citizens within the Limits of Public Reason” provide an answer. Quinn is prepared to accept Rawls’s ideal of public reason as just that, i.e., as an ideal that it would be good for us to strive to obtain given our actual political circumstances. However, merely as an ideal it does not impose moral obligations on us to act in the way that it outlines. Instead, in our present political environment, Quinn seems to think that there would be nothing either irrational or morally wrong with adopting the more inclusive model of political discourse and decision making outlined in his presidential address.

### *Topics in Christian Philosophy*

Despite the resurgence of interest in philosophy of religion in the past thirty years, comparatively little attention has been paid by philosophers to claims which are specific to particular world religions. As a Christian, Quinn himself lamented the absence of work devoted to topics uniquely central to Christianity, and sought to address this absence in a number of papers. The papers reprinted in this section reflect his thinking on three topics of interest to Christians, namely original sin, atonement, and the church.<sup>33</sup>

Quinn’s approach to these topics is not to consider them primarily in the context of purported Biblical revelation, but rather to build off of the work of previous thinkers such as Anselm, Kant, and Kierkegaard. In typical fashion, he first clearly and painstakingly reconstructs a given philosopher’s view before submitting it to a penetrating critical discussion. Thus these papers here should also be of interest to historians of philosophy, including those who have no stake in the outcome of the particular debates. Because Quinn is so careful in his presentation of both the issues and the historical positions he discusses in these three papers, I will simply summarize briefly the central themes of each of them.

In “‘In Adam’s Fall, We Sinned All,’” Quinn examines the writings of Anselm and Kant on the Christian doctrines of the fall and original sin. According to Quinn, anyone trying to make sense of original sin has to confront a basic puzzle. Original sin is supposed to be innate in all human beings. But if it is innate, it is plausible to think that original sin is not something human beings could have avoided. And on widely held views about moral responsibility, if something is unavoidable then it is not something for which we can be held accountable. Thus original sin is not something for which we would be punished or condemned by a just authority figure or judge, and so it is really no form of sin at all. Hence the doctrine of original sin, when conjoined with certain independently plausible assumptions, seems to lead to its own demise.<sup>34</sup>

According to Quinn, Anselm tries to salvage the doctrine by denying the connection between something’s being unavoidable and its thereby being such that we cannot be held accountable for it. In response, Quinn does not address issues about moral responsibility directly, but instead argues by *reductio* that such a move on Anselm’s part leads to a morally repugnant conclusion about the fate of unbaptized infants. Anselm believes that the proper condemnation for sin is eternal damnation in Hell, and so it would thereby follow that all unbaptized infants would automatically be consigned to such a fate.

Kant, on the other hand, tries to avoid the above puzzle by denying the connection between something’s being innate and its being unavoidable. On Kant’s view of radical evil, and simplifying greatly, all human beings as a matter of contingent fact have a propensity to evil. This is not a physical propensity, such as a disposition to eat ice cream, since all such propensities are for Kant subject to the laws of nature and so morally indifferent. Rather it is a moral propensity, and so in Kant’s general framework it is one that must be the upshot of a rational agent’s exercise of genuine libertarian free will. Thus the propensity to evil is something

that human beings have freely bestowed upon themselves, and is not constitutive of human nature or causally determined by the laws of nature.

Kant's view can nicely avoid what Quinn takes to be the morally repugnant implication of Anselm's proposal. At the same time, if we are talking about original sin, the propensity to evil must be innate in human beings in some sense, and according to Quinn's reading of Kant, the sense is that in which "as the underlying ground of all morally evil actions in time, it is to be thought of as present in its possessors antecedent to all such actions."<sup>35</sup> In evaluating Kant's proposal, Quinn acknowledges the advantages of the view on ethical grounds, but notes that it suffers from a theological difficulty since it does not leave any role to be played by some historical catastrophe that Christians traditionally have believed led to the presence of evil in the world.<sup>36</sup>

Thus Quinn has helpfully illustrated two ends of a spectrum in thinking about original sin: one according to which original sin inheres in us at birth because of a causal chain of transmission from the first human beings, and the other according to which original sin is the product of our own exercises of free will. Quinn himself is clearly dissatisfied with both positions, but here does not offer a positive proposal of his own as a way of navigating between these two opposing approaches.<sup>37</sup>

A natural companion to this first paper is "Christian Atonement and Kantian Justification," which was reprinted in *Philosopher's Annual* as one of the top ten papers of 1986. If sin is the problem, Christians claim that Christ's death and resurrection are supposed to be the solution. But how exactly should we make sense of atonement for sin from the Christian perspective? Again Quinn turns to Anselm and Kant for help, and again he finds their proposals wanting.

For Anselm, sinners are deeply in debt to God and must either fully satisfy their debt or be punished for their sins. Yet Anselm believes that left to their own devices, human beings cannot accumulate enough by way of positive merit or good works to fully pay back their debts to God. But all is not lost since, according to Anselm, God can satisfy the debts incurred through human sin, given that those debts are transferable and that God as Christ chose to atone vicariously for those sins himself. To this proposal Quinn raises a number of objections, one of which is that unlike financial debts, moral debts are not transferable and so cannot be paid by anyone other than the original debtor himself.

Kant's view on atonement is complex, and the reader is urged to consult both Book Two of *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* as well as Quinn's very helpful reconstruction of the relevant passages. Kant's two central claims seem to be the following. First, Kant believes that we must do what we can on our own to pay our debts for wrongdoing by exercising our freedom in order to carry out a moral revolution in our characters such that the propensity to evil is replaced by a propensity to goodness. But for Kant this isn't enough to fully satisfy the debt, and so secondly, the Christian hope is that through grace and mercy God will bestow a gift of righteousness on the individual who has undergone such a radical change of heart. These two actions, one human and one divine, are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for atonement according to Kant. To this proposal, Quinn again raises several objections, one of which is that God's bestowing righteousness on an individual as a gift would be a violation of the strictness of the moral law - unless someone is perfectly righteous, he or she must be condemned and punished at least to some extent.<sup>38</sup>

Thus Quinn has raised what he takes to be serious difficulties with two of the leading philosophical theories of Christian atonement. As he freely admits, he has not shown that no

plausible theory can be devised. Yet here, too, he does not attempt to provide one of his own, but merely takes himself to have clearly outlined the parameters within which future investigation ought to proceed.

Finally, “Kantian Philosophical Ecclesiology” is an attempt by Quinn to enrich Christian thinking about the role of the church in the Christian life. Here again the focus is on Kant, and specifically on his remarks about the church in the *Religion* and in *The Conflict of the Faculties*. According to Quinn’s reading, the central image of Kant’s ecclesiology is that of a pair of concentric circles. The inner circle is made up of the *a priori* principles of the pure religion of reason. The outer circle is made up of putative historical revelation, which is to be critically evaluated by reason and, if necessary, revised when conflicts arise. How do these claims pertain to the church? Kant’s ideal is the establishment of an ethical commonwealth in which humans are guided by the commands of pure reason, commands that are self-legislated by reason and that at the same time are the true commands of God. Such an ethical commonwealth simply is the church in its perfected state, according to Kant. The true church, then, is “that which exhibits the (moral) kingdom of God on earth so far as it can be brought to pass by men.”<sup>39</sup> Thus reason itself, insofar as it is not contaminated by any weakness, can bring about the perfected church for Kant. But unfortunately, ordinary human beings struggle mightily with weakness, and so as a matter of empirical fact the church has been founded on revelation and historical contingency, and adorned with hierarchical structure, scripture, and tradition. Yet the order of priority remains the same – any and all empirical ecclesiastical practices should serve only to further the pure religion of reason.

Once again Quinn is not completely satisfied with this picture, and tries to convince us that we shouldn’t be either, especially once we appreciate the fact that for Kant, the propositions

within the inner circle are supposed to be such that we have very high epistemic confidence in them, whereas those in the outer circle have a much lower epistemic status. This difference in epistemic status between beliefs in the two sets of propositions is what for Kant grounds the priority claim between pure reason and historical revelation. But, Quinn argues, there are at least two problems here. First, in light of the reception that Kant's moral theory has received in subsequent decades, it is highly unlikely that it, or indeed any other moral theory, will acquire the epistemic status Kant claims for beliefs about moral propositions in the inner circle of pure reason. And second, Quinn argues that using the widely accepted methodology of reflective equilibrium, it is not at all clear that people will always resolve conflicts between their moral and theological beliefs in favor of the former. As a general matter, we should expect that resolutions will end up being made in a number of different ways, given widespread cultural and experiential diversity.

But all is not lost. According to Quinn, a 'chastened' Kantian ecclesiology should be accepted instead that "proceeds on a case by case basis to deploy moral beliefs of high epistemic status as levers, as it were, to move churches and their members in the direction of reforming ecclesiastical arrangements and reinterpreting scriptures."<sup>40</sup> Without elaborating on this alternative ecclesiology much beyond these brief remarks, Quinn concludes by evaluating the extent to which the Roman Catholic Church, and specifically the changes brought by Vatican II, have moved in the direction both of Kant's original view and of the 'chastened' Kantian alternative.

*Religious Diversity*

The final two papers in this collection center on another important topic in the philosophy of religion to which Philip Quinn turned his attention late in his professional career, namely the implications of widespread religious diversity. Quinn's central paper in this area is his "Toward Thinner Theologies: Hick and Alston on Religious Diversity," which is reprinted both here and in the excellent collection *The Philosophical Challenge of Religious Diversity*, which Quinn edited with Kevin Meeker. As the title suggests, the paper is largely concerned with the work of John Hick and William Alston on religious diversity. However, Quinn also leaves several clues as to where his own sympathies lie, and so in what follows I briefly summarize his criticisms of Hick and Alston with the aim of trying to elucidate Quinn's positive view about the subject.

Alston argues that Christian doxastic practices of forming beliefs about God as a result of immediate religious experiences are not demonstrably unreliable and derive some support for themselves from the way in which they can lead to satisfying forms of spiritual development for some Christians. But Alston also acknowledges that the same is true of the religious experiences had by followers of many other major world religions, so that the beliefs formed as a result of such experiences all seem to be on equal epistemic footing. Perhaps independent evidence from natural theology, divine revelation, miracles, and the like could shift the balance in favor of Christianity, but Alston wants to consider what would happen to the degree of justification enjoyed by Christian beliefs in the worst case scenario in which there is no such supplemental evidence. Does epistemic parity render irrational the basic beliefs of any of the world's religious practitioners that are arrived at through religious experience?

Alston is prepared to admit that awareness of such religious diversity does lower the degree of justification that would otherwise be enjoyed by, say, Christian beliefs formed via religious experience. But using an analogy with sense perception, he argues that the degree of

justification for such beliefs need not decrease to the level of irrationality. Alston asks us to imagine one society in which people form perceptual beliefs using a 'Cartesian' practice of understanding the objects of visual perception to be extended mediums with concentrations of points, whereas in a different society people have a 'Whiteheadian' practice in which the content of visual perception is understood to involve growing events. If I am a member of the first society, then according to Alston it is rationally permissible for me to retain my Cartesian framework even while being aware of the alternative Whiteheadian approach, provided I don't have any reason for thinking that the latter approach is more accurate. And the same is true of members of the second society vis-à-vis their Whiteheadian practice. So then by analogy it follows that Christians who formed their beliefs in God as a result of religious experiences can be rational in holding on to their beliefs in the face of religious diversity, provided there is no independent evidence for the veracity of any competing religious traditions.

Quinn agrees with Alston that this argument shows that it would be rationally permissible for the Christian (or Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, etc.) to remain a Christian despite awareness of widespread religious diversity. However, he objects that Alston has not shown that this is the *only* rationally permissible thing to do. Returning to the example of sense perception, Quinn argues that it would also be rationally permissible to work from within, say, a Cartesian approach by gradually revising it in various ways and then attempting to establish this revised view in society. Similarly, then, by analogy it would also be rationally permissible for Christians to revise their view from within and work towards the revised view's widespread acceptance.

But how should this revision be undertaken? Here is where Quinn sees Hick as providing a promising starting point. According to Hick, behind the major world religions is an ultimate divine reality that has been interpreted in different ways by those religions. Using Kantian

language, Hick's claim is that there is a noumenal Real that is manifested as different phenomena in the context of divergent religious traditions. Against this proposal, Quinn raises a number of objections, among them that Hick's view is ambiguous as to whether it is offering a construct model or a disguise model, that Hick does not provide any arguments for central negative assumptions of his view, and that Hick makes ontological claims about the noumenal Real to which he is not entitled by his own theory.

Interestingly, though, Quinn takes these problems to apply only to the details of Hick's own version of a pluralist approach to understanding religious diversity, and not to pluralism as such. Thus at the end of section one of his paper, we find Quinn formulating a schematic version of religious pluralism that allegedly avoids the problems with Hick's view. Are, then, religious believers in the major world religions rationally required to work from within their own traditions towards such a pluralist view? Clearly not, according to Quinn, as such believers are rationally entitled to either revise their religious views or simply keep them as they are: "[e]ach of these courses of action is rationally permissible in the light of religious diversity. Neither of them is irrational, but neither is rationally required."<sup>41</sup> Provided then that each option is merely permissible, is one of them nonetheless preferable by Quinn's own lights? Here the textual evidence is slim at best, but my own hunch is that Quinn would side with believers in the major religions making pluralistic revisions to their religious beliefs.

The final paper of this collection, "On Religious Diversity and Tolerance," was also the last paper Quinn completed before his death. It was published in *Daedalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, to which Quinn was elected a Fellow in 2003. This short paper is written for a general academic audience, and as the last paper of his philosophical career, it fittingly touches on a number of themes from Quinn's work. A central claim is one that

Quinn borrows from Alston, namely that one's awareness of widespread religious diversity lowers the level of epistemic justification enjoyed by one's beliefs in the distinctive claims of one's own religion. Quinn suggests that this claim can be used to develop a new strategy for promoting tolerance among practitioners of different religions. More precisely, Quinn suggests that the Alstonian claim can be employed in an argument against the rationality of religious believers acting on the intolerant elements of their own particular religions, since awareness of religious diversity may lower the epistemic status for such beliefs below the level of rational acceptability.<sup>42</sup>

### **Final Remarks and Acknowledgements**

The papers in this collection attempt to represent what are, in my judgment, the central issues on which Philip Quinn concentrated in his published work in the philosophy of religion. However, I would be remiss if I did not mention that Quinn also had interesting and original things to say about a wide variety of other topics in the field ranging from Pascal's wager, to religious responses to torture, to Christianity and the meaning of life. A complete bibliography of his published work can be found at the end of this volume.

I am grateful to a number of people for their help in seeing this project through. A great deal of thanks is owed to Peter Momtchiloff at Oxford University Press for his initial interest in and invaluable assistance with the project. For her advice and willingness to write the forward, I am also grateful to Eleonore Stump. For various forms of support, advice, and encouragement, I want to thank Joyous Miller, Jason Baldwin, LinDa Grams, Cheryl Reed, Mary Lou Solomon, and an anonymous referee for Oxford. Finally, my greatest debt is to Paul Weithman, the chair of the philosophy department at Notre Dame and the co-executor of Philip Quinn's estate. Paul was

extremely helpful at every step of the way, and his advice was always clear, insightful, and wise. I very much doubt that this volume would have appeared without his patience and help.

I would like to end this introduction on a more personal note. I received my Ph. D. from Notre Dame in the summer of 2004, immediately before Phil was diagnosed with cancer. I was the last student at Notre Dame to finish a doctorate degree with Phil as a committee member, and I consider it an honor that he was willing to take the time to help me with my project. Not only was he a mentor, but by the end of my time at Notre Dame he was also one of my closest friends. We would routinely have lunch two to three times a week at a popular faculty cafe on campus, and those conversations make up some of my best memories of my time at Notre Dame. This volume is a symbol of my gratitude to a wonderful teacher, philosopher, and friend.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Quinn, "Divine Command Theory," in H. LaFollette (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 53.

<sup>2</sup> Quinn, *Divine Commands and Moral Requirements* (Oxford: Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy, 1978), 67-73.

<sup>3</sup> This is the proposal in *Divine Commands and Moral Requirements*.

<sup>4</sup> See his "Divine Command Theory," 54-55.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Murphy, "Divine Command, Divine Will, and Moral Obligation," *Faith and Philosophy* 15 (1998): 3-27.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Quinn, "Divine Command Theory," 55.

<sup>7</sup> See his "An Argument for Divine Command Ethics," in Michael Beaty (ed.), *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 289-302.

<sup>8</sup> Quinn also employs the cumulative case method on behalf of divine command theory in "Divine Command Theory" and in "The Recent Revival of Divine Command Ethics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50 (1990): 345-365.

<sup>9</sup> For additional discussion of objections, see also his "Divine Command Theory" and "The Recent Revival of Divine Command Ethics."

<sup>10</sup> Quinn 265. The argument is from James Rachels, "God and Human Attitudes," *Religious Studies* 7 (1971): 325.

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 22: 1-2. New International Version.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Adams. *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 284.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, chapter 12.

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- <sup>14</sup> Quoted from “Agamemnon and Abraham: The Tragic Dilemma of Kierkegaard’s Knight of Faith,” *Journal of Literature and Theology* 4:2 (1990): 183. Tragic dilemmas are similar in structure to what Quinn calls ‘Kierkegaardian conflicts’ in “Moral Obligation, Religious Demand, and Practical Conflict,” reprinted here.
- <sup>15</sup> See “Agamemnon and Abraham” and especially “Moral Obligation, Religious Demand, and Practical Conflict.”
- <sup>16</sup> “Agamemnon and Abraham,” 192.
- <sup>17</sup> See in particular the final paragraphs of “Moral Obligation, Religious Demand, and Practical Conflict.”
- <sup>18</sup> See “Agamemnon and Abraham.”
- <sup>19</sup> For an excellent evaluation, see William Hasker, “The Foundations of Theism: Scoring the Quinn-Plantinga Debate.” *Faith and Philosophy* 15:1 (1998): 52-67. For what it’s worth, I agree with Hasker’s scorekeeping.
- <sup>20</sup> Plantinga 1983: 46.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 19, 55.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 59. Classical foundationalism itself is the disjunction of ancient or medieval foundationalism on the one hand (proper basicity = self-evidence or being evident to the senses) and modern foundationalism on the other (proper basicity = incorrigibility or self-evidence).
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-63.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 77. Emphasis his.
- <sup>27</sup> Quinn, “The Foundations of Theism,” 473.
- <sup>28</sup> Quinn, “The Foundations of Theism Again,” 23.
- <sup>29</sup> Adapted from Quinn, “The Foundations of Theism,” 476.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 481.
- <sup>33</sup> For additional papers by Quinn on these and related topics, see “Original Sin, Radical Evil and Moral Identity,” *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984): 188-202; “Does Anxiety Explain Original Sin?” *Noûs* 24 (1990): 227-244; “Saving Faith from Kant’s Remarkable Antinomy,” *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (1990): 418-433; “Aquinas on Atonement,” in R. Feenstra and C. Plantinga (eds.), *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990); “Abelard on Atonement: ‘Nothing Unintelligible, Arbitrary, Illogical or Immoral About It,’” in E. Stump (ed.), *Reasoned Faith* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); “Swinburne on Guilt, Atonement and Christian Redemption,” in A. Padgett (ed.), *Reason and the Christian Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and “Sin and Original Sin,” in P. Quinn and C. Taliaferro (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 541-548.
- <sup>34</sup> For a formal statement by Quinn of this puzzle, see “Original Sin, Radical Evil and Moral Identity,” 189-190.
- <sup>35</sup> “In Adam’s Fall,” \_.
- <sup>36</sup> For additional critical discussion of Kant on original sin and radical evil, see Quinn’s papers “Original Sin, Radical Evil and Moral Identity” and “Does Anxiety Explain Original Sin?”
- <sup>37</sup> For some indication of where Quinn’s own sympathies may lie, see “Does Anxiety Explain Original Sin?”
- <sup>38</sup> For additional discussion of Kant on atonement, see Quinn’s paper “Saving Faith from Kant’s Remarkable Antinomy.”
- <sup>39</sup> Quoted by Quinn, “Kantian Philosophical Ecclesiology,” \_.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, \_.
- <sup>41</sup> “Toward Thinner Theologies,” \_.
- <sup>42</sup> For related discussion of religious diversity, see two other papers by Quinn: “Religious Diversity and Religious Toleration,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 50 (2001): 57-80; and “Religious Diversity: Familiar Problems, Novel Opportunities,” in William Wainwright (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 392-417.
- <sup>43</sup> For comments on this introduction, I am very grateful to Joyous Miller and Jason Baldwin.