

Reply to Christopher Insole

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Critique

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By Lawrence Pasternack

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to Christopher Insole for his well-focused, scholarly, and philosophically mature discussion of my book. He has taken considerable care in attending to the nuances of my interpretation of the *Religion*, and has further enhanced this exchange through his erudite presentation of numerous issues within Christian theology.

Insole's comments focus on my reading of *Religion's* soteriology, especially my contention that, like Kant's philosophical theology more broadly, it is both internally consistent and compatible with the key tenets of transcendental idealism. In addition to some discussion as to whether or not I understate Kant's divergence from traditional Christianity, the bulk of his comments concern whether or not my reading of Kant's approach to Divine Aid is internally consistent. Let me now turn to this issue, and then return to the broader question of Kant's relationship to Christianity at the end.

Section one: On Divine Aid and the *Religion*

1. The internal consistency of Kant's soteriology

A key desideratum for my reading of the *Religion* is to demonstrate, contrary to its battery of critics (Quinn, Wolterstorff, Hare, Michalson, etc.), that the philosophical theology it presents is both internally consistent as well as compatible with transcendental idealism. Insole, however, challenges the former claim in particular, arguing that my reading of the *Religion* ends up advancing an inconsistent view on Divine Aid.

As he presents my view, I, on the one hand, reject the necessity of Divine Aid with regard to the Change of Heart (i.e., the restoration of morality over self-interest within our Supreme Maxim), while on the other hand, I nevertheless maintain that Divine Aid remains necessary for the Ethical Community. To Insole, this compromises my goal of presenting a wholly consistent Kantian theology, especially a Kantian soteriology.

I, however, do not see in my portrayal a relevant inconsistency. Locating necessity in one place, denying it in another, does not seem to me to be sufficient to charge Kant (or my reading) with inconsistency, for it does not follow from it that there are any inconsistencies within the *principles* for Divine Aid.

To use a rough analogy, there is no objectionable inconsistency in praising someone for action A and criticizing him for action B so long as the evaluative standard being used remains the same. Similarly, we may find an endorsement of the necessity of Divine Aid in one domain with a rejection of its necessity in another—so long as the principles used to frame the role of Divine Aid remain consistent throughout. Contrary to numerous critics, I believe that there is such consistency in the text, and believe that my presentation of Kant's soteriology shows it to be so.

Through the following, I will discuss some of the background issues behind my interpretation and then turn to the various components of Kant's soteriology. As I move through these components, I will point to the principles at stake in the debate as to whether or not his account of Divine Aid is consistent.

2. Divine Aid—The standard objection

The standard accusation against Kant's treatment of Divine Aid holds that he, on the one hand, subscribes to a 'Stoic maxim', whereby our moral transformation, the Change of Heart, must depend solely upon ourselves and our own powers; and yet, on the other hand, Kant is still forced to sneak in appeals to Divine Aid as necessary for this transformation. This charge was repeated throughout the 1980s and 1990s in the works of Philip Quinn, Nicholas Wolterstorff, John Hare and Gordon Michalson.

In my book (and more focally in my article 'Kant on the Debt of Sin' [Pasternack 2012]), I discuss this charge of inconsistency, rejecting the contention that Kant is committed to the necessity of Divine Aid for the Change of Heart. I argue that the position of Quinn et al. is, rather, imported into the text, and is due, at least in part, to some mistranslated passages (esp. AA 6:44). Many Kantians now recognize these mistranslations (cf. Pluhar's translation of the passage), and yet Insole worries that I nevertheless have generated a new inconsistency when I oppose the necessity of Divine Aid with regard to the Change of Heart, and yet endorse its necessity with regard to the Ethical Community (which I link with the highest good as an eschatological ideal state of affairs).

Of course, deeming God necessary for the highest good is nothing new, as Kant clearly postulates God because only through His powers and judgment can there be an 'exactly proportionate' distribution of happiness in accordance with moral

worth. Hence, I deny the necessity of Divine Aid with regard to our individual moral transformation, but maintain His necessity for the highest good. On its own, this may not raise as much concern as what comes from the additional fact that I see the latter as further involving God's soteriological *assistance* rather than just being the rewarder of happiness for our realized moral worthiness. But even still, I do not think there is a *principled* inconsistency here.

3. *Ought implies can* and Kant's shifting soteriology

To see why, let me begin by discussing one of the key principles at play in the allegations of inconsistency, namely, Kant's commitment to *ought implies can*. As I read Kant's use of this principle, a necessary condition for our being bound by an *ought* is that its fulfilment is within our power (the *can*). That is, unlike Allen Wood's peculiar softening of the *can* to just metaphysical possibility (*can* = just non-impossibility of the state-of-affairs), I take Kant to maintain that if I *ought* to do X, it is within my capabilities, or power to do X.

So, one key issue (if not *the* key issue) relevant to the consistency of Kant's soteriology is whether any of the roles assigned to God violate *ought implies can*, i.e., whether there is something we *cannot* do, despite being obligated to do it. As Insole notes, I do think that Kant faced this problem in works prior to the *Religion*, but then (partly by way of the 1791 'Theodicy' essay), substantively revised his views in the 1790s. This, by the way, is not a view unique to my book. It can be found most recently in the works of Sam Duncan and Rob Gressis.

Among the differences found between the *Critique of Practical Reason's* and the *Religion's* soteriology is that the condition for our moral worthiness shifts from moral perfection in the former to the Change of Heart (the alteration of one's Supreme Maxim) in the latter. In fact, the former text deviates from the bulk of the remaining corpus in that it uses our need for moral perfection as the primary argument for the postulate of immortality. And yet, despite our immortality, Kant nevertheless concedes that even with eternal striving, we still cannot actually realize our moral perfection. As a result, he then presents God accepting our efforts in substitution (AA 5:123n.). Hence, in the Second *Critique*, a Divine supplement of forgiveness or grace is needed to make up for what we constitutively are incapable of doing.

I take it that Kant is here at risk of violating *ought implies can*, and so arguably, the objection of Quinn et al. can hold against the Second *Critique*. Kant might be defended by claiming that our obligation is to *strive* for moral perfection (a defence I think is tenable), even though the standard for our salvation is still higher than what we can achieve—thus requiring Divine Aid nonetheless.

However, in the *Religion*, these problems disappear as Kant therein moves on to a different soteriological standard, one that is within our reach: the Change of Heart. Additionally, unlike the need for eternal striving for perfection in the *Second Critique*, the *Religion* presents our soteriological challenge as within this life alone, and “at the end of life our account must be completely closed” (AA 6:71n.; 8:330).

Divine Aid is thus not something given to us post-mortem, nor is it a forgiveness for what we are incapable of accomplishing (as we see in the *Second Critique*). Rather, in the *Religion*, Kant sets the standard for our becoming ‘well-pleasing-to-God’ in this life and within the scope of what we can possibly do. Divine Aid in the *Religion* must therefore be understood differently than in the former text, even if it is seen as necessary.

Those who read the *Religion* as endorsing its own form of Divine Aid tend to build from the Augustinian picture that our state of sin makes us incapable of the Change of Heart through our own power. Hence, unlike the *Second Critique*’s post-mortem forgiveness for an imperfection that will never be overcome (making, thereby, the nature of our sanctification hardly clear), a common reading of Divine Aid in the *Religion* is that God does change us, and does so by moving our will to undergo a Change of Heart. That is, God somehow steps into our will and executes an ‘internal’ change within the structure of our own agency. I, however, deny that this is a view Kant supports, even though I do not deny other forms of (non-necessary) Divine Aid relevant to our Change of Heart, nor even necessary Divine Aid with regard to the Ethical Community.

In addition to various textual issues discussed in the book, I reject the above reading of necessary Divine Aid with regard to the Change of Heart on the grounds that such aid would be in violation of *ought implies can*. If we are morally obligated to undergo this transformation, the *ought* demands that it is within our power, that it is something we *can* do through our own power. Further, let me here add that one could also object that the sort of internal Divine Aid that is commonly found in Christian visions of sanctification is structurally at odds with Kant’s conception of the will.

A theory of the will that takes it to be moved by affective forces can far more easily accommodate such intercessions. God could lend support to our efforts as a supplementing force to move us through the change. But what of a rational will? A will moved by reasons? If, for Kant, the will moves based upon the incorporation of maxims, does God then incorporate a new Supreme Maxim for us? If one were to claim that God helps us in this new incorporation, how so? And how so without sneaking in some affective model here?

Relatedly, I worry that internal Divine Aid too deeply compromises our autonomy as well as our responsibility for this change. Even if it is on our shoulders to begin the process by some desire for change, Kant repeatedly discusses how difficult this change is and how we tend to shrink away from its demand. Hardly, then, does it seem that the major work is done by God and not us.

Thirdly, unlike the sort of corruption of sin represented by Augustine, for Kant, our state of sin does not corrupt our volitional faculties in themselves, as that, he claims, would undermine our culpability (AA 6:35). Moreover, our state of sin is not due to the power of inclination. It is, rather, due to an ‘inner perfidy’ resultant from the Propensity to Evil (which I, like Allen Wood and Sharon Anderson-Gold, closely link with our predisposition to humanity). This perfidy is chosen by us, and while through it we give priority to self-interest over morality, it does not involve a corruption of the volitional faculties themselves.

So, in short, I do not see Part One of *Religion* as presenting the nature of original sin in such a way that sets out either the necessity of Divine Aid or how it could somehow be internal to our agency (such as is often seen in more traditional discussions of sanctifying grace). While Kant certainly discusses the possibility of Divine Aid in our moral transformation, numerous problems would arise within his account of human agency if it were also deemed necessary. If Kant wanted to support such necessity, then I presume he would have made this point of immense theological significance quite clear as well as then discuss how it can fit within his broader theory of agency. Kant instead seems quite committed to theses that mark its non-necessity, including that the will is not itself corrupted by sin, but rather that sin involves a self-deception through which we have given priority to an immoral Supreme Maxim. Hence, I take it that Kant presents the nature of evil, or sin to be such that we are given charge over fixing it. How to fix it, in fact, then becomes the theme for the remainder of the *Religion*—with Part Two’s focus on our individual Change of Heart and then the ecclesiology developed through Parts Three and Four.

4. Insole’s Construal B vs. Construal C: the scope and nature of Divine Aid
Despite arguing that Divine Aid is not (and cannot be) necessary for the Change of Heart, I see no problem with non-necessary and ‘external’ Divine Aid—akin to what Insole refers to as “Construal B”. According to Construal B, “God is *not* needed to transform us [...]. But God is able [...] to supplement our efforts”. Construal C, by contrast, denies Divine Aid (outside of the highest good’s distribution of happiness).

To my surprise, however, Insole mistakenly links my reading of Kant to Construal C rather than B. Where Construal C denies Divine Aid in every respect except in the highest good's distribution of happiness, I nevertheless write, for example, that Kant

does allow for the possibility of Divine aid, perhaps forms of aid such as arranging circumstances so that opportunities for transformation are made available or offering protection from circumstances that would hinder our moral efforts (p. 146);

and that

Kant does not in principle reject the possibility of Divine Aid. He allows for its possibility so long as it does not compromise any of the above three conditions [...]" (p. 209)

In short, I take it that Kant is open to Divine Aid as a contingent supplement in our efforts to realize a Change of Heart. Kant is also quite explicit about being open to the possibility of Divine Aid in the establishment of the church and the evolution of historical faith (AA 6:84). But in all these cases, the aid we have is external to the will. Just as another human being or even natural good fortune can provide circumstances that are to our moral benefit, so God likewise can make available to us opportunities for moral growth or protect us from circumstances that could undo our efforts. None of this yields any philosophically pernicious inconsistencies. While we must remain agnostic as to whether or not any such aid has been given, its possibility is accepted by Kant and I take it that my book makes this clear.

While I do not see 'internal' Divine Aid as compatible with Kant's conception of the will, and could easily stand in violation of *ought implies can*, I take it that he is fine with 'external' Divine Aid, such as the arranging of worldly circumstances to offer contingent help (i.e., help that is not in itself necessary for our undergoing a Change of Heart). Although his discussions of Divine Aid tend to focus more on the corporate than the individual, the *Religion* contains an array of discussions of miracles, revelation, Providence and so forth, salient, for the most part, to the developments of the universal Church out of historical faith. As Kant presents such aid, various Divine intercessions in history can be taken as "wise and very advantageous to the human race" (AA 6:155). This, I take it, is in line with Construal B.

5. The *ought* of the Change of Heart vs. the *ought* of our duty to promote the highest good

Returning to the issue of *ought implies can*, as discussed above, if we have an obligation to realize within ourselves the Change of Heart, then it must be within our power to bring it about. That, however, does not mean that this transformation occurs completely without any worldly context. Whether through the encouragement of another human being, an inspiring book, a personal tragedy, etc. various life events and encounters can bring us to greater reflection, can help us forge greater self-discipline, etc. Sometimes such aid is accidental and unintentional, sometimes (such as through sermons or meditation retreats), it is meant for such a purpose. So, while the act of transformation is within one's power (given *ought implies can*), there can be many different 'external' catalysts to occasion the change. We may not ever know if some occasionings are divine in origin, but Kant seems open to the possibility (and I think takes the attitude of openness as important for our moral growth).

Now, let me turn to the locus for where I claim that Divine Aid is not only contingently available, but necessary—and why such necessity neither violates *ought implies can* nor otherwise compromises the consistency I attribute to the *Religion*.

Part Three of the *Religion* opens with a discussion of the problem of moral of recidivism. Kant claims that our Propensity to Evil “cannot be eradicated” (AA 6:31), as it is “woven into human nature” (AA 6:30), and so the very same conditions that originally led to our state of sin will continue to assail us even after the Change of Heart. Although our moral transformation elevates morality over self-interest in our Supreme Maxim, we remain “in incessant danger of relapsing into it [sin]” (AA 6:94). The cause of this relapse, Kant explains at the opening of Part Three, is the impact that human beings have on one another, “mutually corrupt[ing] each other's moral disposition and mak[ing] one another evil” (AA 6:94).

As I explain in Chapter Three, our Propensity to Evil is closely connected to our predisposition to humanity, particularly the need to seek “worth in the opinion of others” (AA 6:27). This need, and the corresponding insecurity of our egos, can then get triggered through our Unsocial Sociability: our competitive drive and pursuit of self-interest at the expense of others. The universal Church, however, is supposed to offset the more pernicious elements of our Unsocial Sociability, and thereby serve as a “union which has for its end the prevention of this evil and the promotion of the good in the human being” (AA 6:94).

So, where, as Kant states, merely being among other human beings can otherwise instigate our moral downfall, the universal Church, with its corporate commitment to a corporate end, serves to engender a morally felicitous social

dynamic, buffering and offsetting the triggers of our Unsocial Sociability. This is an important issue for my overall reading of the *Religion*, as it links Parts Three and Four to Parts One and Two. Moreover, as I discuss in the Introduction, I see the *Religion* as the most important of Kant's works for understanding the highest good. Unlike the Second *Critique* (or elsewhere), in the *Religion*, Kant finally explains at length how we are to understand our duty to promote the highest good.

A common concern seen in the literature on the highest good is that either its alleged duty is 'empty' or offers no new content beyond what the moral law otherwise prescribes. Moreover, those who do try to assign it content typically fall into the view that since the highest good is an ideal state of affairs in which there is an exact distribution of happiness in accordance with moral worth, our duty amounts to our contribution to this distribution of happiness. Of course, since we already have a duty to promote the happiness of others, this does not give us, as many have argued, any new content. Likewise, even those who prefer a secular reading of Kant take our duty to involve this distribution of happiness (either simply to bring happiness to others or to distribute it according to their moral worth).

However, I think the *Religion* does much to address these concerns. Contrary to the emptiness objection as well as the claim that our duty involves us in the distribution of happiness, I take it that Kant instead sets out a division of labour between humanity and God with regard to the highest good. Unfortunately, this distribution is not well articulated prior to the *Religion*, but it still can be found in a number of other texts. For example, in the Second *Critique*, Kant writes:

[T]he moral law led to a practical task [...] namely, that of the necessary completeness of the first and principal part of the highest good, morality [...]. The same law must also lead to the possibility of the second element of the highest good, namely happiness proportioned to that morality. (AA 5:124)

He then goes on to explain that the two postulates for the highest good, God and immortality, correspond to this division of labour. God is postulated as the distributor of happiness; immortality is postulated (in this text) as necessary for our becoming worthy of that happiness.

The same division of labour is expressed in the following from the Theory/Practice essay:

[T]his concept of duty [...] **introduces** another end for the human being's will, namely to work to the best of one's ability towards the **highest good** possible in the world [...] which, since it is within our control from one quarter but not from both taken together, exacts from reason belief, **for practical purposes**, in a moral ruler of the world and in a future life. (AA 8:279)

Although less explicit, the point here is that morality and happiness "taken together" are not within our control. Only one is, and that is, as Kant here puts it, "the purest morality throughout the world" (AA 8:279).

Then, finally, in the *Religion*, Kant begins to fill out the details. I have discussed above part of what is needed from us: as individuals, the Change of Heart, and collectively, our elevation of the species to such worthiness. Hence, towards the opening of *Religion's* Third Part, after explaining that the "ethical community" is "a work whose execution cannot be hoped for from human beings but only from God himself", Kant then sets the stage for the rest of *Religion* by pressing for the importance of our contribution to this ideal. As in previous texts, we need God because only he "knows the heart" and can "give to each according to the worth of his actions" (AA 6:99); and yet, Kant continues, "human beings are not permitted on this account to remain idle in the undertaking" (AA 6:100)—"Each must, on the contrary, so conduct himself as if everything depended on him" (AA 6:100).

As with our individual duty to undergo a Change of Heart, the role assigned to God in the Ethical Community does not involve some internal influence on our will. In this Kant is consistent. Moreover, if we look at the scope of our corporate duty, we will see there likewise that Divine Aid, even necessary Divine Aid, does not violate *ought implies can*. Our duty to promote the highest good is, first, a duty to 'promote' (i.e., an imperfect duty), and thus the *can* assigned to us is not one of full realization, but rather to do what is within our power to 'promote' the end. What is within our power is to cultivate the social conditions that help secure and stabilize the Change of Heart. This is achieved through an adjustment of the 'external' influences on us, the social triggers tied to our Unsocial Sociability.

Given his various discussions of God's role in history (miracles at the founding of a church, divine dispensations of ecclesiastical principles, Providence, etc.), Kant is open to such assistance, and presumably does not take it to be inconsistent. So, while the logic of *ought implies can* denies the necessity of Divine Aid for the fulfilment of our duty, it does not carry over into a denial of contingent aid.

Second, as our duty to promote the highest good is a duty to 'promote' versus realize this end, space remains for Kant to assign to God a necessary role in the end's realization.

This God does, first, as the agent who distributes happiness in accordance with moral worth. After all, throughout the Critical corpus, God is postulated *because* only He can bring this about. We lack the power to secure such a distribution, and lack as well the cognitive capacity to judge moral worthiness. Given the nature of the duty here, *ought implies can* does not exclude God from being necessary here, and given our limitations, God is thus postulated as necessary.

In the concluding chapter of my book, when discussing the issue of Pelagianism, I further add that God is also necessary not just as the distributor of happiness but also (through this distribution) is soteriologically necessary as the agent that completes the aim of the Church. It may be on our shoulders to undergo the Change of Heart; and further, we have a duty to cultivate and stabilize this transformation for the whole of the species. This is done through the potential of the universal Church to mitigate the social triggers related to our Unsocial Sociability, but such mitigation, I suggest, is still incomplete. Such efforts may be necessary for our corporate worthiness, but they may not be sufficient, since the exigencies of nature or other unknowns beyond our power could yield the sort of inequities that could lead to one being morally compromised. Here, then, is where one may assign to God a necessary role in our soteriological journey. We are obligated to undergo a Change of Heart, and this is something we can do on our own; we are obligated to promote the highest good through the efforts of the universal Church, and this is something we do as far as we are capable. But if the Church is still not enough to guarantee our moral stability, to remove all possible triggers that could lead to our downfall, then God can be taken as necessary here.

So, rather than seeing God's distribution of happiness in accordance with moral worth as just reward, we may further see it as part of what stabilizes our Change of Heart. We need to do much of this work on our own, for the stability depends, in part, on how we human beings relate to one another. As such, some recidivist triggers are ones that only we can address, doing so by changing how we relate to one another (i.e., without envy, power-games, etc.). But if there are still recidivist triggers beyond our powers to address, we must therefore postulate God as a further agent in this regard.

None of this, however, yields an inconsistency in principles, for God's role remains compatible with the scope of our duties and the sorts of powers we must have to fulfil them. Hence, 'external' and contingent Divine Aid at the individual

level is compatible with *ought implies can* because such aid does not deny the possibility of coming to a Change of Heart through our own efforts; and also, where Divine Aid is necessary at the corporate level, this too does not violate *ought implies can*, because the *ought* here is imperfect—it concerns our duty to promote the highest good through the stabilizing potential of the universal Church. We can do much in this regard, but the distributive principle of the highest good I take to be the final piece to prevent the recidivist danger that the universal Church, on its own, can only partly address.

To restate: the Church provides the means through which we can stabilize this transformation, reducing the risk of recidivism. Yet, since the Church is still, at best, the Ethical Community “greatly scaled down under human hands” (AA 6:100), the Church does not guarantee the stability of the Change of Heart. God, and the contribution He makes through securing the Ethical Community, ultimately, is still needed for that. But once again, there is no contradiction that results, for not only is such aid still external to our wills, but also there is no violation of *ought implies can*.

Section two: On Kant’s Christian credentials

1. Kant’s Christian credentials

A broader concern that Insole raises periodically through his comments is that I can be too much of an apologist for Kant, sometimes overstating how compatible his theology is with traditional Christianity. While my aim was to present a balanced view—articulating both where Kant is more traditional than many have recognized, but also showing places of significant deviation, I thought the former was particularly important to discuss, given that so much of the literature has taken Kant to be an essentially secular philosopher if not an enemy of faith.

Nevertheless, Insole fears that I was too eager to certify Kant’s Christian credentials and thus did not give his divergences from Christian orthodoxy their proper weight. On this point, I am not sure what to say. As my book advances, I am definitely concerned with showing the extent of Kant’s own religious commitments and the sophistication of his own philosophical theology. In some respects, his theology overlaps with traditional Christian doctrine, while in other respects, it does not. With regard to the latter, I do not think I at all downplay the points where Kant dramatically diverges from core Christian doctrines, including the inheritability of original sin, the need for Divine Aid with regard to our sanctification, the nature of our justification, and, most radically, his denial of vicarious atonement.

Given especially the last of these, I do not disagree with Insole's concluding point that "Kant does not even manage the base-line Christianity requisite to qualify as a Christian heretic". With Kant's rejection of the Crucifixion's soteriological relevance, I certainly agree that he has, thereby, placed his theology outside traditional Christianity. However, I still believe that theological scholarship has over the centuries failed to give Kant his due as a systematic theologian in his own right, one that also has much to offer both ecumenical theology as well as orthodox Christianity. I wrote my book with this issue in mind, hoping that it would help theologians realize how gravely misunderstood Kant has been.

Let me now move on to two more issues raised by Insole, both dealing with his view of Kant as more radically outside traditional Christianity than I seem to indicate. While I agree that Kant's denial of vicarious atonement (and more broadly, salvation through Christ), places him far enough outside traditional Christianity, I think his views on revelation are not as radical as Insole suggests. Likewise, while I certainly agree that Kant deviates from Luther on various core issues (esp. soteriology), I think there is merit in exploring parallels between the two, likely ways in which Kant's Lutheran Pietist upbringing shaped his philosophy.

2. Kant on revelation

In his comments, Insole writes that contrary to Kant's (alleged) views, revelation "is not an optional supplement of things that can be perfectly well-known otherwise. It is, rather, the only secure way of knowing those things that are essential to salvation". This is an interesting claim, or rather set of claims, that I would like to work through in detail.

First, we have the issue of whether or not for Kant revelation is an "optional supplement". It may seem optional in that whatever is essential to our salvation must also be available through reason alone. However, while this may be so for revelatory contents that overlap with the Pure Rational System of Religion (PRSR), Kant does not presume that revelation (real or alleged) is limited to just this narrow domain. The Bible and other religious texts communicate (alleged) revelations of many different sorts, including rules of piety, rules for the organization of a church, theological propositions not discoverable through reason, and non-natural causes of natural events (i.e., miracles).

Rather than dismissing this broader domain as unworthy subjects for revelation, Kant states, for example, that it would be "arrogant peremptorily to deny that the way a church is organized may perhaps also be a special divine dispensation" (AA 6:105). This is a point I think most readers of the *Religion* have overlooked, including Allen Wood (an oversight he acknowledges in his comments for this

symposium). Where Wood (1991) formerly thought it absurd to claim that God could issue commands that are independent of morality—and also found it “hard to image anyone who would hold to” this view—I have pointed out that many traditions distinguish between morality and piety. This is, moreover, a distinction not unknown to the philosophical tradition, but rather dates as far back as Plato’s *Euthyphro*.

Of course, Kant maintains that we have no means of determining whether or not an alleged revelation is genuine, but I do not think we should understate the significance of his recognition of revelatory contents (and miracles)—within his ‘pure rationalism’. By accepting the possibility of divinely commanded rules of piety, ecclesiastical rules, and so forth, this shows Kant to be far from a deist or naturalizer of religion.

This point further helps to rebut the common charge that Kant reduces religion to morality. While it is through morality that we become ‘well-pleasing-to-God’, religious life is still shaped by much more than this, and Kant wants to recognize the life of piety as one that is not just contrived by humanity but may be honoured as sacred. However, he is well aware of how pious practice has through the ages been treated as essential to our salvation, effectively replacing morality as the means through which we become ‘well-pleasing-to-God’.

It is especially in relation to this concern that Kant emphasizes that the rules of piety are ‘intrinsically contingent’, in that no particular form of religious practice is essential to our salvation. This, however, does not mean that we can simply forgo these practices altogether. There are different historical traditions with their different set of alleged revelations. So long as humanity remains in need of religious institutions (a need that does not go away until the establishment of the “Kingdom of God on earth” (AA 6:93, 95), the vitality of these institutions and the fellowship of its members will depend upon ecclesiastical principles and rules of piety. Hence, while (alleged) revelation supplements the PRSR, these supplements will continue to be needed so long as the church is needed... and that need will continue until God founds the Ethical Community, the “Kingdom of God on earth”.

Second, Insole suggests that for the tradition, revelation is “the only secure way of knowing those things that are essential to salvation”. I wonder about the use of “knowing” here—as claims of revelation are more typically treated as matters of faith. But I also wanted to remark on their soteriological role. It is true that some traditions regard some matters of revelation as essential to salvation, but I see this as a point of dispute within Christianity, between Catholics and Protestants, and among Protestants. For those who see our salvation as dependent on the

Crucifixion, then for some, faith in Christ is all that is needed. In this, I do not see where revelation is essential. The Gospels mainly report events observed. Those who hear the Good News and believe it, are or may be saved. So, while revelation may offer much of theological relevance, not all traditions see its contents as *essential* to salvation.

For Kant, likewise, revelation may offer much of relevance: rules for organizing the church, principles of piety, etc. But while such contents may be “wise and very advantageous to the human race” (AA 6:155), they are not soteriologically essential. He is hardly unique in this, nor is he unique in his view that we become ‘well-pleasing-to-God’ by way of an inner transformation that overcomes our state of sin. The particulars are different, the role of Divine Aid is as well, but still, his *sola moralitate*, understood properly, is compatible with a robust ecclesiology including the contribution made by (alleged) revelation.

3. Kant and Luther

As for some points of compatibility and/or ways in which Kant’s views were shaped by Christian doctrine and debate, I certainly try to show some intriguing parallels between Luther and Kant on the relationship between faith and reason. While I hardly would claim that Kant is anything close to a thoroughgoing Lutheran, I do think that his investment in some elements of Lutheranism is worthy of exploration. We may consider, for instance, not only how Kant’s presentation of the division between faith and reason has kinship to Luther’s own, but also their shared attack on the “monopoly of the schools” (KrV, Bxxxii) and the importance of placing our path to salvation outside of priestcraft. In fact, I think we may see Kant’s commitment to the universality of the PRSR as his own way of promoting Luther’s vision of universal priesthood.

Hence, while Kant most definitely deviated from core elements of Christian theology as well as Luther’s own views in numerous and important ways, there are still points of influence worthy of consideration. Given Bruno Bauch’s *Luther und Kant*, I am hardly the first to discuss their relationship. Moreover, Insole, likewise, in his *Kant and the Creation of Freedom*, considers the extent to which Kant’s religious interests helped motivate his Copernican Revolution.

While I agree that Kant’s rejection of vicarious atonement may very well remove him from, as Insole puts it, even a “base-line Christianity”, I take it that anyone who spends time with Parts Three and Four of the *Religion* should nevertheless see how committed he was to the ongoing existence of the Church, though a Church that has overcome its history of “delusory faith”, “counterfeit service”, and “priestcraft”. In this, we may paint Kant as a religious reformer in the Protestant tradition. That was, at least, his own self-image, or so I suspect. Like Luther

before him, he sought to liberate religion from the “monopoly of the schools” and set it on a footing suitable to “the common human understanding” (KrV,Bxxxii). Like Luther as well, he sought to realize this religio-political goal through a vision of the relationship between faith and reason, a vision that, like Luther, rejected the arcana of theological metaphysics and promoted a way of faith available to all.



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