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Chris L. Firestone and Stephen R. Palmquist (eds) *Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis IN: Indiana University Press, 2006). Pp. xxvi + 270. \$65.00 (Hbk); \$25.95 (Pbk). ISBN 0253 21800 4.

This volume contains twelve original essays on aspects of Kant's philosophy of religion. The essays are preceded by an introduction by Michel Despland and an editorial preface and introductory essay.

The twelve substantive essays in the volume are the usual mixture of the good, the moderate, and the not so strong. The main problem with the volume is the programme that the editors give it. They write in the preface (xx–xxi) of there being a tradition in English-speaking philosophy of reading Kant on religion in a theologically negative manner. No wonder, we may reflect. There are numerous places in the Critical corpus where Kant declares that knowledge of God is out, and even that talk about deity lacks significance. The editors declare that the aim of this book 'is to bring together an all new sampling of theologically affirmative interpreters of Kant with a view to articulating an alternative to the [negative] tradition more forcefully' (xxi). They use their introduction to try to show how the individual essays fit in with this aim. Herein lies the difficulty: not all the essays do lend themselves to this interpretation. Some could be read with perfect ease by those who regard Kant as a robust theological sceptic. Overall, the essays do not bear out the editors' claims that the volume testifies to and supports a new, theologically positive philosophy of religion.

I now illustrate the above line of criticism. The first essay in the volume is by Gregory R. Johnson. Its title, 'The tree of melancholy', disguises the fact that it is a study of Kant's attitude to enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*). Johnson defines enthusiasm thus: 'For Kant, enthusiasm refers to all attempts to achieve immediate, intuitive knowledge of the supersensible, including those of such philosophers as Plato and Spinoza, who appeal to mystical or intellectual intuition' (44). By the end of Johnson's essay it is clear that he reads Kant as rejecting direct knowledge of the supersensible. All genuine knowledge claims speak the language of common human reason. So Johnson's paper does not disturb the established reading of Kant as one who rejects religious experience as a source of knowledge of God. The paper does contain a central section that describes Kant's kinship with the enthusiast. Even though this person pursues a phantom, there is something about the longing for knowledge of the supersensible behind enthusiasm that Kant recognizes as important. The editorial comment on this paper does not match what I found in it: 'For those who have come to adopt the traditional interpretation of Kant, Johnson's demonstration

that Kant was far from condemning all forms of enthusiasm may be met with shocked disbelief' (21).

A similar point about the mismatch between the editorial aim and the content of a contributed essay can be made with reference to Leslie Stevenson's contribution: 'Kant's approach to religion compared with Quakerism'. This interesting essay highlights ways in which the theory and practice of British Quakerism matches the account of true religion and true religious practice in Kantian works such as *Religion with the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. But far from this disturbing a view of Kant as a religious sceptic, Stevenson offers a very agnostic, minimalist reading of Kant on God to make him fit in with a similar agnostic and symbolic reading of Christian theology in Quakerism.

Other papers strike me as simply neutral in any debate between interpreters of Kant as theologically agnostic and as theologically orthodox. Into this category I would put Elizabeth C. Galbraith's essay on Kant's theodicy and John E. Hare's resumé of Kant's arguments for the long-term instability of dogmatic atheism. This latter paper provides the occasion for a general comment on a number of papers in the collection. They contain little that is not already in print. Hare's many other recent publications on Kant's account of the relations of religion and morality contain similar points to those in his contribution to this volume. There is moreover a more thorough treatment of Kant's arguments against atheism by Laura Denis: 'Kant's criticism of atheism', *Kant-Studien*, 94 (2003), 198–219. Denis's paper is not cited by Hare. It is a superior treatment of the issues, in my view, not least because it considers objections to Kant's various arguments against atheism and explores tensions in his account. It is thus dialectically very much richer.

Where papers in the volume do clearly contend for a more positive reading of Kant on religion and theology it is not always evident that they take account of the tensions in Kant's thought on these matters. Take the paper by Christopher McCammon: 'Overcoming Deism: hope incarnate in Kant's rational religion'. The chief target of this piece is the argument for seeing Kant as a deist offered by Allen Wood (in the earlier Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen collection *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1991)). McCammon contends against Wood that Kant's *Religion* posits the necessity of a faith/hope in Christ as the archetype in human form. Thus Kant cannot be a deist. Of itself this is but a modest amendment to a more negative reading of Kant's theology. However, the essay lacks balance insofar as it does not explore the many things in Kant that speak in favour of seeing him as allied to eighteenth-century Deism. These include Kant's identification of religious truths with universal, necessary truths (of morality): 'The true, unique religion contains nothing but laws, i.e. such practical principles, of whose unconditional necessity we can become conscious, which we therefore recognise as revealed through pure reason (not empirically)' (*Religion, Gesammelte Schriften* 6:167–168). And of

course he states *re* religious scriptures that belief in the truth of their historical narratives is not a necessary part of a true faith.

A similar comment can be made about Chris L. Firestone's piece 'Making sense out of tradition'. This study of Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* claims that Kant seriously sought some sort of genuine dialogue between the claims of philosophy *re* God and religious truth, on the one hand, and the claims of a theology based on the Word and the Spirit, on the other. In this vein, Firestone writes: '*Conflict* is all about establishing a university context that can ensure progress toward the eventual unity of philosophy and theology into one religious world view' (44). It is a moot point how far Firestone is able to anchor such assertions about *The Conflict* in Kant's text. It is certainly the case that he does not consider the passages in the work that seem to count strongly against this estimate of Kant's aims for the work. For example, we find Kant distinguishing between the content and the form of true religion. The content of true religion is grounded on reason alone. A scripture like the Bible is merely the vehicle for true religion (*GS* 7:44–45). He states at 7:45 that reason alone is sufficient for religious faith and the value of religious dogma lies only in serving as a means to the ends of true religion. Perhaps these, and other Deist-like utterances, can be explained away so as to fit in with Firestone's interpretation of *The Conflict*, but he does not attempt to provide such an explanation. They do not *appear* to cohere with statements from Firestone such as this: 'In the court of public reason and the recesses of personal belief, the philosopher and the theologian draw closer together in the truth by confronting one another in humility' (153).

The other papers in the volume are: Gene Fendt 'The anatomy of truth: literary modes as a Kantian model for understanding the openness of knowledge and morality to faith'; Philip J. Rossi 'Reading Kant through theological spectacles'; Nathan Jacobs 'Kant's prototypical theology: transcendental incarnation as a rational foundation for God-talk'; Charles F. Kielkopf 'A Kantian model for religions of deliverance'; Stephen R. Palmquist 'Philosophers in the public square: a religious resolution of Kant's *Conflict*'; and Ronald M. Green 'Kant and Kierkegaard on the need for historical faith'.

Fendt's paper is perhaps the weakest one in the whole collection. Its argument is hard to follow and it delights in allusions to icons of Western thought: Northrop Frye, Hobbes, Wittgenstein, Rorty, Levinas, Weber, Leibniz, Tarski, Gödel, Kierkegaard, and Russell all get a mention. The following quotation is typical of its style: 'One may say empirical reason has faith ... or accepts or trusts in the a priori categories, for they are not demonstrated in the way empirical reason demonstrates [*sic*]' (93).

Rossi has written some good stuff on Kant. His paper's leading idea is that Kant can be considered a theologian by virtue of his reflection on the very possibility of relation of the human to the divine (111). Yes: he is a theologian, if that is the right definition of 'theologian', but some atheist philosophers will then count as

theologians. Rossi proceeds to illustrate this contention via Kant's account of grace. But here we find his exposition is wholly and explicitly dependent on J. Mariña's paper in *Religious Studies* on this subject ('Kant on grace: a reply to his critics', *Religious Studies*, 33 (1997), 379–400). That paper does attempt to establish that Kant's account of grace falls within mainstream Christian theology, but Rossi's contribution contains no effort to validate or question Mariña's thesis by reference to Kant's texts.

Nathan Jacobs endeavours to show that one aspect of divinity, at least, can escape Kant's apparent ban on cognition of the divine and meaningful theological discourse. This is the divine as the incarnated moral prototype – embodied, perfect humanity. He asks at the close of the paper for further exploration of whether this possibility is sufficient for pursuit of a meaningful theology. A good question, but anyone can see why the possibility might not be sufficient. The incarnated moral prototype can be meaningfully discussed as a possible object of meaningful description because it is deity emptied of all of those aspects that seem to transcend the Kantian boundaries of cognition.

Kielkopf's paper contains a worthwhile case for the conclusion that one can use Kant on moral failure to build a positive, substantive account of grace and atonement. Stephen Palmquist's paper explores the interesting question of how a Kantian religious philosopher (understood *à la* Palmquist) might actually operate in a living religious context. She or he need not forswear such involvement, for Palmquist. Ronald Green offers a very lively imaginary dialogue between Kant and Kierkegaard. The aim of the paper is to contend (as indeed Green has argued before in print) that the two authors are closer in their accounts of true faith than might be supposed. The dialogue form of the paper means that it is suggestive rather than probative.

Let me end by noting that the editors themselves invite a comparison between this volume and the earlier Rossi and Wreen collection cited above, *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered* (see xx). Many of the papers in Rossi and Wreen have become standard reading for students of Kant's philosophy of religion. Even if one disagrees with them, they are for the most part challenging attempts to get to grips with Kant's religious thought. Time will tell whether *Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion* comes to occupy the same place in the secondary literature as Rossi and Wreen.

PETER BYRNE
King's College London