

THE PERNICIOUS INFLUENCES OF
IMMANUEL KANT

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The notable Christian apologist Norman Geisler commented to a class of about forty seminarians who were actively involved in the professional study of God's Word with something like: 'Men, Immanuel Kant has a bigger influence on your life than Jesus Christ.'¹ When I heard about Geisler's comment, it woke me from my slumber regarding the importance for every Christian to understand Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and his influences. It would be one thing if Geisler made the comment to Christians who were not serious about the Word of God. However, this charge was made to seminarians who had taken the call of Jesus Christ seriously enough to receive professional training in Christ's Word for the purpose of serving Him as evangelists, pastors, Bible teachers, and theologians. Could it be true that these seminarians were *more* influenced by the thoughts of a man whom they may not have known much about than the Man whom they were actively studying? Could mere philosophical naiveté be responsible for them being more influenced by Kant than Christ? If so, what are the characteristics of and distinctions between the influences of Immanuel Kant and Jesus Christ?

Such a charge by the likes of Norman Geisler should not be lightly dismissed by any Christian. Given the grave repercussions, it is imperative for every Christian to understand the

¹Norman Geisler's comment was related by Professor Richard Howe in a recorded lecture at Southern Evangelical Seminary in distance education course "PH501, Classical Philosophy," lecture 12. The DVDs of this course is available from Southern Evangelical Seminary, <http://www.ses.edu/bookstore.htm>.

nature of Kantian influences so they can identify and root out any of his corrupting influences that may come between him and his Lord. This paper focuses on examining the major influences of Immanuel Kant in three key areas: cosmology, philosophy, and theology.² Kant's influence in each of these areas is discussed along with his subsequent influence on society and in Christendom. Kant's philosophy will be compared to Christ's philosophy in an attempt to qualify or quantify the distinct nature of Christian and Kantian influences.

Kant's Pernicious Influences in Cosmology

Immanuel Kant's early career begins with a commitment to theistic dependent Newtonian science.³ As a product of the scientific Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), his first writings are of a scientific nature.⁴ However, by proceeding to combine the hypothesis of Emanuel Swedenborg and Thomas Wright, Immanuel Kant begins to slice away the need for a theistic dependent universe and in 1755 delivers "a coup d'état to the cosmologies, philosophies, and theologies of his day; in fact of the preceding thirteen centuries."⁵ Kant, like the atheist Pierre-

²The complexity and abstractness of the Kantian corpora precludes an exhaustive examination of his works. For an excellent distillation of Kant's difficult philosophy, see Peter Kreeft, *Socrates Meets Kant: the Father of Philosophy Meets His Most Influential Modern Child: a Socratic Cross-Examination of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and Grounding For the Metaphysics of Morals* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009). As Kreeft notes in this work, "*Critique of Pure Reason* . . . is far too difficult for the beginning student to tackle, and far too long. It is also written in a heavy Germanic academic style . . ." (p. 12). For a summary of Kant's life and his agnostic influence on subsequent history, see Ed Hindson and Ergun Caner, eds., *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), s.v. "Kant, Immanuel," by Linda Gottschalk. Kant's three significant works that deal with the true (epistemology), the good (ethics) and the beautiful (aesthetics), respectively are his *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *Critique of Judgment*. For overview of these works, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), xv-38. For a plethora of accessible Kantian resources, see <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/Kant.html> [accessed November 5, 2011].

³Frederick Copleston S.J., *History of Philosophy, Volume 6* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 187.

⁴Ibid., 181.

⁵Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God* (New York: Whitaker House, 2000), 28. Norman Geisler also notes that it was Kant who effectively removed the need for God as Creator or Sustainer of the cosmos, and that "departure from the Creator was not envisioned by the early modern scientists. In their view the primary cause was needed directly (for the origin of the universe and living things), and indirectly (for the operation of the world)

Simon Laplace, no longer sees the need for “a divine hand to keep things in order.”⁶

Kant proceeds to spend his time, energy, and talents in attacking the classical cosmological arguments for the existence of God which further impels Western thought towards agnostic and atheistic world views.⁷ The Kantian effect of stripping out the need for God as Creator or Sustainer in cosmology and the sciences spanned three centuries, from the latter half of the eighteenth century to the whole of the nineteenth and a large fraction of the twentieth centuries. Due to Kant’s postulates that reduce cosmology to *merely* a mechanistic entity, astronomers and physicists treat cosmology as a science discipline void of theological or philosophical roots or implications.⁸

Kant’s pervasive influence of supposedly “sweeping away all accepted proofs for the

through secondary causes. It was not their intent that secondary (natural) causes should be used to eliminate the need for a primary cause (Creator), in the realms either of the origin of or the person of the universe and living things,” Norman L. Geisler, *Knowing the Truth About Creation: How It Happened and What It Means For Us* (Belmont, CA: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003), 84-5.

⁶Mortimer Adler, *How to Prove There Is a God: Mortimer J. Adler's Writings and Thoughts About God*, ed. Ken Dzigan (Chicago: Open Court, 2011), 58. While a scientist may be excused for not being able to *directly* see and thus quantify God in his scientific examinations of the material universe, it is nothing short of hubris for him to dogmatically exclude God from first cause of visible the material things and then summarily posit that everything came out of nothing by its own nothingness, i.e., that everything came from nothing rather than God. The big question remains: Why is there something rather than nothing?

⁷Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*, 33. For a discussion of how Kant’s criticisms of the cosmological argument for the existence of God or his antinomies of time, causality, and contingency do not apply to the Thomistic existential cosmological arguments, see Norman Geisler, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1991), 125-35; Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 59-62; Norman L. Geisler and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion: Second Edition* (New York: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2003). 106-10, 133-35. Kant’s critique of the arguments of natural theology earned him the reputation of “the philosopher who attempted to assassinate God,” Peter Byrne, *Kant on God*, (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 19. In spite of the devastating influences of Kant, there are still those who continue to support Kant, see Chris L. Firestone and Stephen R. Palmquist, eds., *Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). On the back cover of this book is written: “As a whole, this book capitalizes on contemporary movements in Kant studies by looking at Kant not as an anti-metaphysician, but as a genuine seeker of spirituality in the human experience.” Given that Kant did not spend time developing such doctrines as the Trinity, the incarnation, the hypostatic union, salvation, or spirituality, it could hardly be true biblical spirituality. This “spirituality” in human experience is nothing short of existentialism.

⁸Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*, 35.

existence of God as developed by Augustine, Aquinas, Kepler, Newton, Lessing, and Herder”⁹ continues to effect modern civilization. Joseph Owens explains, “On the popular level they [the proofs for the existence of God] are widely regarded as having been neatly disposed of once for all by Kant, and so as outdated and as utterly irrelevant to the acceptance of God in modern civilization.”¹⁰ Unfortunately, Kant did not live to see the day when following *scientific* discoveries in the modern world would make his materialistic view of the universe increasingly untenable (e.g., the singularity event, creation ex nihilo of all matter, space, and energy in the universe as implied in Albert Einstein’s discovery of general relativity, and the ever increasing discovery of incredibly *intelligent* precise tuning of the universe).¹¹

Kant’s materialistic philosophy also spawns a host of *deterministic* worldviews like “behaviorism, existentialism, fascism, Freudianism, hedonism, humanism, liberationism, Marxism, neo-Darwinism, nihilism, pragmatism, relativism.”¹² Hugh Ross adds, “the credibility of Kant’s axioms and corollaries is of utmost importance not just to scientists and theologians, but also to economists, politicians, sociologists, psychologists, educators, and, for that matter, the

⁹Ibid., 31. Most of the early founders of modern science believed in divine creation. Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler, Kelvin, Newton, and others saw evidence in nature for divine creation. After carefully studying the universe, Newton concluded that *mere* mechanical cause could not be give birth to so many regular motions and that “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being,” Isaac Newton, “General Scholium,” <http://www.jstor.org/pss/301985> [accessed October 14, 2011].

¹⁰Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (San Francisco: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 338.

¹¹Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*, 39-139. These pages document the overturning of Kant’s cosmology through discovery of relativity and the design features of the cosmos, and how this led to scientists’ rediscovery of God or at least Intelligence throughout the cosmos. However, though *design* is recognized and conceded in almost every scientific discipline, this does not mean that God is openly accepted. Even with all of the evidence, man still has an incredible proclivity to suppress God as outlined in Romans 1:18-32.

¹²Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*, 38. For more on how Kant provided the soil for Darwinism to grow, see Hans Schwarz, “Darwinism between Kant and Haeckel,” *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XLVIII/4, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/311398/Immanuel-Kant> [accessed October 17, 2011].

rest of the human race.”¹³ Kant’s commitment to materialism also manifests itself in his attempt to develop mechanistic biological evolution which he finally abandons “for want of clear understanding of the internal processes of living organisms.”¹⁴ In *Critique of Judgment* he explains the evolutionary process in greater detail and posits evolutionary concepts such as certain water animals transforming themselves gradually into marsh animals and these, after some generations into land animals.¹⁵ Kant, along with Hegel become the “main philosophical mentors of German nineteenth century evolutionists.”¹⁶ However, evolution as commonly understood today would not become popular until Darwin would later offer a “plausible” naturalistic mechanism known as the survival of the fittest.¹⁷

Before discussing possible Kantian cosmic influences in Christendom, there are at least three key features of a distinctly Christian cosmological worldview that should be noted. First, biblical Christianity explicitly identifies Jesus Christ as the Logos of the Universe, the very cause of the becoming of the universe as well as the cause for its continuing existence (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17).¹⁸ Even the ancient Greeks (e.g., the Stoics) recognize the gnostic nature of the universe which they ascribe to a Logos, the soul, the governor, and rational principle of the

¹³Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*, 38. For more details on Kant’s determinism, see Gordon H. Clark, *Historiography: Secular and Religious* (Jefferson: Trinity Foundation, 1994), 33-51. For overview of Kant’s treatment of space, mathematics, physics, logic, and the laws of science, see Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey: a History of Philosophy* (New York: Trinity Foundation, 2000), 309-25.

¹⁴Hugh Ross, *The Fingerprint of God*, 29.

¹⁵Schwarz, Hans. "Darwinism between Kant and Haeckel." 48, no. 4: 583.

¹⁶Ibid., 48, no. 4: 581-602.

¹⁷Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 106.

¹⁸Unless otherwise stated, all Bible references are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

universe.¹⁹ The ancient Greeks understand that the orderliness of the universe requires a regulator in contrast to Kant who denies this reality.²⁰

Second, Christ is not only the Creator and Governor of the universe, He is also the *Esse* (act of Being, Pure Act) behind the continued existence of all existing things. He is why there is something rather than nothing. The most ontological and apt name for God is translated: “I AM WHO I AM” (*Esse*) in Exodus 3:14.²¹ Scripture unmistakably identifies this “I AM” with none other than Jesus Christ in John 8:58 (ἐγὼ εἰμὶ). The glorious truth behind “I AM” was richly developed by Thomas Aquinas as *Esse*, the act of Being, who gives existence to all things and actualizes all potentials in all existing things throughout the universe.²² Sadly, development of

¹⁹For review of logos cosmology among the Greeks and Hebrews, see Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections On the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 1-6. For the philosophical background on John’s Logos prologue, see Gordon Clark, *The Johannine Logos* (Jefferson: The Trinity Foundation, 1989), 13-45. Although ancients were unaware of how precise the four basic forces of the universe (gravity, electromagnetism, strong nuclear force, and weak nuclear force) work together to make the existence of the universe possible, they understood that there had to be a Logos behind the structure and gnomic principles they observed in nature, the seasons, and in the very rationality of man. While the Greeks would *somewhat* agree with most of what is revealed in John 1:1-3, they would not have accepted that this Logos of the universe became flesh apart from accepting special divine revelation (John 1:14). At any rate, the Stoics through their study of the heavens were a lot closer to the Logos governance of the universe than Kant with his autonomous mechanical universe. For excellent overview of God as the Sustainer of the universe, see Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume Two: God, Creation* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003), 501-17

²⁰Charles, Hodge, *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960, 1:225-26.

²¹Exodus 3:14: "I AM WHO I AM," Charles C. Ryrie, ed., *Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*, (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1995); “אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה,” Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Nordlingen, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1998); “ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ὁ ὄν,” Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta* (Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006); "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh," The Jewish Publication Society, ed., *The Jewish Bible: Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures -- The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

²²For excellent discussion of identification and development of *Esse* with the “I AM WHO I AM” of Exodus 3:14, and why it is the most proper ontological name for God, see Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 84-95. Other works on *Esse* and Metaphysics include Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas On the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Washington: Catholic University, 2008), 315-17; John F. Wippel, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas: from Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2000); George P. Klubertanz, S.J. and Maurice Holloway, S.J., *Being and God* (New York: Meredith Publishing, 1963).

this truth is woefully lacking in standard Protestant theological works.²³ Yet, it is the name of God that more than any other 1) describes God's own existence (rather than the relational, metaphorical, or extrinsic descriptions of Himself); 2) provides important insights into the correct understanding of non-ontological anthropomorphic and anthropopathic descriptions of God; 3) leads to appreciation of how the beauty, perfections, and power of God are displayed (in some degree) in all existing things throughout creation; and 4) is the name that describes God as the ground of all continuing existence.

Third, the Christian position is that one *can* gain knowledge of God through the study of His creation (Rom. 1:19-20; Psa. 19:1-6). If one does his natural sciences correctly in regard to creation and the science of being (metaphysics), he will discover the necessity of God behind it all. God is the author of truth in general revelation just as He is the author of truth in the special revelation of the Bible.

Given that the Christian worldview explicitly and inextricably ties Christ into the cause, operation, and continued existence of the universe in contrast to the Kantian mechanistic autonomous worldview, the extent of Kant's influence on a Christian can be evaluated based on which viewpoint a Christian possesses. To the extent that a Christian simply sees the cosmos as governed *merely* by Newtonian physics, rather than ultimately guided by the Logos (albeit by first and by secondary causes), he is more influenced by Kant than Christ. However, the Christian who lives in the wonder of Christ's creation of the universe *ex nihilo* (Col. 1:16) as

²³Standard Protestant theological works consulted which do not *develop* *Esse* and the vertical cosmological argument for the existence of God: Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989); Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Chafer Systematic Theology in 8 Volumes* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1983); Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: a Compendium Designed For the Use of Theological Students* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009); William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1980). The one marvelous exception is Norman L. Geisler, *God/Creation*, vol. 2, of *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Bethany House, 2003), 30-9. I suspect the reason that this has not been richly developed in Protestantism is due in part to Kantian anti-metaphysical influences as well as reactions against Aquinas's works due to his close identification with Roman Catholicism.

well as His present existential cause of the universe (Exod. 3:14; John 8:58; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3) is indubitably more influenced by Christ than Kant.

As far as the actual cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of God, a Kantian influence would lead one to being very skeptical about any proof of God from creation as such. This is in stark contrast to Scripture and its Christ-centered human writers who explicitly teach that creation demonstrates the existence of God (Psa. 19; 1-4; Acts 14:15-17; 17:23-31; Rom. 1:18-20). Therefore, to the extent that a Christian believes that the arguments for the existence of God are irrelevant or inconclusive²⁴ and sees the cosmos operating autonomously rather than under the direct control of Jesus Christ, he is more influenced by Kant than Jesus Christ. It was Christ Himself who teaches that Christians can look at creation and see God clearly enough to remove fear, doubt, and distractions from their lives (Matt. 6:26-34). Christ is no fideist; He does not teach his followers to take blind leaps of faith. Christ is a Realist who taught that one could see God in creation. The true issue is what the person is doing with that knowledge of God—seeking more of it or suppressing it?

As far as cosmology and Christianity thank God that there has been a resurgence of apologetic literature on classical proofs for the existence of God and the rise and development of Christian apologetics in higher education over the past few decades. However, one area that continues to lag behind in all of the various approaches to apologetics, at least in Protestant circles, is lack of robust understanding of Christ as the *Esse* or the Pure Act behind all existence. There are still many Christians who are oblivious to the science metaphysics (science of being) and how Pure Act is the present cause of the existence of all things. Perhaps the study of metaphysics, due to its highly abstract nature is not practical for apologetic purposes in

²⁴Kant rejected any notion of “necessary existence” as a contradiction in terms, see Paul Copan, *Loving Wisdom: Christian Philosophy of Religion* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2007), 31.

professional debates with atheists. However, it is a very rich area for the Christian spiritual life. I suspect that there is a Kantian anti-metaphysical spirit that continues to have significant influence on Protestantism's lack of development in metaphysics and the subsequent lack of appreciation of *Esse*.²⁵

Kant's Pernicious Influences in Philosophy

Kant is not only the father of modern cosmology by detaching God from celestial dynamics, he is also the father of Critical Philosophy by detaching truth from the knower. He describes his newly created philosophical system as a "Copernican revolution"²⁶ where the human mind, instead of being an observer mirroring reality, is *actively* creating reality with its cognitional categories that cut and form reality "for" the knower. As to the nature of this Copernican philosophy, Gordon Clark writes:

Copernicus, instead of assuming with his predecessors that the heavenly bodies revolve around the spectator, made his great advance by turning the universe inside out and assuming that the spectator revolves while the stars remain at rest. Similarly, preceding philosophy had always assumed that the human cognition revolves around and must conform to the objects of knowledge; but now Kant proposes to try the assumption that objects must conform to the conditions of cognitions.²⁷

²⁵On Kant's anti-metaphysicalism, see Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 179-98. Gilson documents the fact that Kant effectively destroyed metaphysics by attempting to make everything physics. Regarding Kant's own metaphysics, note the scathing review by Objectivist Ayn Rand: "His argument, in essence, ran as follows: man is *limited* to a consciousness of a specific nature, which perceives by specific means and no others, therefore, his consciousness is not valid; man is blind, because he has eyes—deaf, because he has ears—deluded, because he has a mind—and the things he perceives do not exist, *because* he perceives them"), <http://enlightenment.supersaturated.com/objectivity/walsh1/>. However, Ayn Rand's own philosophy is but a philosophy of selfishness where "man—every man—is an end in himself," Ayn Rand, *For the New Intellectual* (New York Library, 1961), 123. Both Rand and Kant ended up with man defied—although in different ways—due to their anthropocentric philosophies.

²⁶Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, xvi.

²⁷Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey: a History of Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York, NY: Trinity Foundation, 2000), 309. While Clark has excellent insights into the problems with Kantian philosophy, as a Presuppositionalist he likewise has serious problems with having confidence in reality as such apart from special revelation. This was brought home to me by apologist Phil Fernandez who once related in a lecture an incident at Dallas Seminary when someone asked Clarke how he, as a Presuppositionalist, could *really* know that his Bible in front of him was real. Clarke's response was "What Bible?" While I cannot vouch for the truthfulness of the statement, it certainly seems to fit within his Presuppositional transcendental epistemology.

When Kant creates this new subjective philosophy there were at least four principal epistemological theories available to him: the Rationalism of Rene Descartes, the Empiricism of John Locke, the Skepticism (due to failure at empiricism) of David Hume, and Realism (i.e., one could attain truth by reason and sensation working in tandem) of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Kant discards the Realism of Aristotle and only focuses on the battle between Rationalism and Skeptical Empiricism.²⁸ When Kant's somnolent dogmatic Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalism encounters the criticisms of David Hume's work, he "wakes up" and concludes that both empiricism and rationalism are wrong because they both assume the same mistaken premise that truth came by the mind. According to Kant, instead of the mind conforming to truth and reality, the mind was like a cookie cutter that shapes the unorganized clutter of reality into cookie shapes by categories in the mind such as space, time, and causality. Human thought, Kant suggests, is more like a creator than a mirror. It actively structures the world in phenomenal terms rather than discovering form and order as it is in the world. In this system no man can know things in themselves. Kant's bottom line is that all of the form and order and intelligible content and experience of the world comes by way of our cognitive cookie cutters; the "shape" of the data comes from the cutters, not from the batter.²⁹

Kant's desire to solve the "impasses" in various epistemologies leads him to agnosticism.³⁰ Geisler notes that as a "crossroad's thinker Kant synthesized the two dominant

²⁸Copleston notes that as far as he knows, there is no evidence that Kant knew much about the mediaevals or their philosophy, Frederick Copleston S.J., *History of Philosophy, Volume 6*, 287n2.

²⁹Peter Kreeft, *Ethics: a History of Moral Thought – Course Guidebook* (Prince Frederick, MD: Recorded Books, 2004), 68.

³⁰For overview of Kant's agnosticism and critique of his views, see Norman L. Geisler and Paul K. Hoffman, eds., *Why I Am a Christian: Leading Thinkers Explain Why They Believe* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 43-9.

but conflicting modes of thought of the Enlightenment—empiricism and rationalism—into an intellectual whole. The result, unfortunately, is philosophical agnosticism.”³¹ This epistemological renovation consists of going beyond the two standard kinds of knowledge: a priori analytic and a posteriori synthetic knowledge.³² By combining a priori knowledge with synthetic propositions, he argues that we have a third kind of knowledge, *synthetic a priori knowledge*—knowledge that may begin with experience but did not arise from experience.³³ This revision shifts philosophical presuppositions in a totally new direction.³⁴

Kant’s *synthesis* of rationalism and empiricism results in three postulates: 1) humans do not have inner ideas as the rationalists claim; 2) humans do not have access to the noumenal (real) world through observations as empiricists claim; and 3) humans are instead, stuck in the phenomenal world. However, his “solution” to the problems between rationalism and empiricism only makes the “problems” much worse—especially for Christians. All faith claims are now marginalized into the subjective *unknowable* phenomenal realm.

One wonders how Kant would know that he could not know reality. How could Kant ever hope to know anything? His whole enterprise is totally self-defeating. As Edward Feser writes, “But where does *Kant* of all people get off appealing to the nature or essence of reason, since he denies that we can know any objective essences or natures of things . . . The whole Kantian

³¹Norman Geisler, *Introduction/Bible*, vol. 1 of *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 321; *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 13-17.

³²Immanuel Kant was the first to use the terms "analytic" and "synthetic" to divide propositions into two types, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N.K. Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965), A6-7/B10-11. Analytical statements are statements where the predicate is contained in the subject, whereas in synthetic statements the predicates are not contained in the subject—the latter actually adds new information.

³³For fuller discussion of these epistemological categories, see Louis P. Pojman, *What Can We Know? An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), 205-24.

³⁴Winfried Corduan, *Handmaid to Theology: An Essay in Philosophical Prolegomena* (Belmont, CA: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009), 13.

project is a complete muddle from start to finish.”³⁵ Bertrand Russell—no friend of Christianity—comments that Kant’s “awakening was only temporary, and soon he invented a soporific which enabled him to sleep again.”³⁶ Furthermore, if one is going to reject such things as causality, then why should anyone accept the causality inherent in logic—especially Kant’s.

Kant’s subjectivism also leads to the philosophical dichotomy between nature and grace—a dichotomy which is often incorrectly blamed on Aquinas.³⁷ Nancy Pearcey notes how Kant created a two-realm theory of truth of two levels of nature versus freedom. The lower story was the Newtonian world of nature and machine whereas the upper story was the area of freedom, God, the soul, immortality, and autonomy.³⁸ In the lower story is what we *know*; the upper story is what we can’t help believing. In the end Kant threw up his hands and simply insisted that regardless of what science says, we must act as if we were free—just wishful thinking.³⁹

Kant’s new subjective theory of knowledge certainly is no Copernican revolution in any sense of getting closer to reality. On the contrary, it becomes the bane of philosophy. If man could not really know things as they are, then what hope is there of him discovering Truth—

³⁵Edward Feser, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* (Belmont, CA: St. Augustine Press, 2010), 218-19.

³⁶Bertrand Russell, *RC Series Bundle: History of Western Philosophy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 640.

³⁷For discussion of the two realms, see Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: 1976), 52-74; *Escape from Reason* (Downers Grove, 1968), 9-32. In *Escape from Reason*, Schaeffer notes that “By the time we come to Kant and Rousseau, the sense of the autonomous, which had derived from Aquinas, is fully developed,” p. 32. While Aquinas, like Aristotle, did emphasize the world of particulars, he certainly did not cut it off from God. As a matter of fact, his whole concept of God as *Esse*, the present existential cause of all creation, shows just how intimately and necessarily connected God is to creation and all existence.

³⁸Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 103-06.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 106.

let—alone being a lover of Truth as such? Kant’s system is nothing but a new form of Idealism. Kant’s reality was tied to a shared rational structure, whereas in the Realist system there is a shared metaphysical nature in reality as such.⁴⁰ The result of Kant’s breaking of the “intrinsic link between being [metaphysics] and intelligibility by holding that beings in themselves are unknown to us but that we impose intelligibility upon them from without, from our own forms of thought” means that all objectivity is lost.⁴¹ In fact, Kant admitted that he could not even know his own soul, “My soul, view from the latter standpoint, cannot indeed be known by means of speculative reasons (and still less through empirical observation).”⁴² What a tragedy! What a waste of time and of an otherwise gifted mind!

Kant’s annihilation of confidence in truth is not lost on his own generation. The “simple citizens of his native Konigsburg, Germany, nicknamed Kant ‘The Destroyer’ and named their dogs after him.”⁴³ Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), one of Germany’s famous poets, goes so far as to compare Kant to a Robespierre:

What a strange contrast between the outward life of the man and his destructive, world-crushing thoughts! Truly, if the citizens of Koenigsberg had had any premonition of the full significance of his ideas, they would have felt a far more terrifying dread at the presence of this man than at the sight of an executioner, an executioner who merely executes people. But the good folk saw in him nothing but a professor of philosophy . . .

If, however, Immanuel Kant, the arch-destroyer in the realm of ideas, far surpassed Maximilian Robespierre in terrorism, yet he possessed many similarities with the latter which invite comparison of the two men. . . . We also find in both the same talent for suspicion, only that one directs his suspicion towards ideas and calls it criticism, while the other applies it to people and entitles it republican virtue. . . . Nature had destined

⁴⁰Thomas A. Howe, *Objectivity in Interpretation* (Longwood, FL: Advantage Inspirational, 2005), 390.

⁴¹James F. Anderson, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Gateway Editions, 1997), xx-xxi.

⁴²Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A28.

⁴³Peter Kreeft, “Pillars of Unbelief—Kant,” <http://enlightenment.supersaturated.com/objectivity/walsh1/> [accessed October 3, 2011].

them to weigh coffee and sugar, but Fate determined that they should weigh other things and placed on the scales of the one a king, on the scales of the other a god.⁴⁴

As to the extent of Kantian philosophy on the modern man, Peter Kreeft notes that “no other modern philosopher can rival his influence.”⁴⁵ Kreeft lists Kant as one of the *pillars* of modern unbelief who continues to do great harm to the Christian mind, truth, and even the ability to witness to others about Jesus Christ:

Few philosophers have been so unreadable and dry as Immanuel Kant. Yet few have had a more devastating impact on human thought. It was Kant who gave impetus to the typically modern turn from the objective to the subjective. And the consequences of this idea have been catastrophic. If we engage in conversation about our faith with an unbeliever, we know from experience that the most common obstacle to faith today is not an honest intellectual difficulty, like the problem of evil or the dogma of the trinity, but the assumption that religion cannot possibly concern facts and objective truth at all; that any attempt to convince another person that your faith is true—objectively true, true for everyone—is unthinkable arrogance. The business of religion, according to this mindset, is practice and not theory; values not facts; something subjective and private, not objective and public. Dogma is an “extra,” and a bad extra at that, for dogma fosters dogmatism. Religion, in short, equals ethics. And since Christian ethics is very similar to the ethics of most other major religions, it doesn’t matter whether you are a Christian or not; all that matters is whether you are a “good person.”⁴⁶

As one can see, Kant’s mindset fits very nicely with postmodernism’s skepticism about Christian dogma—a skepticism that is only matched by a confident proclivity to create ex nihilo one’s own reality even in the midst of acknowledged inability to know a thing in itself (*ding an sich*).⁴⁷

⁴⁴Heinrich Heine “Heine on Immanuel Kant,” <http://philosophy.uchicago.edu/resources/files/On%20Kant.pdf> [accessed November 5, 2011].

⁴⁵Peter Kreeft, *Socrates Meets Kant: the Father of Philosophy Meets His Most Influential Modern Child: a Socratic Cross-Examination of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and Grounding For the Metaphysics of Morals*, 11.

⁴⁶Peter Kreeft, “Pillars of Unbelief—Kant” A great source for insights into Kant’s personal opinions are in informal notes taken by his students, see Immanuel Kant, *Lectures On Ethics*, ed. Peter Heath (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). These lectures on *ethics* reveal his biases against women (“women are more exposed to avarice than men, which is doubtless in keeping with their nature,” 27:405) and Jews (“every coward is a liar; Jews, for example not only in business, but also in common life. It is the hardest of all to judge Jews; they are cowards,” 27:61).

⁴⁷James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: a Basic Worldview Catalog* (New York: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 218.

Before one can evaluate whether a Christian is more *philosophically* influenced by Kant than Christ, it is important to understand the nature of Christ’s philosophy. It may strike a person a bit odd to think of Christ as a philosopher—since He did not go around quoting Socrates or Aristotle or teach in philosophical jargon. However, philosophy is everybody’s business; no one can do much, if any at all, thinking without philosophizing. Everyone does philosophy, wittingly or unwittingly. Indeed, Christ is a philosopher in the most substantial way and with a definite philosophy of life and reality: He has a philosophy of what is real (metaphysics), how we know what is real (epistemology), who are we who know what is real (anthropology), and ethics (what should we be to be more real).⁴⁸ Concerning reality, there is not a hint of subjectivity with regard to understanding the world, God, and reality as such. He is a Realist. He is not only a lover of wisdom (“philosopher”), He is the very treasure trove of wisdom (Col. 2:2-3). He is Ultimate Reality behind all and sustaining all reality (Exod. 3:14; John 8:58). He is not only Truth (John 14:6), He reveals Truth (John 1:18)—an objective truth that provides *authentic* freedom (John 8:32, 36). Christ is a Realist in metaphysics, epistemology, anthropology, and ethics. There is not a hint of agnosticism or subjectivism in Christ or in His teachings to others. He dogmatically teaches that we can know truth as such—both in natural theology (Matt. 6:25-34) and sacred theology (John 1:18; 16:8).

A common Kantian philosophical influence manifests itself in how just the mention of “philosophy“ evokes negative reaction in society in general and is treated as anathema in many Christian circles. Instead of viewing philosophy as a wonderful *tool* in the pursuit of truth, often the affect is just the opposite—i.e., the viewpoint that philosophizing is just a bunch of agnostic and skeptic blathering. However, philosophy according to its etymology is “love of truth.” It is

⁴⁸See Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Jesus* (Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007), 1-4.

designed to be a pursuit of truth—regardless of where it leads. Instead, all too often, because of Kant it becomes protracted critical and skeptical discussions about epistemological justification about reality as such—instead of starting with reality and then discussing *how* one knows it. Due in no small part to Kant’s skeptical *mess*, “philosophy” is a dirty word to many.

It is unfortunate that some Christians are so soured by Kantian philosophical influences that they cannot see the great value of philosophy. Without philosophy how could one understand the great truths of *Esse* packed in “I AM WHO I AM” (‘ehyeh) of Exodus 3:14, or understand the various creeds of Nicea and Chalcedon that are filled with so many metaphysical concepts? Without philosophy how does one navigate through the various metaphors of God having human parts or feelings (i.e., anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms)? Philosophy is absolutely *necessary* for accurate understanding of all the biblical texts as well as proper development of any systematic theology. It guards Christian theology and provides a reasoned approach to the Logos and His Word. Indeed, Logos (rational thinking) is one of the names of Christ (John 1:1).

This negative attitude toward philosophy certainly is not shared by the apostle Paul who was unmistakably very much influenced by Jesus Christ (Philip. 1:21-23). In fact, Paul is not only philosophically informed (Acts 17), he explicitly warns *Christians* against being captivated by false philosophies (Col. 2:8). To inherently distrust philosophy as a reasoning tool is to be captured by an “anti-Logos” or anti-philosophy philosophy. An anti-philosophy or anti-Truth philosophy is a philosophy that stands in stark contrast to the Realist philosophy of Jesus Christ and those followers who were so influenced by Him.

What are some Kantian philosophical influences? To the extent that a Christian is subjective and rejects philosophical Realism (knowingly or unknowingly) in metaphysics,

epistemology, anthropology, and ethics, he is more influenced by Kant than Christ. To the extent that a Christian lives subjectively about Truth and believes he must take a blind leap of faith, he is more influenced by Kant than Christ. However, the Christian who is more *philosophically* influenced by Christ than Kant has enough confidence in Truth to be a seeker, lover, and discoverer of Truth. He is indeed a true philosopher in the most substantial way—a Christian “lover of wisdom” in natural and sacred theology.

Kant’s Pernicious Influences in Religion

Kant’s toxic influences in religion begin with his notion that true knowledge must be rejected in the realm of religion. He *dogmatically* rejects the notion that objectivity or knowledge could play a role in grounding of religious faith.⁴⁹ In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes that “metaphysics cannot be the foundation of religion.”⁵⁰ As he puts it, he “had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith.”⁵¹ He *insists* that there can be no theology of reason unless one takes moral laws as its basis, or uses them as a clue.⁵² With his rejection of objective religious knowledge, Kant marginalizes faith to the private and subjective realms of opinion and feelings where truth is only true for each individual.⁵³ According to the Kantian scheme this world is known by reason while the *other spiritual world* is revealed by “faith.”

Kant’s subjectivizing of religion permeates society as well as liberal and fundamental Christianity. Throughout society religion is commonly viewed as subjective and merely wishful

⁴⁹McKenzie, David. "Kant and Protestant theology." *Encounter* 43, no. 2 (March 1982), 157-167.

⁵⁰Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A849, B877.

⁵¹Ibid., Bxxx.

⁵²Ibid., A636, B664.

⁵³For how this subjective or postmodern view of truth resonates *today*, see Paul Copan, *True For You, but Not For Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christian Speechless* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998).

thinking as commonly reflected in politics (e.g., no one dare challenge the nature and validity of Mormonism in one of our presidential candidates)⁵⁴ and in the religion sections of local newspapers where existentialism, ecumenism, and pluralism is often celebrated. This removal of religion from objective biblical truth and dogmatic creedal confessions leads to subjectivity and the faith-experience. Furthermore, Christianity's great truths of grace, divine enablement, and salvation are reduced to Kantian moralizing sermons and liberation struggles for "justice."⁵⁵ With Truth cast aside, Christianity becomes just one more subjective existential religious experience in a world saturated with and lost in pluralism.⁵⁶

The Kantian infections that reach into both Protestantism and Catholicism for centuries is well documented by scholars. Garrett Green notes that "Kant's reinterpretation of Christianity becomes the prototype for the mediating Protestant theologies of the nineteenth century and their twentieth-century heirs, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant."⁵⁷ James Livingston, a historian of Christian thought, maintains that the "works of Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hegel alone determined the course of theology for at least the next century and a half."⁵⁸ Hans Frei explains, "Kant's thought was the crucial dividing point for Protestant theology in the nineteenth century. His thought was like a prism, through which reflection upon all previous philosophy had to pass.

⁵⁴Even *discussion* about the question of whether a Mormon is qualified to be President of the United States is not acceptable in society since all religions are "viewed" with equal validity (or invalidity). To attempt to weigh in on the validity of Mormonism as a Christian sect is to open oneself up to charges of arrogance for not accepting everyone's definition of "truth" regarding Christianity. Geisler has written an excellent article on the issue of a Mormon being President of the United States, http://www.normangeisler.net/public_html/MormonPresident.html (accessed November 15, 2011). Richard Howe has provided an excellent comparison between the *theological* beliefs of Christianity in contradistinction to Mormonism, <http://www.richardghowe.com/Mormonism.pdf>.

⁵⁶For documentation of the Kantian influence that led to John Hick's pluralism, see Paul Copan, *True For You, but Not For Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless*, 71-77.

⁵⁷Green, Garrett. "Kant as Christian Apologist : The Failure of Accommodationist Theology." *Pro Ecclesia* (1995) 4, no. 3:302.

⁵⁸James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: From Enlightenment to Vatican II* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1971, 143.

All paths led to Kant."⁵⁹ Mortimer Adler points to modern aspects of Kant's influence among the very influential like Hans Kung with his ecumenical thinking and Joseph Campbell with his reductive thinking about religion in relation to mythology. Adler adds that the deep influence on these men "lies in the fact that the cast of their minds has been formed and deeply influenced by their addiction to twentieth-century liberal attitude toward pluralism and by the serious errors of modern thought, especially those made by such thinkers as Kant, Hegel."⁶⁰ The leap of faith "theology" of Kierkegaard finds its roots in Kant.⁶¹ By removing Christianity from the realm of Truth and reducing it to the realm of subjective "values," it is not hard to see how the Higher Criticism of Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) and the demythologizing of Rudolf Bultmann would rear their ugly heads to attack the Bible as *truthful* history and theology.⁶²

The religious subjectivism of Kant also creates an anti-apologetic attitude within Christendom along with an erosion of the credibility of apologetics in society. William Lane Craig points to Kant as responsible "for the decline of historical apologetics during the nineteenth century as the tide of subjectivism swept away an objective approach to matters of religious belief," and paved the way for the hammers of biblical criticism.⁶³ Joseph Owens

⁵⁹Hans W. Frei, "The Academic Tradition in Nineteenth-Century Protestant Theology," *Faith and Ethics: The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr*, ed., Paul Ramsey (New York Harper & Row, 1965), 17.

⁶⁰Mortimer J. Adler, *Truth in Religion: The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 82-3.

⁶¹Francis A. Schaeffer, *God Who Is There*, 21; Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason: A Penetrating Analysis Of Trends In Modern Thought*, 32-56. Schaeffer's criticism of Thomas Aquinas is unfounded. Aquinas was unmistakably a Realist unlike Kant.

⁶²John S. Feinberg and editor, *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives On the Relationship between the Old and New: Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1988), 30-31. For specifics on the influences of an experientially based theology, see David McKenzie, "Kant and Protestant Theology, Encounter 43 no 2 (Spring 1982), 157-167.

⁶³William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Belmont, CA: Crossway Books, 2008), 348.

provides the following quote by Reinhold Niebuhr from *The Saturday Evening Post*, “Ever since Kant critically examined the various ‘proofs’ of the existence of God, no thoughtful believer has found it possible to give irrefutable rational proof of God’s existence.”⁶⁴

Finally, and what is arguably the most egregious evil, is Kant’s displacement of Christianity’s most sacred teachings on God’s grace system with a human works system dependent upon man’s autonomous moral will—self-righteousness instead of grace! Not only does Kant destroy confidence in Truth, he also displaced Christian grace with a human morality works system. In fact, he even goes so far as to say that his belief in God was based squarely on his own morality: “I will inevitably believe in the existence of God and a future life, and I am sure that nothing can make this belief waver, because of my moral principles themselves, which I cannot renounce without becoming detestable in my own eyes, and would thereby be overthrown.”⁶⁵ This reduction of Christianity into a human works system explains why “Kant generally avoids making explicit reference to Christian church, creeds, theologians, and dogmas.”⁶⁶ Even as a legalistic works system, it is not very lofty because it is based on a good will and not even the actual works. For Kant “the good will is the only unconditional good.”⁶⁷ Kant’s entire system of morality is a deontological system that is not dependent on any religious

⁶⁴Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (San Francisco: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 338n17. The only Kantian criticisms of the proofs for the existence of God that have validity are his attacks on the ontological argument as put forth by Anselm and Descartes, see Alister E. McGrath, ed., *The Christian Theology Reader*, 3rd ed. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 35-6; Norman Geisler and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 134-35. Although Plantinga tries to revise the ontological argument with his own version, it really turns out to be a type of cosmological argument, see William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 148.

⁶⁵Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A828, B856.

⁶⁶Garret Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 31.

⁶⁷Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 79.

grounding; his moral system is *not* based on God; it is based on his own works and rationalism.⁶⁸ Kant does not even grant that the moral law is from God since that would destroy the autonomy of man. For Kant religion is not founded on Truth but on morality and ethics.⁶⁹ However, as good as morality and the Law are, they have no power for salvation (Rom. 3:10-12) or the spiritual life (Rom. 7:14-24). This point is not lost on Charles Colson:

My problem was that I didn't understand the deceptiveness of the human heart. In college, I had studied the best of the world's moral philosophy, including Immanuel Kant's famous "categorical imperative," which is really a modified version of the Golden Rule, a near universal moral principle. So I *knew* well enough what was right. The problem was that I lacked the will to *do* it. For we humans have an infinite capacity for self-rationalization; we can justify anything. Which is exactly what I did. . . .

Moral reasoning and intellectual knowledge are not enough. . . . When we turn to God, the Holy Spirit empowers us to do what we cannot do on our own.⁷⁰

Kant's religion of personal "righteousness" is a *faith* in his practical morality—with no need for dependence on God, grace, sacred revelation, or theological accuracy—as is so common in social gospel and liberation movements. For Kant it never really is about the true ontological status about Jesus Christ or the Bible or grace—a view prevalent in theological liberalism where faith is not about reality but about fulfilling some existential need. The effect of is to reduce Christianity to subjective aspirations and hopes which are all dependent on some autonomous and free human "righteousness."

In Kant's self-righteous moral based religion he adopts a fervent disdain for pietism's inspirationalists attitude toward Scripture and traditional religious service.⁷¹ He also believes that most of what passes for religious service of God is "counterfeit service" (*afterdienst*), a

⁶⁸Ibid., 77.

⁶⁹Craig Vincent Mitchell, *Charts of Philosophy and Philosophers* (Belmont, CA: Zondervan, 2007), 202.

⁷⁰Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1999), 366.

⁷¹Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xii.

pretension of honoring God through which we operate directly counter to true service required by him. For Kant, the only true service of God consists in nothing but morally good conduct in life. He views religious rituals and formulas a “superstitious delusion” to be condemned as “fetishisms.”⁷² While Scripture soundly condemns religious hypocrisy (Matt. 6:1-8; 23:1-35), it also condemns anyone who tries to be saved by their good works. In fact, some of the greatest warnings in Scripture are directed against those who preach a works’ salvation: such ones are under a curse (Gal. 1:7-9) and end up treating Christ as if He died needlessly—for nothing (Gal. 2:21).

Kant may loosely think of himself as a Christian and could even wax eloquently about loving God,⁷³ but by removing special revelation and displacing grace with his own moral system of works he ended up deifying himself. Kant arrogated himself to the level of God Himself. Gilson’s words are incisive:

Having proved in his youth that we know nothing about God, old Kant was beginning to suspect that he himself might be God: ‘God is not a being outside me, but merely a thought in me. God is the morally practical self-legislative reason. Therefore, only a God in me, about me, and over me. . . . God can be sought only in us . . . There is a Being in me which, though distinct from me, stands to me in relations of causal efficacy, and which, itself is free . . . and as man, am myself this Being.’⁷⁴

Peter Kreeft makes a similar point by way of a colloquy between Socrates and Kant on the kingdom of God (from *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*) where after Socrates points out to Kant that he is making man God and how offensive this would be to Christians: “So

⁷²Ibid, xiv.

⁷³See Immanuel Kant, *Lectures On Ethics*, 27:720-729. To this day Kant continues to have active defenders like Steve Palmquist who believes Kant is a friend of Christianity, <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/srp/unpub.html>.

⁷⁴ Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1999), 192. In the spirit of Kant, the first article of the Humanist Manifesto II declares that “we begin with humans not God, nature not deity,” http://www.americanhumanist.org/Who_We_Are/About_Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_II [accessed November 5, 2011].

we are really the second Person of the Trinity,” to which Kant replies “I do not use Trinitarian formulas.”⁷⁵

In evaluating whether one is more *religiously* influenced by Kant or Christ, let us note three comparisons. First, Christ never taught that one must deny true knowledge to make room for faith, and anyone who believes that knowledge must be rejected to make room for faith is more influenced by Kant than Christ. Second, Christ never even hinted that a man could trust in his own morality instead of God’s grace, and to the extent that a man trusts in his own moral goodness, he is more Kantian than Christ. The idea that “all that counts is that man live a good moral life” is anti-Christian and Kantian to the core. Third, to the extent that a believer thinks he can autonomously live by what he thinks is right (e.g., exalt himself like the Most High, Isaiah 14:12-15), he is more influenced by Kant (and Satan) than Jesus Christ and God’s matchless grace. Conversely, to the extent that a Christian uses true knowledge to illuminate faith, trusts in Christ rather than self, and lives in and by His grace than by his own human righteousness, he is more influenced by Christ than Kant. To the extent that a Christian lives in the confidence of Scripture, he is more influenced by Christ and His Spirit than the Kantian *Zeitgeist*.

Conclusion

Kant posits three questions regarding the ultimate issues of life: “All the interests of my reason, speculative as well as practical, combine in the three following questions: 1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope?”⁷⁶ How a Christian answers these basic questions may serve as an aid in evaluating whether he is more influenced by Kant or Christ. With Kant there is no confidence in *objective* divine knowledge, no confidence in objective

⁷⁵Kreeft, *Socrates Meets Kant*, 325.

⁷⁶Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B2.

divine guidance or empowerment, and no confidence in objective hope. This stands in stark contrast to those under the influence of Christ who brings confidence in objective divine truth to discover and grow in, confidence in objective divine knowledge and empowerment “to do” (Rom. 7:23), and confidence in divine hope. In fact, Christ is the Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13). Only Christ promises objective truth, enablement, and hope. All Kant offers is doubt and agnosticism which precludes confidence in the arguments of natural revelation or confidence in special revelation. What hope can there be when such revelation is precluded by Kant? What cure could possibly exist for an agnostic who precludes really gaining objective knowledge and truth in natural theology or sacred theology? What a useless and protracted “Kantian revolution”!

Since Geisler warned his seminarians some thirty years ago of the pervasive pernicious of Kantian influences, there have been wonderful encouraging signs in Christian philosophy and apologetics. There has been a tremendous increase in the development of Christian apologetic resources over the past thirty years in the areas of cosmology, philosophy, and religion from a distinctive rational and Christian viewpoint. This was not the case thirty years ago when Geisler was facing Kantian influences in Christians. At that time there were no seminaries *devoted* to apologetics and Christian philosophy to aid the Christian in apologetics and help him understand how non-Christian systems can *contaminate* his spiritual life and theology. It is imperative that every Christian understand the philosophical giants whose thoughts continue to saturate the *Zeitgeist* in which he finds himself.

Perhaps when Norman addressed his seminarians, the Kantian influence was so great that there was no *sense* of need for philosophy and apologetics. Perhaps the Kantian dichotomy between the observable world and the other world was wide enough to necessitate a fideism—a fideism which teaches that the *only* thing to do was to “just preach the Word.” Given that the one

preaching “the Word” possesses philosophical presuppositions, and that there are philosophical concepts in “the Word,” and in the listeners of “the Word,” a person would have to be philosophically naïve to think that he could preach the Word without already doing philosophy. The question is not whether one needs philosophy; we are all philosophers. Acknowledging this is not enough, there must be an understanding of what kind of philosophy one is already doing: either in accordance with Truth (Realism) and Christ or falsely and deceitfully though dressed up with Christian nomenclature (Col. 2:8). The person who is philosophically trained has far better tools to discern even the smallest amount of philosophical error than can contaminate his theological views and relationship with Jesus Christ. As Mortimer Adler puts it, “Philosophy is a way of life and philosophy is something that guides a man’s life.”⁷⁷ To be guided by philosophy necessarily means to be influenced by it on the deepest level. To be guided by agnosticism is to be influenced on the deepest level by Kantian influences. To be guided by confidence in Truth is to be influenced on the deepest level by Jesus Christ and His Word.

Perhaps it was Geisler’s admonition that played a significant role in waking up men and women from their evangelical slumber to the contaminating influences of Kant in their own spiritual lives, theology, churches, and in society at large. Perhaps it took someone like Geisler to wake up the Christian somnolence regarding the danger of being captivated by false human philosophies (Col. 2:8) due to being philosophically naïve. Perhaps it was this awakening that led to the increase in philosophical and apologetic literature over the last three decades so that Christians could understand the philosophical dangers as well as intelligently defend the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3) and prepare themselves to always be ready to do apologetics with respect to the *objective hope* of authentic Christianity (1 Pet. 3:15).

⁷⁷Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Think About the Great Ideas: From the Great Books of Western Civilization* (Chicago: Open Court, 2000), 459.

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