

4-2012

Cross-Examination of In Defense of Kant's Religion

Stephen R. Palmquist

Department of Religion and Philosophy, Hong Kong Baptist University, stevepq@hkbu.edu.hk

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.hkbu.edu.hk/hkbu_staff_publication



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

This document is the authors' final version of the published article.

Link to published article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5840/faithphil201229217>

APA Citation

Palmquist, S. (2012). Cross-Examination of In Defense of Kant's Religion. *Faith and Philosophy: The Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*, 29 (2), 170-180. <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil201229217>

This Journal Article is brought to you for free and open access by HKBU Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in HKBU Staff Publication by an authorized administrator of HKBU Institutional Repository. For more information, please contact repository@hkbu.edu.hk.

CROSS-EXAMINATION OF
IN DEFENSE OF KANT'S RELIGION

Stephen R. Palmquist

This article extends the metaphorical trial posed by the authors of *In Defense of Kant's Religion* by cross-examining them with two challenges. The first challenge is for the authors to clarify their claim that they are the first interpreters to present “a holistic and linear interpretation” of Kant’s *Religion* that portrays it as containing a “transcendental analysis” of religious concepts, given that several of the past interpreters whose works they survey in Part 1 conduct a similar type of analysis. The second is to compare the assumption pervading Part 2 of their book, that Kant conducts his first “experiment” in the first three Pieces and the second experiment in the Fourth Piece of *Religion*, with the previously defended view that the two experiments are weaved throughout all four Pieces. After observing several dangers this assumption poses for affirmative interpreters of Kant’s philosophy of religion, I conclude by showing how the authors’ problem-driven hermeneutic led them to downplay various portions of Kant’s text.

Extending the Trial

I cannot hide my sympathy with the overall thrust of *In Defense of Kant's Religion* (*IDKR*). Its masterful effort to resolve “the most common conundrums forwarded by Kant’s critics” (234)¹ resonates so extensively with my own reading of Kant’s *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* that I would be foolish to minimize its significance. Nevertheless, merely singing the praises of its contribution to the recent “affirmative” trend in interpreting Kant’s great (but hardly straightforward) philosophical classic would waste a valuable opportunity to advance the cutting edge of scholarship. Bypassing the statutory praises one gives at the outset of such critical reviews (but see note 15, below), I shall therefore move directly to the first of two questions, intended here to cross-examine the authors’ defense of Kant’s coherence.

In keeping with *IDKR*’s two-part division—first an overview of past interpreters’

positions, then a fresh attempt to interpret *Religion*, based on three novel interpretive assumptions—I begin by asking for clarification on how the authors understand their claims to *IDKR*'s uniqueness. My second question, stemming from *IDKR*'s Part 2, focuses on the legitimacy of one of its three interpretive innovations. I aim to offer the authors an opportunity to clarify where they stand on two issues that might otherwise prevent readers from accurately assessing the nature and extent of their accomplishment.

Kant's Religion as a Transcendental System

My first question is: *What do you mean by your claim that IDKR uniquely presents "a holistic and linear interpretation" of Kant's Religion that portrays it as containing a "transcendental analysis" of religious concepts?*² *IDKR* clearly does conduct such an analysis. What is puzzling is that the authors seem unaware that books in their own Bibliography have also done so. Given that Part 1 shows an impressive command of recent major trends in interpreting *Religion*, the authors must not intend the quoted words in their ordinary sense. Hermeneutic charity constrains one to assume they are aware that some of the very interpreters whose works they summarize have written section-by-section commentaries portraying *Religion* as defending a transcendental system. Unless the authors were either unaware of this or *chose* to ignore such previous attempts (neither assumption being charitable), they must have meant something idiosyncratic by "linear interpretation" and "transcendental analysis."

If the authors insist they are using these terms in their normal sense, my first question would be a request that the authors clarify why they failed to acknowledge that their approach in Part 2 follows an already established motif. Not in dispute is that *IDKR* uniquely responds to the challenges of certain *specific allegations* against the coherence of Kant's system. But Part 2 claims to accomplish far more than this, as if there simply *are no precursors* to their linear, transcendental analysis. Thus, this first challenge appears to be stronger: to explain how *their* understanding of a linear transcendental analysis differs fundamentally from past interpreters' understanding of these terms. Several examples that appear to contradict their claim will highlight the urgency of this challenge.

Allen Wood, the past defender of Kant's coherence with whom *IDKR* interacts most often in Part 2, initiated the affirmative shift in interpreting Kant's *Religion*, though he did not traverse very far down the path he forged. While much of his *Kant's Moral Religion* examines religious implications of theories advanced in Kant's *Critiques*, three chapters

discuss Kant's *Religion*. Wood presents a text-based analysis of the key arguments in the First and Second Pieces.³ His analysis is linear, though not holistic, since he offers only cursory comments on the Third and Fourth Pieces. Moreover, although the early Wood's preferred motif is quasi-existentialist, he focuses on the role of the disposition as Kant's key to establishing a *non-empirical* account of conversion, thus highlighting that Kant's analysis is *transcendental*.⁴ It is odd that the authors chose Wood's linear transcendental analysis and his account of the centrality of the disposition as their primary partner in dialogue: Wood could not have responded to the "conundrums" *IDKR* attempts to resolve, because they were all advanced *after* Wood wrote his book!

Without mentioning each Kant-interpreter featured in *IDKR*, we can assume at least *some* would regard their books as having progressed further than Wood in making Kant's *Religion* coherent. Would John Hare, for example, accept the claim that his *Kant's Moral Gap* contains no linear, transcendental analysis of *Religion*? *IDKR* defines "linear interpretation" as "one where [the text's] arguments are understood to build on one another by unpacking underdeveloped concepts from [Kant's] critical philosophy in ways that are intricate and insightful" (233). Do the authors seriously deny that some past interpreters of *Religion* have done exactly that?

Consider Sidney Axinn's *The Logic of Hope*. *IDKR* lists this book in the Bibliography (262) and refers to it once (257), yet never points out that Axinn's Chapter 3 is a lengthy, section-by-section analysis of *Religion*, explicitly aiming to establish the text's *holistic* coherence.⁵ Axinn conducts a rigorous logical analysis of the arguments that appear problematic, given Kant's strictures on knowledge—this being the precise nature of the alleged conundrums *IDKR* defends Kant against. *IDKR* never considers the position Axinn defends, that *Religion* might be inherently ambiguous because human persons are inherently ambiguous, so that Kant's portrayal of religion is both accurate and deep precisely *because of* the (apparent) conundrums *IDKR* claims to dispel. Like Axinn, other past interpreters think Kant's emphasis on *hope* is rooted in his *unwillingness* to take refuge in the kind of metaphysical "cognitions" the authors claim Kant establishes in *Religion*. Curiously (given the in-depth literature review in Part 1), *IDKR* offers no example of an Axinn-type affirmative approach.

In case I am misunderstanding other interpreters' positions, this first line of questioning concludes by referring to my own publications on *Religion*. My first conversation with one of *IDKR*'s authors was sparked by his interest in my then-recent (1992) *Kant-Studien* article,

“Does Kant Reduce Religion to Morality?” That article offers a resounding “No” to its title’s question, suggesting we should instead read *Religion* as *raising* morality to the level of religion. In defending this position, I present a *linear* summary of Kant’s entire argument, portraying *Religion* as a system of *transcendental* conditions for the possibility of religion. That essay appears (revised) as Chapter VI of *Kant’s Critical Religion (KCR)*, where it prepares for Part Three’s tracing of Kant’s systematic argument through *every section* of *Religion*;⁶ Chapter VII analyzes Kant’s “attempt” (*Versuch*) to construct a system of rational religion (his so-called “first experiment”⁷); Chapter VIII analyzes his “attempt” to render Christianity consistent with that system (his second experiment); Chapter IX adopts the opposing, biblical theologian’s Perspective, outlining a Christian theology that remains Kantian. *KCR*’s threefold analysis covers every major aspect of Kant’s text discussed by *IDKR*, including the transcendental character of the “archetype” (or prototype) as a metaphysical “gift” without which “conversion would be impossible” (*KCR*, 162). Yet *IDKR* virtually ignores *KCR*’s Part Three. The only hint that these lengthy chapters exist comes in Part 1: “To unpack all the idiosyncrasies of Palmquist’s approach to *Religion* [i.e., of *KCR*’s Part Three] would take us well beyond the confines of the required testimony” (24). *IDKR*’s summary of *KCR*’s position focuses instead on *KCR*’s claims about the metaphysical grounding of Kant’s *Critical philosophy* in the mystical writings of Swedenborg; to make this point, the authors admittedly need not summarize *KCR*’s analysis of the coherence of Kant’s *Religion* as a transcendental system. In the context of the courtroom metaphor adopted in *IDKR*’s Part 1, this neglect of *KCR*’s interpretive heart may be legitimate. But is it legitimate to go on in Part 2 to defend an interpretation of *Religion* that closely resembles and was directly influenced by *KCR*’s, without ever acknowledging the similarity?⁸ Only if the authors meant something idiosyncratic by “holistic and linear” and “transcendental analysis.”

IDKR exhibits several worrying indications that this charitable reading may be unwarranted. Part 1 presents *KCR*’s Kant as an outright mystic, missing the point of the qualifier “Critical” in “Critical mysticism.” *KCR* never portrays *Religion* as an explicit defense of *any* kind of mysticism (not even “Critical”). Quite to the contrary, “Critical” mysticism means (in part) that the *Critical System* provides a philosophical grounding for a *properly* mystical life, in contrast to Swedenborg’s fanatical mysticism. When Kant wrote *Religion* he had completed his Critical groundwork for metaphysics, and so also his implicitly analogous Critical groundwork for mysticism. *Religion* is therefore no more a defense of mysticism than a defense of metaphysics *as such*. Moreover, *IDKR*’s Part 2 portrays *KCR*’s approach even more

inaccurately: each of the authors' several references is either confusing or commits outright exegetical error.⁹

Rather than acknowledging its relevance, *IDKR* misleadingly labels *KCR* as defending the "Religion-as-Symbol thesis" (209). *One aspect* of *KCR*'s interpretation of *Religion* could be called a "*Faith-as-Symbol thesis*"; but this is very different. Religion, on my reading of Kant, puts believers in touch with an inner, transcendental reality that concrete symbols of faith must point to in order to retain meaningfulness; but religion cannot be *reduced* to these symbols! *IDKR* is completely correct to advance this claim (209), except insofar as to imply no previous interpreter has made it. Ironically, the authors note that Kant "admits" the importance symbols have in religion, portraying this as "akin to the *Religion-as-Symbol* motif of Ward and Palmquist" (229). Nowhere do I *identify* Kantian religion with symbolism;¹⁰ yet *IDKR* latches onto one word, "symbolically" (177–178), to discount *KCR*'s reading of Kantian atonement, even though *KCR* also defends a much deeper, non-symbolic interpretation,¹¹ similar to the one advanced in *IDKR*. *KCR* not only agrees with, but directly influenced *IDKR*'s claim that Kant's first experiment in *Religion* is essentially a system of the transcendental conditions that make the symbols of empirical religion theoretically possible and morally necessary (e.g., *KCR* 148–149).

IDKR contrasts its heretofore allegedly "untried" approach to those of past interpreters with bold words like: "Gone was the temptation to truncate the text in order for it to make sense" (234). Yet some past interpreters *have* conducted the kind of holistic analysis *IDKR* claims to perform; not all "truncate the text." Ironically, the authors' implied self-assessment, that *their* interpretation does not truncate Kant's text, turns out to be questionable.

Locating Kant's Two "Experiments"

The novel assumption that most seriously undermines the overall cogency of *IDKR*'s interpretation concerns how to identify Kant's two "experiments." The other two assumptions—that Kant's distinction between pure cognition and empirical cognition helps overcome his strictures on God-talk, and that "disposition" for Kant refers to "the enduring moral ontology of the human being" (122)—are also controversial. But this third assumption is the most subtle and problematic. So my second question is: *How do you reconcile your claims about the location of Kant's two experiments with the massive amount of contrary evidence in Kant's text?*

IDKR's assumption here is indeed novel: that when Kant distinguishes between two experiments in the Prefaces, he intends to develop the first experiment entirely in the first

three Pieces, modulating to the second experiment only in the Fourth Piece. Unfortunately, the authors make little effort to rebut previously published evidence contradicting their position. They merely *assert*: “Kant’s explication of rational religion in the first experiment refers specifically to Books One, Two, and Three” (203). Yet *Kant* makes no such claim. Without any significant textual backing,¹² their assertion amounts to intriguing eisegesis.

The authors’ assumption is instructive, though mistaken. In describing Kant’s account of the two experiments, they claim the first “considers only natural religion,” while the second relates natural religion to a specific revelation (114); yet Kant introduces “natural religion” only in the Fourth Piece, *never mentioning it* in the Prefaces. By assuming the first experiment corresponds to what Kant later calls “natural religion,” they cleverly make their assumption appear self-evident: the Fourth Piece, being the only place where *Religion* discusses how natural religion *as such* relates to a purported revelation, *must* constitute the second experiment! This is not merely a verbal quibble; it has far-reaching implications for how we understand the two experiments and the overall goal of *Religion*.

Two problems plague *IDKR*’s assumption. First, it leaves unexplained why Kant examines scriptural claims to revelation not only in the Fourth Piece, but throughout *Religion*. He compares Scriptural claims to rational doctrines in *each* Piece, discussing in each case whether the doctrine “lead[s] back to the same pure *rational system* of religion”—this being *Kant*’s description of how the first experiment (the “pure *rational system*”) relates to the second (*Religion*, 12). The section-by-section exegesis in *KCR*’s Chapter VIII carefully analyses how the whole *Religion* text weaves the two experiments together like two sides of a tapestry, so that characteristics of both experiments are visible in each Piece. The details presented in *KCR* demonstrate what I can only summarize here: the second experiment comes into focus toward the end of each Piece. Thus, the last section of the First Piece (necessarily downplayed in *IDKR*) explicitly modulates to an examination of the Christian doctrine of original sin, highlighting its origin in “Scripture” (*Religion*, 41); *KCR* 202–207 interprets this as Kant’s crucial first stage “[i]n carrying out his second experiment” (*KCR*, 202). Similarly, in the Second Piece, Section Two begins “Holy Scripture

. . . sets forth this intelligible moral relation in the form of a story” (*Religion*, 78), then compares the scriptural account of salvation with the rational account Kant himself defended in Section One; significantly, instead of responding to the explicit claim in *KCR* 165, 207–216, that Kant is here developing an important “second stage” in his second experiment, *IDKR* mentions Section Two only once, incorrectly identifying it as part of the General Comment

(166; cf. 155). The Third Piece, likewise, has two major “Divisions”: Division One, a “Philosophical Presentation” (*Religion*, 95), focuses on the first experiment (*KCR*, 165–175), while Division Two’s “Historical Presentation” (*Religion*, 124) focuses on the second experiment (*KCR*, 216–229). *IDKR* goes to great lengths to rationalize why Division Two says so much about Christianity (185), something the authors think Kant should have put in the Fourth Piece (e.g., 192). What is puzzling here is not that *IDKR* proposes a new suggestion regarding the location of the two experiments, but that in spite of their masterful overview of the literature in Part 1, the authors miss a golden opportunity to *defend* their novel assumption, had they argued against the alternative defended at length in *KCR*. Instead of taking up that challenge in *IDKR*, the authors simply remain silent about what is arguably the most detailed, textually-based alternative reading in the literature.¹³

The second (and arguably more serious) problem posed by the authors’ assumption about the location of the two experiments is that their account implies the arguments of the Fourth Piece *play no formal role in Kant’s system of rational religion* (i.e., in the first experiment). Ironically, their summary of the purpose of the Fourth Piece implies its *sole* task cannot be to conduct the second experiment. Because in the Third Piece Kant has argued that the weakness of human nature *requires* empirical manifestations of the invisible church (and because we humans must be in charge of organizing these structures), Kant emphasizes in the Fourth Piece the importance of keeping such empirical structures well “pruned” (228). If the authors’ assumption were correct, then this metaphorical pruning would apply *only* to Christian churches, not to the practice of rational religion as such or to manifestations of other historical faiths. Interestingly, the authors inadvertently imply that Kant is here also thinking of the first experiment, for they refer to “the dual perspective of the two experiments” (228); even while discussing Christianity in the Fourth Piece, Kant also says something *essential* about the first experiment. As *KCR*’s linear analysis demonstrates, one side of the tapestry cannot be woven without threads appearing on the other side!

If the Fourth Piece consists entirely and *only* of Kant’s second experiment (210), then the distinction between true and false service of God, made in its title, would apply only to Christians. This distinction plays an indispensable (though regulative, hypothetical) role in completing Kant’s system of rational religion (see *KCR*, 229–235), yet *IDKR*’s assumption regarding the purpose of the Fourth Piece forces the authors to ignore this role. If their novel assumption were correct, then wouldn’t Kant’s title indicate his intent to modulate to his long-awaited consideration of Christianity? *IDKR* never addresses the obvious problem of why Kant

avoids mentioning Christianity in the title of the Fourth Piece, if conducting the second experiment is actually its *sole purpose*.

IDKR's account of "the opening of Book Four" (211) is technically correct, but misleading, because it does not describe *all* that Kant accomplishes there. Readers unfamiliar with *Religion* would not know, merely from reading *IDKR*, that (following a summary of the first-experiment argument *up to this point*) this opening section explains the key rational distinction between true and false service of God. To persuade their readers that the Fourth Piece makes no contribution to the first experiment, the authors *must* downplay this distinction, since it is a crucial component of Kant's system of rational religion. Even though Kant emphasizes this focus both in the title of the Fourth Piece and in its opening section, *IDKR* discusses Kant's theory of true and false service only nineteen pages into chapter 8 (227)—just five pages before the end.

IDKR points out that the Fourth Piece is divided into sections considering natural religion and revealed religion. The authors' discussion of these terms is accurate (219–220), though incomplete; it does not justify the conclusion drawn from it regarding the location of the second experiment. Because Kant associates *both* sections with Christianity, the authors assume both must refer to the second experiment. But the first section explicitly argues that Christianity at its core *is a natural religion*; as the authors admit, the latter is the topic of the *first* experiment. Kant's distinction between natural and *learned* religion correlates more unambiguously to the distinction between the first and second experiments, as the authors acknowledge (220). Why would Kant deal with natural religion at such length in a Piece that concerns only the *second* experiment? An even greater problem is that they never convey what *Kant* presents as the main purpose of his "turn" to the distinction between natural and revealed religion in the Fourth Piece. His purpose is not (as *IDKR* claims) to begin conducting his second experiment, having finally completed the first. Rather, his aim (*Religion*, 182; see also 105; cf. *KCR*, 175–183) is to answer the question: *How does God want to be served in a church?* Answering this question is as crucial to the first experiment as to the second. Is that why *IDKR* never calls attention to Kant's explicit aim? Acknowledging Kant's focus would have required the authors to revise their view of the second experiment's location, abandoning one of their three novel assumptions.

Is the "much-debated distinction" (211) between true and false service to be identified solely with Kant's *second* experiment? *IDKR* repeatedly identifies the second experiment with the entire Fourth Piece, yet admits the turn to the second experiment actually occurs only *after* Kant makes this distinction in the introductory section. Ironically, *IDKR*'s discussion of

the second experiment does not begin until the *second* section of Chapter 8. What then is the status of Kant's preliminary distinction, as put forward in the introductory section (and in the Piece title)? Is it, or is it not, part of his defense of the first experiment's transcendental system of religion? If it is, then the Fourth Piece does contain arguments essential to the first experiment.

This second line of questioning can be summed up with a twofold question: *How can the authors reconcile their interpretation of the two experiments with the fact that Kant (a) establishes a crucial aspect of his system of rational religion in the Fourth Piece, and (b) considers how Christianity fits the mold of rational religion in each of the four Pieces, especially in the final major section of each Piece?* This question is intensified when we note that *IDKR* says almost nothing about the General Comments appended to each Piece. Its account of the two experiments thus raises a further question: In what way do the first three General Comments (dealing with Effects of Grace, Miracles, and Mysteries) relate solely to the first experiment, while the fourth General Comment (dealing with Means of Grace) relates solely to the second experiment? Without a persuasive answer, we are left with no other alternative than to conclude that *IDKR* inadvertently commits the very error it accuses all past interpreters of committing: making their position appear more persuasive than it actually is by truncating Kant's text wherever conflicting evidence arises.

IDKR's Problem-Driven Hermeneutic

IDKR's exegesis of *Religion* is driven by "conundrums" presented in the writings of several critics. In itself, this is a legitimate expository strategy, but it can produce only limited results: demonstrating that the conundrums can be solved. A good example of the impact of this problem-driven hermeneutic comes when the authors discuss the General Comment to the Fourth Piece. They mention this intriguing climax of Kant's text only in passing, saying they need not discuss the issues because it "is not considered a source of conundrums" (228). However, these issues *are* a source of significant misunderstandings (see *KCR*, 147–148, 472–497): reductionist interpreters frequently refer to this closing section of *Religion* as evidence that Kant merely discards empirical religion. Any serious affirmative interpreter must therefore stake a claim on these points of dispute: Is Kant affirming the value of prayer, or denying it? Is he encouraging church attendance, or providing a good excuse to stay away? Is he disclosing the reason baptism and communion should be preserved, or mocking those who still believe in silly rituals? *IDKR* offers no hint regarding how such important questions

should be answered. If anything, by referring to them as “excesses” (228), the authors imply they read Kant as *rejecting* these elements of what Kant calls indirect service. If so, they have (inadvertently?) portrayed *Religion* as reducing religion to morality after all!

The dangers of *IDKR*’s way of interpreting Kant’s two experiments are significant, at least for Christians: its portrayal of Kant’s second experiment requires the authors systematically to overlook Kant’s many attempts to *reform* traditional understandings of Christian doctrine and practice. The First Piece no longer reveals a *moral gap* to be filled by scriptural symbols if (as *IDKR* argues) evil is a fully cognized, Aristotelian reality whose depths are laid bare by Kant’s transcendental analysis (e.g., 147–151). *IDKR*’s attempt to dissociate the Second Piece from Kant’s second experiment likewise leads the authors to write as if Kant’s language is Platonic *rather than* Christian (158), even though Kant there quotes frequently from the Bible. And in discussing the Third Piece they read *Religion* 93–94 as claiming *unconverted* persons can corrupt the disposition of good-hearted persons, when Kant’s argument makes sense only if it refers to *converted* persons corrupting each other;¹⁴ with similar implausibility, their novel assumption leads them to skew passages in the Third Piece, where Kant refers explicitly to Christianity, as if his warnings about the dangers of organized religion refer only to “non-Christian faiths” (e.g., 158).

Just as the authors’ assumption about the location of the two experiments adversely influences their understanding of how the first three Pieces of *Religion* relate to historical faiths such as Christianity, it also obscures various key factors relating to the role played by the Fourth Piece in a rational system of religion. Thus, after reading an alleged “elitist tendency” into the Fourth Piece, their attempt to clear Kant from this allegation (202) seems half-hearted. Yet Kant’s rejection of clericalism in *Religion* is *anti-elitist* in the extreme. Unlike his later *Conflict of the Faculties*, where his discussion of the conflict between religious and philosophical *scholars in a university* has arguably elitist overtones, Kant’s arguments in *Religion* are about *how to please God in a church*. By reading the assumptions of *Conflict* back into *Religion*, *IDKR* makes the potential problem of elitism look more important than the text merits.

The upshot is that, unless the authors can demonstrate the *advantages* of their problem-driven hermeneutic in general and of their assumption regarding the two experiments in particular, and can effectively rebut the weighty evidence that militates against the latter, *IDKR* presents the ironic picture of two “defenders” of Kant who, in trying to make his claims “coherent,” end up portraying *Religion* in a manner that renders his position unworthy of

assent, at least for Christians. Were Kant himself able to respond, I suspect he might refuse to address *any* of the foregoing issues, instead merely reciting the old rabbinic prayer: “Lord, protect me from my friends; I can take care of my enemies myself!”¹⁵

Hong Kong Baptist University

Footnotes:

¹Page references without other identifiers refer to Chris L. Firestone and Nathan Jacobs, *In Defense of Kant’s Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

²*IDKR* 233; cf. 154 and throughout Part 2.

³In referring to the four “Books” of *Religion*, I follow Werner Pluhar’s recent translation of Kant’s *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009), calling each Book a “Piece”—this being the literal translation of Kant’s term, *Stück*. Kant probably used this term because he initially wrote these four essays as “pieces” for publication in *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.

⁴Allen Wood, *Kant’s Moral Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1970), 180, 203, 230.

⁵Sidney Axinn, *The Logic of Hope* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994), 67–138.

⁶Stephen Palmquist, *Kant’s Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant’s System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). *KCR* applies the systematic assumptions introduced in volume one (*KSP*), *Kant’s System of Perspectives: An Architectonic Interpretation of the Critical Philosophy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993). These assumptions form a backdrop but are not the focus of *KCR*’s Part Three, whose exposition is an explicitly transcendental interpretation of *Religion* (see *KCR*, 142 and *passim*). Our authors apparently mistook the backdrop inherited from Volume One (i.e., the “architectonic”) to be the *purpose* of *KCR*.

⁷Pluhar is the only English translator who consistently uses “experiment(s)” for both of Kant’s initial references to these two “attempts” (*Versuche*) in *Religion* 12.

⁸In presenting the Palmquist-Wood contrast (103–104), *IDKR* never acknowledges *KCR*’s basic claim, that *Religion* bridges Kant’s theoretical and practical systems. *IDKR* adopts the term coined in *KSP*, “judicial standpoint” (see e.g., *KSP*, 62, 355–356), to describe the synthetic role *Religion* plays in Kant’s architectonic; yet *IDKR*, not acknowledging this as *KCR*’s position, falsely portrays *KCR*’s interpretation of *Religion* as appealing to the symbolic

mystery of mystical irrationality! For a good illustration of the cognitive content conveyed by Kantian symbolism, on my view, see the interpretation of the archetype/prototype in *KCR* 161–163, 207–216, and further development of that position in my essay “Could Kant’s Jesus Be God?,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 52:4 (forthcoming, December 2012).

⁹See e.g., *IDKR*, 210 n1. Part 2 criticizes several passages (e.g., 154, 167) that are quoted from *KCR* completely out of context (cf. *KCR*, 211, 282); taken in its proper context, each passage actually *agrees* with *IDKR*’s position!

¹⁰In *The Tree of Philosophy: A Course of Introductory Lectures for Beginning Students of Philosophy* (Hong Kong: Philopsychy Press, 2000), I do discuss Paul Tillich’s explicit identification of symbolism and religion in Lecture 31, just before presenting a holistic, linear summary of Kant’s transcendental theory of religion in Lectures 32 and 33. Perhaps this order of exposition misled the authors into thinking that on my view Kant also adopts their so-called “Religion-as-Symbol” motif.

¹¹See *KCR*, 165, 210, 215–216, 458–464. The latter passage consists of an entire section, entitled “Critical Soteriology and the Problem of Atonement for Sins.”

¹²Our authors claim the word “test” (*Religion*, 156) signals this modulation; yet Kant’s word, *prüfen*, carries a distinctive meaning that is irrelevant to the two experiments: “*Versuch*” (see note 7, above) *never occurs* in this allegedly crucial passage.

¹³While *KCR*’s Chapter VII presents itself as a thoroughgoing attempt to trace Kant’s first experiment through the entire text of *Religion*, by contrast, Chapter VIII explicitly aims to focus on an “examination of Kant’s second experiment” (*KCR*, 196). That discerning the precise locations of the two experiments is one of the main topics of these two chapters of *KCR* is evidenced by the fact that the word “experiment” occurs twenty times in the former chapter and twenty-six times in the latter chapter. A summary of my position on “Kant’s second experiment” is presented at *KCR*, 201–202: “Books One and Two correspond . . . to the Old and New Testament, respectively. Books Three and Four likewise correspond to early church history and traditional forms of Christian worship.” When I discussed this interpretation of the two experiments with one of the authors at length in 2004, while working together on a co-edited book, he assured me that his lack of a persuasive response would be fully rectified in *IDKR*.

¹⁴*IDKR*, 183 and *passim*; but cf. *KCR*, 167–168 and my article, “Kant’s Religious Argument for the Existence of God—The Ultimate Dependence of Human Destiny on Divine

Assistance,” *Faith and Philosophy* 26 (2009), 3–22.

¹⁵I comment more generally on *IDKR* in an invited book review published in *The Journal of Religion* 90:2, 49–52. The original version of the present essay, as it was written for presentation at the AAR symposium (which, including footnotes, was well over twice the length of its present incarnation) can be found at: hkbu.academia.edu/StephenPalmquist/Papers/1387435/Cross-Examination_of_IDKR_at_AAR. Due to other pressing commitments, I was unable to attend that American Academy of Religion conference (Montreal, November 2009). Fortunately, Brandon Love, an Exchange Graduate Student working with me in Hong Kong at that time, kindly offered to deliver it on my behalf. This was appropriate, not only because Firestone had been the supervisor of Love’s Master Thesis (2008–2009), but also because his thesis focused on the very issue I have highlighted in the third section of this essay. See Brandon Love, “The Interpretation and Implications of Kant’s Two Experiments in *Religion*” (Trinity International University MA thesis). Love briefly surveys the views on the two experiments put forward by Wood, Michalson, Reardon, Hare, Collins, Caird, and Despland; he then goes into much greater depth to examine the positions of *KCR* (pp. 59–91) and *IDKR* (pp. 83–99) on this topic, before comparing and contrasting the latter and proposing his new position. I would therefore like to thank Brandon for passing on an earlier version of this paper on my behalf at the American Academy of Religion conference held in Montreal (November, 2009) and for passing on feedback from various persons attending the symposium; Andrew Chignell and an anonymous reviewer for some helpful suggestions; and most of all, the authors, for many years of fruitful collaboration during which we have proved the validity of the maxim, *opposition is true friendship*.