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The 'Two Experiments' of Kant's *Religion*: Dismantling the Conundrum

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Abstract

The past decade has seen a sizeable increase in scholarship on Kant's *Religion*. Yet, unlike the centuries of debate that inform our study of his other major works, scholarship on the *Religion* is still just in its infancy. As such, it is in a particularly vulnerable state where errors made now could hinder scholarship for decades to come. It is the purpose of this article to mitigate one such danger, a danger issuing from the widely assumed view that the *Religion* is shaped by 'two experiments'. I will begin with a survey of the four current interpretations of the experiments, and then propose one further interpretation, one that hopefully will help dismantle this alleged 'conundrum' and thereby help scholarship on the *Religion* move beyond this early misstep.

Keywords: Kant, religion, conundrum, Two Experiments, Christianity

1. Introduction

An interpretative battle has been waging over how to best understand the so-called 'Two Experiments' of Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. According to the main combatants in this battle, how one interprets these experiments 'matters a great deal to how the remaining interpretation of *Religion* unfolds' (Firestone 2015); and particularly for those committed to the so-called 'affirmative' reading of the *Religion*,[1] 'the two experiments can have a profound effect on whether Kant's position is compatible with Christianity' (Palmquist 2012: 343).

Unfortunately, those who put the greatest interpretative weight on the Two Experiments do not give sufficient consideration to the passage in the Second Preface that serves as its basis. More often than not, their discussions focus instead on critiques of their opponents, critiques that rely more on their broader religious and philosophical commitments than careful

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analysis of the text itself. In this article, I will provide such an analysis, one that will in the end raise doubts about the overall interpretative relevance of the Two Experiments. This is because, first, the passage at issue is simply too vague to be utilized as it has been by some as a hermeneutical key to the whole of the *Religion*; and second, as will be proposed, there may in fact be no 'experiment' intended by Kant, never mind two.

Before we turn to the passage in question and the view that will here be proposed, let us begin with an examination of the interpretations of the Two Experiments most recognized in the current literature. We will then turn to the text itself, attending both to the passage where the alleged Two Experiments are intimated and the discussion that surrounds it. What will there be offered is a further reading of the passage, one that has not yet been considered in the literature, one that may help us recognize that this battle may very well not be worth our time. Accordingly, this article seeks to euthanize the debate that gave it rise.

2. The Interpretations

The fourth sentence of the Preface to the second edition of the *Religion* begins as follows: 'Aus diesem Standpunkte kann ich nun auch den zweiten Versuch machen' (6: 12).[2] Given Kant's mention of a 'second experiment' (*zweiten Versuch*, 6: 12), readers have understandably assumed that there is also a first, albeit unstated 'experiment' as well. But what exactly that experiment involves, and how it differs from the second that is enumerated, stands as one of the many contested elements of the *Religion*. Since the main combatants within this battle do not build their interpretations from specific textual details, we will defer such an analysis until later in this article. For now, however, our procedure will be as follows. First, we will present how each of the current interpreters renders the Two Experiments. Second, we will consider how they apply the distinction to one particular test case: Kant's discussion of the moral 'prototype' (*Urbild*) at the opening of Part Two. Third, we will summarize their respective accounts of the experiments, highlighting key similarities and differences. In each case, we will, as issues arise, discuss how each interpreter's reading of the Two Experiments interacts with their broader understanding of the *Religion* as a whole.

Religion as Translation

Let us begin our survey with what has come to be known as the 'Religion as Translation' (*RaT*) interpretation.[3] This view is attributed primarily to John Hare (1996) and Bernard Reardon (1988), though only the former explicitly takes on the First/Second Experiment distinction. According to

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Hare, the First Experiment concerns the representation of 'the relation between special revelation and reason … as the relation to between two concentric circles, with special revelation being the part of the larger circle not included in the smaller one, and the pure religion of reason being on the inside' (Hare 1996: 40). More specifically, *RaT* takes the First Experiment as concerned with the domain of overlap between 'Biblical Theology' (BT) and the 'Pure Rational System of Religion' (PRSR).[4] The Second Experiment then seeks 'to show that certain items in the outer circle lead back within the inner circle when looked at in the light of, or translated in terms of moral concepts' (Hare 1996: 40). That is, outside what is often referred to as 'general revelation', which includes the moral teaching of the Bible and various matters of natural theology, the 'special revelation' of the outer domain involves doctrines given to us through revelation alone. These include 'the central claims of Christianity in the traditional order of creation, fall, redemption, and second coming' (Hare 1996: 40).

RaT further characterizes the Second Experiment as 'a kind of raiding party; leaving the inner circle, we investigate the outer circle to see if we can bring back any doctrines found there into the domain of pure *reason* by translating them under appropriate constraints' (Hare 1996: 40–1). In other words, the question of the Second Experiment is, according to *RaT*, to determine whether special revelation also contains elements of the PRSR, though contained in a manner less than apparent. The core aim of the *Religion* thus becomes to investigate this possibility in order to see whether 'the central claims of Christianity' can be understood as – or 'translated' into – tenets of the PRSR. This will become relevant as we move forward, but note that Hare does not consider the Second Experiment as providing a case for enlarging the PRSR, such as to include contents only available through special revelation. He instead takes it to be a 'translation' (some accuse him of a reduction) whereby Kant culls from special revelation its purely rational elements.

As illustration of this 'translation', we may consider the suggestion offered in Part Two of the *Religion* that in order to see in the Gospels a moral example we can follow, we should not elevate Jesus into 'a supernaturally begotten human being', one 'above every frailty of human nature' (6: 64). Instead, we should 'translate' the Gospels into a representation of human moral potential; though in doing so, we gain a practical reason to not represent Jesus as any more than human. In other words, what, according to *RaT*, primarily matters to the project of the *Religion* is the practical value of religious doctrine. With regards to

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theoretical reason, we may be agnostic regarding the supernatural elements of Christology; but with regards to practical reason, we find the Gospels to be of value insofar as they provide for us a representation of *human* moral potential.

It is far from obvious that Reardon approaches the *Religion* through similar exercises in 'translation', but be that as it may, we have here one of the interpretative camps found within the contemporary battlefield:

> First Experiment$_{RaT}$: the construction of the PRSR (as coordinate with what of BT falls within general revelation).[5]
>
> Second Experiment$_{RaT}$: the 'raid' on the outer domain of special revelation so as to translate it into the PRSR.

While Hare is not especially clear about the locus of the First Experiment, others (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 115; Palmquist 2015: 34) presume his view to be that it precedes the *Religion* itself, taking place instead in the Canon of the First *Critique*, the *Groundwork*, Second *Critique*, and elsewhere as Kant constructs his moral theory, occasionally compares it to divine command theory, introduces the Highest Good and its postulates of God and immortality and even explores the problem of moral evil as found in his 1791 'Theodicy' essay. By contrast, the Second Experiment is understood as taking place in the *Religion*, for we find in each of its four parts, a 'raid' on the 'the central claims of Christianity'.

To some interpreters, this reading of the *Religion* is unsatisfying on the grounds that 'the pure religion of reason gains nothing from translating Christianity' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 79).[6] Yet it is not so obvious that this should be seen as an objection. First of all, even if *RaT*'s critics are correct that its rendering of the *Religion* entails that the PRSR gains no new content from BT, that may very well reinforce the merits of the PRSR as a 'complete religion' (6: 162).[7]

Second, if we view the main aim of the *Religion* to be a comparison between the PRSR and BT, that still speaks to its value, particularly for someone of Kant's own time, someone who wished to reflect on whether or not 'between reason and Scripture there is, not only compatibility but also unity' (6: 12). If we remind ourselves that Kant himself was brought up in a Lutheran Pietist household and, by numerous accountings, suffered miserably through his many years at the strict Pietist Collegium Fridericianum,[8] it is hardly beyond the pale to imagine within the spectrum of human interests that he would want to explore how the

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intellectual views of his adult life might correlate to the doctrines that shaped his youth (as well as, of course, a significant share of the Western world).

Third, if the project of the *Religion* is understood as having practical import, seeking to promote the PRSR to an audience straddled between their Christian upbringing and Enlightenment commitments, a meaningful case can be made that the *Religion* was written to offer a path for religious reform. From Lessing's explorations of the 'ugly broad ditch' between 'the accidental truths of history' and 'the necessary truths of reason', to the Jeffersonian Bible, composed to separate Christianity from its 'mystical cover', to Schleiermacher and the Liberal Christian movement who regard the *Religion* as one of their founding documents, *RaT*'s interpretation of the *Religion* situates it quite firmly within the central theological debates of the period.

Religion as Symbol

The next interpretation of the Two Experiments emerges primarily from Stephen Palmquist's *Kant's Critical Religion*. Palmquist there presents the First Experiment as pertaining to the *Religion*'s 'transcendental elements' (Palmquist 2000: 142), and then some years later describes it as an exposition of 'the essence of religion in terms of "an a priori rational concept"' (Palmquist 2015: 34). The First Experiment thus 'aims at constructing a "pure rational system of religion"' (Palmquist 2000: 143). The Second Experiment then 'aims at assessing one particular empirical religion by "start[ing] from some alleged revelation or other and … examin[ing] [it] … in the light of moral concepts"' (Palmquist 2000: 143). Palmquist subsequently describes the Second Experiment as an attempt 'to discern the extent to which Christianity exhibits this a priori concept (i.e., fulfils the necessary conditions for "actual religion")' (Palmquist 2015: 34). He also, as we will soon discuss more fully, ultimately divides the Second Experiment into two distinct stages.

One initial point of contrast between *RaT* and *RaS* (Religion as Symbol) is that the latter characterizes both the First and Second Experiments as advancing incrementally through each of the *Religion*'s four parts, with the earlier sections of each part devoted to the First Experiment, and the later sections devoted to the Second Experiment (Palmquist 2000: 144). Also unlike *RaT*, *RaS* does not take the First Experiment to be just the principles of morality and natural religion found elsewhere in the Kantian corpus. *RaS*, rather, takes this experiment, and thus the *Religion* as a whole, as moving beyond the moral and religious topics offered in

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earlier texts. Each part thus begins with the First Experiment and its contribution to the expanding PRSR; each part then moves on to the Second Experiment, exploring this new content in relation to BT.

For example, in his *Comprehensive Commentary* Palmquist writes: 'the first major task of Kant's first experiment' is found in Part One's account of 'what bare reason justifies us to say about the essential conditions of human nature'; he then presents the question of 'how closely the traditional Christian understanding of evil conforms to this rational standard' as an issue for the Second Experiment (Palmquist 2015: 106). Hence, in Part One, the First Experiment proffers such aspects of our moral nature as the rigourism of a supreme maxim that either makes us morally good or morally evil, the presence of a propensity to evil, three predispositions to the good, and how these various elements relate to one another. Part One then moves on to the Second Experiment's query as to 'how closely the traditional Christian understanding of evil conforms to this rational standard'. The story of Genesis is thus 'tested' by Kant to determine how well it comports with the PRSR. Some of its elements are thereby rejected (e.g. the historicity of its account of our origins, the biological inheritance of original sin), and some affirmed, though, Palmquist maintains, affirmed in two very different ways.

First, and more straightforwardly, the biblical story is taken to contain the essence of the rational account of moral evil presented by Kant earlier in Part One. But second, the biblical story importantly *supplements* rational religion, for according to *RaS*, since 'human beings are not purely rational beings … bare reason is unable to answer many of the most important philosophical questions' (Palmquist 2015: 116). *RaS* thus takes quite seriously this added role of special revelation, for it 'is crucial for a proper understanding of his second experiment and hence of the entire book' (Palmquist 2015: 116).

Accordingly, *RaS* takes the Second Experiment as not just a test of how well BT serves as vehicle for the PRSR. Likewise, it does not simply seek to 'translate' BT into the PRSR. For rather, it *also* advocates for BT (or more specifically, special revelation), as providing new and important content for our religious lives. BT, therefore, does more than address 'the natural need of all human beings to demand for even the highest concepts and grounds of reason something that the senses can hold on to' (6: 109). The claim made by *RaS* is far more radical. Religious symbols are not just imaginatively enhanced vehicles for the PRSR. [9] Instead, *RaS* ascribes to BT a 'mystical' significance: 'the door to transcendence can be *recognized*

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by reason, but it cannot be opened' (Palmquist 2015: 116). *Religion as Symbol* thus treats BT and its symbols not just as vehicles for the PRSR, but as passageway to something more.[10]

This dynamic, the movement from the First Experiment to each phase of the Second Experiment, can be seen perhaps the most vividly in *RaS*'s treatment of the *Religion*'s Christology. For as Palmquist states quite directly: Kant's 'appeal to the biblical notion of "the Son of God" cannot properly be understood without recognizing its grounding in Kant's second experiment' (Palmquist 2015: 164). So, where the First Experiment details the idea of a moral 'archetype' (*Urbild*), 'available to *all* human beings by virtue of their rational capacity' (Palmquist 2015: 165), the Second Experiment not only then correlates this moral principle with the Gospels, but also proposes that the Gospels speak to 'what we might call a Christ-sized "hole" in the heart of humanity's rational capacity' (Palmquist 2015: 165).

As Kant explains, the rational 'prototype' (*Urbild*) is 'present as model already in our reason' (6: 62), but according to *RaS*, it cannot on its own function as a 'motivating counterforce' to our propensity to evil absent Jesus's historical example (Palmquist 2015: 165). This supplement is needed because we otherwise would not be able to '*believe* we are capable' (Palmquist 2015: 166) of taking the step imposed on us by Kant's rigourism – i.e. either we prioritize self-interest over morality or vice versa. There is no middle ground to the moral status of our *Gesinnung* and thus its transformation 'cannot be effected through gradual *reform* but must rather be effected through a *revolution* in the disposition of the human being' (6: 47). Hence, one who has not yet undergone this transformation, one whose fundamental maxim prioritizes self-interest over morality, must undergo a revolution, a revolution that presumably will not seem even possible, since from the logic of self-interest, how could one ever choose to forgo it? The example of Jesus is thus offered, according to *RaS*, as proof that it can be done.[11]

Insofar as it might be feared that Kant is here 'merely importing Christian notions into his supposedly rational system – that is, of letting the second experiment dictate to the first' (Palmquist 2015: 165), Palmquist responds with a surprising defence: here revelation is needed 'out of the necessity caused by its [reason's] own limits' (Palmquist 2015: 166). That is, according to *RaS,* 'had the Christian revelation never come to pass … [we] may never have become aware of the archetype (*Urbild*)' (Palmquist 2015: 166). *RaS* holds thereby that Kant 'regarded the Christian Gospel

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as a genuine revelation' (Palmquist 2015: 166). It provides for us not just 'symbolic clothing' for an otherwise deficient 'bare reason', but further content as well: content that 'reason may never have been capable of formulating' (Palmquist 2015: 166), content that 'empowers us to "*believe*" in our own capacity to imitate the archetype of perfection' (Palmquist 2015: 116).

While it may have first seemed as if the main difference between *Religion as Translation* and *Religion as Symbol* was just a matter of the First Experiment's locale (i.e. antecedent to the *Religion* or within the *Religion*), Palmquist's contention that the Second Experiment does not merely test Christianity but shows the need for a religious supplement to pure reason, marks out a clear difference between *RaT* and *RaS*. Accordingly, we may regard his treatment of the Second Experiment as having two stages: it first 'tests' biblical theology, to assess the extent to which it serves as vehicle for rational religion; but then it further discovers that special revelation adds something to our moral vocation that reason alone does not and cannot: a ground for belief that moral transformation is possible. To summarize:

> First Experiment$_{RaS}$: the construction of the PRSR.
>
> Second Experiment$_{RaS}$ – Part A: a study of the outer domain of 'special revelation' in order to find within it the PRSR.
>
> Second Experiment$_{RaS}$ – Part B: a study of whether the outer domain of 'special revelation' contains within it morally necessary principles absent in the PRSR.

Religion as Vehicle

A third approach to the Two Experiments is tendered in Lawrence Pasternack's 2014 commentary on the *Religion*.[12] In contrast to our other interpreters, Pasternack prefers a more cautious approach to the text, acknowledging that 'Kant does not tell us what the first experiment is' (Pasternack 2014: 79). Moreover, unlike most interpreters of the *Religion*, Pasternack does not use the distinction as guide to his overall interpretation. He approaches the *Religion* instead by way of its continuity with the broader corpus, emphasizing in particular the relevance of the Highest Good to the *Religion*'s overall aims. As Pasternack observes, we can see this connection made explicit in various locations, including at the very opening of the *Religion*, where in its First Preface Kant employs the Highest Good to motivate the claim that '"morality … inevitably leads to religion" (6: 6)' (Pasternack 2014: 79).

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In light of this approach, Pasternack sees less relevance to the First/Second Experiment distinction, and what he does say is more reserved, particularly with respect to the First Experiment. Instead of advancing a specific view, he opts instead to accept the text as irresolvably vague, for the only claim we can infer from it is that 'whatever the first experiment is, it must be understood as conceptually or logically prior to the second' (Pasternack 2014: 79). To Firestone however, this is a major shortcoming in Pasternack's commentary, for his reticence 'leaves readers in the dark' (Firestone 2015) as to 'where one experiment begins and the other ends' (Firestone 2015). Yet this is in fact part of Pasternack's point: the text is vague, and in the absence of Kant explicitly mentioning an *ersten Versuch*, it is best to leave it an open question as to what he intended. Pasternack does, nevertheless, grant that whatever (and wherever) this First Experiment is, it must in some way relate to 'the construction of the pure rational system of religion from an a priori procedure rooted in moral concepts' (Pasternack 2014: 79). But more specific claims should be regarded as no more than conjecture.

With regard to the Second Experiment, however, Pasternack is less diffident. He writes, for example, that it centrally involves a comparison of 'the elements of Historical Faith associated with "alleged revelation" to the Pure Rational System of Religion' (Pasternack 2014: 79). This, comparison, however is evaluative, for he takes the Second Experiment as doing more than offering a piecemeal comparison between the PRSR and BT.

According to Pasternack, the Second Experiment is guided by a general rule or 'evaluative standard' (Pasternack 2014: 80) according to which any religious system, be it pure or historical, can be assessed. That rule he proposes to be based upon Kant's employment of *ought implies can* – and more specifically, on the requirement that whatever is essential to our becoming 'well-pleasing to God' must be 'convincingly communicated to everyone whereas a historical faith, merely based on facts, can extend its influence no further than the tidings relevant to a judgment on its credibility can reach' (6:103). In other words, since the content of an alleged revelation 'can extend its influence' only to a limited audience, whatever is required of us in order to become 'well-pleasing to God' must be available to one and all. Pasternack then draws from this that the PRSR, as based upon reason alone, will therefore be adequate to 'Saving Faith' (Pasternack 2014: 80). Christianity, likewise, meets this test of being a 'complete religion', though that is, as the *Religion* documents, established by virtue of what is shared between the PRSR and BT.

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Hence, Pasternack does not treat the *Religion* as either successful or failed Christian apologetics. He rather reads it as a philosophical work, one which explores how historical faith is to be understood in relation to the PRSR. The Second Experiment examines the obvious test case: Christianity, but it could just as well investigate other historical faiths. Where those who read the *Religion* as Christian apologetics ignore or brush off passages where Kant favourably compares other religions to the PRSR (e.g. 6: 108, 111, 140), such passages are more salient to what might be called Pasternack's *Religion as Vehicle* (*RaV*) reading, for many historical faiths can serve as vehicles for the PRSR. Such an ecumenicalism is, in fact, of considerable significance according to *RaV*, insofar as the second half of the *Religion* promotes a 'Universal Church' for all humanity. For as Kant states: 'There is only *one* (true) *religion*; but there can be several kinds of *faith* … [and thus] one and the same true religion can nevertheless be met with' (6: 107).

Let us now look once again to the opening of Part Two, and see how *RaV* renders Kant's Christology. Quite in contrast to most readers of the *Religion*, Pasternack sees little significance in Kant's use of *Urbild*. Referencing the first *Critique*, he writes: 'Kant regards the hypostatization of the *Urbild* to be an "exaggerated expression" (A318/B375). *Urbilder* are, more mundanely, just entities of the mind, instruments of regulative judgment through which "the understanding is directed towards a certain goal" (A644/B672)' (Pasternack 2014: 135). The moral 'prototype' (*Urbild*) is thus just the 'ideal of practical perfection' (Pasternack 2014: 136), an ideal that 'is present as model already in our reason' (6: 62), and so what the Gospels then offer is just a more 'vivid mode of representing' our moral ideals (6: 83).

Hence, for *RaV*, questions about the historicity of the Bible are just not relevant to its moral function; in fact, they can endanger that function by fomenting what Kant calls 'moral unbelief' (see: 6: 63, 84, 120). Moreover, in opposition to those who prefer to read the *Religion* as Christian apologetics, Pasternack emphasizes that while '[w]e find in the Gospels a representation that helps us grasp moral perfection and so helps guide us in our own efforts … we should not conflate this with a metaphysical claim about the ideal becoming flesh' (Pasternack 2014: 136). Quite unlike the views proffered by others (especially *RaA*, as we shall see below), *RaV* takes Kant to be agnostic about both the Gospels' historicity and their supernaturalist claims. The aim of the Second Experiment is thus similar to its portrayal by *RaT*: for Kant 'did not see himself as rejecting Christian doctrine, but rather getting to its core,

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a core that is also available to the Pure Rational System of Religion' (Pasternack 2014: 165). In sum:

> First Experiment$_{RaV}$: the construction of the PRSR.
>
> Second Experiment$_{RaV}$: a study of 'special revelation' in order to find within it the PRSR.[13]

Religion as Apologetics

The fourth and most extraordinary reading of the Two Experiments appears in Chris Firestone and Nathan Jacobs' seminal *In Defense of Kant's Religion*. According to these authors, there is no other viable explanation as to why Kant would have written the *Religion* except in order to demonstrate the truth of Christianity, a truth that Transcendental Idealism was likewise created to serve. As discussed earlier, they attack *RaT* on the grounds that its 'translation' project effectively makes the *Religion* into a valueless text, for it ultimately concludes that 'the pure religion of reason gains nothing from translating Christianity' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 79). Similarly, Firestone dismisses Pasternack's interpretation of the *Religion* as grounded on Kant's doctrine of the Highest Good. While Firestone concedes that Kant's interest in the Highest Good can be used as an explanation for why he would write about religion (since it is, for Kant, by virtue of the Highest Good that 'morality … inevitably leads to religion', 6: 6), he nevertheless does not see this as explaining why Kant would write about the Christian religion in particular (Firestone 2015).[14]

With regard to Palmquist's *RaS*, their critique is less direct. Their dismissal of *RaT* and *RaV* is based on their view that Kant would not have had interest in exploring Christianity except in order to defend it. Yet *RaS* just as much as Firestone and Jacobs' *Religion as Apologetics* (*RaA*) takes Kant's *Religion* as showing that there is a genuine need for special revelation. Their criticism seems to stem, instead, from their dislike for Palmquist's architectonic and what they see as his failure to bring the so-called 'conundrum' literature of the 1980s and 1990s to the forefront of his scholarship. Hence, while they could have found in Palmquist an ally, stylistic differences occluded greater philosophical kinship.

Where *RaA* and *RaS* differ is more in the details of their apologetics and in how they see the Two Experiments unfolding through the text. Recalling our previous summary of *RaS*, each of the *Religion*'s four parts contain both experiments. Each part begins with the First Experiment's construction of the PRSR, and then each part turns to the Second

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Experiment, moving from an initial comparison between the PRSR and BT, then on to a defence of some elements of BT absent from the PRSR. In contrast to this, *RaA* claims that the First Experiment develops through the *Religion*'s first three parts, with the Second Experiment taking place solely in Part Four. According to this view, the First Experiment turns to special revelation, identifying 'the doctrine of radical evil, his prototypical theology, and his vision of the ethical commonwealth' as the key 'advances on his critical philosophy, without which it is incomplete' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 115). In other words, the First Experiment discloses for us the items of special revelation that Kant's Critical philosophy requires, but could not come to via our natural capacities.[15]

They then characterize the Second Experiment, and so the *Religion*'s fourth part, as setting out Kant's account of the philosophical foundation for special revelation as well as 'the apparatus surrounding this foundation' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 226). The authors, unfortunately, do not tell us what this philosophical foundation looks like, or how we can circumvent Part Four's claim that 'nowhere in experience can we recognize a supersensible object' (6: 174). In fact, in the very pages where Firestone and Jacobs claim that Kant sets up this foundation he, rather, quite forcefully protests that any proposed 'method' for identifying 'inner revelation … always remains a self-deception detrimental to religion'. And even more bluntly: 'To want to *perceive* heavenly influence is a kind of madness' (6: 174). So, while they claim that 'Kant's emphasis in Book Four, [is] … on the priority of belief in Christianity' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 226), the text seems far more a polemic *against* 'requiring a revelation as necessary to religion' (6: 178).

The prospects for *RaA* are clearly gruesome. But let us nevertheless complete our study by once again exploring Kant's Christology in light of its reading of the Two Experiments.

Unlike *RaT*, *RaS* and *RaV*, *RaA* treats Kant's Christology as taking place solely within the First Experiment. But as their rendering of the First Experiment is actually quite close to the *RaS* two-stage Second Experiment, it is unsurprising that they follow *RaS* by also regarding the prototype (*Urbild*) as grounds for moral hope. Nonethless, there are differences in some details.

According to *RaS*, in order for us to believe in our moral potential, we must have an example of an actual moral success. Jesus thus serves as this example, requiring, however, Jesus to then be just like us, as 'a naturally

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begotten human being' (6: 63). For Firestone and Jacobs, however, the picture is very different. As they are more orthodox in their Christian commitments, Firestone and Jacobs seek to preserve the divinity of Jesus Christ as well as to disallow the possibility that *any* human being could overcome the state of sin through just rational principles. To them, 'Kant's premises in Book One undercut the possibility of such [moral] renewal' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 156), and so they maintain that 'Kant must cognize a moral ideal *outside of* and *distinct from* our corrupt species' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 156). The prototype of Part Two, which they describe as 'a transcendental entity', thus stands outside our fallen nature (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 156).

Put differently, Firestone and Jacobs follow Augustinian convention by regarding original sin in terms of a corruption of our own powers as agents; and so for them, original sin makes moral conduct impossible for us, since we are as a result, 'slaves to sin'.[16] Accordingly, they present Kant as likewise following Augustinian convention, such that 'only the descent of the prototype can restore the possibility of genuine moral freedom' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 166). For *RaA*, then, Kant follows the distinctly Christian balance between a pessimism about human nature and the optimism conveyed by the Good News. That optimism, however, is not to be gleaned from our own natures, but rather from a being made intelligible to us through what they call Kant's 'Transcendental Platonism'.

As *RaA* presents the opening of Part Two of the *Religion*, the prototype is not, as it was portrayed by *RaV*, a mere intentional object 'present as model already in our reason' (6: 62). It is also not, as characterized by *RaS*, a rational model of what is morally possible for all of us, though made possible through the *example* of the historical Jesus. The prototype, according to *RaA* is, rather, a supernatural being, one that, despite their already dubious 'Transcendental Platonism', is not quite as much Platonic as Scotist: 'We also find that this idea exists within God, not merely as a concept but as a being, or substance, that proceeds from God's own being' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 158).

While on the one hand, they draw from *RaS* that this ideal provides the rest of humanity with moral hope, they differ in that they follow the Augustinian view of our passive reception of grace, such that the aid we receive is through 'a gracious condescension on the prototype's part' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 164). Hence, as they read Kant, we cannot raise ourselves up, but rather must just hope for help 'from without'

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(Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 164); and, all the more radically as a reading of Kant, they assert that 'only the decent of the prototype can restore the possibility of genuine moral freedom' (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 166).

Let us now see what can be said of the Two Experiments in light of the above. Clearly, their reading of Part Two depends upon a number of theses shockingly at odds with how Kant is understood by most philosophers. They endorse a loosely Scotist metaphysics; they reject the freedom of the will (for unless saved, we are slaves to sin); they reject autonomy (for we cannot through our own powers act *from duty*). Hence, in order to fulfil the First Experiment, whose aim is to bring Kant into alignment with Christian orthodoxy, they forsake widely established features of both the theoretical and practical sides of his Critical philosophy. Of course, if we do not read Part One's treatment of original sin as endorsing its Augustinian variant, Kant would not then place us in the pickle whereby we would need Christ's aid. But, as Firestone and Jacobs routinely protest, Kant would never have written the *Religion* except as Christian apologetics. Though little is ultimately explained with regards to the Second Experiment's alleged demonstration of the Kantian foundations of special revelation, we have been able to make relatively legible how they approach the First Experiment. In sum:

> First Experiment$_{RaA}$: an exposition of what contributions are made by 'special revelation' to the PRSR.
>
> Second Experiment$_{RaA}$: a Kantian defense of 'special revelation', its 'apparatus' and foundations.

Review of Findings

Before moving on to the new interpretation that will be tendered below, let us take stock of our findings thus far. What should be most apparent is that, with the exception of Firestone and Jacobs' *RaA*, there is a rough consensus between the other main interpreters of the Two Experiments. *RaT, RaS* and *RaV* all concur that the First Experiment has something to do with the construction of the PRSR, though there is some debate as to its specific content and locale. Similarly, all but *RaA* portray the Second Experiment as attending to the scope of overlap between the PRSR and special revelation, though again, there are various differences in the details. Perhaps it is worth noting here that Pluhar and di Giovanni (via personal correspondence) fall into this near-consensus, for they both see the First Experiment as related to the construction of the PRSR, and the Second Experiment as directed to its relationship to special revelation.

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It is, however, ironic that with so much overlap in how the Two Experiments are understood, there is so much disagreement as to Kant's ultimate goals in the *Religion*, particularly, as Palmquist notes, on 'whether Kant's position is compatible with Christianity' (Palmquist 2015: 343).

According to Hare, the *Religion* is internally vitiated by a conflict between Kant's 'Stoic Maxim', according to which one's moral achievements need be solely the result of one's own efforts, and his sympathies with the doctrine of original sin, which seem to demand an appeal to grace. By contrast, Pasternack sees the *Religion* as internally consistent, though defends that consistency on the grounds of Kant's divergence from core Augustinian precepts, while both Palmquist and Firestone and Jacobs take the *Religion* as appropriating all that is needed from Christianity, even (in the case of the latter authors) at the expense of the received views regarding Kant's ethics.

What I think the above discussion helps to show is that there may be far less significance to how one reads the Two Experiments than what Firestone and Jacobs and Palmquist assert. It seems much more the case that interpreters come to an understanding of the *Religion's* overall structure, themes, and goals, and then apply their understanding of the text to the passage at 6: 12. This becomes all the more evident when we attend to the fact that the passage does not explicitly enumerate the alleged *ersten Versuch*, nor clearly tell us what this *ersten Versuch* involves. Even what is says about the *zweiten Versuch* is still nowhere near as robust as some have claimed. While 6: 12–13 does tell us that the *Religion* investigates whether there is 'not only compatibility but also unity' between some portion of BT and the PRSR, it offers little to settle key normative issues, including the necessary and sufficient criteria for a 'complete religion', whether rational religion depends (because of our weaknesses) on a historical vehicle (as per *RaV*), or whether it depends (because of its intrinsic weaknesses) upon further revelatory content (as per *RaS* and *RaA*).

In other words, despite how much some interpreters have put on the shoulders of the alleged Two Experiments of 6: 12, it is best to look elsewhere for answers to the more disputed questions regarding how – or if – Kant appraises Christianity. The Two Experiments cannot bear the interpretative weight, for even if there were a complete consensus as to how to read the scant passage at 6: 12, many of the most important and most disputed evaluative questions would not there find their answers.[17]

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These reservations, however, are just preliminaries for the view to which we now turn, one that will cut even more deeply against the relevance of the passage from which the debate over the Two Experiments has arisen. For as we shall now discuss, it may very well be the case that this entire debate flows out of an utterly banal misunderstanding.

3. The Second Preface

To set the stage for the view I would like to advance, we will first work through the opening sentences of the Preface to the second edition of the *Religion*, the alleged source-text for the Two Experiments. Readers may, of course, wish to consult their preferred version of the passage, for I will here summarize most sentences rather than quote them in full.

First, I presume that the first two sentences of the Second Preface are non-controversial. For they merely state that the second edition includes some minor corrections plus supplements marked by the dagger symbol '†'. The lengthy third sentence is then where the fun begins. The significance of its opening *Von dem Titel dieses Werks* is often overlooked, as is the parenthetical remark which follows, where Kant notes that concerns have been raised about 'the intension hidden under' the *Religion*'s title. Readers instead focus on what comes next in the sentence: Kant's well-known metaphor of the two concentric spheres, with the wider sphere (BT) containing the more narrow (PRSR). What is typically missed, or at least forgotten, is that the imagery here is issued by Kant for the purposes of explaining the *Religion*'s title. And, as we shall see, how the title is understood is, in turn, of importance to how *zweiten Versuch* is understood.

With Kant's depiction of the two spheres, the wider (BT) inscribing the more narrow (PRSR), we can then envision what Kant meant by the title: what of the wider sphere falls *within* the *boundaries/limits* of the more narrow. Or, stated more fully, Kant describes two concentric spheres, with the wider sphere of historical faith containing the more narrow sphere of rational religion. In virtue of this containment relation, there will be some subset of the larger domain that overlaps or falls with the boundaries of the more narrow. Hence, the title references that portion of the wider sphere of historical religion that falls *within the boundaries/limits* of the more narrow domain of rational religion.

It is then, following this sentence, with its explanation of the title of the *Religion* by way of the above imagery, where we find: 'Aus diesem Standpunkte kann ich nun auch den zweiten Versuch machen'.

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The sentence then continues with Kant explaining what he is going to do by way of this 'standpoint': 'namely, to start from some alleged revelation or other and, abstracting from the pure religion of reason (so far as it constitutes a system on its own), to hold fragments of this revelation, as a *historical system*, up to moral concepts, and see whether it does not lead back to the same pure *rational system* of religion' (6: 13).

After some further elaboration, Kant then offers what is often understood as the success condition for the Second Experiment: if the PRSR is 'sufficient to genuine religion … then we shall be able to say that between reason and Scripture there is, not only compatibility but also unity, so that whoever follows the one (under the guidance of moral concepts) will not fail to come across the other as well' (6: 12–13). Then, as the last sentence of this long paragraph, Kant discusses the opposing outcome, i.e. if no overlap is found between a historical faith and the PRSR. In such a case, the key result would be two incompatible systems of 'a religion and a cult', which, 'like oil and water', cannot stably combine, leaving the 'purely moral religion (the religion of reason) [to] float to the top' (6: 13).

In sum, the opening of the Preface to the second edition, after a brief point of orthography, responds to concerns regarding the meaning of the title of the *Religion*, leading then to an account of what, 'from this standpoint', the *Religion* aims to determine: namely, whether or not there is to be found any 'unity' (*Einigkeit*) between the PRSR and a subset of BT.

The Two Experiments

What I am now *not* going to do is to explain how the above can be separated into the First Experiment and the Second Experiment. Instead, I am now going to argue that it is a sheer misunderstanding of the text to think that anything in the above sets out a division between a so-called First and Second Experiment. Or more precisely: my view is that Kant does not in the Preface to the second edition of the *Religion* assert that the project of the *Religion* is guided by two distinct experiments. The culprit here, the cause of all this confusion, is in how the key passage has been translated: *Aus diesem Standpunkte kann ich nun auch den zweiten Versuch machen*.[18]

In their 1934 translation of the *Religion*, Greene/Hudson chose the English 'experiment' for the German *Versuch*. Then, in 1996 and 2009 respectively, di Giovanni and Pluhar each followed this convention, likewise using 'experiment' here. This, I think, is a mistake … or rather

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the mistake, the one that is centrally responsible for our current interpretative conundrum and the many hours that have been devoted to it. In order to see the weaknesses of this choice of terms, consider, first, that Kant could have used the cognate *Experiment,* as he does often enough elsewhere (e.g. Bxiii, 5: 92, 7: 98). *But he did not*. He instead used *Versuch*, a term which could, as Pluhar in fact footnotes at 6: 9, just as well be translated as the more gentle 'attempt'.[19]

Second, consider that the passage in question comes on the heels of Kant explaining the meaning behind the title of the *Religion* – and *Versuch* was, during the period, routinely used in titles to mean 'attempt' or even 'essay'. Locke's *Essay*, for example, was translated as *Versuch über den menschlichen Verstand*. We also have Tetens's 1777 *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung*, Fichte's 1792 *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung*, Reinhold's 1795 *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des Vorstellungsvermögens*, and so on.

But even more to the point, Kant himself was clearly fond of using *Versuch* in his own titles, including:

> *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels oder* ***Versuch*** *von der Verfassung und dem mechanischen Ursprunge des ganzen Weltgebäudes nach Newtonischen Grundsätzen abgehandelt* (1755)
>
> ***Versuch*** *einiger Betrachtungen über den Optimismus* (1759)
>
> ***Versuch*** *den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (1763)
>
> ***Versuch*** *über die Krankheiten des Kopfes* (1764)
>
> And, in the year just prior to the *Religion*, his 'Theodicy' essay bears the title: *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen* ***Versuche*** *in der Theodicee*.

A third point to consider is that there are numerous passages where Kant refers to what he is writing, has just written or is about to write as *Versuch*, and if one reviews their context, they are for good reason translated as 'attempt'. Anyone familiar with German will agree that it is non-controversial that *Versuch* often means 'attempt', and likewise grant that the term is routinely used in contexts where an author is about to embark on some exposition, explication, defence or argument.

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Throughout the Kantian corpus, such uses of *Versuch* read in the hundreds, but let me offer here just a modest sampling:

> The third chapter shall be an attempt (*Versuch*) at this . . . (1: 118)
>
> Of those who presume to judge works of the mind, it is a minority which boldly looks at the attempt (*Versuch*) as a whole . . . (2: 67)
>
> Accordingly, if the reader will bear with me, I shall venture such an attempt (*Versuch*) here . . . (2: 334)
>
> Now the concern of this critique of pure speculative reason consists in that attempt (*Versuch*) to transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics. (Bxxii)
>
> Physicotheology is the attempt (*Versuch*) of reason to infer from the ends of nature (which can be cognized only empirically) to the supreme cause of nature and its properties. A moral theology (ethicotheology) would be the attempt (*Versuch*) to infer from the moral ends of rational beings in nature (which can be cognized a priori) to that cause and its properties. (5: 436)
>
> But it can easily be demonstrated, and has already been understood for some time, that this attempt (*Versuch*) to bring unity into the multiplicity of faculties, although undertaken in a genuinely philosophical spirit, is futile. (20: 206).[20]

In light of the three broad points so far discussed (more will follow), let us consider the passage in revised di Giovanni translation. *Aus diesem Standpunkte kann ich nun auch den zweiten Versuch machen*: 'From this standpoint can I now also make this second attempt'.

With the word changed to 'attempt', a new possibility thus begins to take form. Recall that the passage appears towards the opening of the Preface to the second edition, a Preface that is centrally about why Kant decided to compose a second edition. Hence, it *may be* that the meaning here is quite simply that Kant is now issuing *this second attempt* to engage in a comparison between the PRSR and BT. Now consider as our fourth piece of evidence Kant's use of *Versuch* through the *Religion*'s first and second Prefaces:

* The Preface to the **first edition** uses ***Versuch*** to describe the project of the text, a comparison between the 'pure *philosophical* doctrine of religion' and 'biblical theology'.

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* The Preface to the **second edition** uses ***zweiten Versuch*** to describe the project of the text, a comparison between the 'pure *religion of reason*' and 'alleged revelation'.
* The Preface to the **first edition** uses the **non-enumerated *Versuch*** to describe the project, with no mention of any other *Versuch*.
* The Preface to the **second edition** uses the **enumerated *zweiten Versuch*** to describe the project, with no mention of any other *Versuch* – any other *Versuch*, that is, other than the *Versuch* of the Preface to the first edition: for after Kant discusses what seems the success condition of the *zweiten Versuch* (i.e. whether the PRSR and BT have unity), he writes: 'I noted in the first Preface that this unification (*Vereinigung*), or the attempt (*Versuch*) at it, is a task to which the philosophical researcher of the religion has perfect right' (6: 13).

Fifth, and finally, let us look at what each of the two prefaces says about the aim, strategy or target of the aforementioned uses of *Versuch*:

* In the Preface to the second edition, in its account of the *zweiten Versuch*, Kant describes it as comparing the PRSR to BT so as to determine whether 'there is not only compatibility but also ***unity*** (***Einigkeit***)' (6: 13).
* The Preface to the second edition then refers back to the Preface of the first edition, to what it had to say about 'this ***unification*** (***Vereinigung***), or the attempt (*Versuch*) at it' (6: 13).
* In the Preface to the first edition, Kant uses nearly the same language, explaining that via the *Religion* 'the attempt (*Versuch*) is made for the first time to consider them as ***united*** (***Vereinigung***)' (6: 10).[21]

Unfortunately, the pattern here is hidden by the Greene/Hudson and di Giovanni translations. They vary the English terms used for *Vereinigung*, and so do not capture the overlapping accounts of the *Versuch* as depicted in both the first and second Prefaces. But once we put aside the translations and look at Kant's German, it is hard not to take references to the *Versuch* as all related to the singular project of comparing one domain to the other in order to possibly find 'unity'. The second Preface tells us that the *Religion* will explore the question of unity (*Einigkeit*); it then refers us back to the issue of 'unification' (*Vereinigung*), as raised in the first Preface; and so as Kant indicates, the first Preface likewise explains that through the *Religion* 'the attempt (*Versuch*) is made for the first time to consider them as united (*Vereinigung*)'.

Thus the evidence present in the original German strongly supports the conclusion that the enumerated *zweiten Versuch* of the second Preface

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refers to the same project as the unenumerated *Versuch* of the first Preface: they both refer to the project of considering the *Einigkeit/Vereinigung* of BT and PRSR. It is just that *Versuch* becomes enumerated as *zweiten Versuch* in the Preface to the second edition – simply because it expresses the fact that, through the second edition, the *Versuch* put forward by the *Religion* is being reissued. Kant thus offers by way of the second edition this *zweiten Versuch* – this second attempt – at considering whether there is any 'unity' between BT and the PRSR.

In sum: there is no first/second experiment distinction whatsoever. There is merely the first iteration of the project as offered in the *Religion*'s first edition, and its second iteration as offered in the *Religion*'s second edition. Whatever else the *Religion* is doing, whatever testing, comparing, raiding, translating, and so forth, that is for the main body of the text itself to disclose.

4. Conclusion

Philosophical scholarship evolves slowly. As individuals, many of us look back at our previous work and cringe at what we thought we then understood but did not. Likewise, our collective work as scholars faces a long, even multi-generational maturation cycle. We must not forget this. We must not forget our role as stewards of a tradition. Errors will, of course, creep in, but among the key responsibilities we have is to correct those errors, be they of our own making or those of others. For the less careful we are, the more mistakes get passed on to later generations.

Scholarship on Kant's *Religion*, in particular, is in an especially vulnerable state, for until very recently, the text (beyond Part One) was seen as so scandalous (a 'capitulation', a body of 'wobbles', a 'failure') that our most capable scholars gave it little of their time. Just as political vacuums make possible the rise of dangerous ideologues, so likewise in the vacuum of scholarship on the *Religion*, various tendentious readings can gain undue recognition. Chris Firestone reports in his response to a symposium on his *In Defense of Kant's Religion*, the following: '*IDKR* sticks so closely to the text rather than meta-considerations. As much as interpreters are tempted to find something of themselves in Kant, they must try to resist this urge. *IDKR* devotes itself to interpreting Kant's *Religion* in a close textual sense in order to minimize this inevitability' (Firestone 2012: 206).

Firestone, I agree, is correct that many readers are tempted to find in Kant 'something of themselves'. But if that is the case here, so far as I can tell,

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what I have found is an absence, an absence of a distinction, an absence of a conundrum. To compound this point, I do not think that my interpretation suggests that the *Religion* as a whole is to be read any differently, for the upshot of the view here and the near-consensus view is still really the same. Except for those who read back into 6: 12 claims just not there mentioned, it matters very little whether one takes the *ersten Versuch* and *zweiten Versuch* as a distinction between the first and second editions, or a distinction between the initial construction of the PRSR and then its comparison to BT. Either way, the upshot is the same: the *Religion* seeks to compare biblical theology and rational religion. If it aims for more, for a proof of the deficiency of the PRSR, the truth of what is uniquely found within Christian doctrine, or even whether the project of the *Religion* is grounded in the Highest Good, that is not for 6: 12 to answer. Rather, the *Religion* is large enough to do many things.[22]

Notes

1 The so-called 'affirmative' reading is one that regards Kant as committed to various religious doctrines, including, at least, belief in God. There is, however, considerable debate as to the nature of religious assent in Kant as well as whether the objects of assent are limited to the practical postulates or expand into more specifically Christian doctrines.

2 Di Giovanni translates this as: 'From this standpoint I can also make this second experiment', Pluhar translates it as 'From this standpoint I can now also make the second experiment'. Unless otherwise indicated, English quotations will be from the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, primarily from its 1996 translation of the *Religion*.

3 'Religion as Translation' is the label assigned by Firestone and Jacobs to John Hare's and Bernard Reardon's reading of the Two Experiments. While perhaps not the most perspicuous title, insofar as others have adopted it, this article will likewise follow the convention. We will also in the next subsection likewise adopt 'Religion as Symbol', the label assigned by Firestone and Jacobs to Palmquist's reading.

4 Kant uses various terms beyond 'pure rational system of religion' (6: 12), including 'pure philosophical doctrine of reason' (6: 10), 'pure religion of reason' (6: 12), and 'pure rationalism' (6: 155). They refer to the body of religious theses that 'can be convincingly communicated to everyone' (6: 103); 'everyone can be convinced through his reason' (6: 163). Contrasting terms include: 'biblical theology', 'historical faith', 'ecclesiastical faith', 'revealed faith', the 'Christian faith' and so forth. How the latter set relates to the former set is among the points of dispute within the debate over the Two Experiments.

5 Note that I am here rendering the First Experiment in line with how it is portrayed under *RaT*. Hare's own view on the matter is more ambiguous; and Reardon does not directly discuss the First/Second Experiment distinction. For reasons that will become clear later, whatever discrepancies there may be between Hare, Reardon and the constructed *RaT* will not be of much significance in the end.

6 Palmquist likewise agrees with Firestone and Jacobs that Hare's interpretation of the Two Experiments ends up deflating the value of the *Religion* (Palmquist 2015: 34).

7 It is well known that Hare deems the PRSR a 'failure' (Hare 1996: 60), though this is for other reasons than what Firestone and Jacobs claim. Contrary to their accusations,

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RaT does make sense of *why* Kant would have explored Christian doctrine – and this is so whether or not in the end Kant's soteriology is inconsistent. Firestone and Jacobs, however, just run these two issues together. To make this point more clear: one could fully agree with *RaT*'s reading of the *Religion* as a translation project, while also challenging how Hare renders Kant's soteriology. According to Hare, Kant is (a) committed to a 'Stoic Maxim' whereby our moral development depends upon our powers alone; and yet (b) sets forth in Part One an account of radical evil (original sin) that makes it impossible for us to overcome our depravity without divine aid. As such, Hare claims that Kant's soteriology violates *ought implies can*. Yet one can reject either (a) or (b) as an accurate accounting of Kant's views. Mariña 1997 and, more recently, Vanden Auweele 2014 reject (a); while Chignell 2011 and Pasternack 2012 reject (b).

8 Kuehn (2001: 45–55) documents various depictions of the *Collegium* and Kant's torments through those years.

9 There are, of course, many who see in the *Religion* no affirmative religious commitments, but rather what is essentially just an exposition of religious symbolism. See e.g. DiCenso 2012.

10 Palmquist distinguishes between what he calls 'Critical Mysticism' and the sort of mysticism that Kant characterizes as a '*salto mortale*' (8: 398). Insofar as Palmquist intends any 'mysticism' here, I take it that it is the former. Rather than here attempt to explain the difference, interested readers should consult his many discussions of the topic.

11 Note that Palmquist does not claim that we are incapable of undergoing this transformation through our own efforts. His claim, rather, is that absent the Gospels (or perhaps some other record of moral excellence?), we would not believe that it is possible. This move allows Kant's Christology to be consistent with a denial of intercessionary divine aid. Although many have assumed that Kant does permit such aid, that may not in fact be so. The standard proof-text for Kant's alleged endorsement of it is 6: 44, but with the exception of Pluhar, other translators fail to capture the subjunctive mood of the German: *Gesetzt, zum Gut-oder Besserwerden sei noch eine übernatürliche Mitwirkung nöthig.* Later in the *Religion*, Kant rejects 'foreign influence to which we must remain passive' (6: 118). And all the more overtly in the *Conflict of the Faculties,* after setting up something of an antinomy between Pietist and Moravian soteriologies, Kant writes: 'Yet they are greatly mistaken in this, since on their view the effect of this power would not be our deed and could not be imputed to us' (7: 59). In short, we see in both of these texts the view that moral merit can only be earned through 'our own work' (6: 118). This, of course, is not the place to debate the controversies regarding divine aid and grace in Kant. I have dipped into it mainly for the purposes of indicating that Palmquist's reading can save Kant from both a violation of *ought implies can* as well as from the criticism levelled against Kant by Hare (see n. 7).

12 When I wrote this article for blind review, I for obvious reasons presented the views of my 2014 commentary in the third person. I have decided to retain this format rather than repeatedly entering locutions such as 'as I formerly held', 'my previous view', etc. Apologies to those who might find this pretentious. My intent is to convey that my 2014 interpretation of the Two Experiments is just one among others that, as I will discuss in section 3, share a common flaw.

13 Pasternack 2014 also discusses the evaluative principles informing the Second Experiment, but the BT-PRSR relation is nonetheless the key target of the experiment. As we will later see, the additional details will not be of much significance in the end.

14 Firestone's point seems to be that the distinctive elements of Christianity, including original sin, the incarnation and grace, are not pertinent to the Highest Good. Hence, an exploration of the religious implications of the Highest Good would not on its own call

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for discussion of these topics. Yet it hardly seems controversial to claim that Kant's positive philosophy of religion is grounded in the Highest Good. In fact, the *Religion* itself opens with a discussion of this topic, one that culminates in the claim that 'morality inevitably leads to religion'. Accordingly, Pasternack 2014 presents the *Religion* as Kant's inquiry into the relevance of religion for our practical lives, both with regard to the rational principles that comprise the PRSR as well the importance of historical faith as 'vehicle' for the PRSR. It is then in light of this that Christianity is examined, to determine whether it has sufficient 'unity' with the PRSR or whether 'like oil and water … they would soon have to separate again and let the purely moral religion (the religion of reason) float to the top' (6: 13).

15 It is unclear why *RaA* still portrays Kant's theology as a project of *rational* religion, for they overtly maintain that 'divine revelation is necessary to universal religion' (6: 155). As such, they read the *Religion* under what Kant describes as the 'supernaturalist' approach to religion.

16 Firestone and Jacobs are certainly not alone in assuming that Kant's understanding of original sin is Augustinian. Yet there is ample evidence to the contrary. For instance, according to Kant, there is no corruption of 'the morally legislative reason' (6: 35), nor does the 'human being (even the worst) … repudiate the moral law' (6: 36). The 'germ of goodness' is thus 'left in its entire purity' (6: 45) even though it has been subordinated to self-love. Hence, Kant's corollary to original sin is not based upon a lack or privation on our part, but rather – he makes quite clear – an 'active and opposing cause' (6: 57). This is a generally overlooked but important point, one that came as a result of Kant's careful deliberations on the problem of evil in his 1791 'Theodicy'. See Gressis forthcoming; Duncan 2012.

17 Consider as well that the alleged First/Second Experiment distinction does not appear in the Preface to the first edition nor anywhere in the main body of the text. Whatever it is conveying to us, except for Kant having written a second edition wherein we find mention of *den zweiten Versuch*, we would never have been given any indication that the *Religion*'s structure and goals are informed by a division between a First and Second Experiment.

18 As translated by Pluhar: 'From this standpoint, I can now also make the second experiment'; and by di Giovanni: 'From this standpoint, I can also make this second experiment'.

19 To avoid a possible misunderstanding, I of course am not claiming that 'experiment' is outside the lexical meaning of *Versuch*. My point is rather that the choice to translate *Versuch* as 'experiment' *here* is the culprit – for this choice has led readers to think that *zweiten Versuch* points to an important technical distinction, rather than, as I propose, something far more banal.

20 Readers interested in surveying the corpus more thoroughly can make use of such databases as *Kant-im-Kontext* III.

21 I here use the Pluhar translation since di Giovanni does not translate *Vereinigung* consistently.

22 As I began to ponder the issues at the foundation of this article, I received generous input from Werner Pluhar, George di Giovanni and Courtney Fugate. I would also like to thank Brian Chance for his helpful feedback on an earlier draft.

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