

## **KANT and FAITH**

The great philosopher Kant argued that if you do an action that would make life impossible if everybody did it then you know its immoral. You don't need a God to tell you much less command you. In fact commanding would be too forceful and a form of abuse. It would be cynical. It would be encouraging those who worry about the consequences of being bad not being bad.

Religion is about faith community. Kant's ethic is individualist in the sense that each person has to consider if an action could be done by all people. So the individual discovers the moral law by this technique. Again God is shut out.

Not surprisingly then Kant regarded prayer and going to Church as degrading. He detested it when people went to Church.

The main reason was that Kant thought that everybody must look at reason says and reason it out for themselves. They are not to take his word for it or anybody's. It is just like a teacher may have to teach you maths but until you start using your head to see if he is right - and you will see it.

Christians ridicule Kant by saying he thought that anybody who disagrees with him is not rational in so far as they do so. Kant did not say it was about disagreeing with him. He denied that it was. It was about disagreeing with the principles of reason that anybody could work out.

Kant held that reason gave us two principles to live by. One was to make others happy. The other was to gain one's full freedom. He held however that reason cannot theoretically prove these beliefs. It only points to them as reasonable assumptions to make. No other assumption makes as much a sense.

Kant decided that the two principles were achievable for it is unreasonable to try and be perfectly good and make others happen if it cannot be done. It must be at least possible if not guaranteed to work.

The basics of morality for Kant were not a leap of faith but a leap of reason.

Is Kant right to say that we can be moral as long as we do what we perceive to be right? But you do the thinking beforehand, and you cannot do the act and think it at the same time. There is a distance between you and your "knowledge" and your belief at that time. Thus we have refuted the Kantian and Catholic doctrine that you cannot do wrong unless you know what you are doing when you do it.

I have consulted Keith Ward's *More Than Matter* (Lion, 2010).