

The Bible teaches the religion-&-morality of--by divine initiative--hearing & obeying the **word** of God &--by our initiative--discovering & doing the **will** of God. The hyphens in "religion-&-morality" are vital: you can't flail the Bible's morality out from its religion, as though the former were the wheat & the latter the chaff.

While that's especially true in the case of the Bible, it's true in all cultures that you can't separate *what?* (the content, differentia, of morality) from the *why?* (the persuasive backing, the motivation or incentives, the ethical sanctions, the reasons for not/doing this or that). Roughly, the *why?* for anything in any culture or subculture ("life-style") is life's religious root, "religion" being a central focus & fountain of what, for each culture, (1) is really real & (2) has the right & power to guide & judge.

1 Sound too abstract? Here's an illustration from my devotional reading this morning. As you know, the Bible's against both ends of commercial sex, ie both the seller & the buyer. In the NT world, Christians didn't have the power to try to put a stop to the far end, ie the seller, but they came down hard on the near end, viz any Christian who thought he could continue whoremastering after conversion. (Well, that's the English of it: the seller is the "whore," the buyer is the "whoremaster")....Is this condemnation unique to the Bible? By no means: that "what" is common to most moral systems. What's unique is the Christian "why" here in 1Cor.6.15-20, or rather "why not." Look how tight & rich is the argumentation! NT ethics is rooted primarily in the OT, so we're not surprised at Paul's use of the scriptural sanction here: sexual intercourse makes two bodies into "one flesh" (Gn.2.24, marriage). From Stoicism, Paul then associates the OT "flesh" (Heb., *basar*) with the metaphoric corporate "body" (Gk., *soma*): a Christian man who avoid whoring not because (if married) he's already one body with his wife (though the NT elsewhere makes that argument) but (here) because he's already one body "spiritually" with the Lord (v.17), with whom he's joined himself, & thus with the Lord's body, the church, "the body of Christ" (v.15). Then in v.18 we get the very Greek reflexive sanction (less prominent among the Jews): whoring is a unique sin in that it affects a man's body, is a sin against his own body (no implication here of disease, though Paul could have added that; STDs have been around a long time, though of course he didn't know of the AIDS horror). Next (v.19) Paul baptizes a very pagan notion, viz that the human body is a temple (cf. the near-worship of the body in ancient Greek art). Who's the god/dess in your body-temple? The Holy Spirit! You gonna take that body-Holy Spirit-temple to a whore? Finally, we get appeals based on God as Giver of the Holy Spirit (v.19) & of salvation (v.20: in Jesus' sacrifice, God "bought you with a price"--in radical contrast to whoredom's money, which flows in the opposite direction--so you can't sell yourself to a whore, you already belong to God by divine purchase [v.19]--an involuted argument you're more to feel than unpack). That's all negative: the argument closes with a resounding positive, the enunciation of a principle of Christian morality & ethics (v.19): "So use your bodies for God's glory." How? Look at this Thinksheet's first sentence for the answer.....As you readily see, the "why not" of whoring is distinctly & distinctively Christian. Please note also that Paul's purpose here does not require laying on as negative sanctions what whoring can do in broken hearts, wrecked marriage, & diseases transmitted by the purchaser of commercial sex. Self- & other-regarding sanctions stressed by psychology, social psychology, & public health can strengthen the NT's motivational base against (the Gk. & Lat. wd.) "prostitution," but it's sad to see some Christian leaders putting more emphasis on secular than on sacred sanctions.

2 Now, as promised, Immanuel **Kant** (d.1804)--with Plato & Aristotle, one of the chief architects of Western thought. A Pietist (something like "evangelical" today) by birth & training, he sought to reconcile this with the Enlightenment thought that dominated the intellectual life around him. I am, he said, "a poor bungler who is trying as best he can to interpret Christ's teaching." While he was

deeply concerned about morality (what are we to do?) & ethics (how are we to think toward what we are to do?), his forte was metaphysics (what is really real?). In line with the ideals of the American & French revolutions, he saw freedom as the basis of progress & justice--all of which comported well with Pietism's emphasis on personal relationship with God, purity of heart, saintliness of character, & devotion to human welfare. He was a severe critic of reverence for reason in all its forms, including the perfectionist belief in the possibility of a purely rationalistic ethics (see CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON, 1781; & RELIGION WITHIN THE LIMITS OF REASON ALONE, 1793). To make room for freedom, faith, & morality--all threatened by ultrarationalistic determinists & materialists--he chose the agnostic alternative: he posited behind nature an unknowable real world of things-in-themselves. We human beings participate in both these worlds. As part of nature, we are caused, determined; as part of the real world beyond nature, we are self-causing (free) beings transcending the laws of nature & subject to the moral law, on the basis of which we give laws to ourselves as sensuous beings, laws constraining our natural inclinations in the interest of duty, supremely the duty of experiencing the categorical imperative as a personal-individual demand (or even "command," though he will not equate this with "the will of God" or any other entity extraneous to our own being). The most moral philosophy can do is to show that freedom is necessary practically & possible theoretically. ("The categorical imperative" he stated in many ways, each way facing what may be called a particular department of ethics. His most general statement of it is this: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become universal law.")

3 What morality does the Bible teach? One that is **like** Kant's in being ultimately unavailable to reason but avoiding irrational cynicism. And **unlike** Kant's in that whereas with him the avoidance is by nonrational insights derived from everybody's moral experience, especially the conflict between what we'd like to do ("inclination") & what we believe we should do ("duty"), the Bible's conviction of revelation (God "unveiling" his word, will, & nature to us) avoids both the claim of Promethean reason (eg, scientism's claim that mystery is nothing but what science hasn't got to yet) & agnosticism.

4 Is, then, Kant friend or enemy of the biblical morality? **Friend** in trying to prevent reason's strangling (religious) faith, (moral) responsibility, & (political) freedom. Unintentional **enemy** in that many of his followers raised the power of his agnosticism from negative to positive (eg, Comtean positivism, Darwinian evolutionism, Freudian mechanism, Marxian materialism, Sartrean existentialism). **Enemy** also in virtually transferring deity from God to humanity, giving us the hyper-individualistic notion of what our politicians & educationists like to call "the ultimate worth & dignity of the person," the individual Kant invests with unconditional being. **Enemy** also in claiming that to be universal & necessary, moral principles must stem from reason alone, ie they must be a priori (Enlightenment reason returned, especially in CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON, a philosophy of ethics, seven years after CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON--though reason can know only the thing as experienced [sense experience being inherently rational], not the *Ding an sich* [thing-in-itself]). **Enemy** also in that since "knowledge" of God is available only through our moral feelings, a potential (soon actual) wedge was driven between the realm of feelings ("faith") & the realm of reason ("knowledge"), so theology ceased to be a science (literally, a "knowledge"): "knowledge" was radically secularized, as soon was "the modern world" (a 1992 book title, eg, is THE SECULARIZATION OF SIN). In RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF MERE REASON (1793), Christianity (corrupted by Jewish elements!) is replaced by the religion of morality (requiring, on the religion side, belief only in God & in a future life); reason takes the place of the historical Jesus; the incarnation is replaced by the triumph of the good principle; & whatever is true in religion must be derivable from moral reason. But **friend** in democratic reconciliation of freedom & law.

5 A good thing reason can't know ultimates, or "God and eternity...would stand...before our eyes," robbing us of duty (because we'd then act out of fear or hope), & thus of the chance for good will, the only available unqualified good.