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LAST JUDGMENT AS SELF-JUDGEMENT  
(KANT, AUTONOMY, AND DIVINE POWER)

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Long-lasting darkness, ill food, and wailing-to such an existence shall your conscience lead you by your own deeds, O wicked ones.

-Zoroaster (*Yasna* 31:20)

The judge *within* will pronounce a severe verdict..., for a man cannot bribe his own reason.

-Immanuel Kant (*R* 72)

The inner reproaches of conscience plague vicious men more relentlessly than the Furies.

-Kant (*FPT* 288)

God judges according to our conscience, which is his representative on earth.

-Kant (*LPT* 128)

As scholars push Zoroaster's life back to 1,000 BCE, 300 hundred years before the Hebrew prophets, we have even better reason to call him the ancient father of moral theology.<sup>1</sup> The earlier he is dated the more impressive his belief in monotheism and human freedom becomes. His insistence on individual moral responsibility and its consequences constitutes a significant break with ideas of collective pollution in ancient societies. In contrast to the amoral eschatologies of Hades and Sheol, where all the dead, regardless of virtue, are destined, Zoroaster's hell is reserved only for the wicked. Unlike Christian hell, however, Zoroastrians are not punished eternally (which to

them would seem unjust), but only for a period commensurate with their evil deeds.

Immanuel Kant's focus on conscience as the only convincing evidence of deity certainly places him among the great modern moral theologians. Many scholars believe that Zoroastrianism is the most likely source of Judeo-Christian eschatology, and even Kant, presumably drawing on contemporary Bible scholarship, could find no evidence of a Last Judgement in the Hebrew Bible. More significant and intriguing, however, are Kant's apparent sympathies, in the passages quoted above, with a Zoroastrian Last Judgement as self-judgement.

In the late 1780s, when Prussian authorities were calling into question the religious orthodoxy of Kant and his colleagues, they would have been hard pressed to find, except for the passages on self-judgment, anything wrong with Kant's views on the afterlife. Even in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (hereafter *Religion*), a controversial theological work written during this period, Kant speaks confidently of a "blessed and cursed eternity" for the righteous and the wicked. He also contends, with uncharacteristic provocation, that Judaism cannot be a religion because "taken in its purity is seen to lack this belief" in future rewards and punishments (R 117). This position is continuous with Kant's earlier moral argument for Gods' existence, which assumed that the moral law exists and that it can be fulfilled only by the retributive justice of an omnipotent God.

This paper attempts to deal with a specific problem with Kant's eschatology as it relates to his ethical theory: Kant's Last Judgement seems to require that we become heteronomous vis-avis God, whereas autonomy is the basic principle of Kantian morality. Seen in terms of divine power, the Last Judgement requires a God who can unilaterally direct human wills so that justice is done, but the categorical imperative demands that God always respect human autonomy and self-determination. As a counter to Kant's heteronomous tendencies, which indicate that God aids in the perfection of moral wills, I offer the idea of "theonomy" (inspired by but not identical with Paul Tillich's idea) as a way to reconcile moral autonomy and eschatology. In this view,

God sets up the conditions for the perfection<sup>o</sup> of justice, but the rest is left to autonomous selves.

A critic might say that since Kant defines autonomy as simply the capacity for a moral agent to give itself the moral law, then there can be no conflict between divine power and autonomy. There can be no violation of autonomy if God helps us obey laws that we have put to ourselves. While this is indeed Kant's definition of autonomy, such a strict interpretation would sever the connection between moral reflection and moral action, something no moral philosopher would want to countenance. This objection overlooks the Kantian axiom that "ought implies can" - that a moral agent's duty is within her power to fulfill. As we shall see, Kant explicitly recognizes the problem that divine aid conflicts with the requirement that we use our own power to enact the moral law (R, 179). Therefore, there is an inseparable connection, in Kant and in moral theory in general, between freedom, self-determination, and autonomy. The principle of autonomy is an empty concept without the engagement of the will and subsequent moral action. There is therefore very good reason why, in moral and political discourse, autonomy has become essentially synonymous with self-determination.

Section I is an elaboration of the conflict between Kant's orthodox eschatology and his moral theory, as well as a summary of inconsistencies within his views of the afterlife. Section II is a discussion of three types of divine power (DP): divine omni causality (DP<sub>1</sub>), occasional divine intervention (DP<sub>2</sub>), and divine noncoercion DP<sub>3</sub>, while the ommicausal God of Luther and Calvin is no where to be found in Kant, both DP<sub>2</sub> compatible with the Last Judgment, and DP<sub>3</sub>, consistent with his moral theory, are found. In the concluding section, I analyse selected texts that suggest that a truly Kantian Last Judgement would be autonomous selves Judging themselves.

## I

With regard to most religious beliefs, Kant appears to be a good deist: petitionary prayer is a "superstitious illusion" (R183), the resurrection of the body is equally irrational (CF 40); the Bible is a "vivid form of representation"

of moral truths (R 78); Adam and Christ are symbolic figures only (R 54-59, 69,78); and Christ's Resurrection and Ascension are not admissible in a rational religion (R 119). Given these deviations from tradition, many readers are surprised to find so many passages supporting orthodox eschatology. In *Religion* he writes explicitly about a "blessed or cursed eternity"; he believes that Satan set up a "kingdom of evil... in defiance of the good principle", and, quoting Paul's "death is destroyed", he declares that "Immortality commences for both parties, to the salvation of one, the damnation of the other" (R 63,74,126). Although he believes the afterlife to be eternal, Kant concedes that this is not something that reason can decide. Nevertheless, he rejects limited punishment, and option taken by Zoroaster and John Adams, <sup>2</sup> as not sufficient incentive to turn people away from sin (R 63 fn). In *Religion* Kant introduces the concept of radical evil the "original" sin against the moral law that produces "infinite guilt". Kant states: "It would seem to follow, then, that because of this infinite guilt all mankind must look forward to *endless punishment* and exclusion from the Kingdom of God" (R 66, Kant's italics). But if the afterlife allows for moral development and conversion (this is the view of the Second *Critique*), then infinite time might enable some of the damned to redeem themselves. For the most part, however, Kant was inclined to believe that they would become even more wicked in the afterlife (LPT 124; R62).

The orthodoxy of Kant's position is weakened by his admission that traditional eschatological events and figures are "symbolical representation(s) intended merely to enliven hope and courage and to increase our endeavors to that end" (R125). Behind the symbols, however, is a strong, almost Manichean belief in good and evil principles, which is clearest in the following passage:

Though this representation (of heaven and hell) is figurative, and, as such disturbing, it is nonetheless philosophically correct in meaning. That is, it serves to prevent us from regarding good and evil, the realm of light and realm of darkness, as bordering on each other and as losing themselves in one another by gradual steps... but rather to represent

those realms as being separated from one another by an immeasurable gulf (R 53 fn.).

In other words, eschatological symbols represent the philosophical truths of absolute good and evil, the validity of retributive justice, and the necessity of the ultimate judgment and division of the righteous and the wicked.

One of the first problems with Kant's eschatology is sorting out the various types of afterlife found in his works. First, there is the belief in the coincidence of eschaton and noumenon that means that the "end" already exists in an atemporal state of moral perfection. We find this view in works as far apart as *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (hereafter *Foundations*), and parts of *Religion*. In these passages the operative phrase is "kingdom of ends", and ideal moral realm in which each rational being is automatically a member. During the winter of 1783-84 Kant introduced this idea: "If all men speak the truth, then a system of ends is possible among them," (LPT 140; cf.41). This view continues in *Foundations*, where the nominal kingdom of ends, consisting of self-legislating rational beings, contrasts with a phenomenal realm of heteronomous beings obedient to an external law. Again, membership is not granted by God, but is acquired by reason. "He is fitted to be a member in a possible realm of ends to which his own nature already destined him" (F, 54). Even though *Religion* introduces a significantly different eschatology, Kant's initial view is still present: "The constant seeking for the kingdom of God would be equivalent to knowing oneself to be already in possession of this kingdom", and we must "consider ourselves always as chosen citizens of a divine ethical state" (R 61, 93).

The kingdom of ends is Kant's most humanistic eschatology. Until Kant speaks of God as uniting the realms of nature and virtue (F 58), god seems to play no role in the noumenal kingdom of ends, except as guarantor of the moral law. Sharon Anderson-Gold states that "there is ... a notable lack of reference to the role of theistic belief in realizing such realm... The internal essence of the realm... does not appear to require that there be" a God at all<sup>3</sup>. Using our three types of divine power, we could amend this by stipulating

that  $DP_1$  or  $DP_2$ , where god intervenes in nature or aids or manipulates human wills, is not required. The kingdom of ends is most compatible with the noncoercive god of  $DP_3$  and full self-determination.

The eschatology of the Second *Critique* requires that God set up an afterlife in which nature and virtue are harmonized so that "infinite progress" to perfection through "an infinitely enduring existence" is possible (PrR 127). The ideas of moral development and a real afterlife make this view very different from the kingdom of ends. Although Kant once hints that divine aid may be necessary (PrR 132 fn), this is inconsistent with his main argument. The earliest passages on moral progress in the afterlife make no mention of divine aid (LPT 125), and in the Second *Critique* Kant contends that "the Christian principle of morality is not theological and thus heteronomous, being rather the autonomy of pure practical reason itself" (PrR 133). A corollary to moral autonomy - usually phrased as "ought implies can" - also required that Kant's eschatological pilgrims proceed to perfection under their own power. The Last Judgement of the Second *Critique* is most compatible with a  $DP_2$  God, one who would use divine over-power in a limited way. God would make the perfection of morality possible, but would not at all compromise human wills.

The eschatology of *Religion* offers some surprising changes. Along with a "blessed" and "cursed" eternity, there is also an ethical commonwealth on earth, both presumably established with divine aid. Kant also introduces the idea of "radical evil", which involves a fundamental inversion in the ordering of moral incentives. In radical evil priority is given to attaining happiness, and it alone becomes the incentive for conforming to the moral law. In other words, in radical evil inclination always wins out over duty. Before *Religion* Kant could think of moral perfection as a gradual reformation of the human will, but now he can only conceive it as a "revolution in man's disposition (R 41). Kant sees his dilemma and the thesis of this paper clearly : "If a man is corrupt in the very ground of his maxims how can he possibly bring about this revolution by his own powers..." (R 41). Kant remains confident that moral agents can hope that they can do this on their own power (R 46), but this now seems very problematic with the assumption of radical evil and

many references to the necessity of divine aid. Before *Religion* Kant was generally consistent in the view that human beings could be redeemed by simply exercising their rational natures, now it seems that Kant has returned to what looks like orthodox Christian soteriology.

## II

Christian theology has always assumed a view of divine power that is at odds with autonomy, and the idea of human self-rule has always been condemned as the original sin. In the history of Christian thought at least three views of divine power can be discerned. First, there is the belief in divine omnicausality (I abbreviate it  $DP_1$ ), which holds that God is the only subject of power—the active, immediate, and originative cause of all things and events. Martin Luther, John Calvin, neoorthodox theologians, and contemporary evangelical Carl Henry believe that this is the correct view of divine power. Let Luther speak for them all:

By the omnipotence of God... I do not mean the potentiality by which he could do many things which he does not, but the active power by which he potently works all in all ... This omnipotence and the foreknowledge of God, I say, completely abolish the dogma of free choice.<sup>4</sup>

Luther would be dismayed to learn that the option that he rejects.” the potentiality by which he could do many things which he does not”.. Has become the most prevalent conception of divine power in contemporary theology and philosophy of religion. Although God could exercise all power, God instead chooses to delegate power to a self-regulating nature and self-determining moral agents. (This type of divine power, attributed historically to Augustine, Aquinas, Erasmus, Arminius, Leibniz, and Kant, is abbreviated  $DP_2$ ). In the current literature, this God has the power to bring about any logically possible state of affairs. In addition, this deity possesses what Nelson Pike calls “over-power”... “Veto” power, I call it— or the coercive power of traditional theology. This is a direct power (as in  $DP_1$ ) for god to perform miracles, to “Harden hearts,” to make himself incarnate (if that is not a self-

contradiction), and ultimately, to bring nature and history to an end, and to judge the righteous and the damned. Opposed to both  $DP_1$  and  $DP_2$  is the view of process theism ( $DP_3$ ), in which god is the preeminent cosmic power but God cannot unilaterally control nature nor contravene free choices.

There is much evidence to demonstrate that  $DP_2$  is indeed Kant's view of divine power" "Every event in the world is directed by God's supreme will, the divine direction is partly *orderly* and partly *extraordinary*"; and "not everything *happens* through divine direction, even if everything is *subject* to it" (LPT 154, 155; Kant's italics). Kant's distinction between "orderly" and "extraordinary" causation corresponds nicely with the delegated power of a self-regulating nature and Pike's "over-power". Later in *Religion* Kant states that God is "the creator... of the order of nature, as well as the moral order"; and that in performing miracle god, using his "veto" power, causes "nature to deviate from its own laws" (R 81). Kant reminds us that we can have no knowledge of how god causes miracles, except that we can be sure that a beneficent deity would have good intentions in every instance.

Regarding the origin of evil, the three types of divine power generally correlate with three solutions to the problem. The logical implication of  $DP_1$  is that God is the origin of evil. Both Luther and Second Isaiah agree: "Since ... God moves and actuates all in all, he necessarily moves and acts in Satan"<sup>5</sup>, "I form light, and I create darkness: I produce well-being, and I create evil, I Yahweh do all these things" (Is. 45:7, AB)<sup>6</sup>. With their rejection of *creatio ex nihilo*, process theists see the root of all evil in primordial chaos (Whitehead's "creativity"), thereby mitigating to a great degree divine and human responsibility.

Proponents of  $DP_2$  generally subscribe to the "free-will" defense that evil is the result of moral agency - and Kant falls in the line with this group. He suggests that God, using his "extraordinary" power, could have made everyone a member of the kingdom of ends "by divine decree" (LPT, 156), but chose instead to allow free agents to make themselves worthy of happiness. In answer to the question of why God did not eliminate the rebel Satan, Kant answered that "in its dominion over the government of rational beings...



Supreme Wisdom deals with them according to the principle of their freedom, and the good or evil that befalls them is to be imputable to themselves" (R 73-4). Please note, as opposed to the hypothetical critic mentioned in the introduction, how Kant fuses questions of autonomy, freedom, and self-determination. Giving ourselves the moral law (strict Kantian autonomy) is obviously not sufficient, but must be combined with the freedom and power to fulfill it.

Consistent with DP<sub>2</sub> position Kant speaks frequently, both early and late, of the necessity of divine intervention for the perfection of virtue. "If we act as well lies in our power, what is not in our power will come to our aid from another source, whether we know in what way or not" (PrR 132fn). God "makes good their inability to fulfill this (moral) requirement themselves" (R132); and "that what is not in his power will be supplied by the supreme Wisdom in some way or other..." (R 159). In his very last work "*On History*" Kant concluded that moral progress will require supernatural influence, and Despland observes that in the last decade of his life Kant resorted, more and more, to Providence and divine intervention in history.<sup>7</sup> These passages pose a grave threat to freedom and self-determination, because God is not only setting up the conditions for moral perfection, but also reordering human wills so they will succeed.

At the same time, from the Second *Critique* on, Kant is aware that God's use of "extraordinary" power undermines self-determination. He makes it clear that not even God is exempt from the second form of the categorical imperative: we are "never to be used merely as a means for someone (even God) without at the same time being (ourselves) an end, and thus the humanity in our person must itself be holy to us" (PrR 136). If God's aid is to help us reach our own ends, then there is no violation of the second form of the categorical imperative. But God's general administration of justice would involve the use of all humanity as a means for a divine end. It appears that Kant's commitment to Christian eschatology does commit him to the latter as well as the former.

Kant's commitment to DP<sub>2</sub> undermines another essential principle in

his moral theory, namely, that "ought implies can." It would be a cruel joke of nature that we are allowed to discover moral laws within our soul, but then find that we do not have the capacity to fulfill them. Kant states that the kingdom of ends is an ideal that can become real "through our conduct" (F55 fn.17). Repeatedly Kant reaffirms the Stoic view of moral self-determination: "Man must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, whether good or evil, he is or is to become" (R40). Even here in *Religion*, where we find the most references for the necessity of divine over-power, Kant rejects it as both irrational and ruinous to autonomy. Divine intervention "contradicts spontaneity..., according to which such a good cannot come from another but must arise from man himself, if it is to be imputable to him" (R 134). Please note the clear link between autonomy and self-determination in each of these passages.

The most significant passage on divine intervention appears in his discussion of nature and grace in *Religion*.

The concept of supernatural accession to our moral, though deficient, capacity... is a transcendent concept, and is a bare idea, of whose reality no experience can assure us. Even when accepted as an idea in nothing but a practical context it is very hazardous, and hard to reconcile with reason, since that which is to be accredited to us as morally good conduct must take place not through foreign influence but solely through the best possible use of our powers (R 179).

After such an unequivocal defense of autonomy, it is extremely puzzling to find that Kant immediately reinstates divine intercession by arguing that both this and the idea of freedom are equally mysterious. As such, they are, Kant claims, also equally impossible; therefore they are equally usable to practical purposes! This is imminently unconvincing considering Kant's moral theory, where the intuition of freedom is an indubitable fact and where morality is impossible without that intuition. Kant's use of the principle of the "equity of mystery" appears to fail utterly. An altogether poor argument is made weaker by Kant's admission that there is really no equity: we experience freedom and there is nothing supernatural about its exercise, but Kant confesses that we

can know nothing about supernatural intervention.

Obviously the Christian and Stoic Kant are at odds with one another, so what are we to do to rescue him from the dilemma? How can God help without violating human autonomy? God must join nature and virtue in such a way as to prevent backsliding and self-deception, but preserve self-determination at the same time. One alternative would be to hold Kant to a noumenal kingdom of ends. Here divine "aid" would be not necessary: God would do nothing except guarantee the foundations of morality. This would amount to a rather strict form of deism and a  $DP_3$  that requires far less divine activity than does process theism, which actually maximizes noncoercive intervention with God supplying an "initial aim" for every actuality.

From the Second *Critique* onward Kant is firmly committed to  $DP_2$  and substantial divine intervention. This includes the granting of immortality, the melding of nature and virtue, and the administration of justice. Something like Tillich's concept of theonomy appears to be a possible solution: God makes the perfection of virtue possible, but human beings actualize it by themselves. I believe that we can see the outlines of a Kantian theonomy already in the *Foundations*. Here Kant suggests that God could unite the kingdom of ends and the kingdom of nature, such that the former is no longer a mere idea but a reality. Furthermore, Kant argues that the worth of autonomous actions still remains, because "the essence of things is not changed by their external relations, and without reference to these relations a man must be judged only by what constitutes his absolute worth; and this is true whoever his judge is, even if it be the Supreme Being" (F 58). Kantian theonomy is summed up nicely in this passage from *Lectures on Ethics*: "God wants mankind to be made happy. He wants men to be made happy by men, and if only all men united to promote their own happiness... god has set us on the stage where we can make each other happy. It rests with us, and us alone, to do so: (LE 54-5).

Despland suggests that Tillich's concept of theonomy could have helped Kant explain the influence of Christ in the life of faith.<sup>8</sup> Without naming Tillich in the following passage, Despland proposes a more general

### Kantian theonomy.

Rational free men might after all be in need of specific divine help in history. Rather than endangering the autonomy of men and making them superstitious slaves, this divine help restores autonomy to captive men and thus brings them to fee maturity. More precisely, it enables man to make of autonomy not a formal principle governing human thinking, but an effective power governing human relationships. It enables absolute freedom to incarnate itself and give motivation and content to human actions themselves.<sup>9</sup>

The divine action Despland envisions is surely more than Kantian freedom can stand. Despland's language reminds one of more conservative views of Christian freedom in which true liberty is achieved through conformation to the divine will. The advantage of the DP<sub>2</sub> theonomy proposed above is that divine intervention does not affect human wills, but only the conditions under which those wills can operate.

### III

In speaking of divine grace, says Nicholas Wolterstorff, Kant wants to give God "the power of making the person who is guilty not guilty"<sup>10</sup>. But this leads to a great internal contradiction: on the one hand, Kant accepts the Stoic view of strict autonomy and moral self-sufficiency; but on the other, Kant has God intervening and altering our moral status. As Wolterstorff phrases it: "Our situation is not that we do not know how God wipes out guilt. Our situation, given the Stoic principle, is that we know God does not."<sup>11</sup> In *Religion* Kant follows his earlier view of divine judgement: our moral lives are judged as if they were already complete. (Since there is no time in god's vision, that is the only way God could do it). Kant wants to call this judgment "grace", but Wolterstorff contends that this is nothing but divine justice.

Thus Kant cannot have it both ways: he cannot hold that we can expect god's forgiveness, since God's failure to forgive would violate the moral order of rights and obligations, and also hold that God's

granting of forgiveness is an act of grace on God's part.<sup>12</sup>

A grace that is required is not grace at all. Since Kant's goal is a moral, rational religion, the Christian concept of grace as freely given must be eliminated.

I believe that it is crucial for Kant's moral theology to preserve a noninterventionist view of divine judgment. Just as Wolterstoff has argued that Kant, the moral rationalist, cannot support unconditional grace, I contend that Kant cannot maintain a traditional view of the Last Judgment. The view most consistent with human autonomy is a doctrine of self-judgment, and Kant appears to recognize this on several occasions:

The concept of each rational being as a being that must regard itself as giving universal law through all the maxims of its will, *so that it may judge itself and its actions from this standpoint, leads to ... a realm of ends* (F51; my italics).

Furthermore, if anyone is apprehensive that this reason, through his conscience, will judge him too leniently, he errs, I believe, very seriously. *For just because reason is free, and must pass judgement even upon the man himself, it is not to be bribed;* and if we tell a man under such circumstances ... that he will soon have to stand before a judge, *we need but leave him to his own reflections, which will in all probability pass sentence upon him with the greatest severity* (R 64fn; my italics).

When, therefore, he considers the verdict of his future judge (that is, of his own awakening conscience...), he will not be able to conceive any other basis for passing judgement than to have placed before his eyes at that time his whole life and not a mere segment of it, such as the last part of it or the part most advantageous to him (R 71; my italics).

As I have demonstrated in another work, there are ancient traditions - in Zoroastrianism and Tibetan Buddhism - of self-judgment, which have been corroborated, some would say, by ongoing studies of near-death experiences

(NDEs).<sup>13</sup> Especially intriguing is the parallel between the “life-review” of the NDEs and Kant’s idea that we must judge our lives as a whole, and not in the parts most agreeable to us. In many NDEs life-reviews are initiated by a “great being of light” who accepts us unconditionally as completed spiritual wholes. During these life-reviews, it is the self, not God, who does the judging, by viewing its life and owning up to its past deeds. The great being of light is like Kant’s holy will who does not judge, but simply accepts us as “well-pleasing to God, at whatever instant (our) existence be terminated” (R 61). While god has already “credited to us” the spiritual wholeness that he atemporally sees, the temporal” accuser within us would be more likely to propose a judgment of condemnation” (R 70). For Kant rational persons will be harder on themselves than either God or their peers.

In the *Metaphysical Elements of Justice* Kant seems to undermine my thesis by rejecting the concept of self-judgment as a “great sophistry.” He explains: “No one suffers punishment because he has willed the punishment, but because he has willed a punishable action. If what happens to someone is also willed by him, it cannot be a punishment. Accordingly, it is impossible to will to be punished (MMJ 105). But here Kant is speaking of “judicial” punishment, not “natural” punishment, and Last Judgment as self-judgment would definitely be a form of the latter. The heteronomous *homo phenomenon* cannot be trusted to judge himself, because in him self-deception and lapses of conscience are habitual. The autonomous *homo noumenon*, however, realizes the maxim that “vice punishes itself”, and that “if you vilify him, you vilify yourself, if you steal from him, you steal from yourself, if you kill him, you kill yourself” (MMJ 101). Members of the kingdom of ends are colegislators of the moral law, but criminals, because of their criminal acts, are no longer members of the kingdom of virtue and cannot act as their own judges. The social contract is for *homo phenomenon*, not *homo noumenon*. Therefore, we can trust only the latter to be their own judges, for their unobstructed reason cannot be bribed.

For Kant the punishment of self-judgment is this worldly as well as other-worldly, and it begins during the change of heart that leads to obeying

the moral law within. While the immoral person “laughs at the fear of those inner reproaches which plague honest people” (FPT 288), the latter experience the pain of the consequences of earlier transgressions. This self-inflicted punishment begins the process of satisfying divine justice (R 67). For Kant this is the correct meaning of the story of Adam and Eve and Paul’s discourse about the “old” and “new” man in Christ. “Everything... what would be due him as punishment in that quality (of the old man) he gladly takes upon himself in his quality of new man simply for the sake of the good” (R 69fn). The virtuous should be willing to give up happiness in this life, judging themselves and doing penance for their radical evil.

Kant believes it is significant that in the New Testament Christ as the Son of Man is the one who Judges. “This seems to indicate that *humanity itself*, knowing its limitation and its frailty, will pronounce the sentence in this selection (of the good from the bad)\_a benevolence which yet does not offend against justice” (R 131fn; Kant’s italics). Kant’s humanistic interpretation of the Son of Man actually has some support in the Hebrew Bible, but later it becomes just another title for the divine messiah and judge of orthodox Christianity. Kant’s attempts at a biblical justification for his views are obviously strained, and they definitely pass the breaking point when Kant makes it clear that guilt is not transferable and that each one of us must bear it on our own. Therefore, there can be no vicarious atonement of Christ, or any other atoning act of God. Radical evil is a type of sin “which only the culprit can bear and which no innocent person can assume even though he be magnanimous enough to wish to take it upon himself for the sake of another”(R 63). If radical evil is “the most personal of all debts”, then we must atone for it in the most personal of all ways, namely, self-judgment. As Despland states: “By the very nature of his rationality man cannot partake of any good unless he partakes of it by his own judgement and by his own activity. And he can always know what his judgment is.”<sup>14</sup>

In his impressive study of *Religion*, Despland stresses a distinction between conscientiousness and perfection, “which always distinguishes between form and content in the moral life, or between the method of decision-making and the attainable results.”<sup>15</sup> I believe that this distinction can aid us

in offering an alternative to Kant's eschatology. We could propose that the goal of the afterlife is a conscientious assessment of our actions rather than an endless pursuit of moral perfection. Using Heideggerian terminology, the goal of human life is authenticity (*Eigenlichkeit*)-owning (*eigen*) up to what we have done-not complete conformation with the moral law. This solution would eliminate the infinite guilt that Kant believes accrues by attempting an impossible moral task. As I have argued in previous work on self-judgement, the disembodied existence of an afterlife would make temporizing and self-deception - common obstacles to honest self-realization --essentially impossible. Once Last Judgement as self-judgment is over, the afterlife would end in the peace of Nirvana. This proposal goes far beyond the juridical Judeo-Christian eschatology and even the limited afterlife of Zoroaster, which is still based on retribution, to a nonjudicial Buddhist-existentialist model of attaining internal peace. This solution eliminates the goal of moral perfection and also the divine aid that this impossible goal requires.

#### NOTES

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#### *Abbreviations for Kant's works*

**CF:** *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1979).

**F:** *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1985).

**FPT :** "On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies", trans. Michel Despland in Despland, *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973).

**LE:** *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

**LPT:** *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, trans. Allen Wood and Gertrude M. Clark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).



**MMJ** : *Metaphysical Elements of Justice* : Part I of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Trans. John Ladd (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965).

**PrR** : *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York:Bobbs-Merrill, 1965).

**R**: *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960)

### FOOT NOTES

1. Gherardo Gnoli, *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland* (Naples:Instituto Universitario Orientale, 1980); and Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), Vol.1. IF Boyce is correct about the moral tritheism of the early Indo-Iranians, then Zoroaster is only a transmitter, not an inventor, of an even more original moral theology. Interestingly enough, Kant knows Zoroastrianism only in its later dualistic form, not in its early monotheistic phase (R 131 fn).
2. "I believe, too, in a future state of rewards and punishments, but not eternal (*The Works of John Adams*, ed. C.F. Adams (Boston: 1850-56), vol., 10, p.170) Other American "deists" agreed with Kant on an afterlife, even Thomas Paine, the only real deist among them. See my "Religious Liberalism and the Founding Fathers" in *Two Centuries of Philosophy in America*, ed. Peter Caws (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp.22-45.
3. Sharon Anderson-Gold, "God and Community: An Inquiry into the Religious Implications of the Highest Good" in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, eds. P. J. Rossi and Michael Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 126.
4. *Luther's Works*, eds. N.Pelikan and H.T.Lehman (St.Louis:Concordia, 1955-76), Vol.33, p.189. See my "Three Types of Divine Power" (*Process Studies* 20:4[Winter, 1991], pp.221-232) for detailed discussion of each of the three powers.
5. Luther, *Weimarausgabe*, vol. 18, p.709 (Gordon Rupp's trans.)
6. Evangelical Carl Henry criticizes those who wish to soften the implications

of this verse, and he reasserts his Calvinist view of absolute divine sovereignty and that all evil is done by divine commission rather than permission (*God, Revelation, and Authority* (Waco:Word Books, 1976-1983], vol. 6, pp. 293-94).

7. Michel Despland, *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973). P.274.
8. *Ibid.*, p.200. it is also interesting to note that Despland believes that Tillich's concept of theonomy, especially in terms of how philosophy of religion bridges reason and revelation, was influenced by Kant (p. 155).
9. *Ibid.*, pp.237-8.
10. Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, "Conundrums in Kant's Rational Religion" in Rossi and Wreen, *op. Cit.*, p. 48.
11. *Ibid.*, p.49
12. *Ibid.*, p. 45
13. See my "Humanistic Self-Judgment and After-Death Experiences" in Geddes MacGregor, ed. *Immortality and Human Destiny* (New York: Paragon House, 1985), pp.3-20
14. Despland, *op. cit.*, p. 163
15. *Ibid.*