Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's

Religion Within
the Bounds of
Bare Reason

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Preface

Why a commentary on Kant's *Religion*, now?

What is religion? Are its essential features grounded in human reason, or does it necessarily appeal to extrarational elements that can be verified only by experience or some external authority? When a religious tradition does make historical truth claims, how can we discern whether they are essential or merely peripheral to genuine faith? Moreover, what is the proper role of symbols and rituals in religious practice? These questions, and many more like them, are the focus of Kant's highly influential yet often confusing book *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793/4). Ever since its first publication 222 years ago, readers have debated what Kant was trying to accomplish, often refusing to believe that the philosopher of pure reason, creator of the Critical philosophy, even *might* have been attempting to make room for something as messy as empirical *religion*.

Time is ripe for a revolution—in Kant studies as in the academic (and, if possible, the popular) understanding of the nature of religion. That "Fichte is the key to the entire tradition of modern continental philosophy" (Wood 2010: xxvii), his influence on modern developments in theology and philosophy of religion having been even more direct than Kant's (xvi), is commonly recognized; indeed, as Dorrien 2012 aptly demonstrates, Fichte's understanding of the religious implications of Kant's philosophy has dominated the subsequent history of modern liberal theology. What is rarely acknowledged is that *another option* exists. In Kant's own day the influential Tübingen

theologian Gottlob Christian Storr (1746–1805), a defender of orthodoxy and the originator of the now standard theory of the priority of Mark's Gospel, was an ardent defender of Kant's Critical philosophy, viewing it as a welcome respite for a "supernaturalist" theory of divine revelation, after several decades of harsh Enlightenment skepticism in relation to empirical religion. And now, after two centuries of neglect, a recovery of something akin to Storr's more affirmative way of interpreting the implications of Kant's philosophy for empirical religion has gained momentum: in recent years more and more interpreters have been willing to take Kant's moderate position at face value, as a genuine attempt to elucidate one of the most significant aspects of human life, in hopes of *reforming* Christian theology and religious practice rather than abolishing it. The present commentary is an attempt to consolidate thirty years of work on this project, with the aim of bringing this moderate reading of *Religion* into the mainstream.[1]

Aside from *Critique of Pure Reason*, his magnum opus, *Religion* is the only book Kant bothered to publish in a significantly revised edition after its initial publication.[2] Unlike in the case of the *Critique*, whose first edition he allowed to stand for six years before publishing a revision, Kant published the second edition of *Religion* less than a year after the first, which had been reprinted twice during the second half of 1793 (Vorländer 1922: lxxv). This, together with the fact that *Religion* was the first book Kant wrote after he had finished his trilogy of *Critiques* (published in 1781–7, 1788, and 1790), should remove all doubt as to the personal importance this topic had for Kant. He published two editions of this controversial book within less than a year, *even though* (or perhaps *because*?) it was under threat of censorship from the conservative king's religious authority. Getting this text right was obviously very important to Kant. Yet commentators on *Religion*,

unlike those who focus on the first *Critique*, have virtually ignored the differences between the two editions, often seeming unaware of what these differences even are.[3] Why did Kant take such pains over the publication, revision, and republication of a work that many Kant scholars have ended up treating as but an anomaly in the Kantian corpus? Answering that question is one of central goals of the present project.

The first English translation of *Religion* appeared during Kant's lifetime, in 1799: John Richardson, a British scholar and friend of James Sigismund Beck, one of Kant's closest disciples, included long extracts from *Religion* in volume 2 of his *Essays and Treatises*.[4] A second and more complete translation was published by J. W. Semple less than forty years later, in 1838 (and then republished in 1848). Just 35 years later, in 1873, the first modern-sounding translation was published by T. K. Abbott—a translation that continues to influence scholarship on Kant's *Religion* to this day, for two reasons. First, it included only the first of *Religion*'s four parts, portraying it explicitly as an appendix to Kant's ethics; for the next 120 years, the vast majority of Kant scholars assumed a similarly narrow view of the book's scope. Second, when T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson produced the next *complete* translation (hereafter GH) in 1934, their treatment of that first part was largely a revision of Abbott's effort. Perhaps because interest in Kant's theory of religion reached its low point during the middle years of the twentieth century, it would be a further 62 years before George di Giovanni produced his 1996 translation (hereafter GG) for the Cambridge edition of Kant's works;[5] GG often follows GH, just as the latter used Abbott as a starting point.

That interest in Kant's *Religion* has never been greater than in the past twenty years is evidenced by the fact that

Werner S. Pluhar's 2009 translation (hereafter WP) appeared a mere 12 years after its most recent predecessor. Unlike the previous translators, Pluhar is a native German speaker and has the distinction of being the only person to have translated all three *Critiques* into English. These two credentials alone were enough to ensure that his version of *Religion* would provide English readers with a substantially fresh perspective on Kant's text, for the first time in 135 years. And the product lived up to expectations: many incoherencies that had plagued interpreters, tempting readers to assume that Kant's advancing age was already beginning to affect his cognitive powers in 1793, resolved themselves at Pluhar's skillful hands. I was therefore honored, having learned about his project during the first few months of my work on the present commentary, to be invited to write the Introduction to Pluhar's translation. Readers seeking a comprehensive overview of Kant's argument in *Religion* might wish to consult that Introduction (especially [section 3](#)) before tackling the detailed study set out in the following pages.

Collaborating with Pluhar during the final stage of his work on translating Kant's *Religion* was one of the highlights of my scholarly career. Rare is the time—even (or perhaps especially) among philosophers—when one can feel entirely free to criticize, discuss, and argue without having to worry about the other party feeling offended or refusing to grant the plausibility of the opposing view, when one's own *reasons* come to an end. Although we did not agree on all issues by the time the process had to be drawn to a close, I was firmly convinced that my *Commentary* should use, as its starting point, WP rather than any other work in the long line of (often quite similar) older translations. Moreover, WP's critical apparatus is more comprehensive than those provided by either GG or GH. Readers of the present *Commentary* would therefore do well to consult WP

regularly for helpful supplementary material. Pluhar provides many footnotes that give detailed background information on Kant's sources or other facts about the text, and in most cases I only briefly cite such notes, on the assumption that readers do not need me to repeat Pluhar's good work.

At first I expected to reproduce WP with only a few minor departures—most notably, his translation of *Gesinnung*, since our disagreement over that term was aired in lengthy footnotes within his translation itself. Though occasionally expressed in somewhat awkward English (due in large part to Pluhar's effort to remain faithful to Kant's use of often torturous German), WP is on the whole far more accurate than GG or GH. GH makes quite a few errors due to grammatical misidentification and other infelicities; GG corrects some of them but occasionally generates new ones, especially where an accurate translation would reflect just how religious Kant's language often was. However, the more I proceeded with the task of carefully examining each word of Pluhar's text, comparing it to Kant's German and to the two most recent previous translations, the more I found room for making small improvements to WP's otherwise excellent text.[6] I also found myself disagreeing with the word choice in WP—sometimes only mildly, but on a few occasions with a profound effect on the meaning of the text (though this happened far less often than in the cases of GH and GG); in the end I revised WP's translations for well over five hundred German words, including some of the most important technical terms in *Religion*.[7] The next section of this Preface provides a detailed explanation of the rules I have followed to ensure that this commentary meets one of its key goals: to present the most accurate, complete, and informative translation of Kant's *Religion* available in English, one that will allow even the non-German speaker

to appreciate the many ways in which one's interpretation depends on how one translates the text.

The purpose of this commentary, however, is not merely to present a comprehensive analysis of Kant's text as such, but also to advance to a new level the cutting edge of scholarship on *interpreting* Kant's *Religion*. The history of interpreting Kant's *Religion* has several major turning points. The first occurred in the 1920s: the publication of books by C. C. J. Webb (1926) and F. E. England (1929) signaled a renewed appreciation among English-speaking scholars of Kant's relevance to religion and was likely a contributing factor to Greene and Hudson's decision to publish a new translation several years later. However, these groundbreaking studies portrayed "Kant's philosophy of religion" as little more than his arguments against the traditional proofs for God's existence, complemented by the moral proof he puts in their place—Kant's reflections on the nature and purpose of religion *itself* being treated more as a supplement to his ethics. Indeed, this assumption that Kant's *Religion* does not play a central or culminating role in his philosophy ended up being taken for granted by most interpreters throughout the twentieth century. One reason why this position gained such prominence was that Greene and Hudson's translation employed the misleadingly restrictive title *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*; and, when reissued 26 years later, it included an introductory essay (Silber 1960) that explicitly promoted the reductionist reading that was by then mainstream.

Aside from his treatment of evil in the opening sections of *Religion*, Kant's actual arguments were largely ignored in the English-speaking world until three books prompted what might be called a "second wave"[8] of interpretations: these sparked new interest in Kant's *Religion* as such, significantly increasing awareness of how it not only sheds new light on Kant's ethics (Wood 1970) but also has

applications for real historical religion (Despland 1973), and even for religious practice, that might extend beyond Kant's own focus on the Christian tradition (Green 1978). In spite of these three valiant efforts, however, the position taken as granted in most of the secondary literature throughout the first ninety years of the twentieth century was that Kant reduces religion to morality (see e.g., Michalson 1979 and 1990), so that a person who is interested in real, empirical religion (as such) has little if any need to read Kant.

This way of reading Kant began to change with what might be called a "third wave" of scholarship on Kant's religion, beginning around the time when I published "Does Kant Reduce Religion to Morality?" (SP-1992). This article argues that Kant does not reduce religion to morality but *raises* morality to the level of religion, as a *necessary* supplement to humanity's moral weakness. In the 23 years since that article appeared, a torrent of books and articles has been published on issues arising directly out of the theories Kant presents in *Religion*. Most of these books and articles explore fresh ways of reading Kant on religion.

A key aim of this commentary is to provide a comprehensive resource for those who want to assess this third wave and to move forward with *new* applications—or perhaps even to initiate a fourth wave, which goes beyond the "traditional versus affirmative" distinction that has characterized much of the past decade or two of scholarship in this area (see, e.g., *FNP*-Firestone/Palmquist). The present commentary downplays that dichotomy because the old "conundrums" (i.e., the complaints raised by the generation of interpreters who merely *assumed* that Kant's text is self-conflicted and/or incoherent) have been answered by various recent studies,[9] so that the time is now ripe for a new generation of Kant interpreters to begin examining the many detailed

proposals that Kant puts forward in the text of *Religion*, in his effort to create the new discipline of philosophical theology. That is, this potential fourth wave of scholarship on Kant's theory of religion will work on the assumption that Kant's position has serious and specific implications for real, empirical religion and will attempt to flesh out these implications in detail, without quibbling over old questions of textual coherence that have tended to bog down works published during the third wave. With this purpose in mind, and because my previous monograph on the same topic—namely *PCR*—already assesses and responds to the older (pre-2000) literature on Kant's philosophy of religion, my treatment of secondary literature in this book focuses on work published in the past 15 years, references to older literature being limited to material that was not adequately addressed in *PCR*.

The overall purpose of this commentary, then, is to provide the first comprehensive reference work in English on *Religion*: a work that any reader interested in Kant's treatment of questions relating to religion can turn to for clarification of and assistance on *any specific passage* in Kant's book. The best commentary on *Religion* published in German is Bohatec 1966 (first published in 1938); but it focuses almost entirely on tracing Kant's sources, without offering comments on every passage. Following the typical style of a biblical commentary, I have divided Kant's entire book into short snippets, normally consisting of one to four sentences ranging from one to about thirty lines of text in the standard Berlin Academy edition (on average twelve lines or less, and only occasionally over twenty)—in other words, short enough for a single paragraph to suffice in providing a restatement of and comments on Kant's claims therein. Fortunately, Kant usually breaks up long paragraphs by inserting dashes when the topic changes—even slightly. While a quick reading may cause these to

appear random, they often turn out to be excellent hints as to where and how his thought processes are developing. I nearly always follow his lead by breaking my quotations of his texts wherever a paragraph break (or footnote) appears *and* wherever one of these dashes appears.[10]

I introduce each passage briefly, usually with a single sentence; then, after the quotation itself (which is presented as an indented excerpt and uses my revised version of WP; see Glossary for details), I comment on the quoted passage. In most cases a single paragraph of commentary suffices for each passage. When a second (or in rare cases, more than one additional) paragraph follows a quoted passage, the purpose of the subsequent paragraph(s) is to discuss either (1) interesting post-Kantian developments that may have been influenced by what Kant wrote in the quoted passage or (2) interpretive controversies that have arisen because Kant scholars have disagreed with each other over the correct interpretation of (or with Kant over the claims advanced in) a given passage. In cases where the quoted passage has given rise to comparatively minor interpretive disputes in the secondary literature or is only loosely suggestive of subsequent developments, I relegate such discussions to the footnotes.

Given these limitations, the present commentary is (at best) only indirectly comprehensive in its coverage of the secondary literature: it brings together under one cover an account of precisely where and how Kant defends the various claims I have attributed to him in previous books and articles. While my comments highlight passages where I believe Kant is providing evidence for such interpretive stances, I have not attempted to reproduce my more comprehensive treatments of the secondary literature except in summary form. Readers interested in my defense of Kant's position in *Religion* or in my more detailed reconstruction of that position should consult *PCR* and/or

the other relevant publications listed in Part C of Works Cited. My central task here, in other words, is not to defend through independent arguments the validity of the various positions that I think Kant adopted but to explain more straightforwardly what his position actually *is* and how *he* defends it through argument (when he does). In cases where the coherence of Kant's position requires an independent defense, I merely summarize the treatment I or other recent scholars have provided elsewhere. Had I made this book comprehensive in this sense—by grafting in all the details of my previous responses to studies related to Kant's theory of religion that were published during the twentieth century—I would have more than doubled the size of this already massive book. Similarly, in order to be comprehensive in my coverage of Kant's text, I have been able, at any given point, to devote only brief attention to identifying Kant's sources (a task that is accomplished far more comprehensively by Bohatec 1966) and/or those he influenced. Rather than repeating old knowledge, my main emphasis here has been on sources and influences that Bohatec and others had not previously detected, which I have identified and highlighted in several significant contexts. A truly comprehensive treatment of these two areas would require a multivolume encyclopedia.

Another implication of my thoroughly text-based approach is that this commentary only occasionally relates the ideas that Kant expresses in *Religion* to those defended in his other writings. The present book is a comprehensive study of Kant's theory of *religion*; it is not about Kantian ethics or epistemology, nor does it claim to offer comprehensive coverage of Kantian theology. These are all areas I have addressed elsewhere, in varying degrees of detail. I touch upon them here only insofar as they have a direct impact on something stated in the pages of *Religion*, and then only briefly. As I demonstrate in §3 of the Introduction, Kant

hoped that *Religion* would be used as a textbook for theology students, clarifying for them what it means to be authentically religious, though *not* how to construct a systematic theology. Anyone who picks up this commentary expecting to find yet another overview of Kant's philosophical theology, or an account of how Kant's theory of religion completes some aspect of his Critical project (e.g., as a supplement to his ethics), is bound to be disappointed. Where noteworthy links to other works of Kant's exist, I briefly cite the relevant passage(s), so that readers interested in pursuing issues of cross-textual comparison will know where to look. But the goal of my exposition is singular: to offer a clear and concise account of every point that Kant makes in *Religion*, with references to his sources and to abiding controversies as relevant.

Those interested in a quite different approach from the one I am taking here may wish to consult one or more of the four recently published commentaries on *Religion*. For a commentary that often skims lightly over precise textual details but puts a significant emphasis on exploring links between *Religion* and Kant's other writings, one could not do better than to consult Pasternack's (2014) *Guidebook* (*PID*). Pasternack does an excellent job of demonstrating how *Religion* fits into the overall evolution of Kant's moral and religious thinking, though his treatment of the secondary literature on *Religion* and his clarification of the many minor technical interpretive problems that arise in this text are far from complete. By contrast, Firestone and Jacobs' (2008) *Defense* (*FDR*) is well worth considering for its coverage of the secondary literature, especially in [Part 1](#), as is DiCenso's (2012) *Commentary* (*DRB*), for its careful attention to the nuances of Kant's German text and to the various interpretive problems that arise in the course of Kant's exposition. These three recent books, together with Bohatec (1966) and six other books that focus mainly on

Religion and that have been published since 2000, are my main interlocutors throughout the commentary (see of Abbreviations), though I refer to numerous other secondary works as relevant—especially to highlight seminal studies of a specific feature of Kant's text or excellent overviews of the literature, where I have *not* dealt with these in *PCR* or elsewhere. The chief advantage of a fourth recent work on *Religion*, Miller's (2015) *Reader's Guide*, is that it is very short—an especially fortuitous feature because the author adopts the old (and now increasingly outdated) reductionist interpretation of Kant's *Religion*, which should have been laid to rest by SP-1992 and *PCR*, two of many relevant secondary works that Miller simply ignores. His book appeared only after the final manuscript of the present work had already been submitted, so I was unable to include significant responses to it within the main text. Suffice it to say that Miller's work is bound to mislead a new generation of students and teachers of Kant's *Religion*, if it is not read with a keenly critical eye, as a good example of how *not* to interpret Kant.

Because this comprehensive approach has resulted in a lengthy book, I do not expect many readers to have the patience to read through it from cover to cover, nor do I have Schopenhauer's audacity of insisting that one must commit to reading it twice if one is to attempt to read it all. Rather I have designed it to be used more like an encyclopedia: readers can dip into whatever section may interest them in order to get a clear and concise description of what is happening on the corresponding page(s) of *Religion*. The numerous cross-references throughout the book, the detailed Glossary, and a thorough index should enhance the potential for such a selective approach to utilizing both the commentary and the revised translation.

Note on the revised translation and its presentation

While I was preparing the Introduction for Pluhar's translation of Kant's *Religion* I began a thorough comparison of Kant's German text with the three most recent translations: GH, GG, and WP. I have focused my comparing endeavors on these three translations because the three earlier translators did not have access to the Berlin Academy edition of Kant's *Collected Works*—usually referred to as the *Akademie Ausgabe* (hereafter *Ak.*) and published over many years, starting in 1900[11]—whereas these three all based their translations on the text found in volume 6 of *Ak*. I relied primarily on the same version of Kant's text, consulting both the online version (at www.korpora.org/Kant) and the printed volume and comparing them regularly with the original 1793 and 1794 editions of the German text.

Ak. 6 was first published in 1907, then hastily reissued in a new edition in 1914. Not having been well proofread, the 1914 edition introduced some minor errors that were mostly corrected in later printings. This was done by reverting to the (more accurate) 1907 edition, while including the (more detailed) notes that had been published with the 1914 edition. As a result of this early publication history, different printings of *Ak*. 6 that seem at first glance to be identical (i.e., all identified as the 1914 edition) actually exhibit some minor discrepancies; when such differences come to light, the only way to know for sure what Kant actually wrote is to consult the original editions of his published work, which I abbreviate *R1* (for the first edition of 1793) and *R2* (for the second edition of 1794). Whenever uncertainties arose out of *Ak*. 6, I consulted these and/or the Reclam edition (hereafter RM), which reliably reports *R2* variants as well as numerous places

where *Ak.* attempts to correct apparent errors in *R2*, often either reverting to *R1* (where Kant's *R2* change seems incoherent) or proposing some new wording. In many cases I have argued that these *Ak.* changes were unnecessary, since the *R2* text does make sense, if read in the light of a comprehensive interpretation of and with a sympathetic appreciation for Kant's argument.

A good example of *Ak.*'s occasional inconsistency appears at *R* 159.28,[12] where WP has "the holy" and GG "the … sacred," whereas GH has "the holi*est.*" My online copy of *Ak.* 6 as well as my 1914 printed copy (both apparently based on the initial printing of the second edition) have *Heiligsten*, thus agreeing with GH; interestingly, this reading follows *R1*. *R2* and the first (1907) edition of *Ak.* 6, by contrast, have *Heiligen*, thus corresponding to the translations of WP and GG. When I first noticed this difference, before consulting *R1* and *R2* and becoming aware of the flawed publication history of *Ak.* 6, I assumed that GH was correct, since only his translation agrees with my copy of the 1914 *Ak.* edition; it seemed at first that only GH had used the most updated version of *Ak.* Subsequently, however, WP assured me that he used the 1914 edition and that *his* copy of *Ak.* 6 reads *Heiligen*; after further investigation, we concluded that my copy was the initial (flawed) version of the 1914 edition, while his was a subsequent printing that had reverted to the (correct) 1907 edition. Because the difference in this passage is easily traceable to a change that Kant himself made in *R2*, I followed the *Ak.* reading assumed by WP and GG in the end. This passage suggests that GH must have used the flawed version of the second *Ak.* edition before the subsequent printings reverted to the 1907 edition. Wherever such discrepancies came to light as a result of this or other types of textual variants, I dealt with them on

a case-by-case basis and reported my conclusion in a footnote.

Scholars writing about Kant in English normally cite *Ak.* page numbers when referring to Kant's texts; I follow this convention whenever I cite specific pages of *Religion* within the commentary. (References to all of Kant's other writings either use standard abbreviations or cite the *Ak.* volume number, followed by a colon and the relevant *Ak.* page number[s].) To enable readers to identify the location of quoted translations of Kant's text, I begin each excerpted passage by stating the page and line numbers where it appears in *Ak.* 6. I also insert the bolded *Ak.* page number in pointed brackets—e.g., **{3}**—as close as possible to the point where a new page begins in the German text.

Determining where to insert this corresponding page number of the German edition was sometimes difficult when a page break occurred in mid-sentence, because German word order is often very different from English word order. Most translations merely place the number in the margin, leaving the reader to guess the precise location where the page break occurs. My rules for the placement of page divisions are as follows. I place the page number just *before* the English word (or set of words) that corresponds to the German word (or set of words) that comes *first* on the new page, unless that word appears in the German text in a very different position from the one it has in the English text (as often happens, for example, with German verbs, since they typically appear at the end of a sentence or clause). When this rule does not suffice, the page number appears just *after* the English word (or set of words) that corresponds to the German word (or set of words) that comes *last* on the old page. I select whichever method minimizes the number of words that appear to be on the old page in English but are actually on the new page in German. In cases where such words are followed by a

punctuation mark on the new page in the German text, the page number appears immediately *before* that punctuation mark in my translation. In other words, when the translation shows a punctuation mark immediately after the inserted page number, this alerts the reader to the fact that some words in this clause (usually the verb or verbal phrase) appear on the new page in the German edition, even though in the translation they have had to be placed on the old page. For a good example, see the page break for *R* 146, where the words "Holy Spirit" (together with a footnote number) appear at the end of the English clause; in German the verb comes after these words, on *R* 146; the semicolon appears after the page number, to indicate that some words quoted earlier (as if they were on *R* 145) actually appear on *R* 146.

When I refer to footnotes or other material supplied by any translator or editor of *Religion* and not to their version of Kant's text, I put the relevant abbreviation in italics, followed by the page number(s). For example, "WP" refers to Pluhar's 2009 Hackett translation of the relevant passage in *Religion* (or, occasionally, it may refer loosely to Pluhar himself), whereas "*WP* 2n" refers to Pluhar's footnote on page 2 (English pagination), not to *R* 2n in Kant's text.

Any reader who has never examined Kant's German is likely to be amazed to discover how often translators have to take liberties with the text in order to produce a coherent translation. As already stated, I am on the whole very pleased with Pluhar's ability to take such liberties in a way that *captures* the meaning Kant is trying to convey, rather than occluding it. GH and GG—to say nothing of the earlier translators, whose work is often so loose that including them in my comprehensive textual comparisons would have been virtually pointless—are notably weaker than WP in this regard. Still, I have found various passages

(amounting to 8-10 percent of the total text) where close scrutiny of the German suggests an even better wording than WP's; in such cases, my changes sometimes render the translation more literal by revising a passage I regard as misleadingly loose, while at other times they replace overly literal translations with slightly looser ones, which better capture what I take to be Kant's essential point. (An innocuous example of the former is that I normally use the Latin equivalents current in English for Kant's various abbreviations instead of spelling them out. This has the significant advantage of giving readers a "feel" for the way Kant's original actually appeared.) My overall aim in revising Pluhar's already excellent translation in this way has been to provide scholarly-minded readers of *Religion* with a highly accurate annotated version of the text, which warns them (especially those with only minimal knowledge of German) whenever the translation treats the original text in a loose manner—be it for the sake of smooth English reading or for any other reason.

Many (though not all) of the points that I end up highlighting in the process of revising WP *could* impact one's interpretation. In order to allow readers to detect the difference between my revisions and WP's original, I have presented all changed text with dotted underlining (as shown here). For one-off changes and at the first occurrence of any technical term that I have consistently changed throughout the book (and therefore listed in the Glossary), I add a footnote; for repeated changes I provide subsequent footnotes only if a new issue arises in the later context. (Where a single footnote identifying my revised translation and comparing it with those of WP, GG, and GH covers words that occur in significantly different parts of a quoted passage, I mark each portion of underlined text with the same footnote number; the reader therefore should not be surprised to find numerous cases of

duplicated footnote numbers, occasionally including even footnote numbers that are out of sequence, in my presentation of Kant's text.) In cases where the German can be read either way, I have sometimes made minor changes to WP's text, such as omitting (or adding) the definite article in English or changing the word order slightly, for smoother English, without stating the change in a footnote; in such cases only words that WP does not use appear with dotted underlining. So, for example, the reader will not be alerted about the change of article when WP's "the power of choice" becomes "volition" (for Kant's *die Willkür*) or about the change of verb form when WP's final -s or -ing is simply deleted as an alternative way of reading the German; if minor changes in the form of a word involve adding letters that are not in WP, I underline only the new letters, so the reader knows that I am preserving WP's word choice but revising the form. I have also preserved Kant's use of hyphens as much as possible, so that, for instance, WP's "moral evil" becomes "moral–evil" (for Kant's *Moralisch-Bösen*) to show that Kant's usage is a composite noun, meaning "the moral thing that is also an evil thing," not a noun modified by an adjective. Only where rules of standard English usage forbid the use of a hyphen do I follow WP's omission of Kant's hyphens; thus "morally-evil" cannot be used for Kant's *moralisch-Bösen* because adverbs ending in -ly cannot be hyphenated. Even a highly literal translation can only go so far!

All quotations from Kant's German follow the spelling that appears in the original (*R1* and/or *R2*) text. I use angled

brackets (⟨ ⟩) to insert Kant's German into the quoted passages wherever doing so adds potential clarity to a context where there could otherwise be significant confusion; such insertions signal that the translation

involves some degree of interpretation. They occur in one of four types of situations:

1. when the translation *deviates* from the standard translation of the relevant German word, as specified in the Glossary (or when I follow WP in a deviation from WP's own Glossary);

2. when I use an English word that the Glossary lists as normally translating a certain German word but in this context it translates a different German word;

3. when I am following Pluhar's usage, but noting that it is somewhat loose or nonstandard (i.e., it is not the translation one would normally expect for the given German term—and in many cases not the one given by the other translators); and

4. when Kant used a pronoun, an article, or some other referential word, whereas the translation, instead of rendering that word, replaces it with its antecedent.

The fourth type of situation, which I call "displaced referent," arises frequently when translating (Kant's) German into smooth English, so a further explanation may help to clarify this point.

Type (4) insertions enable readers with at least a minimal knowledge of German to ascertain—or at least make a fairly reliable educated guess about—the original construction in cases where Kant is using the equivalents of "the former," "the latter," "the same," or simply "this/that/it" to refer to an antecedent (i.e., a word or phrase in the immediately preceding context). More often than not, Pluhar (like the other translators) helps the reader by supplying the referent rather than preserving a construction that otherwise would often be ambiguous. The German construction is usually not ambiguous (or at least

is less so), thanks to the presence of matching declensions that signal which previous words are eligible to be the intended referent; but English usually has no such signals to depend on, so further specificity is required. I therefore preserve WP's usage in the vast majority of cases. Whenever the translation replaces the actual German word with its referent, as provided in the context, I simply add that original word in angled brackets. As these replaced words are typically pronouns or short referential lexemes that bear no resemblance to the word that appears in the translation, even readers with no German should be able to recognize them as cases of displacement. But on some occasions the English requires a word or expression to be *added* that is not in the German: for example, at *R* 21.13 WP has "this maxim" where Kant has simply *dieser* ("this"). Such insertions of English words are treated differently (see below), usually with no German added.

Another typical use of angled brackets alerts readers to the fact that Pluhar (like virtually all translators of Kant) helps the reader by shortening many of Kant's excessively long sentences. Breaking an extralong sentence into two or more shorter ones nearly always requires a slight change of wording at the beginning of each newly formed sentence— even if one is not translating the long sentence into another language. Likewise, in almost every such case, Pluhar changes Kant's wording slightly and/or adds words that are not in the original. When I insert bracketed German near the *beginning* of a sentence (or at places where the first words of a sentence are the translator's insertions—see below), this typically signals that sentence shortening has occurred.

When WP's usage is nonliteral yet completely standard, I will (normally) not include the corresponding German term in brackets. The most frequently occurring example in *Religion* is when a form of *derselben* is translated as "its"

or "that," even though it literally means "the same."[13] A completely literal translation would be intelligible but would strike English readers as odd, so pointing out that "its" is not the literal translation would be redundant. It is not redundant, however, when WP replaces "its" (literally, "the same") with the word(s) *he thinks* Kant is referring to. On those occasions, in accordance with type (4), above, I do insert the German, so that the reader may be aware that the translation involves some interpretation.

More often than many English readers might expect, Kant's referent genuinely is ambiguous, yet Pluhar has staked a claim by choosing just one referent to specify in his text. If his choice seems to be the only one that makes sense in the wider context, I allow it to stand. But I revert to a more literal translation, noting the ambiguity and the various possible readings in a footnote, if different and *potentially legitimate* interpretations are grammatically possible. Often I do this simply by specifying the other translators' very different alternative(s).

In line with my emphasis on accuracy, I do not update the various archaic spellings that appear in Kant's text. WP does update such spellings when providing Kant's original in his footnotes. The most common examples are words where an "h" once followed a "t" (e.g., *thun*, which is now *tun*, "do"). Another difference in the conventions I adopt is that I always quote the German exactly as it appears in Kant's text, whereas WP follows the more standard practice of changing the form of a word to fit the English grammar and/or simply stating the main (i.e., dictionary) form of the word in question. I employ a less standard option, so the reader has easy access to the exact formulation Kant used. The availability of numerous online translation programs makes it easy for novice readers to look up Kant's *exact* term, determine what part of speech it is, and consider the range of possible meanings.

Finally, in addition to the use of angled brackets for German insertions, described above, I add three distinct types of brackets around English words or phrases in three types of situation. These three groups can be described and illustrated as follows:

1. *insertions*: where the translator adds words for the sake of clarity, even though no equivalent word or phrase is found in the German, the inserted word or phrase is surrounded by square brackets ([ ]);[14]

2. *ellipses*: where Kant uses a German word or phrase only once (even though the grammar clearly requires it to be applied to more than one related word or phrase), while the English translation for that word or phrase appears *more than once*, the duplicated words are surrounded by

   partial brackets (⌞ ⌟); and

3. *displaced referents*: where (as described above) a German word or phrase refers back to an antecedent in such a way that, when translated, it requires more than merely a rendering of that word or phrase, any *supplementary* words (i.e., English words that have no equivalent at this point in the German text, though they may also function as an ellipsis) are surrounded by the pair of slash forward and its reverse—the solidus and the backslash (/ \).

I sometimes use one of the above modes of demarcation in conjunction with the specification of the original German, added in angled brackets. However, for most borderline cases where the translation is not sufficiently literal (so that some annotation is required), the following rule determines a single and sufficient choice: I use one of the three types of brackets described above for English (i.e.,

square, partial, or slash) if the translation includes at least one word that corresponds more or less accurately to each German word but *adds* words that are not equivalent to anything in the German; and, to avoid ambiguity, I add the German in angled brackets if the literal translation of the word does not appear in the English.

Readers of the present volume who wish to quote from my revised translation of WP in their own publications should treat all of the above special textual markings (except standard square brackets) as they would treat footnote numbers that are added by the translator. That is, just as standard practice allows a reader to reproduce a passage from another book without providing any indication that the quoted passage contains a footnote number at one point, so too should readers of this work simply drop any angled brackets (along with the inserted German words), partial brackets, and slashes, without mentioning their presence—unless, of course, a special point is being made about the status of the word(s) being demarcated in this way. Likewise, text placed in double square brackets (see note 14, below) should be presented as single brackets in any quotes from my revised translation. This, incidentally, is the procedure I will follow when I quote from a passage within the commentary itself.

Why go to all the trouble of inserting these different types of markings into the translated text, especially if I do not want readers to reproduce these special markings when quoting from my revised translation? Given that WP's frequent use of translations that are not strictly literal tends to be even more reliable than that of the other translators—in other words, that his many loose translations nearly always convey accurate *meanings*—are the markings anything more than an annoyance to the English reader? Putting up with these markings will be well worth the trouble for any reader who is constantly on the

lookout for potential new interpretations. These often arise from the fact that an interpreter recognizes a possible ambiguity in the original text that past interpreters have not noticed because the translation had removed the ambiguity. Alerting readers to the many places where the English text departs from the German will have been worthwhile if, as a result, a wider group of readers has easy access to the ambiguities in question. My annotated version of the text assists English readers in *seeing through* to the German structure more readily, with this goal in mind. Indeed I have discovered and highlighted a number of such ambiguities in footnotes attached to the translation, and from time to time the new alternative that thereby comes to light has paved the way to some new insight, expressed in the commentary itself. My hope is that this new, highly annotated text of Kant's *Religion* will prompt *many* such innovations in the future, now that English readers with little (or no) knowledge of German can have easy access to potential alternative meanings.Valentine's Day, 2014

Notes

1 That more work is needed to accomplish this goal is clear from the fact that *Kant's Critical Religion* (*PCR*; see note 9 below) was cited in a 2005 article by a leading Kant scholar as an example of recent scholars whose interpretive approach is motivated by religious faith more than by a sound reading of Kant's texts; such a tendency, this Kantian ethicist claimed, typically has a corrupting influence on an interpreter's intellectual honesty. Ironically, the author of that article later told me in a personal conversation that he had not actually read *Kant's Critical Religion*. McGaughey 2013 similarly devotes an entire article to refuting a set of claims about Kant's view of religion, most of which either I have never

held or are taken grossly out of context. That McGaughey imputes to me views such as that Kantian "religion" means "*historical* religion based on particular revelation" (155) indicates that he *sets out* to read my work uncharitably, perhaps on the basis of bias or hearsay rather than on the basis of an attempt to understand what it means to philosophize *perspectivally*. (I include a brief reply to McGaughey in SP-2015e.) Scholars who read the relevant literature (see Works Cited, Part C) will readily discover that I interpret Kant's philosophy of religion as an attempt not to defend Christian orthodoxy as such (à la Storr), but to *moderate* between the extremes of conservative and liberal theology. Hopefully anyone who wishes to accuse the present work of intellectual dishonesty will at least read it first! Regarding my religious commitments and their possible effect on my interpretation of Kant, see the first paragraph of the Acknowledgments, below.

2 As Guyer 2000: xlv–xlvi points out, Kant did publish a second edition of the third *Critique* at the publisher's request. Although he made minor revisions throughout the book, however, he added only one new footnote and did not write a new preface. By contrast, *Religion*'s 1794 edition has an all new preface that responds to early critics, over twenty-five new footnotes, and a major section renamed and supplemented with a lengthy new paragraph, in addition to making roughly one minor textual amendment per page throughout the book.

3 Even Bohatec's extensive commentary on *Religion*, which focuses so intently on Kant's likely sources, virtually ignores this issue. A notable exception is Hare 1996: 39n, who rightly observes that Kant's 1794 additions "show a pattern of responsiveness to the worries of traditional Christians who wanted to accept Kant's

teaching." Unfortunately Hare never mentions Storr and offers few details to amplify this important point.

4 For the full details of these and all other translations mentioned in this Preface, see the Abbreviations. Despite being introduced merely as extracts, Richardson's translation follows some passages of Kant's text quite closely. He published it around the same time Samuel Taylor Coleridge was immersing himself in Kantian philosophy. Indeed, Coleridge learned German in the late 1790s with the specific (though never realized) intention of eventually translating some of Kant's works (see Class 2012: 1).

5 The Cambridge edition of Kant's *Religion* is often incorrectly referred to as the "Wood/di Giovanni" translation. This is due to an ambiguity in the 1998 edition, where *Religion* appeared along with a few of Kant's minor essays. The verso of the title page states that the book is "translated and edited by Allen Wood, George di Giovanni"; in fact Wood and di Giovanni coedited the volume, but di Giovanni was the sole translator of *Religion*. This ambiguity has been allowed to stand uncorrected, even though the volume *Religion and Rational Theology* in the Cambridge edition identifies the editors and translator correctly and unambiguously.

6 To avoid weighing the text down with even more footnotes than already exist, I have in most cases not highlighted Pluhar's improvements, except where the alternative translations risk serious misunderstanding. However, I do note numerous typographical errors and/or passages where Pluhar inadvertently skipped a word or phrase in the German text.

7 These changes are listed in the first part of the Glossary, with specifications as to Kant's German word, the number of times it (or a variant of the same word) occurs in *Religion*, my English translation(s), WP's translation(s), and the footnote identifying the first occurrence of the revised translation. After the first occurrence I normally adopt the revised translation without further footnoting, since interested readers can refer back to the Glossary if questions arise elsewhere in the text. All such changes to Pluhar's text are displayed with dotted underlining. The rationale for changing (and, where controversial, the rationale for adopting) WP's translations of key technical terms is provided in the second part of the Glossary.

8 My use of a "wave" metaphor here should not be conflated with the common use of the same metaphor to discuss the history of interpreting Kant's *Critiques* (see, e.g., Ameriks 2003: 1–2). While the metaphor is the same, the history of the reception of Kant's *Religion* does not parallel that of his Critical philosophy. Yandell 2007: 81, does refer to the recent "affirmative" interpreters of Kant's theory of religion as constituting "a 'new wave' of Kant interpretation," accurately describing the movement as "intended to bring Kant into favor with philosophically alert theists and theologians." Unfortunately he misconstrues the claims being made, as if its defenders were arguing "that Kant is an orthodox and pietistic Christian" (92); quite to the contrary, the movement as I understand it is portraying Kant as a *reformer* who aimed to set orthodox and pietistic Christians on the path of true religion. Although Kant rarely (if ever) comments on his *own* (private) religious beliefs, he was certainly not entirely orthodox; indeed his reformation aims to convince liberals and conservatives alike that, when it comes to religion, there are more

important issues than deciding whether one is liberal or conservative.

9 Most notable here are the books abbreviated throughout this commentary as *PCR* (Palmquist 2000), *FDR* (Firestone and Jacobs 2008), *DRB* (DiCenso 2012), and *PID* (Pasternack 2014). For further details, see [Abbreviations](#).

10 Occasionally I had to break a long paragraph where no such dash appears, in order to avoid giving an excessively long and potentially convoluted paragraph of commentary on the passage. Occasionally, due to the placement of a crucial footnote or to the fact that a sentence was excessively long or conveyed two distinct and separable points, I opted for breaking a quoted passage in midsentence; in various other places the passage ends with a semicolon. The reader should keep in mind, therefore, that quotations ending with a comma or no punctuation and beginning with lowercase are not typographical errors.

11 Due to a printing error in the popular paperback edition published in 1968, scholars have often referred to the *Ak.* publication dates as beginning in 1902.

12 Here and throughout the commentary I abbreviate *Religion* as *R* when citing a page number from vol. 6 of *Ak*. Sometimes (as here), the page number is followed by the line number (also specified in *Ak.*). I use *R1* or *R2* only when referring respectively to the 1793 or 1794 editions in their originally published form.

13 For example, at *R* 70n, Kant writes: *nicht aus dem Anfange, sondern dem Ende desselben* (literally, "not from the beginning but from the end of the same," where "the same" refers to "his life," mentioned earlier). To

express the literal meaning of *desselben* in smooth English, we must write "of it" (or perhaps, "its [end]"). I add the German in such cases only if the translation replaces the referring term (in this case "its") with the word(s) designating the entity it refers to.

14 Pluhar is inconsistent in his use of square brackets for this type of insertion: like other translators, he inserts words of his own fairly often but almost never acknowledges this looseness of translation by placing them in square brackets; yet occasionally he does use square brackets (as do GG and GH) for more blatant insertions. In the latter cases I merely preserve WP's text exactly as it stands, but I use [[double square brackets]] to distinguish his insertions from mine and from insertions that he does not mark as such.