



Judaism in the Enlightenment: A Comparison of Kant and Mendelssohn

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Abstract: Kant and Mendelssohn are both representative figures of the German Enlightenment, and their views on Judaism are closely related. While Mendelssohn believed that the threefold content of Judaism (eternal truth, historical truth and divinely revealed law) was consistent with reason, he insisted that divinely revealed law was only eternally binding on the Jewish people; Kant saw Judaism as a non-moral, non-eternal political faith, and makes his dual critique of Mendelssohn's ideas based on the Enlightenment theory of historical progress and the moral religion of "rational catholicism". As humanity as a whole progresses towards the good, and the ultimate aim of all satutory historical belief is ethical community, Judaism should abandon divinely revealed law and achieve "euthanasia" in the ongoing process of moving towards the one moral faith.

Key Words: Kant, Mendelssohn, Judaism, Morality