

Religion within the Limits of Bare Reason

Immanuel Kant

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.—Some footnotes are presented in the main text instead of at the bottom of the page; this is because of formatting problems; the reasons are aesthetic, and have nothing to do with content.—Passages starting with † were added in the second edition (see page 6).

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Glossary

anschaulich: This is left untranslated on page 30 because no English word or short phrase quite does the job. To make something *anschaulich* is to make it—in this case metaphorically speaking—solid, something we can grab onto, push around, manipulate.

archetype: Translates Kant's *Urbild*, and means 'model' or 'prime example'—something to be followed or copied..

atonement: This English word comes from the notion of two people—e.g. a sinner and God—being *at one*; that goes with Kant's mention on page 63 of *Versöhnung* = 'reconciliation', suggesting that the core notion concerns God's attitude to the sinner, almost how he feels about him. But the word translated—wrongly but unavoidably—as 'atonement' is *Genugthuung*, which comes from *genug* = 'enough', 'sufficient'; the thought is that of reparation, paying a penalty. That is the emphasis all through the third Essay: Kant speaks of it as *legally* undoing what you have done; his phrase *Bezahlung für seine Schuld* means 'reparation for his guilt' and equally well means 'payment of his debt'.

change of heart: This nearly always translated *Sinnesänderung*, literally = 'change in thinking' or 'change of mentality'. On pages 24, 38 and 42 it translates *Herzensänderung*, literally = 'change of heart'. There's no evidence that Kant intended a distinction here, and much that he didn't.

chiliasm: 'The belief that Christ will reign in bodily presence on earth for a thousand years' (OED).

constitutive: A constitutive principle, for Kant, is a principle saying that such-and-such is the case, rather than serving merely as advice or recommendation or the like. (Cf. 'regulative', below.)

debt: This translates *Schuld*, which also means 'guilt'. In many passages Kant clearly means both at once, with 'debt' as a kind of metaphor for 'guilt'.

deduction: In Kant's terminology, the 'deduction' of an idea is an intellectual process in which the idea is introduced and in some way defended or justified.

determine: The basic meaning of 'determine' is *settle, fix, pin down*; thus, to determine what to do next is to decide what to do next, to settle the question. When on page 9 Kant says that in a morally bad action the will can't be 'determined' by anything outside it, the word conveys the notion of *fixed*, which would rule out freedom.

duty: This translates *Pflicht*, which Kant uses as his all-purpose name for what one morally ought to do. Most English-language moral philosophers also use 'I have a duty to do A' to mean 'I morally ought to do A'; but that isn't what it means in good standard English, where the term 'duty' is tightly tied to jobs, roles, social positions. The duties of a janitor; the duties of a landowner.

evil: This as a noun translates *Böse* and means merely 'something bad'. (The corresponding adjective (*böse*) is translated here by 'bad', so as to avoid loading it with all the force 'evil' has in English when used as an adjective.) For the noun, 'evil' is used because we don't have 'bad' as a noun as we have 'good' ('friendship is a good'). This has become a standard philosophical usage—e.g. 'the problem of evil' means 'the problem posed by the existence of bad states of affairs'.

idea: In Kant's terminology an 'idea' is a concept that comes from or belongs to *reason*, as distinct from the concepts

belonging to *the understanding*, which are what we use in thinking about the contingent empirical world.

ideal: As a noun this translates Kant's *Ideal*, a technical term which he explains in the first *Critique* at B 595–7, and is still using in the same sense here. An ideal is an idea [see above] which is the idea of an individual thing. The idea of *perfect moral purity* is not an ideal, the idea of *God* is an ideal. Kant does think of ideals as things we can steer by, try to live up to, etc., but the core meaning is that of 'idea of an individual'. When this word first occurs here (on page 31) Kant moves rapidly between 'idea' and 'ideal'; but that is harmless, because any ideal is an idea.

illuminationism: 'A doctrine involving belief in or a claim to intellectual or spiritual enlightenment' (OED).

man: This translates Kant's *Mann* and (more often) his *Mensch*. The latter can be translated as 'human being', but in this version 'man' has been preferred as less fussy. On page 21 the biblical narrative of The Fall is of course really about a woman, Eve.

personality: In uses starting on page 12 the word refers to the condition of having respect for the moral law. In the uses starting on page 82 it involves the doctrine of the Trinity—one God, three persons. Kant's uses of *Persönlichkeit* on page 71 clearly concern personal identity, and are translated accordingly.

Pfaffentum: The nearest English is 'priesthood' but that doesn't capture the derogatory tone of it, which Kant explains on page 97. The corresponding down-putting word for priests is **Pfaffen**.

principle: Kant often uses *Princip* in a sense, once common but now obsolete, in which it means 'source', 'cause', 'driver', 'energizer', or the like. The same was true of the French

principe, the Latin *principia*, and the English 'principle'. On page 45 the phrase 'a realm in which the power is held by principles' seems to be using the word in both senses at once. And on page 72 (the last of the **how** items) Kant is clearly talking about a 'principle' as a cause or driver and yet, oddly, the word he uses is not *Princip* but *Grundsatz* = 'basic proposition', which is hardly ever used in that way.

rational: This translates Kant's *rational*, an adjective that occurs only four times in the whole work, once on page 1 and three times on page 65.

regulative: A regulative principle, for Kant, is a principle that serves as advice or recommendation or even command, but not as giving any information. (Cf. 'constitutive', above.)

science: The use of this to translate *Wissenschaft* is practically unavoidable, but it has to be taken broadly as covering all the learned disciplines, so that (e.g.) history and theology are 'sciences'.

statutory: A statutory law is one that comes from someone's *choosing* to make it a law. The idea on page 56 of God's laws as being 'merely statutory' is the idea of their being laws only because God has decreed them.

subtle reasoning: This weakly 'translates' the various cognates of the verb *vernünfteln*, a splendid off-shoot of the noun *Vernunft* = 'reason', meaning: to employ a parade of super-subtle possibly invalid reasoning, weaving webs, splitting hairs, and so on. Neither this nor the corresponding noun *Vernünftelei* has a compact English equivalent.

thaumaturgy: 'The performance of miracles or wonders; magic' (OED).

theodicy: Attempt to reconcile the existence of bad states of affairs with the goodness of God.

vicarious: Acting in place of someone else. A vicarious atonement for my sins is an act of atonement performed by someone other than myself. Kant's reference on page 42 to 'the vicarious ideal of the son of God' means the idea of the son of God as a stand-in for God. In this version the word

translates *stellvertretend* = 'place-taking'. The corresponding noun *Stellvertreter* is translated by 'proxy'.

Weltwesen: Literally 'world-being'; the ten occurrences of this word are left untranslated because the preparer of this version can't get a good sense of what Kant means by it.

Preface to the First Edition

Morality is based on the conception of man [see Glossary] as a being who is free and who—just *because* he is free—binds himself through his reason to unconditional laws. So it has no need for

- the idea of some other being above him, for him to
- know what his duty is, or
- the idea of an incentive other than the law itself, for him to •do his duty.

Or if such a need occurs for a given man, that's his fault; and in that case the need can't be met by anything outside himself, because the deficiency of his morality can't be made up for by anything that doesn't come from himself and his freedom. —Thus morality itself has no need for religion

what Kant says next: whether objectively, as regards the will [*das Wollen*], or subjectively, as regards ability [*das Können*],

what he is getting at: whether as •telling us what we should aim at or as •motivating us to aim at it,

because its needs are entirely met by pure practical reason. Its laws set the standard that every other purpose has to satisfy, and there's no further standard that they have to

meet. What makes them binding is a sheerly **formal** feature of the maxims that are to be adopted in accordance with them, namely the feature of being *universal* laws. Morality has no need for anything **material** to direct our free choices, i.e. no need for any end or purpose, to tell us what our duty is or to get us to perform it.¹ When the question of duty comes up, morality can and should ignore all ends. Should I be truthful in my testimony in the witness box? Should I be faithful in returning to another man the property he has entrusted to me? There is no need for me to work out what my duty is by considering what end I can bring about by acting in either of those ways—ends don't come into it. Indeed, if when a man's avowal is lawfully demanded he looks around for some kind of *end*, that fact alone shows him to be worthless.

But although morality doesn't need a representation of an end that must precede and contribute to the determining of the will, it may well have a necessary relationship to such an end, not as a *basis* for moral maxims but as an inevitable *consequences* of maxims adopted in conformity

¹ Those who aren't satisfied with the merely formal notion of *conformity to law* as the basis for settling what is one's duty will admit that such a basis can't be provided by self-love directed to one's own comfort. Then what can they say is the basis? They have two options:

- (1) a rational [see Glossary] basis, one's own *perfection*,
- (2) an empirical basis, the *happiness* of others.

There are two ways they could understand 'perfection' in this context. **(1a)** They could understand it as referring to moral perfection (i.e. having a will that is unconditionally obedient to the law) ; but in that case they would be explaining in a circle. Or **(1b)** they could take it to refer to natural perfection, considered as something that can be improved, and so it can in many different ways, e.g. skill in the arts and sciences, taste, bodily agility, and so on. But these are good only conditionally, because they are good only when their use doesn't conflict with the moral law (the only thing that commands unconditionally); so the aim to have natural perfection can't be the principle [see Glossary] of the concepts of duty. And that also holds for **(2)** the aim of producing happiness for others. Before an action is directed to the happiness of others it must first be weighed in itself, according to the moral law; so the most we can get from the purpose of bringing happiness to other people is a conditional duty, which means that this purpose can't serve as the supreme principle of moral maxims.

with morality's laws. In the absence of any reference to an end, no determination of the man's will can take place, because such a determination has to be followed by some effect, and the representation of the effect must be capable of being accepted—not as •the basis for the determination of the will and as an end antecedently aimed at, but—as •an end conceived of as the result of the will's determination through the law. Without an end of this sort,. . . .a will can't be satisfied: it is told *how* to act but not what it is to act *toward*. So although morality doesn't need an end to determine what conduct is right,. . . .an end does arise out of morality. For reason can't be indifferent to the answer to the question 'What will result from this right conduct of ours?', an answer pointing to an end that may not be entirely within our reach but can at least guide our doings and allowings. Hence the end is no more than

an idea of an object that contains and **unites**:

- the formal condition of all the ends that we *ought to have*, and
- whatever is in harmony with duty in all the ends that we *do have*,

that is, contains and **unites**:

- duty
- happiness in proportion as one is obedient to duty,

i.e. the idea of a highest good in the world.

For the possibility of this we must postulate a higher, moral, most holy, and omnipotent Being, the only thing that can **unite** the two elements of this highest good. But this idea, viewed practically, is not an empty one. . . .

[Why does Kant say 'But this idea is not empty'? Just by calling this item an 'idea' [see Glossary] he is implying that it can't be empirically cashed out in any way, i.e. that nothing could possibly count as perceiving or meeting up with something corresponding to it, so it has no place in

our scientific or metaphysical theorising about what is the case in the world. *But* this idea does in a disciplined way make a difference to *how we behave*. . . .]

. . . . because it does meet our natural need to conceive of some sort of final end, one that can be justified by reason, for all our doings and allowings taken as a whole; if we didn't have that conception of the highest good, our need for it would be a hindrance to our moral resolve. . . . So it makes a moral difference whether men form for themselves the concept of a final purpose of all things; adhering to that concept won't add to the number of their duties, but it will provide them with a special reference-point for the unification of all purposes; and that's the only way for objective, practical reality to be given to the combination of •the purposiveness arising from freedom with •the purposiveness of nature—a combination that we can't possibly do without. Consider this case:

A man honours the moral law, and can't help asking himself: 'If it were up to me to create a world that I would belong to, and if I did this under the guidance of practical reason, what sort of world would I create?'

He would select precisely the world that the moral idea of the highest good brings with it, and also he would will that such a world should somehow come into existence, because the moral law demands the realisation of the highest good we can produce. He would will this even if he saw that in that world he might pay a heavy price in happiness because he might not be adequate to the demands of the 'highest good.' idea, demands that reason lays down as conditions for happiness. He would feel compelled by reason to make this judgment •impartially, as though it were coming from someone else, and yet •as his own. . . .

So morality leads inescapably to religion, through which it extends itself to the idea of a powerful moral lawgiver,

outside of mankind, whose aim in creating the world is bring about the final state of the world that men can and ought to aim at also.

START OF LONG FOOTNOTE

If the proposition *There is a God, so there is a highest good in the world* is to arise as a dogma from morality alone, it is a synthetic *a priori* proposition. It is synthetic because although it is accepted only as an aid to conduct and not as a statement of fact, it goes beyond the concept of duty that morality contains. . . ., so it can't be extracted from morality by analysis. But how can such a synthetic proposition be *a priori*? The general moral concept of

duty

is indeed identical with the concept of

agreement with the bare idea of a being who gives moral laws to all men;

and as far as that goes the proposition commanding this agreement would be analytic. But the assumption of the law-giver's existence goes beyond saying merely that such a thing is possible. I think I know the solution of this problem, but in this place I can only point to the solution, not set it out fully.

An end or purpose is always the object of an *inclination*, i.e. of a desire to possess a thing through one's action, just as the law (which commands conduct) is an object of *respect*. An objective purpose (i.e. the end that we ought to have) is what sheer reason tells us to have. The end that includes the necessary and sufficient conditions of all other ends is the *final end*. The subjective final end of *Weltwesen* [see Glossary] that have reason—i.e. the purpose that they actually have—is their own happiness. . . .; and all practical propositions based on this final end are synthetic and also empirical rather than *a priori*. But the proposition that

everyone's final end or purpose ought to be the highest good that is possible in the world is a synthetic *a priori* practical proposition (an objectively practical one given by pure reason). It is synthetic because it goes beyond the concept of duties in this world and adds an upshot of the duties that isn't contained in the moral laws and so can't be extracted from them by analysis. These laws command absolutely, no matter what the upshot is; indeed, when we are considering a particular action the moral laws tell us to give no thought to what the consequences will be; and in this way they make duty an object of the greatest respect without presenting any end or upshot as an incentive to us to do our duty. Respect for duty is all the incentive anyone needs if he (as he should) attends only to what pure reason commands in the law. What need does anyone have to know what consequences will be drawn from his doings and allowings by the course of events in the world? All he needs is to know that he does his duty, even if there is no life after this one and in this life those who are happy are not the same group as those who deserve to be happy. But it's one of the inescapable limitations of man and of his faculty of practical reason (and perhaps of all other *Weltwesen* as well) that in every action he performs he looks to its upshot, wanting to find in it something that could serve as a purpose for him and could also prove the purity of his intention; this upshot comes last in the sequence of events but first in his thought and intention. In this purpose, even if it is directly presented to him by bare reason, he looks for something he can love; and the law pays some attention to this search. The law itself merely arouses his respect and not his love; and doesn't acknowledge this sought-for object of love as something man needs; but the law extends itself so as to bring it [i.e. the sought-for object of love] in, by including among its reasons for action *the moral final purpose of reason*. That is, the

proposition:

Have as your final purpose the highest good that is possible in the world!

is a synthetic *a priori* proposition that is introduced through the moral law itself, though practical reason in doing this stretches out beyond the law. This extension is possible because the moral law is being taken in relation to a natural characteristic of man, namely that for all his actions he has to think not only about the law but also about a purpose ·or upshot·. [The next few lines of Kant's text are horrendously difficult; we can safely pass them by. This footnote then ends:] If the strictest obedience to moral laws is to be considered the cause of the ushering in of the highest good (as upshot), then, since humans can't bring about happiness in the world proportionate to worthiness to be happy, an omnipotent moral being must be postulated as ruler of the world, under whose care this proportion is achieved. That is, morality leads inevitably to religion.

END OF LONG FOOTNOTE

Just as morality recognises the holiness of its law as an object of the greatest *respect*, so at the level of religion it presents the ultimate cause that fulfills those laws as an object of *worship*—and thus morality appears in its majesty. But everything—even the most sublime thing—dwindles in the hands of men who are turning the idea of it to their own use. Something that can truly be venerated only when it is *freely* respected is forced to ·lose that freedom and· adapt itself to forms that are authoritative—meaning that they are backed up with coercive laws; and something which if left to itself exposes itself to the public criticism of everyone has to submit to a criticism that has power, i.e. to a censorship.

But the command *Obey the authority!* is also moral, and obedience to it—as to all duty-commands—can be extended

to religion, so it's fitting that a treatise devoted to the determinate concept of religion should itself present an example of this obedience. It will, however, be obedience that is based not on

attention merely to the law governing *one* way things are ordered in the state while ignoring *all the others*, but rather on

a combined respect for all of them taken together.

Now the theologian who passes judgment on books may be appointed either as

(a) a cleric, who is to care only for the soul's welfare or as

(b) a scholar, who is to care also for the welfare of the sciences [see Glossary].

[In what follows, 'working part' translates *Glied* = 'limb', or 'member' in the sense in which arms and legs are members.] The **(b)** scholar is a working part of a public institution (called a 'university') that is charged with developing all the sciences and defending them against intrusions from the outside; so it's up to him to ensure that the pretensions of **(a)** the cleric are kept within bounds, so that his censorship doesn't harm the sciences. And if both of them are Biblical theologians, the **(b)** scholar should have the upper hand, as a working part of the university and as belonging to the department whose job it is to deal with theology. They both have the role of caring for souls, but **(b)** the theologian in role as university scholar also has a special function to perform in regard to the welfare of the sciences. If this rule isn't maintained, things are bound to end up in the state they were in at (for example) the time of Galileo. The Biblical theologian, wanting to humble the pride of the sciences without doing any actual *work* in this connection, might venture an invasion into astronomy or some other science (e.g. the ancient history of the earth) and confiscate and cancel all the endeavours of

human reason—like tribes who, finding that they don't have the means or the resolution needed to defend themselves against threatened attacks, adopt a 'scorched-earth' strategy in which they transform all about them into a wilderness.

In the territory of the sciences, biblical theology is a neighbour of philosophical theology, a domain that has been entrusted to another department. This must have complete freedom to expand as far as its science reaches, provided that it stays within the limits of bare reason alone. It is entitled to bring in history, sayings, books of all peoples, even the Bible, but only for confirming and expounding its own propositions, not aiming to carry these propositions into Biblical theology or to usurp the cleric's privilege of changing the latter's public doctrines. If it is shown that the philosophical theologian has really overstepped his limits and trespassed on biblical theology, the biblical theologian (in his role as a cleric) has an indisputable right of censorship. . . . He has this *as a working part of his department* which has been assigned to care for the community's second interest, namely, the prosperity of the sciences, an assignment that is just as valid as the first, namely the care of souls.

In such a case, it is this department of biblical theology that is the authoritative censor, not the department of philosophical theology. Why? Because the former department has a legal right to certain doctrines, whereas the latter department doesn't: in its domain doctrines freely come and go. So only the former—the department of biblical theology—can formally complain that its exclusive rights have been violated. The two bodies of doctrine are close to one another, and it may be feared that the philosophical department will cross the boundary between them, but there's no need for anxiety about this: you just have to bear in mind that there's nothing wrong with the philosopher's **borrowing something from** biblical theology to use for his

own purposes—even if he gives the borrowed material a meaning that suits bare reason but doesn't please the biblical theologian! Biblical theology won't want to deny that it has much in common with the teachings of bare reason, as it does also with historical and philological lore, making it subject to the censorship of these disciplines. There's something wrong in the philosophical theologian's conduct only if he **carries something into** biblical theology, trying to push it in directions that it isn't built for. (Similarly, a professor of natural-rights isn't trespassing when he uses in his philosophical doctrine of rights many classical terms and formulae borrowed from the Roman codex, even if. . . .he doesn't use them in exactly the sense that they originally had (according to scholars of Roman Law). He's not open to criticism for these borrowings unless he tries to get practising lawyers and even judges to understand this material in his way.) If the philosophical theologian weren't entitled to such borrowings, we could turn the thing around and accuse the biblical theologian or the legal theorist of repeatedly trespassing on philosophy's territory, because both of those often have to borrow from philosophy. . . . If the biblical theologian decided to have, if possible, nothing to do with reason in religious matters, it's easy to see which side would lose from this; a religion that rashly declares war on reason won't be able to hold out against it for long.

I will even venture to suggest that it might be beneficial to complete each student's education in biblical theology with a final course of lectures on the purely philosophical theory of religion (which avails itself of everything, including the Bible). The text for the lectures could be this book, or a better one of the same kind if such can be found. For the sciences—I mean these two theological sciences—get pure benefit from separation, so far as each first constitutes a whole by itself; it's only when they have been so constituted

that we should try to survey them in combination. Let the biblical theologian be at one with the philosopher; or let him think he should refute him, but only if he *hears* him! It is only by listening that the biblical theologian can be forearmed against all the difficulties the philosopher might make for him. To conceal these, or to brush them aside as ungodly, is a paltry device that doesn't stand the test; while to mix the two sciences, with the biblical theologian merely glancing across to philosophy occasionally, is a lack of thoroughness that will end up with no-one's really knowing how he stands towards the doctrine of religion as a whole.

To show how religion relates to human nature (with its good predispositions and its bad ones) I shall in the four following essays represent the good and bad principles [see Glossary] as a pair of independent active causes influencing men. The first essay has already appeared in a learned journal, but it had to be included here because of how tightly the materials of all four hang together: the three essays I am now adding contain a complete development of the project. . . .

Preface to the Second Edition

In this edition misprints are corrected and in a few places the wording has been improved; those are the only alterations. Some new material is added; it will occur in footnotes and other additions that start with a dagger (†).

Some readers have expressed concerns about this work, wanting to know what I am *up to* in my choice of title for it. We have to distinguish **(a)** revelation from **(b)** pure religion of reason [which aligns with the distinction between **(a)** biblical theology and **(b)** philosophical theology]. Now, **(a)** can include **(b)**, because a biblical revelation could include, say, a divine command to disregard certain philosophical arguments for God's exist-

tence; whereas **(b)** can't include any of the historical content of **(a)**. So I'll be able to regard **(a)** as the wider sphere of faith which includes within itself **(b)** the narrower one—like two concentric circles). The philosopher, as a teacher of pure reason (working only with *a priori* principles), must stay within the smaller circle and set aside anything learned from experience. From this standpoint I can also run a second **experiment**. After setting aside the pure religion of reason considered as a self-sufficient system, I can take some alleged revelation and conduct a piecemeal investigation of how it checks out against moral concepts, and then see whether it leads back to the pure religion of reason. The latter may be self-sufficient and adequate for the parts of genuine religion that concern the morality of conduct; and those parts are really the whole, because genuine religion is an *a priori* concept of reason with no empirical content, so that it exists only in this moral domain. [Kant builds into that sentence a contrast between 'the morality of conduct' and materials that concern non-moral theories about what is the case, including ones about how best to go about teaching.] If this **experiment** succeeds, we'll be able to say that reason is not only compatible with Scripture but unified with it, so that if (guided by moral concepts) you follow one you'll also conform to the other. If this weren't so, we would have either two religions in one person, which is absurd, or one *religion* and one *cult*. Because a cult is not an end in itself (as religion is) but only valuable as a means, the two would often have to be shaken up together to get them to combine for a while; though each time they would then separate from one another, like oil and water, with the purely moral one (the religion of reason) floating on top.

I noted in the first Preface that this unification, or the attempt at it, is something the philosophical investigator of religion is entitled to do, and doesn't encroach on the

exclusive rights of the biblical theologian. Since then I have found this assertion •cited in *Morality* by the late J. D. Michaelis, a man well versed in both fields, and •applied throughout that entire work; and the higher department [here = the department of biblical theology] didn't find in it anything prejudicial to its rights.

In this second edition I would have liked to respond to what has been said about this book by worthy men, named and unnamed; but I haven't been able to because this material (like all literary material from abroad) has been so slow to arrive in our parts. This is particularly true of the *Annotationes quaedam theologicae* etc.—more fully: 'Some theological remarks concerning Kant's philosophical doctrine of religion'—by the renowned Dr Storr in Tübingen, who has examined my book with his accustomed sharpness and with a diligence and fairness deserving the greatest thanks. I do plan to answer him, but can't *promise* to do so because of the peculiar difficulties that old age sets in the way of working with abstract ideas. [Kant was 70 when he wrote this.] But a review in *Latest Critical News* can be dealt with as briefly as the reviewer did the book itself. For the book, in this reviewer's judgment, is nothing but my answer to the question I asked myself: 'How are the concepts and

doctrines of the ecclesiastical system of dogmatic theology possible according to pure (theoretical and practical) reason?' This essay, ·he claims·, has nothing to say to those for whom Kant's system is non-existent—i.e. those who don't know and understand the system and haven't the least desire to do so. I answer thus: To understand the essential content of this work, all you need is common morality; there's no need to bring in the *Critique of ·Pure· Practical Reason*, still less the *Critique of Pure ·Theoretical· Reason*. For example, when virtue as skill in actions conforming to duty (according to their **legality**) is called '*phenomenal* virtue', and the same virtue as an enduring attitude towards such actions from duty (because of their **morality**) is called '*noumenal* virtue', these terms are used only in deference to the schools [here = 'to one group of academic philosophers'], but the distinction itself is contained, though in other words, in the most ordinary everyday children's instruction and in sermons, and is easy to understand. If only the same could be said for the mysteries of the divine nature that are included among religious teachings! They're introduced into the catechism as though they were perfectly ordinary and everyday, but they won't become comprehensible to everyone unless they are first transformed into moral concepts.

First Essay: The bad principle existing alongside the good i.e. The radical evil in human nature

[On the word 'principle' as used here and in the titles of the other three Essays, see the Glossary.]

The complaint that 'the world lies in evil' is older than history, indeed as old as that oldest of all poetic endeavours, the religion of the priests. All religions agree that the world began in a good state, whether in a Golden Age, a life in Eden, or an even happier communion with celestial beings. But they soon let this happiness vanish like a dream and give place to a fall into evil (moral evil, always going hand in hand with physical evil), speeding mankind from bad to worse with accelerated descent; so that now (but this Now is as old as history) we live in the final age, with the Last Day and the destruction of the world knocking at the door. In some parts of India the Judge and Destroyer of the world, Rudra (sometimes called Siwa or Siva), is already being worshipped as the reigning God, because Vishnu, the Sustainer of the world became weary of his task some centuries ago and renounced the supreme authority he had inherited from Brahma, the Creator of the world.

More recent though far less prevalent is the opposite optimistic belief that the world is steadily (though almost imperceptibly) moving from bad to better, or at least that the predisposition to move in that way can be found in human nature. It's only philosophers who have held this view, and these days especially the teachers of philosophy. If this is a thesis about movement along the scale from moral badness to moral goodness (not simply about the process of civilisation), it certainly hasn't been derived from experience—the history of all times speaks too loudly against it! Presumably it is merely a well-meaning postulate of moralists from Seneca to Rousseau designed to encourage

us to cultivate the seed of goodness that lies in us—if there is one. Their thought is that since we take it for granted that man is naturally sound of body (as at birth he usually is), there's no reason why we shouldn't assume that his soul is also healthy and free from evil; so nature itself is inclined to help us on developing this moral predisposition to goodness. [Kant adds a quotation to that effect from Seneca.]

But it may be that both sides are wrong about this. Isn't it at least possible that the truth lies between them: man as a species is neither good nor bad, or any way as much the one as the other—partly good, partly bad. We call a man bad, however, not because his **actions** are bad (contrary to law) but because his actions show that he has bad **maxims** in him. Through experience we can observe actions that are contrary to law, and we can observe (at least in ourselves) that they're performed with awareness that they are unlawful; but a man's maxims aren't observable in this way (even by himself in many cases); so experience can't support a confident judgment that a given man is bad. To be entitled to call a man bad, you would have to be able to infer *a priori* from several consciously bad acts—or from just one—an underlying evil maxim; and further from this maxim to infer the presence in the man of an underlying general basis for all his particular morally evil maxims, a basis that is itself another maxim.

You may have trouble with the word 'nature' which is used in the title of this Essay. When an action is said to arise from nature, that usually means that the action is not free, which implies that it isn't either *morally* good or

morally evil. But ·I'm not using 'nature' in that way·. What I call 'human nature' is the with the subjective basis of the exercise (under objective moral laws) of man's freedom, a basis which—wherever it lies—precedes every action that is apparent to the senses. But this subjective basis must also be an expression of freedom, because otherwise the resultant action. . . . couldn't be *morally* good or bad. So the basis of evil can't lie in •anything that determines [see Glossary] the will through inclination, or in •any natural impulse; it can lie only in a •rule that the will makes for itself, as something on which to exercise its freedom—i.e. a •maxim. We mustn't ask what the man's subjective ground is for adopting this maxim rather than of its opposite. If it were not ultimately a maxim but a mere natural impulse, the man's 'free' action could be tracked back to determination by natural causes, which contradicts the very notion of freedom. So when we say 'He is by nature good' or ' . . . bad', this means only:

There is in him a rock-bottom basis (inscrutable to us) for the adoption of good maxims or of bad ones (i.e. maxims contrary to law); and he has this just because he is a man, so his having it expresses the character of his species.¹

So we shall characterise as *innate* the ·good or bad· character that distinguishes man from other possible beings that have reason; but that won't prevent us from maintaining that nature is not •to bear the blame if the character is bad or •to take the credit if it is good, and that man himself is its author. ·To see how this can be so, you have to grasp how 'innate'

is being used here·. The rock-bottom basis for the adoption of our maxims must itself lie in free choice, so it can't can't be something we meet with in experience; therefore, the good or evil in man (as the ultimate subjective basis for the adoption of this or that maxim relating to the moral law) is termed 'innate' only in the sense of being posited as the basis for—and thus being earlier than—*every* use of freedom in experience (including ones in earliest youth, as far back as birth); so it is conceived of as present in man at the time of birth—though birth needn't be its cause.

Comment

The conflict between the two hypotheses presented above is based on a disjunctive proposition: *Man is (by nature) either morally good or morally bad*. Is this disjunction valid? Mightn't it be that man is by nature neither good nor bad? or that he is both at once, good in some respects and bad in others? Experience actually seems to confirm the middle ground between the two extremes.

But it matters greatly to ethics to hold off as long as possible from anything morally intermediate, whether in actions or in human characters. That is because such ambiguity threatens all maxims with becoming vague and unstable. Those who favour this strict way of thinking are usually called *rigorists* (a name that is intended to carry reproach but actually praises); their opposites could be called *latitudinarians*. These divide into •latitudinarians of neutrality, whom we can call 'indifferentists' and •latitudinarians of coalition, whom we can call 'syncretists'.²

¹ That the ultimate basis for the adoption of moral maxims in inscrutable can be seen. . . .from the following. This adoption must itself be free; so the basis for it—the explanation for its favouring (e.g.) a bad maxim rather than a good one—can't come from any natural drive and must involve yet another maxim; this in turn must have a basis. . . . and so we are launched on an infinite series of ever earlier bases for choices.

² [Kant has here a footnote arguing that because **(a)** the moral law is a motivating force in us, **(b)** there is no middle position between going with the law and going against the law. The details of the argument are obscure.]

·What follows will involve the notion of an action as being ‘morally indifferent’. Before getting into that, I have some things to say about that concept·.

·PASSAGE ADDED IN SECOND EDITION·

† [This passage is directed towards the great poet, dramatist and critic Friedrich Schiller, who was an unpaid professor at the University of Jena.] A morally indifferent action would be one resulting merely from natural laws, and hence standing in no relation whatsoever to the moral law, which is the law of freedom;. . .with regard to such an action there is no place for, and no need for, command or prohibition or permission.

In his masterly treatise on grace and dignity in morality (published in the journal *Thalia*), Professor Schiller objects to this way of representing obligation, as carrying with it a monastic cast of mind. But he and I agree on the most important ·other· principles, so I have to think that we don’t disagree about this one either, if only we can make ourselves clear to one another. I freely grant that I can’t associate the concept of duty with *grace*, precisely because of the concept’s dignity. The concept involves absolute necessitation, and *grace* stands in direct contradiction to that. The majesty of the moral law (as of the law on Sinai) instils awe (not dread, which repels; and not charm, which invites familiarity); this awe arouses the subordinate’s *respect* for his master; and in this case, where the master resides within us, this respect awakens a sense of how sublime of our own destiny is, which enraptures us more than any beauty. But virtue—i.e. the firmly based disposition strictly to do our duty—has results that are more beneficent than anything nature or art can accomplish in the world; and the splendid picture of human virtue does allow the Graces to enter the picture, though they keep a respectful distance when is the sole topic. [Kant is using the (three) Graces—Roman goddesses of charm, beauty etc.—as

a metaphor for the gracefulness that Schiller was writing about.] . . .

What is the aesthetic character, the temperament, as it were, of virtue? Is it courageous and hence joyous or fear-ridden and dejected? An answer is hardly necessary. The slavish dejected frame of mind can’t occur without a hidden hatred of the law. Whereas a heart that is happy in the performance of its duty. . .is a mark of the genuineness of a virtuous disposition. And of the genuineness of piety, which does not consist in the self-inflicted torment of a repentant sinner (a very ambiguous state of mind, which ordinarily is nothing but regret at having infringed the rule of prudence), but rather in a firm resolve to do better in the future. This resolve, then, encouraged by good progress, must create a joyous frame of mind, without which man is never certain of having •really achieved a love for the good, i.e. of having •incorporated it into his maxim.

END OF THE ADDED PASSAGE

·We confronted the question ‘How do good/bad figure in human nature? Is it indifferent between them? or a bit of one and a bit of the other? or . . .?’· According to the rigoristic diagnosis, the answer to this is based on an observation that is highly important to morality, namely:

Freedom of the will is utterly unlike anything else in that no incentive can determine the will to an action unless the man has incorporated that incentive into his maxim, making it [= this determination] the general rule that he wills to conduct himself by. Those are the only terms on which any incentive can co-exist with the will’s absolute spontaneity, i.e. its freedom.

Now, reason judges that the moral law is in itself an incentive, and anyone who makes it his maxim is morally good. If someone performs an action to which the moral law is relevant and his will was not •determined by this law, then

it must have been •influenced by an incentive contrary to it; and since this can happen only when a man admits this incentive (and thus his deviation from the moral law) into his maxim (in which case he is a bad man), it follows that his disposition in respect to the moral law is never indifferent, never ‘neither good nor bad’.

Nor can a man be morally good in some ways while morally bad in others. His being •good in one way means that he has incorporated the moral law into his maxim; if he were at the same time •bad in another way, this would involve his having a maxim that creates *exceptions* to his *universal* maxim about obedience to duty; and that’s a contradiction.¹

When I speak of one or other disposition as ‘inborn’ and ‘natural’ I don’t mean that it hasn’t been acquired by the man whose constitution it is, or that he didn’t create it; all I mean is that this didn’t happen over time—that he has always been good or bad from his youth onwards. But this disposition—the ultimate subjective basis for the adoption of maxims—. . . must have been adopted by •the man’s• free choice, because otherwise he couldn’t be subject to praise or blame for it. But the subjective basis or cause of this adoption can’t be known (though it’s inevitable that we ask about it), because knowing it would involve bringing in another maxim, which would in its turn have a basis. . . . and so on •backwards to infinity•. Since we can’t explain this disposition, or rather its ultimate basis, in terms of any fundamental act of the will *in time*, we call it a property of the will that belongs to it by nature (although actually the

disposition is based on freedom). However, this proposition—
When we say of someone ‘He is by nature good (or bad)’ we have to be saying this about the whole species, for if we could say it about the individual man then one man could be considered as good by nature, another as bad

—can’t be proved until and unless anthropological research shows that the evidence that justifies us in saying of someone ‘He is innately good (bad)’ is such as to provide no basis for excepting anyone, and that our attribution therefore holds for the species.

1. The Original Predisposition to Good in Human Nature

This predisposition can conveniently be divided into three elements involving dispositions toward three different goals. These can be considered as elements in the structure of mankind.

- (1) As a living being man has a predisposition to animality;
- (2) As a living and reason-possessing being man has a predisposition to humanity;
- (3) As a reason-possessing and morally accountable being man has a predisposition to personality [see Glossary].

¹ The ancient moral philosophers, who said just about all there is to say about virtue, addressed our two questions. They expressed the first of them thus: *Must virtue be learned? Is man naturally indifferent as regards virtue and vice?* And they put the second thus: *Is there more than one virtue, so that man might be virtuous in some respects and vicious in others?* They answered both with rigoristic definiteness in the negative, and rightly so; for they were considering virtue *in itself*, as it is in the idea of reason (what man ought to be). But if we want to pass moral judgment on this moral being, man *as he appears*, i.e. as experience reveals him to us, we can answer both questions in the affirmative; for in this case we judge him not by the standard of pure reason before a divine tribunal but by an empirical standard before a human judge. I’ll say more about this later.

·START OF FOOTNOTE·

We can't regard **(3)** as included in the concept of **(2)**; it has to be regarded as a special predisposition on its own. From the fact that a being has reason it doesn't follow—as far as I can see—that this reason, simply by having the thought that its maxims are fit to be laid down as universal laws, can determine the will unconditionally and thus be self-sufficiently 'practical' [i.e. be able to get itself moving without any input from outside]. A **(2)** *Weltwesen* [see Glossary] extremely well equipped with reason might need certain incentives, originating in objects of desire, to determine his choice. He could

use the full force of his reason to decide which set of incentives adds up to the strongest, and to work out how to achieve the states of affairs that they aim at, without *suspecting the possibility* of **(3)** the absolutely imperative moral law which proclaims that it is itself an incentive, and indeed the highest incentive. If his law weren't given to us from within, we would never have been able by high-level reasoning to bring it into existence or subject our will to it; yet this law is the only thing that tells us •that our will isn't under the control of other incentives (tells us of our freedom) and at the same time •that we are morally accountable for all our actions.

·END OF FOOTNOTE·

(1) Man's predisposition to animality can be brought under the general heading of 'physical and purely mechanical self-love', for which reason isn't needed. It is threefold: •for self-preservation; •for the propagation of the species through sexual intercourse and the care of offspring arising from that; and •for community with other men, i.e. the social impulse. On these stems all kinds of vices can be grafted (but they don't spring from **(1)** this predisposition itself as a root).

They can be called vices of the coarseness of nature, and their extreme cases are called the 'bestial vices' of •gluttony and drunkenness, •lasciviousness and •wild lawlessness (in relation to other men).

(2) The predisposition to humanity can be brought under the general title of 'self-love' that is physical and yet makes comparisons (for which reason is required)—we judge ourselves happy or unhappy only by comparing ourselves with others. This self-love creates the inclination to become worthy in the opinion of others. This starts as a desire merely for equality, to allow no-one to rise above oneself, combined with a constant anxiety about whether others are trying to do just that; from which there gradually arises the unjustifiable craving to achieve superiority for oneself over others. Great vices can be grafted onto this twin stem of •jealousy and •rivalry, namely the vices of secret and open hostility towards everyone we see as alien to us. These vices don't sprout from nature as their root. They are merely inclinations aroused in us •to defend ourselves against the attempts of others to get superiority over us, •to get the upper hand as a preventive measure. [In the next sentence, 'culture' (*Kultur*) could refer to •gardening or to •literature, music etc. Perhaps Kant punningly means both.] •That's not what Nature wanted.; it wanted to use the idea of such competitiveness (which in itself does not exclude mutual love) only as a spur to culture. So the vices that are grafted onto this inclination could be termed 'vices of culture'; in the highest degree of malignancy—e.g. in envy, ingratitude, *Schadenfreude* etc.—where they are simply the idea of a maximum of evil going beyond what is human, they are called 'diabolical vices'.

(3) The predisposition to personality is the ability to have respect for the moral law as an incentive that can unaided move the will. A capacity for mere *respect* for the moral law within us would be moral *feeling*, which is a goal of the

natural predisposition not *in itself* but only as something that moves the will. Since this is possible only when the free will incorporates such moral feeling into its maxim, the constitution of such a will is good character. This...is something that can only be *acquired*; but that couldn't happen unless our nature already included a predisposition to it, a predisposition onto which nothing bad can possibly be grafted. We can't rightly call the idea of the moral law, with the respect that is inseparable from it, a *predisposition to personality*; it is personality (the idea of humanity considered quite intellectually). But the subjective basis for the adoption of this respect into our maxims as a motivating force seems to be something additional to personality, and thus to deserve to be called a predisposition to it.

When we look at the requirements for the three predispositions I have listed, we find that **(1)** isn't based on reason, **(2)** is based on practical reason but only in the service of other incentives, while **(3)** is based on reason that is practical in itself, i.e. reason that dictates laws unconditionally. All these predispositions are not only good in negative fashion (they don't contradict the moral law), but also predispositions toward good (they further the observance of the law). They are original [here = 'basic', 'not derivative'], because they are bound up with the possibility of human nature. Man can indeed use **(1)** or **(2)** contrary to their ends, but he can't extinguish any of the three. By a being's 'predispositions' I mean both •its constituent elements that are necessary to it and also •the way they are put together to make it the

being that it is. They are •original if they are necessarily involved in the possibility of such a being, but •contingent if the being could exist without them. Notice that I am here treating only predispositions that are directly related to the faculty of desire and the exercise of the will.

2. The Propensity to Evil in Human Nature

By 'propensity' I understand the subjective ground of the possibility of an inclination (habitual desire, craving) which mankind in general is liable to have.¹ What distinguishes a propensity from a predisposition is the fact that although it can be innate it doesn't have to be seen in that way; it can also be regarded as having been acquired (if it is good) or inflicted on the man by himself (if it is bad). But my topic here is only the propensity to what is genuinely bad, i.e. morally bad; for since such evil [see Glossary] is possible only as a state of the free will, and since the will can be judged as good or bad only by means of its maxims, this

- propensity to evil must consist in
- the subjective basis for the possibility of the maxims' deviating from the moral law.

If this propensity can be seen as belonging to mankind in general (and thus as being part of the character of the species), it can be called man's 'natural propensity to evil'...

We can distinguish three different levels in this capacity for evil, i.e. in man's natural propensity to evil: **(1)** the

¹ † A propensity is really only a predisposition to want an enjoyment which, once it has been experienced, arouses in the subject an *inclination* to it. Thus all uncultured people have a propensity for intoxicants; many of them know nothing of intoxication and therefore have no desire for intoxicants, but once they have sampled one there is aroused in them an almost inextinguishable desire for it. Between •inclination, which presupposes acquaintance with the object of desire, and •propensity there •is instinct, which is a felt want to do or to enjoy something that one doesn't yet have any conception of (such as the sexual impulse, or the impulse in beavers to build dams). Beyond inclination there is finally a further stage in the faculty of desire, namely •passion,...which is an inclination that excludes the mastery over oneself.

weakness of the human heart in the general observance of adopted maxims, i.e. the **frailty** of human nature; **(2)** the propensity for mixing immoral with moral incentives (·which is bad· even when it is done with good intent and under maxims of the good), i.e. **impurity**; **(3)** the propensity to adopt bad maxims, i.e. the **wickedness** of human nature or of the human heart.

(1) The frailty of human nature is expressed even in the lament of the Apostle Paul: ‘What I will to do I don’t do!’ [Romans 7:18] In other words, I take up the good (the law) into the maxim of my will, but this good, which objectively in its ideal conception is an irresistible incentive, is subjectively—when it comes to actually following the maxim—weaker than ·the contrary· inclination).

(2) The impurity of the human heart consists in this: although the maxim is indeed good in respect of its object (the intended observance of the law) and may even be strong enough to lead to action, it isn’t purely moral; i.e. it hasn’t adopted *the law alone* as its all-sufficient incentive, and instead—usually or perhaps always—needs other incentives beyond this to get the will to do what duty demands. In short, actions called for by duty are done not purely for duty’s sake.

(3) The wickedness—or, if you like, the corruption—of the human heart is the propensity of the will to ·act on· maxims in which the incentives springing from the moral law are upstaged by others that aren’t moral. It can also be called the ‘perversity’ [Verkehrtheit] of the human heart, because it reverses [umkehrt] the moral order among the incentives of a free will; and although conduct that conforms to the law can occur in its presence, the cast of mind is corrupted at its root (so far as the moral disposition is concerned), so the man is described as ‘bad’.

You’ll notice that this propensity to evil is here attributed (as regards conduct) to men in general, even to the best

of them; this must be done if it’s to be proved that the propensity to evil is universal in mankind, i.e. that it is woven into human nature.

As regards conformity of conduct to the moral law there need be no difference between **(a)** a man of good morals and **(b)** a morally good man, except that **(a)**’s conduct doesn’t always—perhaps doesn’t ever—have the law as its sole and supreme incentive, while **(b)**’s conduct always does.

(a) He obeys the law according to the *letter* (i.e. his conduct conforms to what the law commands).

(b) He obeys the law according to the *spirit* (the spirit of the moral law consisting in this, that the law is sufficient in itself as an incentive).

... When incentives other than the law itself (e.g. ambition, self-love in general, even a kindly instinct such as sympathy) are needed to get the will to ·pursue· lawful actions, it is merely accidental that these actions conform to the law, for those incentives could just as well have led to its violation. So the man’s maxim, the goodness of which shows his moral worth, is contrary to the law; and **(a)** the man, despite all his good deeds, is nevertheless bad.

To pin down the concept of this propensity I need to explain something. Every propensity is either **(i)** physical, i.e. belonging to the will of the man as a natural being, or **(ii)** moral, i.e. belonging to the will of the man as a moral being. In **(i)** there is no propensity to moral evil, for such a propensity must spring from freedom; and a physical propensity (based on sensuous impulses) towards *any* use of freedom—good or bad—is a contradiction. Hence a propensity to evil can adhere only to the moral capacity of the will. But the only things that are morally bad (i.e. are things we can be held accountable for) are our own actions. On the other hand, the concept of a propensity is taken to apply to a subjective determining basis of the will

that *precedes all actions* and is therefore not itself an action. Hence the concept of *simple propensity to evil* would be self-contradictory if it weren't possible to take this expression [= 'action'] in two meanings, both of which can be reconciled with the concept of freedom. The word 'action' can apply to either of two uses of freedom: •that in which the supreme maxim (in conformity with the law or contrary to it) is adopted by the will, and •that in which the actions themselves (considered materially, i.e. in terms of what the man is trying to do) are performed in accordance with that maxim. The propensity to evil is both **(1)** an 'action' in the first sense, and at the same time the formal basis of any **(2)** unlawful 'action' in the second sense. . . . It can happen that

- a **(1)** bad action is performed, and yet
- every time a **(2)** bad action might result it is headed off by some incentive that doesn't involve the law.

In that case, the guilt for the **(1)** bad action remains. It's an intelligible action, knowable through bare reason, and not known as happening at some particular time or through any particular period; the **(2)** action is perceivable through the senses, empirical, given in time. The **(1)** action, particularly when compared with the **(2)** action, is called a bare propensity and *innate*. There are two reasons for this. It is because •the propensity can't be eradicated (because that would have to be done by the highest maxim which would have to be that of the good—whereas this propensity has already adopted something bad as the highest maxim); and especially because •although the corruption by evil of this highest maxim is our own action, we can't assign a further cause for it, any more than we can assign a cause for any basic feature of our nature (•e.g. a cause for our having reason•).

From what I have just said, you can see why in this section right from the outset I looked for the three sources of the morally evil solely in matters having to do with the

supreme basis for the adoption or or obedience to our maxims, and not in anything involving the senses. . . .

3. Man is bad by Nature

According to what I have said, the proposition *Man is bad* can only mean that *he is conscious of the moral law but has nevertheless allowed occasional departures from it into his maxim*. 'He is bad *by nature*' means that badness can be predicated of man as a species. It doesn't say that this quality can be inferred from the concept of *man* as such, for that would make it a necessary truth. All it means is that from what we know of man through experience we can't judge him otherwise, or that we can take it that evil is subjectively necessary to every man—i.e. built into each individual man as a separate fact about *him*—even to the best. Now this propensity must itself be considered as morally bad, so not as a natural predisposition but rather as something the man can be held accountable for; and consequently it must consist in unlawful maxims of the will. And because of freedom—i.e. because we are free to obey the maxims or disobey them—these maxims must be regarded as contingent; but that doesn't square with the universality of this evil unless the rock-bottom basis of all maxims is, somehow or other, entwined with and rooted in humanity itself. [Kant is openly declining to say *how* evil is rooted in humanity. He has already said that the rooting is not conceptual.] So we can call this a *natural propensity to evil*, and because we must always accept the guilt for it we can call it a *radical innate evil in human nature*, though one we have brought upon ourselves.

That such a corrupt propensity must indeed be rooted in men needn't be formally *proved*, given the multitude of glaring examples we see by observing men's actions. Some philosophers have hoped to encounter humanity's natural

goodness in the so-called *state of nature*, but just look at it! Look at the scenes of unprovoked cruelty in the murder-dramas enacted in Tofoa, in New Zealand, and in the Navigator Islands, and the ceaseless cruelty that is reported to happen in the wide wastes of northwestern America—cruelty from which no-one gets the smallest benefit.¹ And we have vices of barbarity of our own that are more than sufficient to draw us from the opinion of man's goodness in the state of nature. Perhaps you are drawn to the opinion that human nature can better be known in the civilised state (in which its predispositions can develop more completely), then listen to the long melancholy litany of indictments against humanity:

- secret falsity even in the closest friendship, so that even among the best friends it is always thought prudent to limit one's trust in others;
- a propensity to hate someone to whom one is indebted—something that benefactors must always be prepared for;
- heartfelt well-wishing that doesn't falsify the remark of La Rochefoucauld that 'in the misfortunes of our best friends there is something that is not altogether displeasing to us';

and many other vices concealed under the appearance of virtue, not to mention the vices of those who don't conceal them because we're content to regard as *good* a man who is *bad in a way that everyone is bad*. And we'll have enough vices of culture and civilisation (which are the worst of all) to make prefer to stop looking at the conduct of men lest we ourselves contract another vice, misanthropy.

If you are still not convinced that man is disposed to evil both in the state of nature and in the civilised state, consider the state that is oddly composed of both the others, i.e. the international situation, where civilised nations relate to each other in the way individuals do in the primitive state of nature (a state of continuous readiness for war), and are firmly resolved never to relate differently. That will make you aware of the fundamental principles of the great societies called *states* [see below], principles that flatly contradict their public pronouncements but can't be laid aside, and that no philosopher has yet been able to bring into agreement with morality.

•ADDED PASSAGE COMMENTING ON 'STATES'.

† When we look at the history of these merely as the visible upshot of the inner predispositions of mankind that are mostly concealed from us, we become aware of a certain mechanical movement of nature toward ends that are nature's own rather than those of the peoples. •Each separate state, so long as it has a neighbour that it hopes to conquer, works to enlarge itself at the expense of the neighbour, thus taking a step towards world-monarchy, a political system in which all freedom disappears, along with its consequences—virtue, taste, and learning. •But this monster (in which laws gradually lose their force), after swallowing all its neighbours eventually breaks up—through rebellion and disunion—into many smaller states. •These, instead of working for a union of states (a republic of federated free peoples), begin the same game over again, each for itself, making sure that war, that

¹ † Thus the perpetual war between the Arathapesca Indians and the Dog Rib Indians has no purpose but slaughter. Bravery in war is, in the savages' opinion, their highest virtue. Even in a civilised state it is admired, and is a basis for the special respect given to the profession in which bravery is the sole merit. There's a reason for this: we see a certain nobility in the natural disposition of someone who can make his honour an end to be valued more than life itself. . . . But the complacency with which victors boast of their mighty deeds (massacres, butchery without mercy, and the like) shows that what they really take satisfaction in is merely their own superiority and the destruction they can wreak, with no other objective.

scourge of mankind, never comes to an end. War is not in fact as incurably bad as

- that *tomb*, universal autocracy

or even as bad as

- a confederacy that exists to ensure that despotism doesn't disappear in any single state.

Still, the ancient writer was correct when he said that 'war creates more bad men than it destroys'.

·NOW BACK TO THE MAIN THREAD·

Nor (sad to say) has any philosopher been able to propose better principles that can be brought into harmony with human nature. The result is that the philosophical millennium, which hopes for a state of perpetual peace based on a league of peoples, a world-republic, is sneered at by everyone as fanaticism—as is the theological millennium, which waits for the completed moral improvement of the entire human race.

(1) It is commonly thought that the basis of this evil lies in man's sensibility [*Sinnlichkeit*] and the natural inclinations arising from it; but this can't be right. These inclinations aren't directly related to evil; rather, they provide an opportunity for the moral sense [*moralische Gesinnung*] to show virtue). And there's another reason: these natural inclinations are implanted in us from the outset—we aren't their authors—so we aren't responsible for their existence; but we *are* accountable for the propensity to evil. Why? Because it affects the man's morality, so it is present in him as a freely acting being, and it must be possible to hold him accountable for it as the offender—despite this propensity's being so deeply rooted in the will that we're forced to say that it is to be found in man by nature. Thus, as a basis for the morally bad in man, sensibility contains **too little**, because when the incentives that can arise from freedom are taken away, man is reduced to a **merely animal** being.

(2) Nor can the basis of this evil lie in a corruption of reason, the giver of the moral law—as if reason could destroy the authority of its own law, or deny the obligation arising from it! This is absolutely impossible. Also: a freely acting being can't be determined by natural laws; so if it were released from the moral law it would have to be operating without *any* law, and this is self-contradictory. Mightn't it operate on the basis of *opposition to the law* as an incentive? That would involve a thoroughly bad will, which contains **too much** for the purpose at hand—it would require the man to be a **diabolical** being. 'Merely animal', 'diabolical'—neither of these is applicable to man.

But even if the existence of this propensity to evil in human nature can be shown by empirical proofs of the opposition of man's will to the law—this being a real happening in time—such proofs don't teach us the real constitution of that propensity or the basis of this opposition. That constitution has to do with how •the will relates to •the moral law as an incentive; because the will is free the concept of it isn't empirical, and the concept of the moral law is also purely intellectual; so our grasp of how the propensity to evil is constituted—or as much grasp of it as is possible under the laws of freedom (of obligation and accountability)—must come to us *a priori* through the concept of evil. I now offer a development of that concept.

Even the lowest man doesn't. . . .repudiate the moral law, renouncing obedience to it like a rebel. The law indeed forces itself on him irresistibly by virtue of his •intrinsic• moral predisposition; and if no other incentive acted against it he would adopt it into his supreme maxim as the sufficient [here = 'sole, unaided'] determining basis of his will; i.e. he would be **morally good**. But by virtue of an equally innocent natural predisposition that he has, he clings to the incentive that relates to his senses and (in accordance with the subjective

principle of self-love) adopts it also into his maxim. [Kant speaks of this as a single incentive, but presumably he is referring to the whole set of incentives that kick off from things we encounter through our senses. Perhaps the phrase ‘the maxim of self-love’ is supposed to pull them together into a single cluster.] If he took this into his maxim as all he needs to determine the will, ignoring the moral law that he also has in him, he would be **morally bad**. So we have these premises:

- He naturally adopts both the moral law and the sense-related incentive into his maxim, and
- He would find either of these, if it were all he had, adequate in itself to determine his will.

Does it follow that

- He is at once good and bad?

No! That (as we saw on page 11) is a contradiction. It *would* follow, if the crucial difference between the maxims concerned their **content**, i.e. what incentive each recognises. But it doesn’t. Whether a man is morally good or morally bad depends on the **form** of his maxim, specifically on *which of the two incentives he makes the condition of the other*. So what makes a man bad—and even the best man *is* bad—is that he reverses the moral order of the incentives when he adopts them into his maxim. He does indeed adopt the moral law along with the law of self-love; but when he becomes aware that they can’t maintain parity with each other and that one must be subordinated to the other as its supreme condition, he makes the incentive of self-love and its inclinations the condition of obedience to the moral law; whereas the moral law ought to have been •treated as the supreme condition of the satisfaction of the incentive of self-love and thus •adopted into the universal maxim of his will as the sole incentive.

But even with this reversal of the ethical order of the incentives in his maxim, a man’s actions may still turn out

to conform to the law as much as if they had arisen from genuine basic principles. This happens when the incentives of inclination are drawn together. . . .into a single maxim under the name of *happiness*; for example, a basic principle enjoining truthfulness furthers our happiness by delivering us from the anxiety of making lies agree with one another. In this case, the man’s empirical character is good but his intelligible character is still bad.

Now if a propensity to this ‘reversal of incentives’ does lie in human nature, there is in man a natural propensity to evil; and this propensity itself is morally bad, because it must ultimately be sought in a will that is free and therefore a source of moral accountability. This evil lies deep, because it corrupts the basis of all maxims; as a natural propensity it can’t be wiped out by human powers, because that would have to be done through good maxims, and we’re discussing a situation where the ultimate subjective basis of all maxims is corrupted. Yet it must be possible for it to be outweighed because it is found in man, a being whose actions are free.

So the wickedness of human nature shouldn’t be called *malice* if that word is used in its strict sense as ‘naming’ a disposition. . . .to adopt evil *as evil* into our maxim; because that is diabolical. We should rather term it the *perversity* of the heart, which is called a bad heart because of what follows from it. It can coexist with a generally good will; it arises from two features of human nature:

- its frailty—the man’s not having the strength to follow the principles he has chosen for himself; and
- its impurity—the man’s failure to distinguish the incentives (even of well-intentioned actions) from each other by a moral standard, so that. . . .what he cares about is whether his actions conform to the law rather than whether they are motivated by the law and nothing else.

This doesn't always lead to unlawful acts and a propensity to them, . . . but the way of thinking that ignores the incentives in the maxim and attends only conformity with the letter of the law itself deserves to be called a deep-lying perversity in the human heart.

[Kant wrote this paragraph in three sentences.] This guilt is called 'innate' because it can be seen in man back when his use of freedom first appears, but it must have arisen from freedom and hence is subject to moral accountability. It has three levels, of which the first two (those of frailty and impurity) can be regarded as unintentional guilt; but at the third level it is deliberate guilt, involving something fraudulent in the human heart, in which the man •deceives himself about his own good and bad attitudes and •regards himself as justified before the law so long as his actions don't have bad consequences—which they easily could do, given the maxims that were at work in them. This is the source •of the peace of conscience of so many men—*conscientious* men, they think—when in a course of action where they didn't bring the law into their thinking, or at least didn't give it the dominant role there, they escape bad consequences by sheer good luck; and even •of their self-congratulatory sense of *merit* in not feeling themselves guilty of any such offences as they see others burdened with. They don't look into whether good luck should have the credit; or look deep enough into themselves to discover (as they could if only they would) an innermost cast of mind that would have led them

to similar morally bad conduct if they hadn't been prevented by inability, temperament, upbringing, and circumstances of time and place—none of which are things for which they are morally accountable. This dishonesty, which throws dust in our eyes and thwarts the establishing of a genuine moral attitude in us, then spreads out into falsehood and deception of others. If it isn't be called wickedness, it at least deserves the label 'worthlessness'. It is an element in the radical evil of human nature, which messes up one's capacity to make moral judgements about what a man should be taken for, and makes our attributions of responsibility—ours or those of others—wholly uncertain. It's a foul stain on our species; as long as we don't clean it out, it prevents the seed of goodness from developing as it otherwise would.

A member of the English Parliament once exclaimed, in the heat of debate, 'Every man has his price, for which he sells himself.' If this is true, . . . if there's no virtue that can't be overthrown by some temptation, . . . then certainly it holds true of men universally, as the apostle said: 'There is no difference: they are all sinners—none of them acts well in the spirit of the law, no, not one.' [*Romans 3:12*]¹

4. The Origin of Evil in Human Nature

An origin (a first origin) is the derivation of an effect from its first cause, i.e. the cause that isn't an effect of another cause of the same kind. It can be considered either as

¹ The real proof of this sentence of condemnation by morally judging reason is given in the preceding section, not in this one, which merely confirms it by experience. But experience can't reveal the root of evil in the supreme maxim of the free will relating to the law, the root which as an intelligible act precedes all experience. That there is *one* supreme maxim and *one* law to which it refers shows us why man's pure •intellectual judgment must be based on the principle that there's no middle case between good and bad; yet •empirical judgment on sensible conduct (actual doing and allowing) can be based on the principle that there is a middle between these extremes. •In fact there are two of them: a negative middle of *indifference* prior to all education, and a positive middle that is a mixture, partly good and partly bad. But this empirical judgment is merely a judgment on the morality of mankind as appearance, and in the final judgment it must submit to the pure intellectual judgment.

- an origin in reason, which explains something's existence (·not its coming into existence·) or as
- an origin in time, i.e. the cause of some event.

If an effect is referred to a cause that doesn't detract from its freedom (e.g. moral evil), then the will's being led to produce this effect is conceived of in terms not of events in time but of timeless reasons; such an effect can't be derived from any preceding state whatsoever. But that sort of derivation is always required when a bad action, as an event in the world, is related to its natural cause. To seek the temporal origin of free acts as such (as though they were natural effects) is thus a contradiction, as is the search for the temporal origin of a man's moral character, . . . because 'his moral character' means 'the basis for his exercise of freedom', and thus it must—like the determining basis of free will generally—be sought solely in representations of reason.

How are we to explain the spread and continuation of moral evil through all members and generations of our species? The clumsiest explanation is that *we inherited it from our first parents!* That's because we can say about moral evil precisely what the poet ·Ovid· said about good: 'Birth and ancestry and anything else that we didn't do ourselves I hardly consider to be ours.'¹ But notice this: in our search for the origin of this evil, we don't start with the propensity to evil, but focus on the inner possibility of the

actual evil of particular actions—on what factors must come together in the will if evil is to be performed.

[In this next paragraph and just once more, 'reason-origin' is used to translate *Vernunftursprung*, with no pretence of knowing what it means.] In our search for the reason-origin of bad actions, every such action must be regarded as though the individual had fallen into it directly from a state of innocence. Whatever his previous conduct may have been like, and whatever natural causes—internal or external—may have been influencing him, his action is still free and not determined by any of these causes; hence it can and must always be judged as an *original* use of his will, ·i.e. a use which is a cause that isn't caused·. Whatever his circumstances and entanglements, he *ought* to have refrained from that action; no cause in the world can deprive him of his status as a freely acting being. A man is rightly said to be accountable for the *consequences* of contrary-to-the-law actions that he has freely performed; but this merely means that there's no need to dodge around enquiring whether those consequences were free, because the admittedly free action that was their cause contains a sufficient basis for holding him accountable. A man is about to perform a free action: it doesn't matter how bad he has been up to this moment (so that evil has become habitual to him, his second nature); just as it **was then** his duty to be better, so also it **is now** his duty to better himself. It must be

¹ The three so-called 'higher faculties' (in the universities) would develop this notion of inherited evil each in terms of its own specialty. **(1)** For the Medical School it is an inherited **disease**, something like the tapeworm. No tapeworms have been met with anywhere but in us, not even (of this particular kind) in other animals; so some natural scientists actually believe that it must have existed in our first parents. **(2)** The Law School would regard this evil as an inherited **debt**—the legitimate consequence of inheriting the estate bequeathed us by our first parents (for being born is inheriting the use of earthly goods so far as we need them for our continued existence). This inheritance is encumbered by a serious crime, and we have to go on paying the fine until eventually death expels us from the estate. How just legal justice is! **(3)** The School of Theology would regard this evil as an inherited **sin**. They hold that our first parents played a personal part in the fall of a condemned rebel, and maintain either that we also took part •then (although we aren't now conscious of having done so) or that •now, born under the rule of the rebel (as prince of this world), we prefer the world's favours to the supreme command of the heavenly ruler, and don't have enough faith to free ourselves from this; so that we must eventually share the rebel's doom.

within his power to do his, ·because you can't have a duty to do something that is impossible for you·; so if he yet again acts badly, he is accountable. . . .right then for what he does right then. If he had been endowed with a predisposition to good. . . .and had at this moment stepped out of a state of innocence into evil, he wouldn't have been more accountable than he is ·for his bad action that is just one small addition to a lifetime of bad actions·. So if we're trying to determine and if possible explain the general subjective basis for our adopting something bad into our maxim, we should inquire not into the •temporal origin of such an action but only into its •reason-origin.

This squares with the Bible's way of presenting the origin of evil in the human species as having a *beginning*, in a narrative in which

- what in the nature of the case must be considered as *first* (but not in a temporal sense)

appears as

- coming first in time.

According to this account, evil doesn't start from an underlying propensity to evil (if it did, the beginning of evil wouldn't have its source in freedom); rather it starts from *sin*, meaning the transgressing of the moral law as a divine command. The state of man prior to any propensity to evil is called the state of *innocence*. The moral law was presented to mankind as a *prohibition* (*Genesis* 2:16–17); it had to be presented in that way to beings who were not not pure but tempted by desires. Now instead of straightforwardly following this law as an adequate incentive (the only unconditionally good incentive, the only one that there's no room for doubt about), the man

[see Glossary] looked around for other incentives (*Genesis* 3:6), ones that can be good only conditionally, specifically on the condition that they don't infringe the law. He then made it his maxim (I'm thinking here of his action as consciously springing from freedom) to follow the law of duty not ·solely· •as duty but also, in cases of need, •as furthering other ends. That started him wondering whether the commandment's exclusion of the influence of all other incentives was really meant so strictly; and his next move was to use subtle reasoning [see Glossary] to downgrade •obedience to the law to •the merely conditional character of a *means* (subject to the principle of self-love);¹ and finally he admitted into his maxim of conduct the ascendancy of the sensuous impulse over the incentive arising from the law—and thus sin occurred (*Genesis* 3:6). *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur* [quoted from the Latin poet Horace; it means 'With the name changed, it's *your* story they are telling']. This clearly implies that we daily act in the same way, and that therefore 'in Adam all have sinned' and still sin; except that in us an innate propensity to transgression is presupposed, whereas the first man is credited with no such inborn propensity but rather with *a period of time in which* he is innocent. So his transgression is called a *fall* into sin; whereas our sin is represented as resulting from an innate wickedness in our nature. But all this means is that if we try to explain ·our· evil in terms of its beginning in time, we have to look for the cause of each deliberate transgression in a previous period of our lives, ·eventually being led· right back to a time when we didn't yet have the use of reason, and thus to see the source of evil in a propensity to evil (as a natural basis) that is therefore called

¹ All homage paid to the moral law is hypocritical if in one's maxim one doesn't grant to the law, as an incentive that is sufficient in itself, a higher rank than all the other determining bases of the will; and the propensity to do this is inward deceit, i.e. a propensity to lie to oneself in the interpretation of the moral law, to its detriment (*Genesis* 3:5). Accordingly, the Christian part of the Bible calls the author of evil (who is within us) 'the liar' right from the outset (*John* 8:44), and thus characterises man in terms of what seems to be the chief basis of evil in him.

‘innate’. But we don’t need to—and anyway we *can’t*—trace ·in this way· the causes of evil in the case of the first man, who is depicted as already having full command of the use of his reason; because on such an account the propensity to evil would have to have been created in him. That is why his sin is depicted as generated directly from innocence. But we mustn’t look for an origin in time of a moral character for which we are to be held accountable; though we can’t help doing so when we want to explain the sheer fact that we have this character. When the Bible depicts the origin of evil in this temporal way, perhaps it is allowing for this weakness of ours.

But the reason-origin of this propensity to evil—i.e. this perversion of our will in which it gives lower incentives dominance in its maxims—remains inscrutable to us. Here is why. [This indented passage mainly expands a super-compressed half-sentence of Kant’s, in ways that the ‘small dots’ convention can’t easily indicate.]

This propensity is something for which we are accountable; so a straightforwardly graspable explanation for it would have to involve our having adopted a bad maxim as its basis—evil must have sprung from something morally bad; it couldn’t have come from mere limitations in our nature. And this bad something wouldn’t give us what we wanted unless it was itself *basic*, and not an upshot of something earlier or deeper for which we were accountable and which would start off a new search for an explanation. But the basic human predisposition is a predisposition to *good*! Might it not have become corrupted? If the man

is accountable for the corruption then *he* must have done it, and our search for explanation starts up all over again.

So there is for us no conceivable basis from which the moral evil in us could originally have come. This inconceivability, together with a closer specification of the wickedness of our species, the Bible expresses in an historical narrative¹ which finds a place for evil at the creation of the world—not in man but in a *spirit* that was originally destined for something much higher. Thus the beginning of all evil is represented as inconceivable to us (for where did the evil in that spirit come from?); but man is represented as having fallen into evil only through seduction, and hence as being not basically corrupt. . . .rather as still capable of an improvement; unlike the seducing spirit, a being whose guilt can’t be lessened by pleading temptation of the flesh. For man, therefore, who despite a corrupted heart has a good will, there remains hope of a return to the good from which he has strayed.

General remark: Restoring the Original Predisposition to Good to its Power

[On page 27 Kant says that this General remark could be entitled ‘Works of Grace’.]

Whatever a man’s moral condition •is or •will be, whether good or bad, that must be something that he •has brought on himself or •is now bringing on himself. It must be an effect of his free choice, for otherwise he wouldn’t be accountable for it and therefore he wouldn’t be *morally* good or bad. When it is said that ‘Man is created good’, this can only mean

¹ I don’t offer this as biblical exegesis, which lies outside the realm of bare reason. We can explain how to put an historical account to a moral use without deciding whether that’s what the author intended or is merely something inserted by us, provided this meaning is •true in itself (never mind how it squares with history) and also is •the only one that will let us get something salutary from a passage that would otherwise be only an inert addition to our historical knowledge. . . .

that he is created *for* good, and his original predisposition is good; but whether he is already actually good or bad depends entirely on his free choice of whether to admit into his maxim the incentives that this predisposition ·to good· carries with it. Even if some supernatural cooperation was needed for him to become good (or better)—some positive assistance or reducing of obstacles—his own free will must come into play in two ways: he must •first make himself worthy to receive this help, and •then he must *accept* it (which is no small matter), i.e. he must admit this positive increase of power into his maxim. If he weren't involved in this way he wouldn't be responsible for his goodness and wouldn't be known as a good man.

How can a naturally bad man turn himself into a good man? No answer to that is within our conceptual reach, for how can a bad tree bear good fruit? . . . But we are accepting that the descent from good into evil occurs, and it is no more comprehensible than the climb back up from evil to good; each of them originates in freedom. So it can't be disputed that the climb back up is possible. For despite the fall, the command telling us *We ought to become better* resounds in full strength in our souls; so it must be within our power to do this, even if what we're able to do isn't in itself sufficient to achieve this, and only makes us receptive to an inscrutable higher assistance. It must be taken for granted that through all this a seed of goodness has remained in its entire purity, incapable of being eliminated or corrupted; and this seed certainly can't be *self-love*, which if accepted as the principle of all our maxims, is the very source of evil.

·REPORT ON AN OMITTED FOOTNOTE·

[Kant has at this point a difficult footnote which starts by sorting out an ambiguity in the term *self-love*. He distinguishes

(a) *benevolentia* [Latin]; my having this self-love is my **wishing myself well**, wanting things to go well for me, having myself as an object of my benevolence,

from

(a) *complacentia* [Latin]; my having this self-love is my **liking myself**.

Kant's labels for these have an overlap:

(a) *Wohlwollen* — (b) *Wohlgefallen*

which could be clumsily Englished as

(a) 'well-wanting' — (b) 'well-liking';

but the overlap of *Wohl* in the German names can't be put into civilised English that captures the intended meaning.

Here are the main points that Kant makes in the course of this footnote.

[It is natural to (a) wish oneself well; and reason can come into this in two ways: in connection with the choice of •the best and most durable kinds of well-being and •the best means to them. This use of reason doesn't involve morality; in it reason is only 'the maid-servant to natural inclination' [compare Hume's 'the slave of the passions']. But if the principle of wishing oneself well is made 'the unconditional principle of the will' it is the source of an intense antagonism to morality.

[I might (b) like myself because of how well I have done—success in business, nice family, etc.—but that kind of (b) isn't significantly different from (a), and Kant sets it aside. That leaves him with *unconditional* liking for oneself (ULFO), a liking that owes nothing to any facts about how happy one's life has been etc. This ULFO, Kant says, is possible only for someone whose maxims of action completely agree with the moral law; anyone conscious of having maxims that don't square with the moral law within him will inevitably have a bitter *dislike* of himself. (The only exception would be someone to whom morality was indifferent, i.e. whose attitude to morality was 'I can take it or leave it'.) Notice that

Kant has put a certain condition **on** the ULFO (you can have it only *if*. . . .), but he doesn't put any condition **into** it.

[This ULFO could be called 'the reasonable love of oneself', Kant says, because it prevents the man from giving play to other incentives, ones aiming at this or that state of affairs under the label of 'happiness'. He then discusses the role of the concept of happiness in the ULFO, and concludes that my ULFO aims only at *my being worthy of happiness*; that can be basic, underived, and unconditional, and none of that is anywhere near to being true of any aim I may have to be 'happy' in the sense of achieving my non-moral aims.]

·END OF REPORT·

So restoring our original predisposition to good is not acquiring a *lost* incentive for good; that incentive—which consists in respect for the moral law—is something we have never been able to lose, and if we could and did lose it we could never get it back. What is restored is the moral law's *purity* as the ultimate basis of all our maxims, so that it doesn't merely collaborate with other incentives (inclinations), let alone being subordinated to any of them as its conditions, but is adopted in its entire purity as an incentive that is adequate *in itself* to determine the will. What is originally [here = 'basically', 'ultimately'] good is the holiness of maxims in doing one's duty merely for duty's sake. When a man allows this purity into his maxim, that doesn't make him holy (there's a great gap between the maxim and the deed!), but he puts himself on the road of endless progress towards holiness. When the firm resolve to do his duty has become habitual with him, he is said to have 'the virtue of conformity to law'—this conformity is virtue's **empirical character**. This virtue has as its steadfast maxim *Act in conformity to the law*; and there's nothing here about the incentives the will needs to get it to follow that maxim. Virtue in this sense is achieved

a little bit at a time; and in some cases a man requires long practice in observing the law, during which he passes from •a tendency to vice, through •gradual reform of his conduct and strengthening of his maxims, to •an opposite tendency. This doesn't need a change of heart [*Herzensänderung*]*—only a change of conduct. The man regards himself as virtuous if he feels that he has a firm hold on maxims of obedience to his duty even if these maxims don't arise from the ultimate basis for all maxims, namely from duty itself. For example,*

- the immoderate man turns to temperance for the sake of health,
- the liar to honesty for the sake of reputation,
- the unjust man to civic righteousness for the sake of peace or profit,

and so on—all according to the precious principle of *happiness!* But how can he become not merely law-abiding but morally good (pleasing to God)? come to be someone endowed with virtue in its **intelligible character**? someone who when he knows that it's his duty to do x doesn't need any other incentive to go ahead and do it? This can't be brought about through gradual reformation so long as the basis of the maxims remains impure, ·i.e. as long as non-moral incentives are part of his motivational mix·; it has to happen through a revolution in the man's attitude, a going over to the maxim of the attitude's holiness. He can become a new man only by a kind of rebirth, as it were a new creation, and a change of heart.

But if a man is corrupt in the basis of his maxims, how can he possibly bring about this revolution, using his own powers to become a good man? ·It seems impossible·, yet duty tells us to do it, and duty doesn't demand anything that we can't do. The only way to reconcile these is to say that because it is necessary for man it must be possible for him to undergo

- a ·total· revolution in his way of thinking, but only
- a gradual reform in his way of sensing (which places obstacles in the way of the former).

That is, if by a single unchangeable decision he reverses the ultimate basis of his maxims whereby he was a bad man (and thus ‘puts on the new man’ [Kant is quoting from St Paul here]), that makes him, so far as his principle and way of thinking are concerned, •someone who is receptive to goodness; but only in continuous labour and growth is he •a good man. Because of the purity of the principle he has adopted as the supreme maxim of his will, and because of its stability, he can hope to find himself on the good (though narrow) path of continual *progress* from bad to better. For him who sees through to the intelligible basis of the heart (i.e. of all the maxims of the will), and for whom this unending journey towards being a good man is a single step, i.e. for God, this amounts to his actually being a good man (pleasing to God); and to that extent this change can be regarded as a revolution. But in the judgment of men, who can assess themselves and the strength of their maxims only by how well they come, over time, to dominate ·the inclinations generated by· their way of sensing, this change must be regarded as but an everlasting struggle toward the better, and thus as a gradual reform of that perverted cast of mind, the propensity to evil.

It follows that a man’s moral growth has to start not by •improving his conduct but by •transforming his way of thinking and •laying the foundations of his character. Yet customarily people tackle this differently, fighting against vices piecemeal while leaving undisturbed their common root. But even the most limited man is capable of being struck by respect for an action conforming to duty—a respect that is greater the more he isolates it in thought from self-interested incentives that might influence the maxim

of conduct. Even children can detect the smallest trace of an improper incentive; they see an action thus motivated as instantly losing all moral worth. There’s no better way of developing this predisposition in the young than by getting them •to attend to examples of actual conduct—it can be the conduct of men who are *good* in the sense that their conduct conforms to law—and •to judge the impurity of the maxims that led to them. This works its way into their way of thinking, so that *duty for its own sake* begins to have a noticeable weight in their hearts. But teaching a pupil to *admire* virtuous actions doesn’t favour his feeling for moral goodness, even if the actions have involved great sacrifice. However virtuous a man is, all the good he can ever do is merely his simple duty; and doing his duty is nothing more than doing what is in the common moral order and hence not something to be admired. Admiration will lower our feeling for duty, as if doing one’s duty were something extraordinary and meritorious.

But there’s one thing in our soul that we can’t stop from regarding with the highest wonder [*Verwunderung*], when we view it properly, and for which admiration [*Bewunderung*] is both legitimate and even uplifting—I’m talking about the fundamental moral predisposition in us. [Kant says that what we are to admire is that predisposition *überhaupt*—not any detailed facts about this predisposition but just the fact that we have it at all.]

We are beings whose needs make us dependent on nature in ever so many ways, yet we are also raised so far above these needs. . . .that we count them as *nothing*, and count ourselves as unworthy of existence if we put •satisfying them ahead of •conforming to the law—a law through which our reason commands us powerfully yet without making promises or threats; and all this despite the fact that what makes life worth desiring is the satisfaction of those needs.

What is it within us that produces this result? This question must weigh on the mind of any man, however unintelligent, who has been taught the holiness that inheres in the idea of duty but who hasn't yet advanced to an inquiry into the primary output of this law, the concept of freedom.¹ And the very incomprehensibility of this predisposition, which announces a divine origin, works on the mind. . . .and strengthens it for whatever sacrifice a man's respect for his duty may demand of him. An especially good way to awaken a man's moral sentiments is to arouse in him, *often*, this feeling of the sublimity of his moral destiny. Why? Because this works directly •against the innate propensity to pervert the incentives in the maxims of our will and •toward the re-establishment in the human heart of an unconditional respect for the law as the ultimate test of which maxims are to be adopted, i.e. of the original [here = 'fundamental'] moral order among the incentives, and so of the predisposition to good in all its purity.

But doesn't this restoration through one's own exertions slam up against the thesis of the innate corruption of man that unfits him for all good? It does indeed, as far as the conceivability. . . .of such a restoration is concerned. This is true of everything that is to be represented as an event

in time,. . . .and thus as necessary under the laws of nature, while its opposite is to be represented as possible through freedom under moral laws. But the corruption thesis doesn't conflict with the possibility of this restoration itself. If the moral law commands that we *ought* now to be better men, it unavoidably follows that we *can* now be better men. The innate-evil thesis is useless in moral •dogmatics, whose precepts have the same content and the same force whether or not we have an innate tendency toward transgression. But in moral •self-discipline this postulate has more to say, though only this much more:

In the moral development of the predisposition to good implanted in us, we must start not from an innocence that is natural to us but from the assumption of our will's wickedness in adopting its maxims contrary to the original moral predisposition; and since this propensity ·to evil· is ineradicable we must fight against it incessantly.

Because this leads only to a never-completed progress from bad to better, it follows that the ·total· conversion of a bad man's disposition into that of a good man has to be identified with a change resulting in

¹ The concept of the freedom of the will doesn't precede our consciousness of the moral law within us; it is inferred from the fact that this law can determine our will as an unconditional command. To be convinced of this, ask yourself: 'Am I certainly and directly conscious of power to overcome, by a firm resolve, every incentive to transgression, however great?' You have to admit that you *don't know* whether in such a case you wouldn't be shaken in your resolve. Yet duty commands you unconditionally: you *ought* to remain true to your resolve; and from this you rightly conclude that •you must be able to do so, and that therefore •your will is free. [Kant adds that some philosophers have contended that free will is perfectly comprehensible, doing this—helped by a certain concept of 'determinism'—by attacking a 'problem' that hasn't bothered anyone. He concludes:] The real problem concerns *predeterminism*, according to which voluntary actions are events whose determining bases lie back in earlier time (which, with what happened in it, is no longer within our power). How can *this* be consistent with freedom, according to which doing A and not doing A are both within the subject's power at the moment of of action? *That* is what we want to understand, and never shall.

† There's no problem about reconciling the concept of freedom with the idea of God as a necessary Being. What is needed for God's freedom is the absolute spontaneity of his actions, and the only threat to this would have to come from *predeterminism*, where the determining basis of the action is in earlier time; but God doesn't exist in time, so this difficulty vanishes.

the conformity to the moral law of the ultimate inward basis for the adoption of *all* his maxims,

given that this new basis (the new heart) can't be changed in its turn. A man can't naturally get assurance that such a conversion has occurred, whether by immediate consciousness or from the evidence of changes in his way of life; because the depths of the heart (the subjective ultimate basis of his maxims) are inscrutable to him. But he must be able to *hope* •to reach the road that leads to it—the road pointed out to him by a fundamentally improved disposition—and •to do this through his own efforts, because. . . .he can count as morally good only by virtue of actions he is accountable for, actions performed by himself.

Against this demand for self-improvement, reason brings in all sorts of ignoble religious ideas (including the false ascription to God himself of the principle of happiness as the supreme condition of his commandments). [Kant builds into that sentence the claims •that reason 'is by nature averse to the work of moral reconstruction', and •that it enlists bad religious ideas 'under the pretext of natural incapacity', i.e. on the plea that it isn't up to doing the job itself. We'll soon see that this isn't a joke.]

All religions can be divided into

(a) favour-seeking religion (mere worship) and

(b) moral religion, i.e. the religion of the good way of life.

In (a) the man flatters himself by believing that of course God can make him eternally happy (through remission of his sins) without his having to become a better man, or at least. . . .that God can make him a better man without his having to do anything but ask for it; which amounts to doing nothing at all, because asking an all-seeing Being for something is equivalent to merely *wanting* it. . . . But in (b) Christianity (the only moral religion there has ever been) it is a basic principle that each person must do everything

in his power to become a better man, and that what is not within his power will be made up for through cooperation from above—but only if. . . .he has worked on becoming a better man through his basic predisposition to good. It's not absolutely necessary for him to know what this cooperation consists in. . . .; but it is essential for him to know what *he* must do in order to become worthy of this help.

† This General Remark is the first of four that are appended to the Essays in this work, one each. They could carry the titles:

(1) Works of Grace,

(2) Miracles,

(3) Mysteries,

(4) Means of Grace.

These are, as it were, accessories to religion within the bounds of pure reason; they don't fall within that territory but they bump up against it from the outside. Reason, conscious of its inability to satisfy its moral need, stretches out to high-flown ·religious· ideas that can make up for this, but it doesn't expand its domain so as to take them *into* it. Without disputing that the objects of these ideas are possible, or even that they are real, reason simply can't admit them into its maxims of thought and action. It holds that if in the inscrutable realm of the supernatural there's something that it can't understand but that may be needed to make up for its moral insufficiency, this unknown something will be available to its good will. Its attitude to the possibility of this supernatural supplement might be called **reflective** belief, in contrast with **dogmatic** belief, proclaims itself as a form of knowledge and strikes reason as dishonest or presumptuous. . . . If we try to introduce these morally high-flying ideas *into* religion, the upshots are:

- (1) from the supposed inward experience of works of grace, *fanaticism*;
- (2) from the alleged outer experience of miracles, *superstition*;
- (3) from a supposed enlightening of the understanding with regard to supernatural mysteries, *illumination* [see Glossary]. . . .;
- (4) from daring attempts to affect the supernatural so as to get means of grace, *thaumaturgy* [see Glossary].

These are all sheer aberrations of a reason that goes beyond its proper limits, doing this for a purpose that it fancies to be moral (pleasing to God).—Focusing now on (1) works of grace: calling works of grace to our aid is one of those aberrations,

and can't be admitted into the maxims of reason if it is to stay within its limits; nor can *anything* supernatural, simply because in the realm of the supernatural all use of reason ceases. Can't we come to know them **theoretically**, by finding evidence that they are works of •grace and not inner •natural effects? No, because we can't extend the concept of cause and effect beyond matters of experience or, therefore, beyond nature. And the hypothesis of a **practical** application of this idea is self-contradictory. [Kant explains why: If we are to deserve any credit for becoming good (or better), this must have happened through something we did; whereas relying for this on works of grace is trying to get moral credit by doing nothing. He concludes:] So we can admit a work of grace as something incomprehensible, but we can't admit it into our maxims either for theoretical or for practical use.

Second Essay: The conflict of the good with the bad principle for command over man

[On the word 'principle' as used here and in the titles of the other three Essays, see the Glossary.]

We can't become morally good just by allowing the seed of goodness implanted in our species to develop unhindered; we also have to fight against an active and opposing cause of evil. The ancient Stoics especially called attention to this by their watchword *virtue*, which in Greek and in Latin signifies courage and daring and thus presupposes the presence of an enemy. In this regard 'virtue' is a noble name, and isn't harmed by the fact that it has often been boastfully misused and (like the word 'enlightenment' recently) ridiculed. Simply to demand courage is to go half-way towards giving it; whereas the lazy and timid way of thinking (in morality and religion) that entirely mistrusts itself and waits for outside aid slackens a man's powers and makes him unworthy even of being helped.

Yet those valiant Stoics mistook their enemy. It is not the merely undisciplined natural inclinations that present themselves so openly to everyone's consciousness,

but rather

an invisible foe that hides behind reason and is therefore all the more dangerous.

They invoked wisdom against **•**folly, which carelessly lets itself be deceived by the inclinations, instead of against the human heart's **•**wickedness, which secretly undermines a man's disposition with soul-destroying principles.¹

There's nothing wrong with natural inclinations, considered in themselves, and trying to wipe them out would be futile, and indeed harmful and wrong. Let us instead tame them, so that instead of tearing one another to pieces they can be brought into harmony in a whole that is called *happiness*. The reason that brings this about is **prudence**. But the only thing that should be completely eradicated as bad in itself and absolutely reprehensible is what is opposed to the moral law; and the reason that teaches this truth, especially when it puts it into actual practice, is the only thing that deserves the name of **wisdom**. . . .

¹ These philosophers based their universal ethical principle on the dignity of human nature, i.e. on its freedom from the power of the inclinations; and they couldn't have taken their stand on anything better or nobler. They then derived the moral laws directly from reason, which alone legislates morally and whose command through these laws is absolute. So they had everything exactly right—objectively with regard to the rule, and subjectively with reference to the incentive—provided the man was credited with having an uncorrupted will to incorporate these laws unhesitatingly into his maxims. But that latter presupposition is just where they went wrong. However early we direct our attention to our moral state, it's never too early for us to start dislodging from its stronghold the evil that has already entered in (and couldn't have done so if we hadn't brought it into our maxims); that is, the first really good act that a man can perform has as its starting-point the evil that resides not in his **•**inclinations but in his **•**perverted maxim, and so in freedom itself. The inclinations merely make it hard to **act on** the good maxim that opposes them; but the genuine evil consists in the man's not **willing** to resist the inclinations when they tempt him to transgress. This disposition of his is the true enemy. The inclinations are opponents of basic principles in general, whether good or bad; and the high-minded Stoic moral principle is of value as a general discipline of the inclinations, aiming to get the subject to be guided by basic principles. But when it comes to specific principles of moral goodness that ought to be present as maxims, but aren't, there must be in the subject some other opponent that virtue must tackle. . . .

So when the Stoics saw a man's moral struggle merely as a conflict with his inclinations—innocent in themselves, but hindrances to his doing his duty—the only wrong-doing they could pin-point was his *not* fighting these inclinations; he hadn't accepted any positive principle that was bad in itself. Yet this failure-to-fight is itself contrary to duty (a transgression) and not a mere lapse of nature, and the Stoics couldn't look for its cause in the inclinations (because that would send them off in a circle). . . . So we can easily understand how philosophers for whom the basis of an explanation remained ever hidden in darkness. . . . could think they were holding their own in a conflict with the opponent of goodness while not recognising what the real opponent is.¹

So it's not surprising that an Apostle represents this invisible enemy—this destroyer of basic principles that is known only through its operations on us—as being •outside us and indeed as being •a bad spirit: 'Our fight is not against flesh and blood (the natural inclinations) but against rulers and

powers—against bad spirits.' [This derives from *Ephesians* 6:12: 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'] This way of putting things seems to be intended not

- to extend our knowledge beyond the world of sense, but only
- to take conception of something that is unfathomable by us and make it *anschaulich* [see Glossary] for *practical* use.

Its practical value to us isn't affected by whether we locate the seducer within ourselves or outside, for we are equally guilty either way; we wouldn't be led astray by an outside seducer if we weren't already secretly in league with him.² I shall deal with this whole subject in two sections, one starting overleaf and the other on page 43.

¹ It is a common assumption in moral philosophy that the existence of moral evil in man can easily be explained by •the power of the incentives of his sensuous nature on the one hand, and •the impotence of the incentive of reason (his respect for the law) on the other, i.e. by weakness. But if it's easy to explain that conflict, it must be even easier to explain one side of it, namely the moral goodness in him (his moral predisposition). Now reason's ability to dominate all opposing incentives through the mere idea of a law is utterly inexplicable; so it is also inconceivable how the motivating forces of the sensuous nature could overpower a reason that commands with such authority. For if all the world proceeded in conformity with the precepts of the law, we would say that everything happened 'according to the natural order', and it wouldn't occur to anyone to ask about the cause.

² It's a special feature of Christian ethics that it represents

- moral goodness as differing from moral evil

not as

- Heaven differing from Earth

but as

- Heaven differing from Hell.

This merely presents a picture, a shocking picture; but what it means is philosophically correct. It gets us to regard good and evil, the realms of light and of darkness, as separated by an immeasurable gulf, rather than as being adjacent and as •merging into one another by gradual differences in degree of brightness. This •Heaven-Hell• manner of representation has something horrible about it, despite which it is very exalting. What *justifies* it is •the complete dissimilarity of the basic principles by which one can become a subject of one or other of these realms, and •the danger of thinking that there's a kinship between the characteristics that fit someone for one of them and those that fit him for the other.

1. The good principle's legal claim to dominion over man

A. The personified idea of the good principle

[This paragraph presents what Kant takes to be a centrally Christian 'idea' of how God relates to human morality. The quoted phrases are mostly from *John* 1–3. That this is offered as reportage and not as Kant's own doctrine is indicated by his final 'and so on'.] The only thing that can make a world •the object of a divine decree and the •purpose of creation is *humanity in its complete moral perfection*. (I'm using 'humanity' here to include any *Weltwesen* [see Glossary] equipped with reason.) According to the will of the supreme being, the direct consequence of such moral perfection is. . . .happiness. This uniquely God-pleasing *man* 'is in God through eternity'; the idea of him emanates from God's very being; so he is not •a created thing but •God's only begotten son, 'the Word. . . .through which all other things exist'. . . . 'Man is the reflection of God's glory.' 'In him God loved the world', and it's only in him and by adopting his attitudes that we can hope 'to become the sons of God'; and so on.

Now it is our universal human duty to elevate ourselves to this ideal [see Glossary] of moral perfection, i.e. to this archetype [see Glossary] of the moral disposition in all its purity; and the idea itself. . . .can give us power to do this. But just because we didn't **make** this idea, and because it has settled itself in man without our grasping how human nature could have been able even to **receive** it, it is better to say that *this archetype has come down to us from Heaven, and has taken on humanity* [i.e. has made itself human]. Why is that better? Because it is even more impossible to conceive how

•man, bad by nature, might unaided throw off badness and **raise** himself to the ideal of holiness

than it is to conceive how

•the ideal of holiness might **lower itself** to man and take on a humanity that isn't bad in itself.

We can see this union with us as a lowering, an abasement, of the son of God if we think of this divinely-minded person. . . .as furthering the world's good by taking upon himself himself a full measure of sufferings, though he himself is holy and therefore not bound to endure any sufferings. Man, on the other hand, is never free from guilt even when he takes on the very same disposition [as the 'son of God?']; he can see himself as *deserving* whatever sufferings come his way, from whatever direction; so he must regard himself as unworthy of the union of •his way of thinking with •such an idea, although the idea serves him as an archetype.

The ideal of a humanity pleasing to God (hence of such moral perfection as can be had by a *Weltwesen* who is prey to needs and inclinations)—how are we to get this into our thought? Only as the idea of a man [see Glossary] who would be willing not merely •to perform all the human duties and •to spread good as widely as possible by precept and example, but even—though mightily tempted not to—•to take upon himself every affliction, right up to the most ignominious death; doing all this for the good of the world and even for his enemies. The only way we can get any concept of the strength of a moral disposition is by picturing it as wrestling with obstacles and winning every time.

So man can hope to become acceptable to God (and so be saved) through a practical faith in this son of God (thought of as having taken upon himself human nature). A man who is conscious of a moral disposition such that

he can have a well-grounded confidence in himself, and believe that with such temptations and sufferings

(if these are made the touchstone of that idea) he would be unswervingly loyal to humanity's archetype and by faithful imitation remain true to his exemplar—that man, and he alone, is entitled to look on himself as an object not unworthy of divine approval

B. The objective reality of this idea

From the practical point of view this idea is completely real in its own right, because it resides in our reason that provides us with moral laws. We •ought to conform to it, from which it follows that we •can do so. If we had to *show in advance* that man could conform to this archetype—as is absolutely essential with concepts of nature, if we're not to run the risk of being deluded by empty notions—we would have to hesitate about allowing the moral law to have the authority of an unconditioned yet conclusive determining basis of our will. How could •the bare idea of lawfulness as such work more strongly on the will than •every conceivable incentive whose source is personal gain? Reason can't help us to understand this, because the law commands unconditionally •so that there are no 'ifs' or 'whethers' or the like for reason to grip onto; and empirical examples aren't relevant because even if no-one had ever given unqualified obedience to this law, the objective necessity of doing so would still be undiminished and self-evident. So we don't need any empirical example to make the idea of *a man who is morally well-pleasing to God* our archetype; this idea as an archetype is already lodged in our reason. Consider the case of someone X who

- wants to accept a certain particular man Y as an example of someone who fits that idea, because X wants to imitate him; but
- demands more •from Y• than what he sees, i.e. more than a course of life that is entirely blameless and as

meritorious as one could wish; and therefore

- goes on to require, as credentials required for **belief**, that Y should have performed miracles or had them performed for him

—this person X is thereby confesses to his own moral **unbelief**, i.e. to his lack of faith in virtue. This lack can't be repaired by any belief that rests on miracles (and is merely historical). The only belief that has moral worth is a belief in the practical validity of that idea nested in our reason. (This idea might count in favour of the truth of miracles as possible effects of the good principle [see Glossary], but it can't make *them* count in favour of *it*.)

For just this reason it must be possible to *experience* the example of such a •morally perfect• man (to the extent that we can expect or demand any merely external experience to document an inner moral disposition). According to the law, each man ought to provide an example of this idea in his own person; and that's why the archetype is always lodged in reason—no example in outer experience is adequate to it, for •outer experience doesn't reveal the inner nature of the disposition but merely allows it to be somewhat shakily inferred. (Indeed even self-observation—a man's •inner experience of himself—doesn't enable him to see deeply enough into his own heart to get certain knowledge of the basis of the maxims he accepts or of their purity and stability.)

Now suppose that such a truly divinely-minded man showed up at some particular time—as though he had fallen from Heaven to Earth—and had

- given in his own person, through his teachings and his way of life and his sufferings, an example of a man who is pleasing to God—as good an example as can be looked for in external experience,

(because, remember, the archetype of such a person is to be sought only in our own reason), and if through all this he had

- produced immeasurably great moral good on earth by bringing about a revolution in the human race,

that still wouldn't give us no cause to suppose that he was anything but a naturally begotten man. (Indeed, any naturally begotten man feels himself obliged to provide such an example in himself.) I'm not absolutely denying that he *could* be a man supernaturally generated in some way that ruled out natural birth; but it doesn't matter either way, because to suppose that he *is* can't **help us** in our moral lives. The *archetype* that we associate with this appearance—[i.e. with this empirically given man]—is located in natural men, in *us*; and the presence of this archetype in the human soul is in itself incomprehensible enough without being supposed to be realised in a particular individual, let alone having a supernatural origin. Indeed, the elevation of such a holy one above all the frailties of human nature would. . . .actually **hinder us** in adopting the idea of him as a model for us to follow. If we regard this God-pleasing individual as

- having a nature that is 'human' in the sense of being burdened with the same needs as ourselves—and hence the same sorrows and the same inclinations—and thus with the same temptations to transgress;

while also

- being so *superhuman* that his unchanging purity of will—innate in him, not something he had to work for—makes it absolutely impossible for him to transgress;

that would put this divine man so infinitely far from the natural man that he could no longer be held up as an *example*. The natural man would say:

'If I too had a perfectly holy will, then all temptations to evil would of themselves be thwarted in me; if

I too had the most complete inner assurance that after a short earthly life I would (by virtue of this holiness) immediately enter into all the eternal glory of the kingdom of Heaven, then I too would accept willingly and indeed joyfully all sufferings, however bitter they might be, even to the most ignominious death, because I would see before my eyes the glorious and imminent outcome.'

To be sure, the thought •that this divine man actually had this eminence and this bliss from all eternity (and hadn't needed to earn them through such sufferings), and •that he willingly renounced them for the sake of utterly unworthy people and even for the sake of his enemies, to save them from everlasting perdition—this thought must attune our hearts to admiration, love, and gratitude towards him. And **the idea of conduct** fitting such a perfect a standard of morality would no doubt be valid as a model for us to copy; but **he himself** couldn't be represented to us as an example for us to model ourselves on, or therefore as a proof that we could attain such a pure and exalted moral goodness.

•START OF A FOOTNOTE ABOUT 'ANALOGIES'•

It is indeed an incurable limitation of human reason that we can't conceive of any considerable moral worth in the actions of a personal being without representing that person, or an appearance of him. This is a constraint not on moral worth but on our thinking about it—it's the fact that to make suprasensible qualities intelligible to ourselves we need help from some analogy to natural existences. The philosophical poet ·Haller· puts •man higher on the moral scale than •the inhabitants of Heaven: *The world with all its faults / Is better than a realm of will-less angels.*' His point is that •man has to fight a propensity to evil within himself. . . .whereas the inhabitants of Heaven are placed above the *possibility* of

going astray by the holiness of their nature. —The Scriptures too go along with this when, in order to make the degree of God's love for the human race **graspable** by us, they ascribe to him the very highest sacrifice that a loving being can make, a sacrifice performed so that even those who are unworthy may be made happy ('For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life' [John 3:16; Kant quotes only the first six words]; though we can't indeed **conceive through reason** how an all-sufficient being could sacrifice a part of his state of bliss or rob himself of a possession. [Kant goes on to say that this way of making something graspable involves what he calls 'the schematism of analogy'—a valid way of elucidating things, but not a basis for any extension of our knowledge. He warns, at length, against treating such analogies as pointers to the facts. For example, we can't make organisms comprehensible to us except by attributing intelligence to them, on the analogy of a watch-maker to his work, but it is just plain wrong to attribute intelligence to organisms. The term 'schematism' occurs in this work only in this footnote.]

·END OF FOOTNOTE·

This same divinely-minded but genuinely human teacher could still truthfully speak of himself as if the ideal of goodness were physically on display in his teachings and conduct. What he would be talking about is only the moral disposition that controls his actions; he can't show this disposition itself to others, so he puts it on view through his teachings and actions: 'Which of you can accuse me of sin?' [John 8:46] 'There is of course no knock-down proof that his moral disposition is doing this work', but in the absence of evidence to the contrary it is only fair to conclude that this teacher's flawless example of his teaching comes from his

having a supremely pure moral disposition. [The rest of this paragraph is exceptionally difficult, even by Kant's standards. In it, he •endorses our adopting this ideal 'teacher' as an archetype, something for us to try to model ourselves on, •speaks of our 'appropriating' the teacher's disposition 'for the sake of ours', and •says that to do this we have to 'unify' our own moral characters with the moral disposition of the archetype. He doesn't say crisply what this 'appropriation' consists in; but his treatment of three great 'difficulties' in the way of making it comprehensible shows us well enough what his topic is here.]

C. Difficulties that oppose the reality of this idea, and their solution

(a) The first difficulty casting doubt on whether the idea of *humanity well-pleasing to God* is achievable in us comes from the contrast between •the holiness of the •divine• lawgiver and •our own lack of righteousness. The law says: 'Be ye holy (in the conduct of your lives) even as your father in Heaven is holy', this being the ideal of the son of God that is set up before us as our model. But it is *infinitely* far from the evil of our starting-point to the good that we ought to bring about in ourselves; so the process of conforming our way of life to the holiness of the law can't be completed in any •finite period of• time. Yet a man's moral constitution *ought to* accord with this holiness. So this •holiness-conforming• constitution must be supposed to be lurking in his disposition—

in the all-embracing and sincere maxim of conformity of conduct to the law, a disposition arising from a holy principle that the man has made his own highest maxim

—as the seed from which all goodness is to be developed. A change of heart [see Glossary] such as this must be possible because duty requires it.

The difficulty is this: How can the disposition—the flawless one of which I have just spoken—stand in for the action itself, when each individual action is defective? The solution rests on these considerations. The only way we can conceive of the relation of cause and effect is in terms of time-conditions, so that we have to see the continual and endless advance from a deficient good to a better one as always still defective. We must, then, regard the good as it appears in us, i.e. in our actions, as being always inadequate to a holy law. But this endless progress of our goodness towards conformity to the law, even if conceived in terms of actual actions, can be thought of as judged by

someone who knows the heart through a purely intellectual intuition, as a completed whole,

—and judged favourably because of the disposition, suprasensible in its nature, from which this progress itself is derived. Thus the always-defective man can hope to be overall God-pleasing at whatever instant he goes out of existence.¹

(b) The second difficulty . . . concerns **moral** happiness. I don't mean the assurance of everlasting **physical** happiness, i.e. contentment with one's physical state (freedom from illnesses etc. and ever-increasing pleasures); I mean rather the reality and constancy of a disposition that always progresses in goodness and never falls away from it. The difficulty is that a man with a disposition of this sort has only to be

absolutely sure of its unchangeableness to think that he isn't merely 'seeking for the kingdom of God' but is already in possession of it, so that 'all the rest (everything that concerns physical happiness) will come to him' [Kant is here echoing 'Seek ye first the kingdom of righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you' *Matthew* 6:33].

how the next paragraph begins: *Nun könnte man zwar den hierüber besorgten Menschen mit seinem Wunsche dahin verweisen: 'Sein (Gottes) Geist giebt Zeugniß unserm Geist' u.s.w., d.i. wer eine so lautere Gesinnung, als gefordert wird, besitzt, wird von selbst schon fühlen, daß er nie so tief fallen könne, das Böse wiederum lieb zu gewinnen; allein. . . .*

flatly translated: A man who is concerned about this could have his attention drawn, with his wish, to this: 'His (God's) Spirit bears witness to our spirit' etc.; meaning that anyone who has as pure a disposition as is required will feel, even on his own, that he could never fall so low as to return to loving evil. But. . . .

more freely, what Kant seems to be getting at: If someone is asking himself 'Might it really be true that I am already in the kingdom of God, and am thus guaranteed physical happiness from now on? That would be wonderful!', he could be told to subject himself and his hopes to *Romans* 8:16: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God', meaning that if his moral disposition puts him in the kingdom of God then he must already feel, with no input from outside, that he will never fall so low as to return to loving evil; but. . . .

¹ Regarding this disposition that stands in the place of the totality of this endless series of approximations I am emphatically *not* saying that it makes up for •the short-fall in conformity to duty. . . .in each individual action•. All it makes up for is •the failure that is inseparable from the existence of a temporal being as such, namely the failure ever wholly to be what we have in mind to become. The question of making up for actual transgressions in this series of actions will be taken up when I solve the third difficulty.

...it's dangerous to put any trust in feelings of that kind, ones supposedly of supernatural origin. A man is never more easily deceived than in what promotes his good opinion of himself. And it doesn't seem advisable to encourage such a state of confidence; rather it is morally better to 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' [Philippians 2:12]. (That is a harsh saying, and if it is misunderstood it can drive people to the blackest fanaticism.) And yet some level of confidence is needed for morality: if a man had no confidence in his moral disposition once he had acquired it, he would scarcely be able to persevere steadfastly in it. However, he can get such confidence in a reasonable way by comparing the course of his life up to now with the resolution that he has adopted. Admittedly, a man who through a long enough course of life has observed the effects that these principles of goodness... have had in steadily improving his way of life can infer only *conjecturally* [*vermuthungsweise*] that his inner disposition has been fundamentally improving, but he can hope *reasonably* [*vernünftigerweise*] that this is so:

'If the improvements I have made are based on a good underlying principle, I can hope they will continually strengthen me to make further advances, and that in this life on earth I'll never leave this path but will push on with ever-growing courage. Indeed, if after this life I'm to enter into another one, although the circumstances there may (for all I know) be utterly unlike those of this life, I can still hope that the underlying principle will keep me on this path and bring me ever nearer to the unreachable goal of perfection.'

His reasonable basis for this is his belief that his conduct up to now shows that his moral disposition has been improving right from the outset. Compare him with someone who finds that despite frequent good resolutions he has never stood his ground, has always fallen back into evil, and has to

admit that as his life has advanced he has kept falling from bad to worse, as though the route of moral progress were always uphill and slippery. This man can't reasonably hope that he will conduct himself better if he goes on living here on earth, let alone that he'll do better in a future life if there is one. On the strength of his past record he has to think that corruption is rooted in his very disposition.

The first of these men gives us a glimpse of a happy and desirable future that stretches further than we can think about; the second a glimpse of an equally long future of misery; in short, a blessed or cursed *eternity*. These are powerful enough representations to bring peace to one man and strengthen him in goodness, and to awaken in the other the voice of conscience commanding him still to break with evil as far as possible. So they are powerful enough to serve as incentives, leaving no need to lay down dogmatically, as a theological doctrine, that man is destined for an eternity of good or evil—a claim in which reason simply passes beyond the limits of its own insight.

·FOOTNOTE ON ASPECTS OF MORALITY AND THE AFTER-LIFE·

Will the punishments of Hell come to an end or will they last for ever? That is one of the *children's questions*, ones the answers to which—if they have answers—won't do us any good. If we were taught that the former alternative is correct, there would be cause for concern that many people (and indeed all who believe in purgatory...) would say 'Then I hope I can endure it!'. [Why might there be a 'concern' about this reaction? Presumably because it shows a resolve to 'tough it out' rather than being adequately deterred.] But if the other alternative—*eternal punishment*—were asserted as an article of faith, then despite the aim for terrific deterrence there might arise the hope of complete immunity from punishment after a most abandoned life. A cleric who is asked for advice and

comfort by a now-repentant man nearing the end of a wicked life must find it cruel and inhuman to announce to the sinner his eternal condemnation. And since he doesn't allow for any middle ground between •eternal punishment and •no punishment, he has to give the sinner a hope of the latter alternative; he'll have to promise to transform him right now into a God-pleasing man. There's no time now for him to enter on a good course of life, so this transformation will have to be brought about by •avowals of penitence, •confessions of faith, and •solemn promises to live better if death is postponed. That is what's bound to happen if the eternity of man's future destiny—good or bad depending on how he has lived here—is set forth as a *dogma*. It is better for a man to be taught to frame *for himself* a concept of his future state as the natural and foreseeable result of his moral condition up to now. The immensity of this series of consequences under the sway of evil will impel him to undo what he has done as far as possible before his life ends, by appropriate reparation or compensation; which means that it will have the same beneficial moral effect on him as can be expected from announcing the eternity of his doom, but without bringing the disadvantages of that dogma (which, incidentally, isn't justified by insight through reason or by biblical scholarship). The upshot of the dogma is that the wicked man either

- during the course of his life counts in advance on easily getting pardon, or
- near the end of his life believes that what he is up against are only the claims of divine justice, which can be satisfied with mere words.

Either way, the rights of humanity are disregarded, and no-one gets back what belongs to him. . . . You might fear that the man's reason, through his conscience, will judge him too leniently; but I believe that that's seriously wrong.

Precisely because reason is free, and must pass judgment on the man himself, it can't be bribed; and if we tell a man in this situation that it's at least possible that he will soon have to stand before a judge, we need then only to leave him to his own reflections, which will probably pass judgment on him with the greatest severity.

I will add here three observations about the common proverb 'All's well that ends well'. **(1)** It can be applied to moral situations, but only if 'ending well' means the man's becoming a genuinely good man. But how is he to recognise himself as such, given that he can only infer this from subsequent steadily good conduct for which, at the end of life, no time remains? **(2)** The proverb can be more easily applied to happiness, but only from the viewpoint of someone who at the end of his life *looks back* on it. Sufferings that have been endured leave behind them no tormenting memories once we realise that we are free of them, but rather a feeling of gladness that adds a tang to our enjoyment of our new good fortune. Pleasures and pains belong to the world of the senses; they belong to the temporal sequence of events, and disappear when it does. . . . **(3)** If someone uses this proverb to assign a high moral value ['all well'] to the life he has led up to now, on the grounds that his latest conduct has been perfectly good ['ends well'], he'll be seriously misled. His life must be judged on the basis of the subjective principle of his moral disposition; this lies outside the reach of the senses, so its existence •can't be divided up into periods of time—i.e. it's not the sort of thing that can have a *history*—and •can only be thought of as an absolute unity. A conclusion about the disposition must be based on the actions that are its appearances; •they are strung out in time, but •for purposes of judging a life they have to be viewed as a temporal unity, a whole; in which case •the reproaches over the earlier, pre-improvement, part of his life might well speak as loudly

as •the approval of the latter portion, greatly dampening the triumphant note of ‘All’s well that ends well!’

The doctrine regarding the ·infinite· duration of punishments in another world is closely related to (though not identical with) the doctrine that ‘All forgiving of sins must happen here’, meaning that at the end of life our account must be completely closed, and that no-one should hope to retrieve **there** what has been neglected **here**. This has no more right to be proclaimed as a dogma than has the previous one ·about eternal punishment·. It’s only a principle through which practical reason controls its use of its own concepts of the suprasensible realm while admitting that it knows nothing of that realm’s objective character. All it is saying is this:

Your answer to the question ‘Am I a God-pleasing person?’ has to be based on how you have conducted your life; but that basis ends when your life ends, so that is the last time at which the moral judgment on your life can be made.

In general, human wisdom would benefit in many ways if, instead of trying to establish

constitutive [see Glossary] principles that would give us something we can’t possibly have, namely knowledge of suprasensible objects,

we limited our judgment to

regulative [see Glossary] principles—ones that content themselves with ·guiding· the possible application of those objects to the moral life.

That would stop us from generating pseudo-knowledge of things about which we basically know nothing at all, a groundless subtle reasoning [see Glossary] that glitters for a while but eventually turns out to do harm to morality.

·END OF FOOTNOTE ON MORALITY AND THE AFTER-LIFE·

So the good and pure disposition that we are conscious of (we could call it a *good spirit* presiding over us) **indirectly** gives us confidence in its own permanence and stability; it is our Comforter when our moral lapses start us worrying about its constancy. [The idea of a Comforter sent by God—the Holy Ghost—appears repeatedly in *John* 14–16.] Certainty about it isn’t possible for us, nor—so far as we can see—would it do us any good morally. We can’t base such confidence on an **immediate** consciousness of the unchangeableness of our •dispositions because we can’t look at •them; we can only draw conclusions about them from their consequences in our way of life. But those consequences are merely objects of perception, *appearances of* the disposition, so the latter’s strength can’t be judged from them with any certainty. And when we think we are near to death and think we have improved our disposition only recently, we can’t even have such ·uncertain· empirical evidence that the new disposition is genuine. . . .

[This next paragraph uses ‘debt’ to translate *Schuld* = ‘debt’ and ‘guilt’, and ‘indebtedness’ to translate *Verschuldigung*= ‘indebtedness’ and ‘guiltiness’. Kant clearly means to be exploiting that ambiguity.]

(c) The apparently the greatest difficulty confronting any man when his life-conduct as a whole is judged before a divine moral tribunal is this: Whatever he may have done in the way of adopting a good disposition, and however steadfastly he is staying faithful to this change, the fact remains that *he started from evil*, and this is an indebtedness that he can’t possibly wipe out. Since his change of heart [*Herzensänderung*] he hasn’t acquired any new debts, but he can’t take this to mean that he has paid his old ones.

Mightn’t he by future good conduct produce a surplus over what he is morally obliged to perform at every instant, ·a surplus that could count towards paying off the old debts·?

No, there are no such surpluses: at every moment it is his *duty* to do all the good he can. This debt is built in, i.e. prior to all the good a man may do; it is exactly the thing I referred to in the First Essay as ‘the radical evil in man’; and our common sense of what is right and reasonable tells us that this debt can’t be paid by anyone else. It’s not. . . .like a financial indebtedness, where the creditor doesn’t care whether he paid by the debtor or by someone else paying it for him; rather is it the most *personal* of all debts, namely a debt of sins, which. . . .can’t be taken on by an innocent person even if he is magnanimous enough to be willing to take it upon himself for the sake of the sinner. Now, moral evil (called ‘sin’, meaning ‘transgression of the moral law regarded as a divine command’) brings with it *infinite* guilt; And because it is infinite, it seems that every man must expect to be punished for ever and thrown out of the kingdom of God. (Why *infinite* guilt? Not because of the infinitude of the supreme lawgiver whose authority is violated: we understand nothing of such transcendent relationships of man to the supreme being. The guilt is infinite because this moral evil lies in the disposition and the maxims in general, so it brings with it with it an infinity of violations of the law. This emphasis on general principles rather than particular transgressions stands in contrast to a human law-court, which attends to a single offence, the act itself and facts relating to it, and not to the offender’s general disposition.)

The solution of this difficulty rests on the following considerations. We have to think of the judicial verdict of someone who knows the heart as being based on •the accused person’s general disposition and not on •his disposition’s appearances, i.e. his individual lawless or law-abiding actions. But we are considering a man whose present good disposition has the upper hand over the bad principle that was formerly dominant in him. So our question is this:

Can the moral consequence of his previous disposition—his punishment, i.e. the effect on him of God’s displeasure—be extended to his God-pleasing present state, with its improved disposition?

the next sentence: *Da hier die Frage nicht ist: ob auch vor der Sinnesänderung die über ihn verhängte Strafe mit der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit zusammenstimmen würde (als woran niemand zweifelt), so soll sie (in dieser Untersuchung) nicht als vor der Besserung an ihm vollzogen gedacht werden.*

plainly translated: Since the question here is not whether the punishment inflicted on him would agree with divine justice before his change of heart (which no-one doubts), the punishment should not (in this investigation) be thought of as imposed on him before his improvement.

perhaps meaning this: This is not a question about whether punishment ordained for him before his change of heart would have squared with divine justice (no-one doubts that it would); so for present purposes we aren’t thinking about punishment inflicted on the man **before** his improvement.

But **after** his improvement the penalty can’t be considered appropriate to him—to this newly God-pleasing man who is now leading a new life and is morally a different man. Yet supreme justice must be satisfied: punishment must come to everyone who deserves it. So we’ll have to think of the punishment as inflicted **during** his change of heart. [Kant’s reason for this last move seems to be mistaken. He says he has concluded that the punishment can’t justly be inflicted either before or after the improvement; but in fact all he has said about pre-improvement punishment—according to the above ‘perhaps meaning’ suggestion about that obscure sentence—is that it *would* be just but isn’t what he is asking about.] So we’ll have to look into this change of heart to see whether the *concept* of it enables us to discover **in** this event ills that the new man with a good disposition •can think he

brought on himself in another context and •can therefore regard as punishments, so that divine justice is satisfied.

•START OF FOOTNOTE•

The hypothesis that all the ills in the world are uniformly to be regarded as punishments for past transgressions cannot be thought of as devised for the sake of a theodicy [see Glossary], . . . because it's too commonly accepted to have been cooked up in such an artificial way. It probably lies very near to human reason, which is inclined to tie the course of nature to the laws of morality, a tie that naturally leads it to the thought that if we want to be •freed from the ills of life, or to be •compensated for them by greater goods, we should first try to become better men. Thus the first man is represented (in the Bible) as condemned to work if he wanted to eat, his wife to bear children in pain, and both to die—all on account of their transgression. [Kant adds remarks about the sufferings of animals, concluding with a joke about the sufferings of horses who aren't being punished for having eaten forbidden hay.]

•END OF FOOTNOTE•

Now a change of heart is a departure from evil and an entrance into goodness, the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new [echoing *Ephesians* 4:22–24]: the man becomes 'dead unto sin' [echoing *Romans* 6:2] and thus to all inclinations that lead to sin, in order to become alive unto righteousness. But this change. . . doesn't involve two moral acts—first one, then the other—but only a single act; the •departure from evil is made possible only by the good disposition that produces the man's •entry into goodness, and vice versa. So the good principle [see Glossary] is as much involved in the abandonment of the bad disposition as in the adoption of the good one; and the pain that rightfully accompanies the bad disposition comes entirely from the

good one. The emergence from the corrupted disposition into the good one (as 'the death of the old man', 'the crucifying of the flesh') is itself both a sacrifice and a start on a long sequence of life's ills. The new man takes these on in the disposition of the son of God, i.e. purely for the sake of the good, though really they are due as punishments to someone else—the old man, 'the pre-improvement man', who is indeed morally a different person.

Regarded from the point of view of his empirical nature as an object of the senses, our man is physically the very same punishable person as before and must be judged as such •before a moral tribunal and hence •by himself; but regarded as an object of thought, he is because of his new disposition morally a different person—that's in the eyes of a divine judge for whom this disposition takes the place of action. And this moral disposition that the man has taken on in all its purity (like the purity of the son of God). . . .

- (a) as proxy, takes on the guilt of his own sin and that of all who believe (practically) in him;
- (b) as saviour, renders satisfaction to supreme justice by suffering and death; and
- (c) as advocate, gives men a hope that they will appear before their judge as justified.

Only it must be remembered that in this way of representing the state of affairs, the suffering that the new man must accept throughout life by becoming dead to the old is pictured as a death endured once for all by the representative of mankind. [In (a)–(c) the man's reformed moral disposition is credited with a startling trio of achievements. The ellipsis just before the trio replaces something meaning 'or (if we personify this idea) this son of God himself', so the trio might be attributed to the son of God rather than to a disposition. But the structure of the German sentence makes •the man's disposition the principal subject and makes the mention of 'the son of God' a parenthetical aside. Admittedly, it's hard to deal with 'his'

and 'him' in (a); replacing them by 'its' and 'it' would seem weird; but the sentence can't be read as applying (a) to the son of God and (b) and (c) to the reformed man's disposition.]

·START OF FOOTNOTE·

The only empirically perceptible achievement of even the purest moral disposition of a man, as a *Weltwesen* [see Glossary], consists in actions in which he is continually *becoming* a God-pleasing subject. In •quality this disposition (since it must be thought of as having a suprasensible basis) should be and can be holy and in tune with the disposition of the man's archetype. But in •degree, as revealed in conduct, it always remains deficient and infinitely distant from the archetype's disposition. Still, because this disposition contains the basis for continual progress in making good this deficiency, it sums up the whole thing in a thought and *stands in for* the completed series of actions. But now a question arises:

Can someone 'in whom there is no condemnation' [Romans 8:1]. . . . believe himself to be justified [= 'morally in the clear'] while also counting as *punishment* the miseries he encounters *en route* to ever greater goodness, thus accepting that he is blameworthy and has a God-displeasing disposition?

Yes he can, but only in his quality of the man he is continually putting off. Everything that would be due him as punishment in that quality (of the old ·pre-improvement· man)—i.e. all the miseries and ills of life in general—he gladly accepts in his quality of new man simply for the sake of the good. So far as he is a new man, consequently, these sufferings aren't ascribed to him as *punishments* at all, except in this special and limited sense:

In his quality of new man he willingly accepts, as opportunities for testing and exercising his disposition to goodness, all the ills and miseries that assail him—things that the old man would have had to regard as punishments and which he too (·the new man·), given that he hasn't completed the process of becoming dead to the old man, accepts as such.

This punishment is both effect and cause of •such moral activity and consequently of •the contentment and moral happiness that consists in an awareness of progress in goodness (= progress in forsaking evil). Back when he had the old disposition, on the other hand, he would have had not only to *count* those ills as punishments but also to *feel* them as such. . . .

·END OF FOOTNOTE·

Here, then, is that surplus—the need of which was noted previously [page 38]—over the merit of good actions, and it's a merit that is credited to us by *grace*. Something that in our earthly life (and perhaps at all future times and in all worlds) is never anything but a *becoming*, namely, becoming a God-pleasing man—that this should be credited to us exactly as if we had already finished the *becoming* and reached the goal is something we have no legal claim to,¹—or so we judge on the basis of the empirical self-knowledge that gives us no direct insight into the disposition but merely permits an estimate based on our actions; which is why the accuser within us would be more likely to favour a guilty verdict. So when we come to be cleared of all liability because of our faith in such goodness, the clearing is always a judgment of *grace* alone, although—because it is based on an atonement which for us consists only in the idea of an improved disposition,

¹ † But only the ability to receive it, which is all that *we* can credit ourselves with. When a superior decrees that a good is to come to a subordinate who has nothing but the (moral) receptivity to it, that's what we call *grace*.

known only to God—it is fully in accord with eternal *justice*.

This deduction [see Glossary] of the idea of a *justification* of someone who is indeed guilty but who has changed his disposition into one well-pleasing to God—does it have any **practical** use? and if so, what is it? It apparently can't give any positive help to religion or to the conduct of life, because the question concerns someone who already *has* the good disposition whose development and encouragement all practical use of ethical concepts properly aims at. What about bringing comfort? No, because someone who is conscious of having a good disposition already has both comfort and hope (though not certainty). So the only good we get from the deduction is an answer to a **speculative** question that needs to be confronted. If it weren't for the deduction, reason could be accused of being wholly unable to reconcile •man's hope of absolution from his guilt with •divine justice—an accusation that might be damaging to reason in many ways, but most of all morally. •So much for the positive benefit of the deduction. • But it brings far-reaching negative benefits to everyone's religion and morality. We learn from this deduction that

- we can't think of the absolution at the bar of heavenly justice of a man burdened with guilt except on the assumption that he has already undergone a complete change of heart [*Herzensänderung*]; that therefore
- in the absence of this change of heart no expiations. . . .or expressions of praise (not even those appealing to the vicarious [see Glossary] ideal of the *Son of God*) can be successful; and that
- when the change of heart has occurred none of those other things can increase its validity before the divine tribunal. . . .

Another question: On the basis of the life he has led, what should a man expect—and what should he fear—at the

end of a his life? To answer this the man must know his own character. He may believe that his disposition has improved, but he must also take into consideration the old (corrupt) disposition that he started with; he must be able to infer

- quantity: how much of this disposition, and what parts of it, he has cast off;
- the quality of the assumed new disposition, i.e. whether it is pure or still impure, and
- degree: its strength to overcome the old disposition and to guard against a relapse.

For this he'll have to examine his disposition throughout his entire life. Now, he can't form a secure and definite concept of his real disposition by being immediately conscious of it; he can only pick it up from the way he has actually lived. So when he considers the verdict of his future judge—i.e. of his own awakening conscience, together with the self-knowledge that he has gathered empirically—the only basis for judgment he'll be able to think of is a conspectus of *his whole life*, and not a mere segment of it, such as the last part or the part most advantageous to him; and to this he would add his prospects in whatever further life he is to have in the future. In this exercise, he won't be able—as in the procedure described on page 40—to let a previously recognised disposition take the place of action; on the contrary, he has to infer his disposition from his action. Now, I ask you: When a man—not necessarily a very bad man—is told

'I have reason to believe that that some day you will stand before a judge',

and this puts him in mind of much •discreditable conduct—that he has long since casually forgotten, what will he think lies in store for him, given the life he has led? If the question concerns the verdict of the judge within the man, he will judge himself severely, because a man can't bribe his own

reason. But if he is to be placed before another judge (and some people claim to know from other sources that *there is* another judge), then he has a store of defences against the severity of that judge, all involving pleas of human frailty. His policy will be to *get past* the judge, either by

forestalling his punishments by offering self-inflicted penances that don't arise from any genuine disposition toward improvement; or else by

•softening him with prayers and entreaties, or with formulas and confessions that he claims to believe.

And if he is encouraged in all this by the proverb 'All's well that ends well' he will plan early in his life to make these moves late, so as not to forfeit needlessly too much of the enjoyment of life and yet near the end to settle his account, quickly, on favourable terms.¹

2. The bad principle's legal claim to dominion over man, and the conflict between the two principles

The Christian part of the Bible presents this intelligible moral relationship—this conflict—in the form of a narrative in which two principles [see Glossary] in man, as opposed to one another as is Heaven to Hell, are represented as persons outside him; persons who pit their strength against each other and also try (one accusing, one defending) to establish their claims legally as though before a supreme judge.

Man was originally given ownership of all the goods of the earth (*Genesis* 1:28), though only in a subordinate way with his creator and Lord as supreme owner. At once a bad being appears on the scene; how such an originally good being became so bad as to be untrue to his Lord is not known. Through his fall he has been deprived of everything he might have had in Heaven, and now he wants to acquire property on earth. As a being of a higher order—a spirit—he can't get satisfaction from earthly and material objects, so he aims for dominion over spiritual natures by causing man's first parents to be disloyal to their overlord and dependent on *him*. Thus he succeeds in setting himself up as the supreme owner of all the goods of the earth, i.e. as the prince of this world. One might wonder why God didn't avail himself of his power against this traitor,² destroying at its inception the kingdom the traitor had intended to found. But supreme wisdom doesn't behave like that: it exercises its power and government over beings equipped with reason, according to the principle of their freedom, and *they* will have to take responsibility for any good or evil that comes their way. A kingdom of evil was thus set up in defiance of the good principle, a kingdom to which all men naturally descended from Adam became subject; and this happened with their consent, because the false glitter of this world's goods drew their gaze away from the abyss of ruin that awaited them. Because of •the good principle's legal claim to sovereignty

¹ † Those who at the end of life want to have a clergyman summoned usually want him as a comforter—not for •the physical suffering brought on by the last illness or even for •the fear that naturally precedes death (death itself can be the comforter for these sufferings and fears by bringing them to an end), but for •their moral anguish, the reproaches of conscience. But at that time conscience should rather be stirred up and sharpened, so that the dying man doesn't neglect to do what good he still can, or to make reparation for the remaining consequences of his bad actions. . . . To administer instead a sort of opium to the conscience is an offence both against the man himself and against those who survive him. . . .

² Father Charlevoix reports that when he told an Iroquois pupil about the evil that the wicked spirit had brought into a world that was good at the outset, and how that spirit still persistently seeks to frustrate the best divine arrangements, his pupil asked indignantly 'But why doesn't God strike the devil dead?'—a question that the priest candidly admits to having no immediate answer for.

over man, it was able to secure itself by establishing a form of government instituted solely for the public veneration of •its name; I am talking about the Jewish theocracy. But this institution did no substantial injury to the realm of darkness, and served merely to keep reminding people of the unshakable right of the first proprietor. Why didn't it do more? Because

- the minds of this government's subjects were moved solely by the goods of this world; and consequently
- they wanted to be ruled in this life only through rewards and punishments; with the result that
- they were capable only of laws that partly •required burdensome ceremonies, and partly •did concern morality but only in a way that made external compulsion the key, so that they were really only civil laws that paid no attention to the inner nature of the subject's moral disposition.

—There came a time when these people •were feeling in full measure all the ills of a hierarchical constitution, and perhaps also •had been influenced by the Greek philosophers' ethical doctrines of freedom, shocking as these were to the slavish mind. These influences had for the most part brought them to their senses and made them ripe for a revolution. At

that time there suddenly appeared a person whose wisdom was purer than that of previous philosophers, as pure as if it had come from Heaven. He proclaimed himself as •truly human in his teachings and example, yet also •an envoy whose origin gave him an original innocence that excluded him from the bargain with the bad principle that the rest of the human race had entered into through their representative, the first ancestral father, so that 'the prince of this world had no part in him' [from *John* 14:30].¹ This was a threat to the sovereignty of this prince. If this God-pleasing man were to resist the prince's temptations to enter into that bargain, and if other men then devoutly adopted the same disposition, each of those would be a subject lost to the prince. and his kingdom would risk being completely destroyed. The prince accordingly offered to make this person deputy-governor of his entire kingdom on condition that he paid homage to him as its proprietor. When this attempt failed he not only •deprived this stranger in his territory of everything that could make his earthly life agreeable (to the point of direst poverty), but also •aroused against him all the persecutions by means of which bad men can embitter life, •caused him •sufferings of a kind that only the well-disposed can feel deeply, namely by slandering the pure intent of

¹ † To think that someone could be free from an innate propensity for evil by being born of a virgin mother—that's an idea [see Glossary] of reason that is hard to explain, but it can't be disowned because it fits a kind of moral instinct. Natural generation can't occur without sensual pleasure on both sides, and it seems to threaten humanity's dignity by making us too similar to the common run of animals; so we regard it as something we should be *ashamed* of (that's the real source of the notion that celibacy is holy)—signifying for us something •unmoral, •irreconcilable with perfection in man, but •grafted into his nature and thus inherited by his descendants as a bad predisposition. This obscure view of natural generation (combining a sense-based account of it with something that is moral, and therefore intellectual) fits nicely with this idea of a child who is free from moral blemish because his birth was a virgin one, a birth that didn't arise from sexual intercourse. There is a •theoretical problem in it (not that this matters from the •practical point of view): according to this virgin-birth idea, the mother—who came from her parents through natural generation—would be infected with this moral blemish and would pass it to her child, at least by half, despite his being supernaturally generated. The only way around this would be to adopt the theory that the seed •of evil• is present in the man and the woman but doesn't germinate in the woman, only in the man. . . . But what's the point of this **theoretical** to-and-fro, when all we need for **practical** purposes is for this virgin-birth idea to be presented to us as a *symbol* of mankind raising itself above temptation to evil (and withstanding it victoriously)?

his teachings so as to deprive him of his followers, and finally •pursuing him to the most ignominious death. Yet the prince's onslaught (through the agency of a worthless mob) on the stranger's steadfastness and forthrightness in teaching and example achieved nothing. And now for the outcome of this struggle! It can be looked at a **legal** upshot or as a **physical** one.

If we look at the physical outcome—the event that strikes the senses—we see it as a defeat for the good principle [see Glossary]: after many sufferings he has to give up his life because he stirred up a rebellion against a (powerful) foreign rule.¹ However, a realm in which the power is held by principles (whether good or bad) is a realm not of nature but of freedom, i.e. a realm in which events can be controlled only by ruling minds, so that no-one there is a slave but the man who wills to be one, and only for as long as he wills it. So this death (the last extremity of human suffering) was •a display of the good principle—i.e. of humanity in its moral perfection—and •an example for everyone to follow. The account of this death should have had—*could* have had—great influence on human minds at that time and indeed, at all times; for it presents •the freedom of the children of Heaven in a striking contrast to the •bondage of a mere son of Earth. But the good principle has invisibly descended from Heaven into humanity not just •at one time but •from the first beginnings of the human race. . . .and it legally has in mankind its first dwelling place. And since

it appeared in an actual human being, as an example to everyone else, 'he came unto his own, and his own received him not, but as many as received him to them gave he power to be called the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name' [*John* 1:11–12]. That is, by the example he sets. . . .he opens the gates of freedom to all who, like him, choose to become dead to everything that ties them to life on earth at the expense of morality; and gathers to himself a people who are 'zealous of good works', a people who are especially *his* and under his sovereignty, while he abandons to their fate all those who prefer moral servitude.

So the moral •or legal• outcome of the combat, as regards the hero of this story (up to the time of his death), is really not the •defeat of the bad principle—for its kingdom still endures and won't be overthrown until a new epoch dawns—but merely the •breaking of its power to hold those who have so long been its not unwilling subjects. This happens because another dominion (man must be subject to some rule or other), a moral dominion, is now offered to them as a refuge where they can shelter their morality if they choose to desert the former sovereignty. But the bad principle is still called 'the prince of this world', a world where those who adhere to the good principle should always be prepared for physical sufferings, sacrifices, and the crushing of self-interest. We have to see these, in the present context, as persecution by the bad principle; and they have to be expected because the bad principle has rewards in his kingdom only for those who

¹ † That is not to say, as one writer has, that he *sought* death as a brilliant and spectacular example that would further a good cause; that would be suicide. For one may indeed •risk death in carrying out some project, or •accept death at the hands of someone else when the only way to prevent it is morally impermissible; but one may not •produce one's own death as a means to any end whatever. [The footnote continues with remarks about another writer's suggestion that Jesus was merely *risking* his life in an attempt to get political power. This, Kant says, doesn't square with the reported words at the Last Supper—'Do this in remembrance of me'. He continues with some thoughts about what Jesus might have meant by that. [Incidentally, while it's obvious that Kant's narrative about the 'good principle', the 'stranger', is centrally based on Jesus of Nazareth, Kant doesn't refer to him by name anywhere in this work. He uses 'Christ' as a name just twice, on page 78, note 2, and on page 91.]

have made earthly well-being their ultimate goal.

This lively way of representing the moral situation was in its time probably the only one available to common folk. Strip off its mystical cloak and you'll easily see that for practical purposes it has been—i.e. its spirit and its meaning for reason have been—valid and binding for the whole world and for all time, because for each man it lies so near at hand that he recognises his duty regarding it. Its meaning is this [to the end of this paragraph]: There's absolutely no salvation for man unless he sincerely brings genuinely moral principles into his disposition; what works against this adoption is *not* man's sensuous nature (often picked on as the culprit), but rather a certain voluntary perversity (wickedness, *fausseté*, Satanic guile through which evil came into the world—call it what you will) that lies in all men and can't be overcome except by a pair of things: the idea of moral goodness in its entire purity, along with a consciousness that this idea really belongs to our original predisposition and that if we carefully prevent any impurities from mixing in with it, and register it deeply in our dispositions, its gradual effect on the mind will convince us

(a) that the dreaded powers of evil can't make any headway against it ('the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it' [Matthew 16:18]); and that

(b) the only mark of the presence of goodness in us that we should acknowledge is a morally good way of life.

If we didn't have the assurance (a) we might make up for that lack either superstitiously, through expiations that don't involve any change of heart, or fanatically, through supposed (and merely passive) inner illumination, and so, either way, be kept distant from (b) the good that is based on activity of the self.

An attempt like this one to find a meaning for Scripture that harmonises with the holiest teachings of reason is something we should regard not only as allowable but as a duty;¹ and we can remind ourselves of what the wise teacher said to his disciples regarding someone who went by a different route to the same goal: 'Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us' [Mark 9:39–40].

General remark

[On page 27 Kant says that this General remark could be entitled 'Miracles'.]

A moral religion must consist not in dogmas and rites but in the heart's disposition to fulfil all human duties as divine commands. If such a religion is to be established, then any miracles mentioned in the narratives about its inauguration must eventually do away with any need to believe in miracles at all. If there were a need for it, that would be because the commands of duty—commands originally written into the human heart by reason—aren't completely authoritative unless they confirmed by miracles; and anyone who believes that is guilty of a culpable level of moral unbelief. 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe' [John 4:48]. But when a religion of mere rites and observances has run its course, and one based on the spirit and the truth (on the moral disposition) is to be established in its place, the narratives introducing the new one may be accompanied—as it were, adorned—by miracles, to announce the end of the previous religion, which without miracles would never have had any authority. This isn't strictly necessary, but it fits in with man's ordinary ways of thought. In the same spirit, wanting to win over the adherents of the older religion to

¹ † In saying this I'm allowing that Scripture also has other meanings.

the new revolution, the new religion may be interpreted as the final fulfilment of something that the older religion merely predicted as the design of providence. In this context there's no point now in debating those narratives or interpretations; the true religion, which in its time needed to be introduced through such devices, is now *here*, and from now on it can maintain itself on grounds of reason. If there were any point in it, we have to accept that mere faith in and repetition of incomprehensible things (which anyone can do without its making him a better man) is the only way of pleasing God—an assertion to be fought against tooth and nail. The person of the teacher of the only religion that is valid for all worlds may indeed be a mystery. It may be that

- his appearance on earth,
- his removal from earth,
- his eventful life,
- and his suffering

are all nothing but miracles. Indeed,

- the •narrative that testifies to all these miracles

may itself be a miracle—a supernatural revelation. If so, we can let each of these rest on its merits without our fussing about its authenticity; we may indeed *honour* them as a fancy-dress that helped the public launching of a doctrine that doesn't *need* any miracles because its authenticity rests on a record indelibly written in every soul. But in our use

of these narratives we mustn't make it a tenet of religion that we can make ourselves pleasing to God by knowing, believing, and professing them.

As for miracles in general, sensible men. . . .may say that they believe in theory that there are such things as miracles but they don't warrant them in the affairs of life. That is why wise governments haven't tolerated new miracles, though they have always granted the proposition. . . .that miracles used to occur in olden times.¹ For the ancient miracles had already gradually been defined and so delimited by the authorities so that new workers of miracles couldn't do harm to public peace and the established order.

What is to be understood by the word 'miracle'? Well, we should be asking what miracles are *for us*, i.e. for our practical use of reason; and the answer to that is that miracles are events in the world whose causes—the operating laws of whose causes—are and must remain absolutely unknown to us. So we can conceive of •theistic miracles and •demonic ones; and the latter are divided into •angelic miracles (performed by good spirits) and •devilish miracles (by bad spirits). . . .

As regards theistic miracles: we can of course form a concept of the laws of operation of their cause (as an omnipotent etc. being and also a moral one); but it can only be a *general* concept—we are thinking of him in general terms as •creator of the world and its •ruler according

¹ Even the orthodox teachers of religion who link their articles of faith to the authority of the government follow the government's attitude on this matter. . . . One writer accused these orthodox theologians with inconsistency, . . .because •they insisted that there had really been workers of miracles in the Christian community 1700 years ago, but were unwilling to authenticate any modern miracles, and couldn't find any biblical statement that miracles would eventually cease altogether, let alone *when* this would happen. (They had their own subtle reasoning [see Glossary] purporting to show that miracles are no longer needed, but those arguments claimed greater insight than any man should credit himself with.) So their refusal to admit contemporary miracles was only a maxim of reason, and didn't express objective knowledge that there aren't any. . . . Some people who don't admit big spectacular miracles have no trouble allowing small ones, . . .because they think that the small ones require only a small input of force from the supernatural cause.) They are not not bearing in mind •that what matters here is not the size of the effect but rather the *how* of it, i.e. whether it comes about naturally or supernaturally; or •that the easy/difficult distinction is meaningless for God. . . .

to the order of nature and the moral order. ·There's no special problem here· about the laws of the natural order, because we can get direct and independent knowledge of them, knowledge that reason can put to work for its own purposes. But if we think this:

God sometimes in special circumstances lets nature deviate from its own laws,

we haven't a hope of ever getting the slightest conception of the law God is following in doing this (apart from the general moral concept that whatever he does is for the best, which tells us nothing about what is going on in detail in any particular case). Here [i.e. when faced with the idea of a miracle] reason is crippled, as it were. it is

- blocked in its ordinary proceedings in terms of known laws,
- told nothing about any new laws, and
- without any hope of ever filling that gap.

Reason's situation is worst with demonic miracles. With theistic miracles reason could at least get guidance from a negative rule, namely: Even if something is represented as commanded by God in a direct appearance of him, if it flatly contradicts morality it can't come from God (e.g. a father is to kill his son who is, so far as he knows, perfectly innocent [see *Genesis 22*]). In evaluating a supposed demonic miracle this rule doesn't apply. We might try to adopt its positive opposite:

when a miracle includes a command to perform a good action, one that we already recognise as our duty, this command has not come from a bad spirit;

but this could still lead us astray, because a bad spirit often disguises itself, they say, as an angel of light.

In the professions, therefore, miracles can't be counted on or taken into consideration in any use of reason (and reason must be used in every incident of life). A **judge** (however

strongly he believes in miracles when he's in church) when he hears an accused person saying 'I was tempted by the devil' treats this exactly as though nothing had been said. If the judge regards this diabolical influence as possible, he might reasonably consider whether in this case an ordinary simple-minded man had been trapped in the snares of an arch-roguer; but he can't summon the tempter and confront the two with each other—in short, he can't *do* anything with it [i.e. with the plea of diabolical influence]. A wise **clergyman** will take great care not to cram the heads of those in his care with anecdotes from *The Hellish Proteus*, thus cutting loose their imaginations. As for good miracles: they're used in the affairs of life as mere phrases. A **doctor** says that there's no help for the patient 'unless a miracle occurs'—which is his way of saying that the patient will certainly die. Then there's the profession of the **research scientist**. ·There's no room for miracles in his thought·: he is searching for the causes of events in their own natural laws; he can verify these laws through experience, although he can't claim to know •what it is *in itself* that operates according to these laws, or •how that would appear to us if we had another sense. And **any man** has his own moral improvement as a ·kind of· professional obligation. Heavenly influences may cooperate with him in this; he may think they are needed to explain how such improvement is possible; but he doesn't understand how to •distinguish them with certainty from natural influences or •draw them—and thereby, as it were, draw Heaven—down to him. So he can't deal directly with them, and therefore excludes them from his thinking about his own moral improvement. If he listens to reason's commands he'll proceed as though every change of heart—every improvement—depended solely on his own efforts. Then there's the opinion that through the gift of a really firm theoretical faith in miracles one could perform them oneself

and so storm Heaven; this senseless notion goes too far beyond reason's limits to be worth discussing.

·THE REST OF THIS PAGE IS A FOOTNOTE IN THE ORIGINAL·

Those who deceive gullible folk through magic arts, or at least try to get them to believe that miracles do occur, have a common trick—appealing to the scientists' confession of their ignorance:

'The scientists proclaim that "we don't know the cause of gravity, of magnetic force, and the like"!

they say.—But we do know enough about the laws of these forces to know within definite limits the necessary conditions for certain effects to occur; and that's all we need •to use these forces rationally, and •to explain instances of them, with conditional explanations going *downwards* from their laws to an ordering of our experience; though not to move unconditionally •upwards to a grasp of the causes of the forces that operate according to these laws.

This lets us understand an inner phenomenon of the human mind, namely the fact that

- so-called 'natural miracles'—i.e. well-attested but paradoxical appearances, events that don't conform to laws of nature previously known—are eagerly seized on and raise the spirits as long as they are held to be natural; whereas
- the spirits are dejected by the announcement of a real miracle.

The first opens up the prospect of something new for reason

to feed on, i.e. it awakens the hope of discovering new laws of nature: the second arouses the fear that confidence will be lost in what has previously been accepted as known. For when reason is deprived of the laws of experience, that leaves it in a magicked world in which it is of no use at all, even in fulfilling one's duty. In that kind of world, we no longer know whether our moral incentives are being miraculously altered without our realising it. . . .

Those who think they can't get by without miracles believe that they can make this more palatable to reason by saying that miracles occur only *rarely*. If they mean this to be guaranteed by the concept of *miracle* (a kind of event that often happens doesn't qualify as a 'miracle') they are giving to a question about what is the case in the world an answer about the meaning of a word. But set that aside, and ask: *how rarely?* Once in 100 years? Or in the olden days but no longer? We can't of course base any answer to this on knowledge about miracles,so we have to be guided by the necessary maxim issued by our reason, which tells us to maintain either

- (a) that miracles happen all the time, disguised as natural events, or
- (b) that miracles never happen, and have no role in our theoretical or our practical thinking.

Of these, (a) totally clashes with reason; so we are left with (b), understood not as a theoretical assertion but as an instruction for judging. . . .

Third Essay: The victory of the good over the bad principle and the founding of a kingdom of God on Earth

[On the word 'principle' as used here and in the titles of the other three Essays, see the Glossary.]

Every morally well-meaning man has to struggle in this life, under the leadership of the good principle, against the bad principle's attacks; but the most he can get out of this, however hard he fights, is *freedom from the sovereignty of evil*. To become free, 'to be freed from bondage under the law of sin, to live for righteousness' [loosely quoted from *Romans* 6]—this is the highest prize he can win. Yet he continues to be exposed to the assaults of the bad principle; and to preserve his freedom through the continual attacks on it he must remain armed for the struggle.

It's the man's own fault that he is in this dangerous situation, so he is obliged at least to try his best to get himself out of it. But how?—that is the question. When he looks around for the causes and circumstances that bring him into this danger and keep him there, he can easily convince himself that it's not because of the grossness of •his individual nature but because of •the people he is related and connected to. [We have been told that the man *is* to blame for his moral predicament, and now that 'he can easily convince himself that he *isn't*. The very next part reads like a continuation of the false proposition that he can easily convince himself is true, but we soon find Kant speaking for himself and not purely for this sample man. He is leading into a view of his that dominates this Third Essay, namely that the moral situation of any person *x* depends enormously on facts about the people he is socially embedded with; but that doesn't require him to retract his thesis that *x* himself is nevertheless ultimately to blame for his situation.] His initial good predisposition is devastated by passions (that's what they should be called, •with a name implying that in them he is passive, on the

receiving end.) that aren't aroused *in him*. His needs are few, and he goes about satisfying them in a temperate and peaceful frame of mind. His only concern about being poor is his anxiety that others may consider him poor and despise him for that. His nature is contented within itself, but *as soon as he is among men* it is attacked by envy, the lust for power, greed, and the malignant inclinations bound up with these. They don't have to be bad men, setting bad examples; for them to corrupt •his and• each others' predispositions and make •him and• one another bad, all that is needed is for them to •be there, •be all around him, and •be men. This association with others will keep an individual man, however much he may have done to throw off the dominion of evil, incessantly in danger of falling back under it, **unless** means can be discovered for forming an alliance designed specifically to protect men from this evil and to further their goodness—an enduring and ever-expanding society aimed solely at maintaining morality and opposing evil with united forces. —As far as we can see, therefore, the only way men can work towards the sovereignty of the good principle is by establishing and spreading a society that •follows the laws of virtue and •is *for* them, a society that ought to include the entire human race, that being the task—the duty—imposed by reason. That's the only hope for a victory of the good principle over the bad one. Reason, the moral-law giver, doesn't just prescribe laws to each individual but also raises a flag of virtue as a rallying point for all who love the good, so that they may come together beneath it and get the upper hand over the evil that is constantly attacking them.

A union of men solely under laws of virtue, patterned on the above idea, and the laws being public, may be called an •ethical commonwealth or an •ethico-civil society (in contrast to a juridico-civil society). It can exist in the midst of a political commonwealth and may even consist of all the latter's members; indeed, the only way men can create an ethical commonwealth is on the basis of a political one. But it has in *virtue* a special principle of union that is all its own, which gives it a form and a constitution that fundamentally distinguish it from the political commonwealth.

Still, there's a certain analogy between the two, as they are both *commonwealths*, so that the ethical one could be called an ethical *state*, i.e. a *kingdom* of virtue (or of the good principle). The idea of such a state has a thoroughly well-grounded •objective reality in human reason (in one's duty to join such a state), even though, •subjectively, we can never hope that man's good will would lead mankind to decide to work in concert towards this goal.

1. Philosophical account of the good principle's victory in founding a Kingdom of God on Earth

A. The ethical state of nature

A juridico-civil (political) state is the relation men have to each other by all standing under a single system of public juridical laws (which are all laws of coercion). An ethico-civil state is the relation they have to one another when they are united under non-coercive laws, i.e. laws solely of virtue.

Just as •a juridico-civil (political) state can be distinguished from •the juridical state of nature, so also •the ethico-civil state can be distinguished from •the ethical state of Nature. In both states of nature, each individual prescribes the law for himself, and there's no external law that

he and everyone else thinks he is subject to. In both, each individual is his own judge, and there's no power-holding public authority •to determine—with legal power according to laws—what each man's duty is in each case, and •to get those laws to be obeyed by everyone.

In an already existing political commonwealth all the political citizens are, as such, in an ethical state of nature and are entitled to remain in it; for it would be an outright contradiction for the political commonwealth to *compel* its citizens to enter into an ethical commonwealth, since the very concept of the latter involves *freedom from coercion*. Every political commonwealth may indeed want to have power over people's minds according to laws of virtue; because then, whenever its methods of compulsion failed (for a human judge can't penetrate into other men's depths), the desired result would be brought about by virtuous dispositions. But woe to the legislator who aims to establish a political system directed to ethical ends and tries to get it by force! For in that attempt he would •achieve the very opposite of what he was aiming at ethically, and also •undermine and destabilise his political state. So a political commonwealth leaves its citizens completely free to choose whether •to come together in an ethical union in addition to the political one or •to remain in an ethical state of nature. To the extent that an ethical commonwealth must rest on public laws and have a constitution based on them, those who freely pledge themselves to enter into this ethical state owe to the political state an undertaking that this constitution won't contain anything that contradicts its members' duties as citizens of the political state; though if the founding of the ethical commonwealth is of the genuine sort, there's nothing to worry about on that score. Of course there's no question of the political power's having any control over the internal constitution of the ethical commonwealth.

[In this paragraph Kant suddenly switches from ‘*an* ethical commonwealth’ to ‘*the* ethical commonwealth’. That is because he is now talking about it as an *ideal* [see Glossary], something singular, individual.] Another difference between the two kinds of commonwealth is this: the duties of virtue apply to the whole human race, so the concept of an ethical commonwealth is an ideal [see Glossary] for the whole of mankind, whereas this is not the case for a political commonwealth. Thus, even when many men are united in that ·ethical· purpose, that can’t be called •the ethical commonwealth but only •a particular society that works towards harmony with all men (indeed, with all finite beings endowed with reason) so as to form an absolute ethical whole of which every partial society is only a representation or schema. Each of these partial societies relates to the others in a way that can be seen as the ethical state of nature, with all the defects that come with this. (It’s exactly the same with separate political states that aren’t united through a public law of nations.)

B. Man ought to leave his ethical state of nature in order to become a member of an ethical commonwealth

Just as the juridical state of nature is one of war of everyone against everyone, so too the ethical state of nature is one in which the good principle that resides in each man is continually attacked by the evil that is found in him and in everyone else. As I remarked on page 50, men corrupt one another’s moral predispositions. Even if each of them has a good will, their lack of a principle uniting them leads to their having disagreements that •drive them away from the common goal

of goodness and •expose one another to the risk of falling back under the sovereignty of the bad principle—just as though they were its instruments! Also, just as the state of lawless external freedom and independence from coercive laws is a state of injustice and of war of everyone against everyone—a state that men ought to leave in order to enter into a politico-civil state¹—so is the ethical state of nature one of •open conflict amongst principles of virtue and •a state of inner immorality that the natural man ought to try to get out of as soon as possible.

Now here we have a unique kind of duty not of men toward men but of the human race toward itself. Every species of beings equipped with reason is. . . .determined by the idea of reason for a common goal, namely the promotion of the highest good as a common good. But the highest moral good can’t be achieved solely by the individual person’s efforts for his own moral perfection; it needs a union of such individuals into a whole working toward the same goal. . . . The idea of such a whole, as a universal republic conforming to the laws of virtue, is an idea completely distinct from all moral laws. *They* concern things that we know to be in our own power, whereas it—the goal of the virtuous republic—involves working toward a whole that may, but may not be, in our power; we just don’t know. So this duty is unlike all others both in •kind and in •principle. [In kind: its special shape, as a duty of mankind towards mankind. In principle: presumably its being a duty that we don’t know it’s within our power to fulfill.] You’ll have seen that this duty will require the presupposition of another idea, namely the idea of a **higher moral being** through whose universal organisation the

¹ Hobbes said that it is *war* of all against all, but he should have said *a state of war* etc. Men who don’t stand under external and public laws, even if they aren’t engaged in actual hostilities, are nevertheless in a state of war in which everyone must be perpetually armed against everyone else. That’s because each wants to be the judge of what shall be his rights against others, but must rely on his own private strength to acquire and maintain those rights. . . .

powers of separate individuals are united for a common goal that they can't achieve individually. Before coming to this, however, let us follow the thread of that moral need and see where it takes us.

C. The concept of an ethical commonwealth is the concept of a people of God under ethical laws

If a commonwealth is to come into existence, all individuals must be subject to a public legislation, and it must be possible to regard all the laws that bind them as commands of a common law-giver. [Kant wrote 'If an ethical commonwealth is to etc.', but that was probably a slip.] For a **juridical** commonwealth, the mass of people uniting into a whole would *itself* have to be the law-giver (of constitutional laws), because the legislation comes from the principle:

Limit the freedom of each individual to the conditions under which it can be consistent with the freedom of everyone else according to a common law,

and thus *the general will* sets up an external legal control. But if the commonwealth is to be **ethical**, the people as such can't itself be regarded as the law-giver. In such a commonwealth the laws are all expressly designed to promote the •morality of actions, which is something inner, and so can't be subject to public human laws. (In a juridical commonwealth, in contrast, the public laws concern the •legality of actions, which is out in the open, visible.) So someone other than the people must be specifiable as the

public law-giver for an ethical commonwealth. But ethical laws can't be thought of as coming originally, basically, from the will of this superior being (as statutes that might not have been binding if he hadn't commanded them), because then they wouldn't be ethical laws, and conforming to them would only be a matter of coerced obedience to the law, not the free exercise of virtue. Thus if someone is to be thought of as highest law-giver of an ethical commonwealth with respect to whom all true duties, including the ethical ones,¹ must be represented *also* as his commands, he must 'know the heart', in order to see the core of each individual's disposition, and—as is necessary in every commonwealth—to bring it about that each receives whatever his actions are worth. But this is the concept of God as moral ruler of the world. Hence an ethical commonwealth can be thought of only as a people under divine commands, i.e. a people of God, and according to laws of virtue.

We could conceive of a people of God under statutory laws, where obedience to them would concern the •legality of acts, not their •morality. This would be a juridical commonwealth with God as its lawgiver (and thus with a •theocratic constitution); but men, as priests receiving his commands directly from him, would build up an •aristocratic government. But the existence and form of such a constitution rests wholly on an historical basis, so it can't help us with the problem we are trying to solve here, concerning morally-legislative reason. I shall consider it in the historical section [starting on page 68], as an institution under politico-civil laws whose •external

¹ As soon as something is recognised as a duty, even one imposed through the sheer *choice* of a human law-giver, obedience to it is also divinely commanded. Of course statutory [see Glossary] civil laws can't be called divine commands; but when they are just, there is a divine command to obey them. The saying 'We ought to obey God rather than men' means merely that when men command anything that is bad in itself (directly opposed to the law of morality) we dare not, and ought not to, obey them. Conversely, when a politico-civil law that isn't itself immoral conflicts with something that is held to be a divine statutory law, there are grounds for regarding the latter as spurious: it contradicts a plain duty, and its status as a divine command can't get strong enough empirical support to justify failing in an otherwise established duty on its account.

lawgiver happens to be God. Our present concern is with an institution whose laws are purely inward—a republic under laws of virtue, i.e. a people of God ‘zealous of good works’ [Titus 2:14].

To such a people of God we can oppose the idea of a *Rotte* [= ‘mob’ or ‘rabble’ or ‘gang’] of the bad principle, the union of those who •side with it for the propagation of evil and •aim to block the formation of that other union, •namely that of the people of God.—though here again the principle that combats virtuous dispositions lies within us and is only figuratively represented as an external power.

D. The only way humans can bring about a people of God is through a church

When the sublime but never wholly attainable idea of an ethical commonwealth is •solely• in human hands, it *shrinks* down to (at best) a pure representation of the form of such a commonwealth; as for bringing it into existence, that is something that sensuous human nature isn’t capable of. How indeed can one expect something perfectly straight to be built with such crooked wood?

So the founding of a moral people of God is a task that men can’t be expected to carry out; it has to be done by God himself. But that doesn’t permit man to be idle in this matter, leaving it to providence to take charge, as though each individual could attend exclusively to his own private moral affairs and leave to a higher wisdom the moral destiny of the human race. The individual man must proceed as though everything depended on him; that’s his only chance of having his well-intentioned efforts brought to completion by higher wisdom.

The wish of all well-meaning people is, therefore, ‘that the kingdom of God come, that his will be done on earth’

[*Matthew* 6:10, *Luke* 11:2]. But what do they have to do *now* so that this will happen for them? An ethical commonwealth under divine moral legislation is called the *invisible church*, because it is not an object of possible experience. It is a mere *idea* of the union of all righteous people under a divine world-government—government that is *direct*, but also *moral*—this being an idea serving as a model of what is to be established by men. The *visible church* is the actual union of men into a whole that harmonises with that ideal. [Kant now offers a long sentence whose syntactical structure makes it needlessly hard to follow. Its gist is this: A *congregation* is a society with laws governing relations between those who obey and those who govern. The latter, called ‘teachers’ or ‘pastors’, are mere administrators on behalf of the invisible supreme head of the society; they are called ‘servants of the church’. Kant compares this with the situation in a political commonwealth whose visible sovereign sometimes calls himself the highest ‘servant of the state’, without recognising anyone above him. Now we move on to Kant’s next sentence.] The true (visible) church is the one that exhibits the moral kingdom of God on earth so far as men can bring it about. The true •visible• church must meet the following four conditions, which are therefore signs that something is the true church. [In the quartet below (the numbering is Kant’s), each word in bold type (three of them provided by Kant) is one of the labels in his top-level classification of ‘concepts of the understanding’ in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This echo, though presumably intended, isn’t put to work here.]

- (1) It must be universal, and thus be numerically *one* (**•quantity•**). It may be divided and at variance regarding unessential opinions, but with respect to its essential aim it must be founded on basic principles that *must* lead to a general unification in a single church (thus, no sectarian divisions).

- (2) In its nature (**quality**) it must be pure, not driven by any motivating forces except moral ones (cleansed of the stupidity of superstition and the madness of fanaticism).
- (3) The principle of freedom must govern its **relation**—both the internal relation of its members to one another, and the external relation of the church to political power. Both these relations are those of a *Freistaat* = ‘republic’; they are not •hierarchical, nor do they involve •illuminism [see Glossary], which is a kind of democracy through special inspiration in which one man’s ‘inspiration’ can differ from another’s according to the whim of each.
- (4) It must be unchangeable in its constitution (**modality**). Incidental regulations regarding administration may be changed according to time and circumstance; but even these changes must be guided by settled principles that the church contains within itself *a priori* in the idea of its purpose, so that it is guided as though •by a primordially published book of laws, not •by arbitrary symbols which, because they lack authenticity, are fortuitous, liable to contradiction, and changeable.

So the structure of an ethical commonwealth, regarded as . . . a mere representative of a city of God, is nothing like a political constitution. Its constitution isn’t •monarchical (under a pope or patriarch), or •aristocratic (under bishops and prelates), or •democratic (as with sectarian illuminati). It is like the constitution of a household (family) under an invisible moral father, whose holy son, knowing his will and yet blood-related to all members of the household, takes the father’s place in making his will better known to them; they accordingly honour the father in him and so join in a voluntary, universal, and enduring union of hearts.

E. The constitution of every church originates in some historically revealed faith (call it ecclesiastical faith), which is best based on a holy scripture

A universal church would have to be based on pure religious faith, because it is a bare-reason-faith that can be believed in and shared by everyone. (An historical faith, based solely on facts, can spread only as far as the news it brings can reach, with limits imposed by •circumstances of time and place and •men’s ability to judge the credibility of such news.) But although a pure faith ought to be a sufficient support for a church, it can’t be relied on to do that, and the reason for this is a special weakness in human nature.

Men are aware that they can’t know suprasensible things; and although they honour the faith in such things (as the faith that must convince them all), they aren’t easily convinced that for them to be subjects in God’s kingdom and well-pleasing to him all he requires is steadfast diligence in morally good conduct. They can’t easily think of their obligation in any way but this: they are obliged to offer some service or other •that God has demanded of them—where what matters is not the intrinsic moral worth of the actions but the fact that they are offered to God—so that however morally indifferent men may be in themselves they can at least please God through passive obedience. It doesn’t enter their heads that •when they fulfil their duties to themselves and other men they are obeying God’s commands, so that in the moral aspect of their doings and allowings they are *constantly* serving God, and that •it is absolutely impossible to serve God more directly in any other way (because they can’t make any difference to God, as they can to earthly beings alone). (a) Every great worldly lord has a special need to be honoured by his subjects and glorified by them through displays of their submissiveness, because without that he

can't expect them to be obedient enough for him to rule them; and **(b)** any man, however gifted with reason he may be, gets immediate pleasure from being openly honoured; and so it is that we treat duty that is also a divine command as doing something for God, not for man. (·In this we are **(a)** likening God to a worldly ruler and perhaps **(b)** likening him to ourselves.) Thus arises the concept of a religion of divine worship instead of the concept of a purely moral religion.

All religion consists in this: that in all our duties we look on God as the lawgiver to be honoured by everyone. So conformity to a religion depends on knowing how God wants to be honoured (and obeyed). Now a divine legislative will commands either •through laws that are merely statutory, or •through purely moral laws. As regards the latter: each individual can know through his own reason the will of God that his religion is based on; for the concept of the deity arises from

- consciousness of these laws, and from
- reason's need to postulate a power that can procure for these laws every result that •is possible in a world and •squares with their final goal.

The concept of a divine will whose content comes from pure moral laws alone won't let us think of more than one purely moral religion, any more than to think of more than one God. But if we admit statutory laws of a divine will, and take religion to consist in our obedience to *them*, we can't know such laws through our bare reason but only through revelation; and this, whether given publicly or given to each individual in secret to be propagated among men by tradition or scripture, would have to be an historical faith, not a pure-reason-faith. And even admitting divine statutory laws (laws that are recognised as obligatory not •just as they stand but only •when taken as revealing God's will), pure moral legislation through which God's will is primordially written

in our hearts is not only •the inescapable condition of all true religion but also •what really constitutes such religion; statutory religion can offer only the means to preserving and propagating it.

How does God want to be honoured? If that is to have one answer that is valid for each human being just because that's what he is, it must be the answer that the legislation of his will is solely moral; because statutory legislation (which presupposes a revelation) can be regarded as contingent and not applicable to every man, and hence as not binding on all men. So the men who offer him the true veneration that he wants are 'not those who say Lord! Lord! but they who do the will of God' [*Matthew* 7:21]; those who try to become well-pleasing to him not •by praising him (or his envoy, as a being of divine origin) according to revealed concepts that not everyone can have, but •by a good course of life—and everyone knows what God's will is regarding that.

But when we see ourselves as obliged to act not merely as men but also as *citizens* in a divine state on earth, and to work for the existence of such an entity under the name of a church, then the question 'How does God want to be honoured in a church (as a congregation of God)?' appears not to be answerable by bare reason, and to need statutory legislation that we can know about only through revelation, i.e. to need an historical faith that we can call **ecclesiastical faith**, in contradistinction to **pure religious faith**.

Pure religious faith is concerned only with the essential thing in reverence for God, namely morally well-disposed performance of all duties *as his commands*; whereas a church, as the union of many morally well-disposed men into a moral commonwealth, requires a public obligation, a certain ecclesiastical form—an empirically conditioned form that is contingent and assembled piecemeal and therefore can't be recognised as duty without divine statutory laws.

But don't rush to the conclusion that the divine lawgiver specifies what this form is to be; we have reason to think •that •he wants us to design it because• he is leaving it entirely to us to carry into effect the reason-idea of such a commonwealth, and •that despite many failed attempts he wants us to keep at this, trying with each new attempt to avoid the mistakes of the earlier ones. . . . To declare that the foundation and form of some church are based on divine statutory laws is presumptuous; it's •an attempt to get out of the trouble of further improving the church's form, and it is also •a pretence of having divine authority for using ecclesiastical statutes to lay a yoke on the multitude. But it would also be self-conceit to deny outright that the way a church is organised *might* have been specially arranged by God, if it strikes us as completely harmonious with the moral religion and if, in addition, we can't conceive how this church could have appeared all at once without the public's having been prepared in advance by improvements in their religious concepts.

In the to-and-fro over whether a church should be founded by God or by men, we see evidence of man's being drawn to a religion of divine worship and—because such a religion rests on precepts that someone *chose*—to a belief in divine statutory laws. It is assumed that the best life-conduct—which man is always free to adopt under the guidance of the pure moral religion—has to be *supplemented* by some divine legislation that can't be discovered through reason but has to be learned from revelation. This involves venerating the supreme being •directly rather than •through the obedience to his laws that reason prescribes to us. And so it happens that what men see as necessary for the promotion of the moral element in religion is not

- union into a church, or
- agreement on the form the church is to have, or
- public institutions,

but only the supposed 'service of God' through ceremonies, confessions of faith in revealed laws, and obedience to the statutes relating to the form of the church (which is itself only a means). None of these actions have, basically, any moral force or direction; but they are held to be all the more pleasing to God because they are performed merely for his sake. In men's working towards an ethical commonwealth, ecclesiastical faith thus naturally precedes pure religious faith;¹ temples (buildings consecrated to the public worship of God) came before churches (meeting-places for instructing and enlivening moral dispositions), priests (consecrated stewards of pious rites) came before clerics (teachers of the purely moral religion), and for the most part they still are accorded a higher rank and value by the great mass of people. [Kant's next sentence has these two clauses: **(i)** 'It's an unchangeable fact that a •statutory ecclesiastical faith is linked with •pure religious faith as its vehicle and as the means for bringing men together to promote it.' **(ii)** 'It has to be granted that the preservation of this statutory ecclesiastical faith unchanged, its propagation in the same form everywhere, and even a respect for the revelation assumed in it, can't be well provided for through tradition, but only through Scripture.' These are supposed to be linked, but it's not clear how. Perhaps Kant's thought is merely that because **(i)** is true, **(ii)** is important. In **(ii)** 'this statutory ecclesiastical faith' replaces a German pronoun which could instead be replaced by 'this pure religious faith'. That would properly link the two statements, but it would require some stretching in the understanding of **(ii)**.] And Scripture, as a revelation to contemporaries and

¹ † That's *naturally*; *morally* it's the other way around.

posterity, must itself be an object of esteem because men need it if they are to be sure of their duty in the service of God. A holy book arouses the greatest respect even among those (indeed, especially among those!) who don't read it, or at least those who can't form any coherent religious concept from it; and the trickiest reasoning is helpless in the face of the all-conquering assertion *Thus it is written!* That is why the scriptural passages that are to lay down an article of faith are called simply *texts*. The occupation of the appointed interpreters of such a scripture are consecrated persons, as it were; and history shows that it has never been possible to destroy a faith based on scripture, even when the state has undergone devastating revolutions; whereas the faith based on tradition and ancient public observances has collapsed whenever the state was overthrown. When such a book falls into men's hands and contains, along with its statutes or laws of faith, the purest moral doctrine of religion in its completeness, . . . how *fortunate* that is!¹ When this happens, the book can be granted the authority of a revelation, because of •the purpose to be achieved by it, and because of •the difficulty of explaining in naturalistic terms what enables it to enlighten the human race as it does.

* * * *

And now some remarks about this concept of a belief in revelation.

There is only one (true) religion; but there can be many kinds of faith. We can say further that even in the various churches, separated by differences in their modes of belief, the one and only true religion can be found.

So it is more fitting (and actually more usual) to describe a man as having this or that *faith* (Jewish, Moslem, Christian,

Catholic, Lutheran) than to describe him as having this or that *religion*. The second expression really oughtn't to be used in addressing the general public (in catechisms and sermons), because for them it is too learned and obscure; indeed, the more recent languages have no synonym for it. The common man always takes 'religion' to refer to his ecclesiastical faith, which is out there in the world of the senses, whereas religion is hidden within and depends on moral dispositions.

In most cases it would be undue flattery to say of someone that he professes this or that 'religion'; for most men don't know any religion and don't want one—all that they understand by the word is statutory [see Glossary] ecclesiastical faith. The so-called religious conflicts that have so often shaken the world and bespattered it with blood have never been anything but squabbles over ecclesiastical faith; and the oppressed have complained not that they were hindered from adhering to their religion (for no external power can do that) but that they weren't permitted publicly to observe their ecclesiastical faith.

When a church proclaims itself (as they usually do!) to be the one universal church (though it is based on faith in a special revelation, an historical event that not everyone can be required to believe), someone who refuses to acknowledge its particular ecclesiastical faith is called by it an **unbeliever** and is hated wholeheartedly; someone who parts company with it only in respect of inessential details is said to be **heterodox** and is—if nothing worse—shunned as a source of infection. But anyone who declares allegiance to this church yet diverges from it over essentials of its faith. . . . is called a **heretic**, especially if he spreads his beliefs, and as a rebel he

¹ 'Fortunate'—an expression for everything wished for, or worthy of being wished for, that we can't foresee or bring about by ordinary processes through our own endeavours; so that if we want to assign a cause for it we have to fall back on 'a gracious Providence'.

is held to be more culpable than a foreign foe, expelled from the church with an anathema, . . . and given over to all the gods of Hell. The exclusive rightness of belief in matters of ecclesiastical faith that the church's teachers or heads claim is called **orthodoxy**, which is of two kinds—despotic (brutal) and liberal.

If a church claiming that its ecclesiastical faith is universally binding is called a •catholic church, and one that protests against such claims on the part of others (though it might well advance similar claims itself, if it could) is called a •protestant church, then an alert observer will find many *protestant catholics*, good men whose way of thinking (though not that of their church) is expansive; and even more *arch-catholic protestants*, whose restrictive cast of mind puts them in sharp contrast—not in their favour—with the former.

F. Ecclesiastical faith has pure religious faith as its highest interpreter

As I have said already: although

a church in basing itself on on a revealed faith loses the most important mark of truth, namely a rightful claim to universality, because such a faith, being historical, can never be taught convincingly to everyone (though a written scripture can greatly help with this),

nevertheless

because of men's natural need and desire for . . . some kind of empirical confirmation of the highest concepts and grounds of reason (a need that can't be ignored when the universal dissemination of a faith is planned), some historical ecclesiastical faith or other must be employed—there's usually one available.

If such an empirical faith, seemingly tossed into our hands by chance, is to be united with the basis of a moral faith

(whether as a means to that or as an end in itself), we need a thorough-going interpretation of it that makes it square with the universal practical rules of a religion of pure reason. (I stress *practical*, because the *theoretical* part of ecclesiastical faith can't interest us morally if it doesn't promote the doing of all human duties as divine commands (which is the essence of all religion). This interpretation will often strike us as forced, in the light of the text; it may often really *be* forced; but if the text can possibly support it, it must be preferred to a literal interpretation that does nothing for morality or even works against moral incentives.

·START OF A FOOTNOTE·

† As an illustration of this, take Psalm 59:11–16, with its terrifyingly extreme prayer for revenge. One writer, approving this prayer, said: 'The Psalms are inspired; if in them punishment is prayed for, it cannot be wrong, and we must have no morality holier than the Bible.' Stop right there! Should morality be expounded according to the Bible, rather than the Bible's being expounded according to morality? There is in any case the question of how to reconcile the prayer for revenge with the passage in the New Testament, ' . . . I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, etc. . . .' which is also inspired. But before going into that, I would try first to bring the prayer for revenge into conformity with my own moral principles: perhaps

the reference is not to enemies in the flesh but rather to invisible enemies that are symbolised by them and are far more dangerous to us, namely bad inclinations that we must desire to trample down completely;

or, if this can't be managed, I shall suppose that

this passage is to be understood not •in a moral sense but only •in terms of the relation the Jews thought they had to God as their political regent.

This latter interpretation applies also to this from the Bible: ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord’ [*Romans* 12:19]. This is commonly interpreted as a moral warning against private revenge, but probably it merely refers to the law, valid for every state, that satisfaction for injury is to be sought in the sovereign’s courts of justice, where the judge’s permitting the plaintiff to ask for a punishment as severe as he desires is not to be taken as approval of the plaintiff’s craving for revenge.

[•In this footnote, Kant speaks of reconciling the prayer for revenge with ‘my own *self-subsistent* moral principles. He means: principles that stand on their own feet, e.g. aren’t based on previous readings of the Bible. •Understanding the prayer for revenge ‘in terms of the relation the Jews thought they had to God as their political regent’—how is that supposed to work? The answer is no clearer in the German than it is in this version. Here is the passage in question: ‘11: Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield. 12: For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak. 13: Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. 14: And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15: Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied. 16: But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.’]

•END OF FOOTNOTE•

We shall find too that this has been done with faiths of all types—old and new, scriptural and not—and that wise and well-meaning popular teachers kept on interpreting their faiths until, gradually, they brought their essential content into line with the universal moral dogmas. The moral philosophers among the Greeks, and later among the

Romans, did something like this with their fabulous tales of the gods. They were able eventually to interpret the grossest polytheism as mere symbolic representation of the attributes of the single divine being, and to supply the gods’ wicked actions. . . .with a mystical meaning that made a popular faith draw close to a moral doctrine that everyone could understand and profit from. (The alternative was to destroy the popular faith; but that would have been inadvisable because it could have led to atheism, which is still more dangerous to the state.)

Later Judaism, and even Christianity, consist of such interpretations, sometimes very forced, but in both cases for unquestionably good purposes answering to men’s needs. The Moslems know very well how to give a spiritual meaning to the description of their paradise, which is dedicated to sensuality of every kind; the Indians do it too in the interpretation of their Vedas, at least for the enlightened portion of their people.

Why can this be done without repeatedly offending greatly against the popular faith’s literal meaning? Because the predisposition to moral religion lay hidden in human reason long before this faith began; and although the first rough expressions of the faith were merely practices of divine worship, supported by those alleged revelations, the moral predisposition had some unintended effect on the ‘revealed’ stories that were told in the faith. Such interpretations aren’t dishonest, provided we don’t •assert outright that the meaning we ascribe to the popular faith’s symbols is exactly as intended by them, but rather •leave this question undecided and say merely that their authors *may* be so understood. The final purpose of reading these holy scriptures or investigating their content is to make men better; the historical element contributes nothing to this end and has no moral force or direction, so we can do what we like with it. . . .

Hence, even if a document is accepted as a divine revelation, the highest criterion of its coming from God is: 'All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for improvement, etc.' [1 *Timothy* 3:16]; and since this moral improvement of men constitutes the real purpose of all religion of reason, it contains the highest principle of all scriptural interpretation. This religion is 'the spirit of God, who guides us into all truth' [*John* 16:13]. This spirit, while instructing us also, animates us with basic principles for action. [Here 'principle' doesn't mean 'force' or 'driver' or the like; what it translates is not *Princip*, which can have that meaning [see Glossary] but *Grundsatz* which almost always means 'basic proposition'.] This spirit subjects. . . .scripture to the rules and incentives of pure moral faith, which is the only genuinely religious element in any ecclesiastical faith. All investigation and interpretation of any scripture must be driven by the search for this spirit in it, and 'eternal life can be found in it, .i.e. in Scripture', only so far as it testifies to this spirit' [very loosely quoted from *John* 5:39, taking Kant's *Princip* to be a slip for *Geist* (= spirit), though neither word is in Luther's original].

Along with this scriptural interpreter, but subordinate to him, is the scriptural scholar. No doctrine based on bare reason strikes the people as suitable to be their unchangeable standard; they demand divine revelation, and hence also an historical certification of its authority through tracing it back to its origin. So the authority of Scripture •lies at the heart of the ecclesiastical faith and •is the best instrument—just now, in the most enlightened parts of the world, the *only* instrument—for the union of all men into one church.

Now human skill and wisdom can't go all the way to Heaven to inspect the credentials validating the first teacher's mission; so we have to settle for evidence we can find. . . .regarding how such a faith was introduced, i.e. for evidence depending on the historical credibility of

human narratives that must be gradually recovered from very ancient times and from languages now dead. Thus, scriptural scholarship will be required for a church founded on Holy Scripture to maintain its authority. (A *church*, not a *religion*. For a religion to be universal, it must always be founded on bare reason.) Even if this scholarship settles no more than that

nothing in Scripture's origin flatly rules out accepting it as direct divine revelation,

that would clear the way for this idea of Scripture as coming from God to be gladly accepted by folk whose moral faith is—they think—specially strengthened by it. Scholarship is needed not only to •authenticate Holy Scripture but also to •interpret it, and for the same reason. For how are unscholarly people who can read it only in translation to be sure of its meaning? Hence the expositor must not only know the original language but also have extensive historical knowledge and critical skills, so as to be able to get materials for enlightening the ecclesiastical commonwealth's understanding out of the conditions, customs, and opinions (i.e. the popular faith) of that earlier time.

Reason-religion and scriptural scholarship are thus the properly qualified interpreters and trustees of a holy document. The secular arm must not—this is *obvious*—exert any influence on the public use of their judgments and discoveries in this field, or tie them down to particular dogmas; for otherwise •the laity would be compelling the clergy to go along with •their opinion—an opinion that they got from the clergy's instruction in the first place. As long as the state •ensures that there are plenty of scholars in morally good repute who have authority in the entire church body, and •entrusts this commission to their consciences, the state has done all that it ought to do and all that it can do. . . .

Here now is a third contender for the role of interpreter—the man who can (he thinks) recognise the true meaning of Scripture, as well as its divine origin, without invoking reason or scholarship and merely going by an inner **feeling**. Now, there's no denying that 'he who follows Scripture's teachings and does what it commands will surely find that it is of God' [John 7:17]. Why? Because the impulse to good actions and to uprightness in the conduct of life that must be **felt** by anyone who reads Scripture or hears it expounded is sure to convince him of its divine nature; for this impulse is the work of the moral law that fills the man with fervent respect and thus deserves to be regarded as a divine command. A knowledge of laws, and of their morality, can scarcely be derived from any sort of **feeling**. And a **feeling** can't be a sure sign of divine influence. One effect can have more than one cause, and in the present case there's a causal story that ought to be preferred, namely that the source of the feeling in question is the sheer morality of the law (and the doctrine), recognised through reason; provided that this origin is at least possible, it's our duty to accept it unless we want to open the flood-gates to every kind of fanaticism. . . . **Feeling**. . . can't be praised as a touchstone for the genuineness of a revelation; for it teaches absolutely nothing, and is merely the way the person is affected on the pleasure/unpleasure scale—and there's no way to get knowledge out of *that*.

So there's no standard of ecclesiastical faith except Scripture, and no expositor of that except •pure religion of reason and •scriptural scholarship that deals with Scripture's historical element. [No expositor of *what*? Kant's pronoun is *desselben*, which here means ecclesiastical faith; but this version makes it refer to Scripture, conjecturing that Kant meant to write *derselben*.] Of these, only the religion of reason is authentic and valid for the whole world; scriptural scholarship. . . merely aims to make

a definite and enduring system out of the ecclesiastical faith of a particular people at a particular time. The inevitable upshot of this is that historical faith—i.e. ecclesiastical faith—becomes mere faith in scriptural scholars and their insight. This doesn't show humans at their best, but the situation can be corrected through public freedom of thought; and people are entitled to such freedom, because scholars can't expect the commonwealth to trust their conclusions unless they submit their interpretations to public examination in the hope of getting better insights.

G. The gradual transition of ecclesiastical faith to the exclusive sovereignty of pure religious faith is the coming of the Kingdom of God

The true church can be recognised by its universality; and what shows that it is universal is its •necessity and its •determinability in only one possible way. Historical faith (based on the experience of revelation) is valid only for those who have had access to the historical narrative it is based on; and like all empirical knowledge it carries with it the consciousness of its contingency, i.e. the consciousness not that such-and-such *must* be so but merely that it *is* so. Thus, historical faith can suffice for an ecclesiastical faith (of which there can be several), whereas only pure religious faith, based wholly on reason, can be recognised as necessary and therefore as the **one** faith that marks the true church.

When (in conformity with human reason's unavoidable limitation) an historical faith

- starts to behave like pure religion, but
- doesn't lose sight of the fact that it is only a vehicle for this religion; and
- having become ecclesiastical, carries with it something that drives it continually towards becoming

pure religious faith with, ultimately, no need for the historical vehicle,

the church emerging from this can be called the *true* church; but since there's no avoiding conflict [*Streit*] over historical dogmas it can only be called the church militant [*streitende*], though with the prospect of eventually coming into bloom as the changeless and all-unifying church triumphant! The faith of any individual who has a moral capacity (worthiness) for eternal happiness is called *saving* faith. [The German is *seligmachend* = 'blessed-making'.] This also has to be **one** faith; and it is discoverable in each of the various ecclesiastical faiths, in each of which it has the practical role of moving the faith in question toward the goal of pure religious faith. The faith of a religion of divine worship, on the other hand, is a drudgery-for-wages affair that can't be regarded as saving because it is not moral; a saving faith must be free and based on a pure disposition of the heart. Ecclesiastical faith thinks that one can become well-pleasing to God through actions. . . . which (though laborious) have no intrinsic moral worth and are motivated by fear or hope—actions that a bad man also can perform. . . . Saving faith involves two items on which a man's hope of salvation is conditioned:

(a) Something he can't do for himself, namely to undo legally (before a divine judge) things that he has done, and

(b) Something that he can and ought to do for himself, namely leading a new life that conforms to his duty.

Of these, (a) is the faith in an atonement—reparation for his guilt, redemption, reconciliation with God—while (b) is the faith that we can become well-pleasing to God by living in a morally good way from now on. The two conditions jointly constitute a single faith, and necessarily belong together. But the only way they could be necessarily linked if for one of them to be derived from the other, i.e. either

- the faith in the absolution from the guilt that we bear will lead to good life-conduct, or else
- the genuine and active disposition always to live in a morally good way will lead, according to the law of morally operating causes, to faith in that absolution.

And now we come to a remarkable antinomy [= 'serious threat of contradiction'] of human reason with itself. We need to •resolve this •by showing that it isn't really a contradiction, or at least to •neutralise it •by showing that it doesn't interfere with our thinking or our acting, if we are to determine •whether an historical (ecclesiastical) faith must always be present as an essential element of saving faith, over and above pure religious faith, or •whether it is only a vehicle which eventually—perhaps in the very remote future—can pass over into pure religious faith. Here, now, are the two sides of the antinomy.

(1) If it is assumed that atonement has been made for men's sins, it's easy •to see how every sinner would be glad to have his sins included, and •to see that he would have no qualms about becoming a believer (which means merely declaring that he wants to be included in the scope of the atonement). But it's impossible to see how a reasonable man who knows that he deserves punishment can seriously believe this:

To regard his guilt as annihilated, all he needs is to believe the announcement that an atonement has been performed for him, accepting this atonement *utiliter* (as the lawyers say); his guilt being so completely uprooted that good life-conduct, for which he hasn't before taken the least trouble, will from now on be the inevitable consequence of this belief and this acceptance of the benefit he has been offered.

It's true that self-love often does transform •a bare wish for a good that one doesn't and can't do anything to bring about

into •an optimistic hope, as though the thing wished for might be drawn into existence by one's mere longing for it; but ·the indented proposition can't be an example of that:· no thoughtful person can bring himself to believe it. The only way such a belief can be regarded as possible is through the man's thinking it has been planted in him by Heaven and thus doesn't need to be squared with his reason. If he can't think this, or if he is still too sincere to *contrive* such a confidence as a way of currying favour ·with God·, he can only believe. . . .that this transcendent atonement is conditional, i.e. that if he is to have the slightest ground for hope that he will benefit from it he must first improve his way of life as much as he can. Thus, historical knowledge of the atonement belongs to ecclesiastical faith, while the improved way of life, as a condition, belongs to pure moral faith; so **pure moral faith must take precedence over a belief in the atonement.**

(2) But if a man is corrupt by nature, how can he believe that by trying hard enough he can turn himself into a new man who is well-pleasing to God, when—conscious of the offences he is already guilty of—he still stands in the power of the bad principle and finds in himself no sufficient power to make improvements in himself? He has provoked justice against himself; if he can't believe

(a) that this provoked justice is reconciled through someone else's atonement ·on his behalf·, and therefore can't believe

(b) that he has been reborn (as it were) through his acceptance of (a), becoming united with the good principle and thus for the first time able to enter on a new course of life,

what basis has he for thinking that he might become a man who is pleasing to God? Thus **faith in a merit that isn't his but nevertheless reconciles him with God must precede**

every effort to act well. But this goes counter to the previous proposition. This conflict can't be resolved theoretically—e.g. through insight into. . . .the causes making a man good or bad—because it's a question that wholly transcends our reason's speculative abilities. [In that sentence, 'theoretical' and 'speculative' are both antonyms of 'practical'.] But a practical question arises: Where should we start? With (a) a faith in what God has done on our behalf, or with (b) what we are to do to become worthy of God's assistance (whatever this may be)? The right answer is (b)—there can't be any doubt about that.

The acceptance of (a) faith in a vicarious [see Glossary] atonement is in any case needed only for our •theoretical thinking—it's the only way we can make such absolution comprehensible to ourselves. In contrast, the need for (b) is •practical, and indeed purely moral. The only way we can have any hope of achieving salvation through someone else's atoning merit is by *qualifying* for it through our own efforts to fulfil every human duty—and this obedience must be the effect of our own action and not just another case of our passively submitting to an outside influence. The command to do our duty is unconditioned,so making a start on the moral improvement of our life is the supreme condition under which alone we can have a saving faith. [Kant then offers a difficult sentence repeating that ecclesiastical faith's concern with (a) belief in atonement is a •theoretical matter whereas (b) pure religious faith is •practical and therefore has primacy in the present context.]

This could be noted here: In the ecclesiastical faith's approach, (a) faith in a vicarious atonement is something man has a **duty** to acquire, whereas (b) faith in good life-conduct is brought about through a higher influence and comes to him as **grace**. According to pure religious faith the order is reversed. For according to it (b) the good course of life, as the highest condition of grace, is unconditioned **duty**,

whereas **(a)** atonement from on high is purely a matter of **grace**. Ecclesiastical faith is accused (often not unjustly) of superstition in the service of God, in which religion can be combined with a blameworthy way of life. And pure religious faith is accused of naturalistic unbelief, which combines a way of life that may be otherwise exemplary with indifference or even hostility to all revelation. This combination would cut the knot by means of a practical maxim, instead of disentangling it theoretically—and the latter procedure is permitted in religious questions. Here now is something that can satisfy the theoretical demand.

The living faith in the archetype of God-pleasing humanity (faith in the son of God) is bound up, in itself, with a moral idea of reason that serves us not only as a •guide-line but also as an •incentive; so it doesn't matter whether I start with it as a rational [see Glossary] faith, or with the principle of a morally good course of life.

In contrast with that, the faith in that very same archetype in its *appearance* (faith in the God-man) is an empirical (historical) faith, and isn't equivalent to the principle of the morally good course of life (which must be wholly rational); and it would be a totally different matter to start with *that* faith¹ and try to deduce the good course of life from it. So there would be a contradiction between the two propositions above. [That is, the two answers to the question 'Which should come first—•belief that an act of atonement has been performed or •resolution to live a morally good life?'] But what it is about the appearance of the God-man that constitutes the real object of saving faith is not

the aspects of him that strike the senses and can be known through experience,

but rather

the archetype contained in our reason that we slide in under him (because so far as we can discover he conforms to it).

And such a faith doesn't differ from the principle of a course of life well-pleasing to God.

So we don't have here **two** intrinsically different principles such that starting from one would take one in the opposite direction to starting from the other. Rather, we have **one** practical idea from which we take our start, this idea representing the archetype •now as found in God and emanating from him, and •now as found in us, but either way as the standard for our way of life. There only *seemed* to be an antinomy, because **one** practical idea taken in different references was mistaken for **two** principles. But if it were maintained that the condition of the only saving faith is to have the historical belief that such an appearance really did occur in the world on a single occasion, then there would, indeed, be two different principles (one empirical, the other rational [see Glossary]); and the corresponding maxims regarding which we should start from really would conflict with one another—a conflict that no-one's reason could ever resolve.

[In the indented sentence just below, 'rendered satisfaction for' translates a verb-phrase that can ordinarily be translated as 'atone for'; but the latter is wrong here, because you can't speak of someone as 'atoning for' his dutiful conduct!] This proposition:

Even if we are living a morally good life, to have any hope of being saved we must **believe** that there was once a man (of whom reason tells us nothing) who through his holiness and merit rendered satisfaction both for his own performance of his duty and for the failures in duty of all others

¹ † Which must have historical evidence of the existence of such a person.

says something very different from this:

We must put all our strength into working for the holy disposition of a God-pleasing course of life if we are to be able to **believe** that God's love towards man (already assured us through reason) will—because of the upright disposition—compensate *somehow* for our moral failures.

The first belief is not in the power of everyone (even of the unlearned). We know from history that all forms of religion have included this conflict between two principles of faith: all religions have involved expiation—'making good for, rendering satisfaction for'—of some kind or other; and in all of them the moral predisposition in each man has let its demands be heard. Yet the priests have always complained more than the moralists:

- the priests protesting loudly (and calling on the authorities to check the mischief) against the neglect of divine worship, which was instituted to reconcile the people with Heaven and to guard the state from misfortune;
- the moralists complaining about the decline of morals, which they insist is due to the means of absolution by which the priests have made it easy for anyone to be reconciled with the Deity over the grossest vices.

Indeed, it seems inevitable that the moralists' complaint will be right concerning any faith according to which an inexhaustible fund is already available for the payment of past and future debts [see Glossary], so that a man has only to reach out (and every time his conscience speaks, he *will* reach out!) to be debt-free, while he can postpone resolving upon a good course of life until he is clear of those debts. This faith might be portrayed 'by its devotees' as having such a special power and such a mystical (or magical) influence that—although as far as we know it is merely historical—it

can make a man better all through (make a new man of him) if he yields himself to it and to the feelings bound up with it. But then the faith would have to be regarded as imparted and inspired directly by Heaven (through the historical faith, which would be part of the package); and everything would come down to an unconditional decree of God, even including the moral constitution of 'each individual' man: 'He has mercy on those whom he wants to have mercy on, and he hardens 'the hearts of' those whom he wants to harden' [Romans 9:18], which, taken strictly literally, is the *salto mortale* [Italian = 'death-leap'] of human reason.

•START OF FOOTNOTE•

The statement about 'hardening' might be interpreted as follows. No-one can say with certainty why this man becomes good, that man bad (both comparatively), because the relevant predisposition often seems to be present at birth, and because contingencies of life

the next phrase: *für die niemand kann*

literally meaning: for which no-one can

really meaning?: for which no-one can be held responsible seem to tip the scale; any more than one can say what a man may develop into. So we must leave all this to the judgment of the one who sees everything, which is expressed in this text 'about 'hardening' as though his decree, pronounced on men before they were born, had assigned to each the role he would some day play. When the creator of the world is thought of in terms of human senses 'and thus as being *in time*', his •seeing in advance the future course of events is also his •fixing what that source of events will be. But in the suprasensible order of things, according to the laws of freedom where time drops out, it is only an *all-seeing knowledge*; but it still isn't possible to explain why one man acts in one way and another in the opposite way, reconciling

any causal explanation that we might give with the freedom of the will.

·END OF FOOTNOTE·

So a necessary consequence of the physical predisposition in us, and at the same time of our moral predisposition that is the basis and the interpreter of all religion, is that religion should eventually cut loose from all empirical determining bases and from all statutes that depend on history—statutes which through the agency of ecclesiastical faith provisionally unite men for good purposes—so that at last the pure religion of reason will rule over everything, ‘so that God may be all in all’ [1 *Corinthians* 15:28]. The membranes making the embryonic sac within which the embryo first developed into a man must be laid aside when it—though it is now *he*—is to come into the light of day. The leading-string of holy tradition with its appendages of statutes and observances, which in its time did good service, becomes dispensable bit by bit until, when man is entering on his adolescence, it becomes a fetter. [Behind the next sentence is this: ‘When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things’ (1 *Corinthians* 13:11). Note Kant’s indication that this paragraph is about the growing-up not of each individual man but of the human species.] While he (the human species) was a child he was clever as a child, and managed to bring together statutes that were bestowed on him without his cooperation, scholarship, and a philosophy subservient to the church; but ‘now that he is a man he puts away childish things’. The humiliating distinction between laity and clergy disappears, and true freedom gives rise to equality; but it doesn’t lead to anarchy, because each person in obeying the (non-statutory) law that he prescribes to himself must regard this law as the will of the world’s ruler, which has been revealed to him through reason—a will which by invisible

means unites everyone under one common government, something that the visible church had done poorly. This can’t be expected from an external revolution, because such an upheaval tempestuously and violently produces an effect that very much depends on circumstances, and any mistakes that it makes in constructing a new constitution will be put up with through centuries because they can’t be remedied except perhaps by a new (and always dangerous) revolution. That transition to the new order of affairs must be based on the principle of the pure religion of reason, as a continuous divine revelation though not an empirical one. [In that sentence, ‘based on the principle’ seems to be best understood as ‘driven by the principle’ [see Glossary]. Also in the next paragraph: the topic seems to be not the growing acceptance of a proposition but rather the ongoing deepening and widening of a process.] Once this transition has been grasped through mature reflection, it is carried out—insofar as this is something that human beings are to do—through gradually advancing reform. As for revolutions that might shorten this process, they are left to providence and can’t be deliberately created without damage to freedom.

Once the principle of the gradual transition of ecclesiastical faith to the universal religion of reason, and so to a (divine) ethical state on earth, has spread and in some places been publicly acknowledged, we are entitled to say that ‘the kingdom of God is come unto us’ [adapted from *Matthew* 12:28], although the actual establishment of this state is still infinitely far off. Since this principle contains the basis for a continual approach towards that perfection, the whole thing is invisibly contained in it—as in a developing seed that will go on to produce more seeds—and will eventually enlighten and rule the world. Everyone’s natural predisposition includes the basis for insight into what is true and good, as well as for a heartfelt concern for it; and when what is true

and good becomes public it doesn't fail to communicate itself far and wide, on the strength of its natural affinity with the moral predisposition of reason-possessing beings generally. The occasional civil/political restraints that might hinder its spread actually help it; they bind men's spirits all the more closely with the good (which never leaves their thoughts once they have cast their eyes on it).¹

* * *

Such, therefore, is the activity of the good principle, not noticed by human eyes but always at work, erecting for itself in the human race, regarded as a commonwealth under laws of virtue, a power and kingdom that sustains the victory over evil and, under its own sovereignty, assures the world of an eternal peace.

2. Historical account of the gradual establishment of the dominion of the good principle on Earth

We can't expect a universal history of religion (in the strictest sense of that word) among men on earth. Being based on pure moral faith, religion has no *public* status, and each man has to look *within himself* to know how far he has gone with it. We can look for a universal historical account of ecclesiastical faith, an account in which its varied and changeable form is compared with the single, unchanging, pure religious faith. At the point where ecclesiastical faith publicly recognises its dependence on the restricting conditions of pure religion and its need to conform to them, the universal church starts to develop into an ethical state of God and to advance towards the completion of this state under the push of a steady principle that is one and the same for all men and all times. We can see in advance that this history will be nothing but a chronicle of the perpetual battle between the faith of divine worship and the moral faith of religion. People are inclined to give primacy to the

¹ We can maintain ecclesiastical faith's work as a vehicle, and not reject the services it requires or attack the faith itself, while still refusing to let it—as a delusion about the duty to worship God—have any influence on the concept of genuine (i.e. moral) religion. [In the remainder of this horribly complicated sentence Kant says, in effect, that if ecclesiastical faith isn't allowed to affect real religion then there can be an influence in the other direction, so that in due course all the different versions of ecclesiastical faith can be drawn together into one by 'the basic principles of the one and only religion of reason'.] The teachers of all the dogmas and observances of the various statutory forms of belief should direct their interpretations to this end, so that eventually. . . . the form of a debasing device for constraining the faithful can be exchanged, by unanimous consent, for an ecclesiastical form that squares with the dignity of a moral religion, namely the religion of a free faith. How are we to combine a unity of ecclesiastical belief with freedom in matters of faith? That's a problem that the idea of the objective unity of the religion of reason continually urges us. . . . to solve; though when we take human nature into account there seems to be little hope of solving it in a visible church. It—i.e. a unitary church accompanied by religious freedom—is an idea of reason: we don't know what it would look like in the empirical world, but it has objective reality as a practical regulative [see Glossary] principle which drives us towards this end, i.e. the unity of the pure religion of reason. In this it is like the political idea of the rights of a state considered in relation relate to an international law that is universal and *has power*. Experience tells us 'Don't waste time hoping for *that* to happen'. A propensity seems to have been implanted (perhaps deliberately) in the human race causing every single state to do its best to subjugate every other state and establish a universal monarchy, but when it has reached a certain size to break up of its own accord into smaller states. In the same way, every church cherishes the proud pretension of becoming a church universal, but when it has extended itself and started to rule universally a principle [see Glossary] of dissolution and schism into different sects at once shows itself. . . .

former of these, as historical faith; but •the latter has never given up its claim to priority on the grounds that it is the only faith that improves the soul—a claim that it will certainly, some day, openly announce.

[In what follows, ‘occasional causes’ of *x* are things that cause *x* to have some of its superficial or inessential features; similarly with ‘occasion’, lower down. The corresponding German words occur in the present work only this once.] This historical account can’t have unity unless it is confined to the part of the human race in which the predisposition to the unity of the universal church has already developed far enough for at least the *question* of the difference between the faiths of reason and of history to have been publicly raised and treated as a matter of great moral importance; for the history of the dogmas of different peoples whose faiths aren’t inter-connected can’t say anything about church unity. Here’s something that can happen:

Within a certain populace a dominant faith is replaced by a new and considerably different one, the earlier faith providing the occasional causes of the new one; and that is *not* an example of church unity. If we are to count a series of different types of belief as states of a single church, there must be a unity of *principle* among them—a single *thrust* driving the series along. My present topic is the history of that single church.

So the church whose history we are to study is one that carried with it, from the outset, the seed and the principles of the objective unity of the true and universal religious faith to which it is gradually approximating. For a start: it is evident that the Jewish faith has no essential connection—no unity according to concepts—with this (Christian) ecclesiastical faith whose history we want to examine, although it immediately preceded it and provided the physical occasion for its establishment.

The Jewish faith was originally set up as a collection of merely statutory [see Glossary] laws, with a political organisation based on them; any moral items added to it then or later emphatically *don’t* belong to Judaism as such. Judaism is really not a religion at all but merely a union of a number of people who, because they belonged to a single stock, formed themselves into •a commonwealth under purely political laws, and not into •a church. Indeed, it was intended to be merely an earthly state, so that if the course of events ever broke it apart it would still retain as part of its very essence the political faith in its eventually being re-established with the coming of the Messiah. This political organisation doesn’t qualify as a religious organisation merely because it is based on a theocracy—an aristocracy of priests or leaders claiming to get instructions directly from God—in which God is honoured merely as an earthly governor who says nothing about conscience and makes no claims on it. The proof that Judaism has not allowed its organisation to become religious is clear. **(1)** All its commands are of the kind that a political organisation can insist on and lay down as laws to be enforced, because they relate to merely external actions. The ten commandments would have counted by reason’s standards as *ethical* even if they hadn’t been given publicly; but the giving of them was aimed only at outer conduct, and wasn’t an attempt to get obedience by making demands on the moral disposition, which is where Christianity later placed its main emphasis. **(2)** All the consequences of keeping or breaking these laws, all rewards or punishments, are ones that can affect everyone in the world; and they aren’t awarded according to ethical standards because both rewards and punishments were to extend to a posterity that had taken no practical part in these deeds or misdeeds. In a political set-up this can indeed be an effective way to get obedience, but ethically it is utterly unfair. Furthermore,

it's unthinkable that any religion should lack any belief in a future life; so Judaism in its pure form, which *does* lack such a belief, is not a religious faith at all. And add this:

We can hardly doubt that the Jews were like other peoples, including the most primitive, in having a belief in a future life and therefore in a heaven and a hell; for the universal moral predisposition in human nature forces this belief on everyone. So the law-giver of the Jewish people, even though he is represented as God himself, must have *deliberately* avoided paying the slightest attention to the future life.

This shows that what he aimed to found was not an •ethical commonwealth but only a •political one—in which it would be stupid and pointless to talk of rewards and punishments that can't become apparent here in this life. We also can't doubt that the Jews later on, each for himself, formed some sort of religious faith that came to be mixed in with the articles of their statutory belief; but that religious faith has never been an integral part of the legislation of Judaism. (3) So far from Judaism's being •a stage in the development of the universal church, or •due eventually to *be* the universal church, it actually excluded from its community the entire human race, on the ground that the community was a special people chosen by God for himself—which showed towards all other peoples enmity toward that the others returned. [The rather long remainder of this paragraph warns against counting Judaism as a genuine religion on the grounds that it was monotheistic. Kant sketches a form of polytheism—one in which each of the 'undergods' favours only 'the man who cherishes virtue with all his heart'—as being more genuinely religious than one form, the Judaic form, of monotheism.]

If our general church history is to constitute a system, therefore, we have to start with the origin of Christianity—which •completely broke with the Judaism within which

it sprang up, •based itself on a wholly new principle, and •brought about a radical revolution in doctrines of faith. The effort that teachers of Christianity now put (and perhaps always did put) into linking Judaism with Christianity by trying to get us to regard the new faith as a mere continuation of the old. . . . reveal what they have been up to: they have been looking for the best way—without directly offending the people's prejudices—to *introduce a purely moral religion* in place of the old worship that the people were used to. The subsequent dispensing with the bodily sign that marked off this people from others [presumably male circumcision] is good evidence that the new faith, not bound to the statutes of the old or indeed to any statutes whatever, was to contain a religion valid for the world and not for a single people.

Thus Christianity arose suddenly, though not unprepared for, from Judaism.

It wasn't the patriarchal and pure Judaism resting solely on its political constitution (which by that time was sorely unsettled); it already had moral doctrines and a religious faith publicly mixed in with it, because this otherwise ignorant people had reached a stage where much foreign (Greek) wisdom got through to it. This wisdom presumably had the further effect of enlightening Judaism with concepts of virtue and, despite the burden of its dogmatic faith, of preparing it for revolution; and the opportunity for this was provided by the diminished power of the priests, who had come under the rule of a people (•the Romans•) who didn't care one way or the other about any foreign popular beliefs.

The teacher of the Gospel announced himself as sent from Heaven. As one worthy of such a mission, he declared that servile belief (with holy days, confessions and rituals) is essentially empty, and that the only saving faith is the moral

faith that alone makes men holy ‘as their father in Heaven is holy’ [adapted from *Matthew 5:48*] and proves its genuineness by a good course of life. After he had given, in his own person, through teaching and suffering—even to the extent of unmerited yet meritorious death¹—an example conforming to the archetype of a God-pleasing man, he is represented as returning to Heaven from which he had come. He left behind him, by word of mouth, his last will. . . .; and trusting in the power of the memory of his merit, teaching, and example, he was able to say that ‘he (the ideal of God-pleasing humanity) would still be with his disciples, even to the end of the world’ [adapted from *Matthew 28:20*]. To this teaching, which

if it were a question of historical belief involving the origin and (perhaps otherworldly) rank of his person, would need verification through miracles,

but which

as merely belonging to moral soul-improving faith, can dispense with all such proofs of its truth,

miracles and mysteries are attached in a holy book. They were made known through another miracle; this demands a trust in history; and *that* can be authenticated, and its

meaning and significance assured, only by scholarship.

Every faith which as an historical faith bases itself on books needs for its authentication a scholarly public in which it can be, as it were, *checked by writers who lived in those times*—ones who •aren’t suspected of conspiring in any way with the first disseminators of the faith, and who •are connected with our present-day scholarship by a continuous tradition. The pure faith of reason, in contrast, needs no such warrant; it proves *itself*. Now, at the time of that revolution, the people (the Romans) who ruled the Jews and had spread into their domain contained a scholarly public from whom the history of the political events of that period has been handed down to us through an unbroken series of writers. The Romans didn’t care much about the religious beliefs of their non-Roman subjects, but they weren’t at all incredulous about reports of miracles’ having occurred publicly in their territories. Yet they produced no contemporary record of •the public religious (·Christian·) revolution among their subject people or of •the miracles that led to it. It wasn’t until more than a generation later that they inquired into into the nature of this change of faith that they

¹ With which the public narrative about his life ends. . . . The added, less public, narrative about subsequent events occurring in the presence only of his intimates, namely his *resurrection* and *ascension*—which, if taken merely as ideas of reason, signify the start of another life and entrance into the seat of salvation, i.e. into the society of all those who are good—can’t be put to use on behalf of religion within the limits of bare reason, no matter how it is evaluated as history. This is not at all because this added bit is an historical narrative (for the preceding narrative is that also) but because, taken literally, it involves the concept of the materiality of all *Weltwesen* [see Glossary]. This is well suited to man’s sense-related way of thinking, but it is burdensome to reason in its **belief about the future**. This concept involves •the psychological materialism which says that a single person can stay in existence only when associated with a single body; and •the cosmological materialism according to which only matter can be present in the world (which must therefore be spatial). As against this, the hypothesis that all *Weltwesen* with reason are spirits—•that a person can remain alive when his body is dead and buried, and •that a man, as a spirit,. . . .can reach the seat of the blessed without having to be transported to some place in the endless space that surrounds the earth. . . .—is more congenial to reason. Not only because of the impossibility of making sense of *matter that thinks*, but also, even more, because it makes our existence after death contingent, ‘accident-prone’, by making it depend on a certain lump of matter’s holding together in a certain form, whereas reason can suppose that a simple substance can stay in existence because of its own nature. [This is the **belief about the future** mentioned earlier.] On the supposition of spirituality, reason is freed from the prospect of dragging along through eternity a body. . . .consisting of the same stuff that constitutes the basis of its organisation—stuff that in life it never had any great love for. . . .

hadn't even known about until then (although it had hardly happened in private!); but they didn't inquire into its first beginning in order to look it up in their own records—i.e. in order to know *what to look for*. So the history of Christianity, from its beginning up to the time when it constituted its own scholarly public, lies in the dark. We don't know how the teaching of Christianity affected the morality of its first adherents, whether the first Christians really were morally improved men or just ordinary folk. From the time when the dark starts to lift, namely when Christianity became a scholarly public itself, or at least part of the universal scholarly public, its history has not shown it having the beneficent effect that is to be expected of a moral religion. This history tells us

—how the mystical fanaticism in the lives of hermits and monks, and the glorification of the holiness of celibacy, made ever so many people useless to the world;

—how alleged miracles accompanying all this burdened the people with heavy chains under a blind superstition;

—how, with a hierarchy forcing itself on free men, the dreadful voice of *orthodoxy* was heard from the mouths of pretentious scriptural expositors who had been 'called' to this work, and divided the Christian world into embittered parties over matters of faith on which absolutely no general agreement can be reached without appeal to pure reason as the expositor;

—how in the East, where the state meddled in a ludicrous way with the religious statutes of the priests and *Pfaffentum* [see Glossary], instead of confining them to the teacher's status that they are always inclined to leave in order to become rulers, this state inevitably became prey to foreign enemies who eventually put an end to its prevailing faith;

—how in the West, where the faith had set up its own throne independently of worldly power, the civil order and the sciences that sustain it were thrown into confusion and rendered impotent by a supposed 'viceroy of God' [the Pope];

—how the two Christian parts of the world were attacked by barbarians, in the way dying plants and animals attract destructive insects to complete their dissolution;

—how in the West the spiritual head—the aforementioned Pope or viceroy of God—ruled and disciplined kings, like children, by means of the magic wand of his threat of excommunication, inciting them to conduct depopulating wars in another part of the world (the Crusades), to feud with one another, to arouse the rebellion of subjects against those in authority over them, and to have bloodthirsty hatred against such of their fellows in so-called 'universal Christianity' as thought differently from how they did;

—how the root of this discord, which is still kept from violent outbreaks only by political interest, lies hidden in the principle [see Glossary] of a despotic ecclesiastical faith, and still gives cause for fear of events like those.

This history of Christianity (which as an historical faith couldn't have gone differently), when surveyed all at once like looking at a painting, might well justify the exclamation 'How greatly religion was able to persuade him to do evil!' [Lucretius, writing about Agamemnon's sacrificing his daughter to a goddess for military reasons], if the way Christianity was *founded* didn't make it shinningly clear that the original aim was to introduce a pure religious faith about which there can't be any conflict of opinions. What went wrong was this: something that was meant merely

to introduce this pure religious faith, i.e. to address a nation that was accustomed to the old historical faith and win it over, using that nation's own prejudices

came through a bad propensity of human nature to be made the foundation of a universal world-religion.

In the entire known history of the church up to now, which period is the best? I have no hesitation in answering *the present*, and here is why. The seed of the true religious faith is now being sown in the Christian world—not by many, but *publicly*—and if it is allowed to grow unhindered, we can expect to get closer and closer to having the church that unites all men for ever and constitutes the visible representation (the schema) of an invisible kingdom of God on earth. In matters which by their nature ought to be moral and soul-improving, reason •has freed itself from the burden of a faith that always depends what the interpreters choose to say, and •has laid down two principles. They are accepted (though not everywhere publicly) by *all* those who venerate religion in this portion of the world. **(1)** The principle of reasonable modesty in statements about anything relating to ‘revelation’. There’s a three-part case for this. •It’s undeniable that a scripture whose practical content contains much that is godly **may** (with respect to what is historical in it) be regarded as a genuinely divine revelation. •Also, the uniting of men into one religion can’t be brought about or made permanent without a holy book and an ecclesiastical faith based on it. •And given the amount that people know, these days, we can hardly expect a new revelation, ushered in with new miracles. So the most reasonable and appropriate thing to do from now on is to use *the book we have* as the basis for ecclesiastical instruction, not cheapening it by useless or mischievous attacks, but not requiring anyone

to believe it as a requirement for salvation. **(2)** The sacred narrative is used solely on behalf of ecclesiastical faith, so in itself it doesn’t and shouldn’t affect what moral maxims are adopted; and its role is to make vivid ecclesiastical faith’s true object (virtue striving toward holiness); so this narrative must always be taught and explained in the interest of morality; and yet it must be inculcated painstakingly and (mainly because the common man has an enduring tendency to sink into passive belief)¹ *repeatedly* that true religion is to consist not in knowing or considering what God may have done for our salvation but in what we must do to become worthy of it. And what is that? It can only be whatever has in itself undoubted and unconditional worth; that alone can make us well-pleasing to God, and every man can become wholly certain of it without any scriptural learning whatever. [Kant says that ‘it is the duty of rulers not to prevent •these two basic principles from becoming public’, and then goes on to excoriate the rulers who flout •them. He speaks of them as ‘pushing into the process of divine providence’ so as to protect historical doctrines that aren’t more than probable in the first place, and remarks that they are •running risks and (unlike the person who isn’t responsible for defects in the faith he was brought up in) •taking on a heavy responsibility. Their procedure involves threats or promises concerning civil advantages; this exposes their subjects’ consciences to ‘temptation’; so it ‘does damage to a freedom which in this case is holy’ and it ‘can scarcely provide good citizens for the state’.]

¹ One of the causes of this tendency lies in the principle of security: that the defects of a religion in which I am born and brought up, not having chosen my instruction or made any difference to it through my own reasoning, are not my responsibility but that of my publicly appointed instructors or teachers. This is a reason why we don’t easily give our approval to a man’s publicly switching religions, though there’s also another (and deeper) reason: amid the uncertainty that everyone feels about which among the historical faiths is the right one, and with the moral faith being everywhere the same, it seems unnecessary to make a fuss about this.

·START OF FOOTNOTE ABOUT 'TEMPTATION'·

When a government tries to clear itself of the charge of coercing people's consciences because it only prohibits the public utterance of religious opinions and lets everyone think what he likes in private, we commonly laugh at this on the grounds that here the government isn't granting any freedom because it can't prevent private thought. But what the greatest secular power *can't* do spiritual power *can*—namely forbid thought itself and actually prevent it. It can even require its political superiors not even to *think* differently from what it prescribes. Men are drawn to the servile faith of divine *worship*, regarding it as not only •more important than the moral faith in which one serves God by doing one's duty but •more important than *anything*; so it is always easy for the custodians of orthodoxy, the pastors, to instil into their flock a pious terror of the slightest swerving from certain history-based dogmas and even of all investigation, to the point where the flock don't trust themselves to allow a doubt to arise in their minds regarding the doctrines that have been forced on them, because this would be tantamount to lending an ear to the evil spirit. . . . This forcing of conscience is bad enough (for it leads to inner hypocrisy), but it's not as bad as the restriction of external freedom of belief. The inner compulsion must of itself gradually disappear through the progress of moral insight and the consciousness of one's own freedom, from which alone true respect for duty can arise; whereas that external pressure hinders all spontaneous advances in the ethical commonwealth of believers that constitutes the essence of the true church, and subjects the church's form to purely political ordinances.

·END OF FOOTNOTE·

Among those who offer themselves for the prevention of such a free development of godly predispositions to the world's

highest good, . . . who would wish to go through with this after thinking it over in consultation with his conscience? He would have to answer for all the evil that might arise from such forcible encroachments: the advance in goodness intended by the world's ruler can never be wholly destroyed through human power or human contrivance, but it might be held back for a long time—and even made to run backwards.

This historical account. . . depicts not only •the process of the kingdom of Heaven's getting ever nearer, sometimes slowed down but never stopped, but also but also •its arriving. When to this narrative is added (in *Revelations*) a prophecy. . . .

- of the completion of this great world-change, in the image of a visible kingdom of God on earth (under the government of his representative and viceroy, again descended to earth),
- of the happiness that is to be enjoyed under him in this world after the rebels who try yet again to resist him are separated and expelled, and
- of the annihilation of these rebels and their leader,

so that the account closes with *the end of the world*, this can be interpreted as a symbolic representation intended merely to enliven hope and courage and to intensify our work for the coming of the kingdom of Heaven. The teacher of the Gospel revealed the kingdom of God on earth to his disciples only in its glorious, soul-elevating moral aspect—in terms of the value of citizenship in a divine state—and told them what they had to do not only •to achieve it for themselves but •to unite with all others of the same mind and as far as possible with the entire human race. As for happiness—the other part of what man inevitably wishes for—he told them not to count on having it in their life on earth. They should prepare for the greatest tribulations and sacrifices, he said, but added (since no man can be expected wholly to renounce the physical

element in happiness): ‘Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven’ [*Matthew* 5:12]. The addition to the history of the church ·in *Revelations*·, dealing with man’s future and final destiny, depicts men as ultimately triumphant—crowned with happiness while still here on earth, with all obstacles overcome. The separation of good people from bad ones,

which wouldn’t have helped the church’s progress toward its completion if it had happened back then (because the mixing of the two was needed, partly to spur the good on to virtue, partly to withdraw the bad from evil through the others’ example),

is represented as *following* the completed establishment of the divine state, as its last consequence. And to this is added, as the final proof of the state’s stability and power, its victory over all external foes, who are also regarded as forming a state (the state of Hell). With this all earthly life comes to an end, in that ‘the last enemy (of good men), death, is destroyed’ [adapted from 1 *Corinthians* 15:26]; and immortality starts for both parties, with salvation for one and damnation for the other. The very form of a church is dissolved, the viceroy becomes at one with man who is raised up to his level as a citizen of Heaven, and so God is all in all.¹

This depiction of the ‘history’ of the future presents a beautiful ideal [see Glossary] of the moral world-epoch, brought about by the introduction of true universal religion. [Kant speaks of this ‘world-epoch’ as something •that the faithful

have foreseen, •that we can’t *absehen*—see? conceive?—as an empirical event, but •that we can prepare for by continually progressing toward the highest good possible on earth, this being a natural moral process with nothing mystical about it. He continues:] The appearance of the anti-Christ, chiliasm [see Glossary], and the announcement that the end of the world is near—all these can take on, before reason, their right symbolic meaning; and representing the end of the world as an event that isn’t to be seen in advance. . . . admirably expresses the necessity to be ready at all times for the end and indeed. . . . always to regard ourselves as chosen citizens of a divine (ethical) state. ‘When, therefore, cometh the kingdom of God?’ ‘The kingdom of God cometh not in visible form. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! *For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you*’ (*Luke* 17:21–2).

·START OF A LONG FOOTNOTE·

† A kingdom of God is being represented here not •according to a particular covenant (i.e. not as messianic) but •as a moral kingdom (knowable through bare reason). The kingdom according to the covenant had to draw its proofs from history; and history divides into •the messianic kingdom according to the old covenant and •the messianic kingdom according to the new covenant. The followers of the former (the Jews) have continued to maintain themselves as such, though scattered throughout the world; whereas the faith of other religious communities has usually been fused with the

¹ This expression (if we set aside what is mysterious, what goes beyond the limits of all possible experience, and what belongs merely to sacred history and so has no practical significance) can be taken to mean that historical faith, which. . . . needs a sacred book as a leading-string for men, but for just that reason hinders the unity and universality of the church, will come to an end and pass over into a pure religious faith that is equally obvious to the whole world. We ought to be working even now to produce this result by continuously freeing the pure religion of reason from its present shell, which can’t yet be dispensed with entirely.

† Not working for it to *end* (because as a vehicle it may perhaps always be useful and necessary), but working for it to *be able to come to an end*, which would be a sign of the inner stability of the pure moral faith.

faith of the people among whom they have been scattered. Many people find this phenomenon of Jewish solidarity so remarkable that they think it can't be happening in the course of nature and must be an extraordinary dispensation for a special divine purpose. But a people with a written religion (sacred books) never fuses in one faith with peoples (like the Roman Empire, then the entire civilised world) that have no such books but merely rites; sooner or later, it makes proselytes. That is why the Jews, after the Babylonian captivity (following which, it seems, their sacred books were for the first time read publicly), were no longer criticised for having an inclination to run after strange gods. . . . Thus also the Parsees, adherents of the religion of Zoroaster, have kept their faith up to the present despite their dispersion, because their high priests possessed the Zendavesta, the holy book of their faith. In contrast with that, the Hindus who under the name of 'gypsies' are scattered far and wide haven't avoided mixing with foreign faiths, because they came from the dregs of the people, the *Pariahs*, who aren't allowed to read in the sacred books of the Hindus. [In the original, the rest of this footnote is unclear through over-compression. The present version eases it out a bit in ways that aren't all marked by small dots.] The achievement of the Jews in holding together was helped by Christianity and Islam, especially the former, in the following way:

It may often have happened that the Jews in their wanderings lost the skill to read their sacred books and thus the desire to possess them, retaining only the memory of having formerly owned them and not having the books themselves. When this happened, the Jews could recover their old documents from the Christians, whose religion presupposes the Jewish faith and its sacred books. Islam declares that those books have been falsified, but it still has them in its

foundations; so Moslems may have helped the Jews in this same way, though not as much as the Christians. (That's why we don't find Jews in countries that are neither Christian nor Moslem, except for a few on the Malabar coast of India and possibly a community in China (and the Malabar group may have had commercial relations with their co-religionists in Arabia); though it can't be doubted that they spread throughout those rich lands. Because of the lack of all kinship between their faith and the types of belief found there, making it harder for them to stay in touch with their sacred books, they eventually forgot their own faith.) As for the Jewish people and their religion that *did* hold together under such difficult circumstances in Christian and Moslem lands, it's a risky business drawing edifying conclusions from that, because both sides think it justifies their own opinions. One man sees in the survival of the people to which he belongs, and of its ancient faith that remained unmixed despite being dispersed among such a variety of peoples, the proof of a special beneficent providence saving this people for a future kingdom on earth; the other sees only the warning ruins of a disrupted state that set itself against the coming of the kingdom of Heaven—ruins that are sustained by a special providence, partly to keep alive the memory of the ancient prophecy of a messiah arising from this people, and partly to make this people an example of punitive justice because it obstinately tried to create a political and not a moral concept of the messiah.

•END OF FOOTNOTE•

General remark

[On page 27 Kant says that this General remark could be entitled 'Mysteries'.]

Exploring the inner nature of any kind of religious faith invariably leads one to a mystery, i.e. something holy that each individual can encounter but that can't be made known publicly, i.e. talked about among everyone. Because it is holy it must be moral, and so an object of reason; and it must be knowable from within, well enough for practical use but not for theoretical use because then it would have to be something that no mystery is—capable of being shared with everyone and made known publicly.

Belief in something that we are nevertheless to regard as a holy mystery can be looked on as •divinely prompted or as •a pure rational faith. Unless we are forced by extreme need to adopt the first of these views, we shall make it our maxim to accept the second. Feelings are not knowledge and so don't indicate •the presence of• a mystery; and since mystery is related to reason but can't be talked about by everyone, each individual will have to search solely in his own reason for mysteries (if there ever is such a thing).

Are there such mysteries? It's impossible to answer this

a priori and objectively. So we'll have to search directly in the inner, subjective part of our moral predisposition to see whether we contain any such thing. But we shan't be entitled to count among the holy mysteries the grounds of morality; they are indeed inscrutable to us, but that's because we don't know their cause; morality *can* be talked about among everyone. Thus freedom, an attribute that man becomes aware of through the fact that his will can be determined by the unconditioned moral law, is no mystery, because the knowledge of it can be publicly shared; but the (to us inscrutable) basis for this attribute *is* a mystery because it isn't given to us as an object of knowledge. Yet this very freedom is the thing—the only thing—that when applied to the ultimate object of practical reason (the realisation of the idea of the moral purpose) leads us inevitably to holy mysteries.¹

The purely moral disposition is inseparably bound up with the idea of *the highest good*; and man himself can't bring this about (either the happiness it involves or the union of men necessary for the goal in its entirety); but he discovers within himself the duty to work towards this goal. So he finds himself impelled to believe in the cooperation or

¹ Similarly, the cause of the universal gravity of all matter in the world is unknown to us, so much so indeed that we can even see that we shall never know it, because the very concept of gravity presupposes a primary motive force unconditionally inhering in matter. [If the 'because' in that sentence seems puzzling, it's because in the sentence 'know' (mis)translates *erkennen*, whose meaning sprawls across 'detect', 'identify', 'perceive' and the like.] But gravity is no mystery, and can be made public to everyone because its law is well enough known. When Newton represents it as similar to divine omnipresence in the •world of• appearance, he isn't trying to explain it (for 'God existing in space' involves a contradiction); he is offering a high-flying analogy for how bodies come together to form a world-whole, attributing this union to an incorporeal cause. Trying to say more than this would be like trying to comprehend the ultimate principle [see Glossary] of the union of reason-equipped *Weltwesen* [see Glossary] into an ethical state, and to explain this in terms of that principle. All we know is the duty that draws us toward such a union; the possibility of the intended effect when we perform that duty lies wholly beyond the limits of our insight.—There are mysteries that are hidden things in nature, and there can be mysteries—*secrets*—in politics that aren't meant to be known publicly; but both can become known to us because they rest on empirical causes. There can be no mystery regarding what all men are in duty bound to know (namely, what is moral); the only genuine (i.e. holy) mystery of religion concerns things that we can't do and thus have no duty to do, things that God alone can do. it may be best for us merely to know and understand that there is such a mystery but not to comprehend it.

management of a moral ruler of the world, through which alone this goal can be reached. And now there opens up before him the abyss of a mystery about what if anything God may be doing about this. Meanwhile man knows concerning each duty nothing but what he must himself do in order to be worthy of that supplement which he doesn't know or, at least, doesn't understand.

This idea of a moral governor of the world is a task for our practical reason. We have to know not so much •what God is in himself (his nature) as •what he is for us as moral beings; though to know this we must assume his nature to include all the attributes—the unchangingness, omniscience, omnipotence, etc.—that are needed if he is to carry out perfectly what he wills to do. Apart from this we can know nothing about him.

The universal true religious belief that squares with this requirement of practical reason is belief in God **(i)** as the omnipotent creator of Heaven and Earth, i.e. morally as holy legislator, **(ii)** as preserver of the human race, its benevolent ruler and moral guardian, and **(iii)** as administrator of his own holy laws, i.e. as righteous judge. [Kant is of course here alluding to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. A little further down he will imply that this is a special case of

something that is built into any notion of a commonwealth, presumably thinking of legislator, executive, and judiciary.]

There's really no mystery in this tripartite belief; all it expresses is God's moral relation to the human race. It presents itself spontaneously to human reason everywhere, which is why it is found in the religion of most civilised peoples.¹ It is also present in the concept of a people regarded as a commonwealth, a concept that inevitably involves such a threefold higher power. Our present topic is the special case of an *ethical* commonwealth; that is why we can think of this threefold quality of the moral governor of the human race as combined in a single being, whereas in a juridico-civil state it has to be divided among three different subjects [here = 'branches of government'].²

This faith. . . has cleansed the moral relation of men to the supreme being from harmful anthropomorphism, and put it in harmony with the genuine morality of a people of God. It was first presented to the world through a particular body of doctrine, the Christian one; so we can call its promulgation a *revelation* of the faith that had until then been a mystery to men—this being their fault.

It says three things. **(1)** We are not to think of the supreme lawgiver as commanding mercifully or with forbearance

¹ In the sacred prophetic story of the events at the end of the world, the judge of the world (really he who will **select** and take under his dominion, as his own, those who belong to the kingdom of the good principle) is spoken of not as *God* but as *the Son of man* [see *Matthew* 26:64]. This seems to indicate that *humanity itself*, knowing its limitation and its frailty, will pronounce the sentence in this **selection** —a kindness •on God's part• that doesn't offend against justice.—In contrast, the judge of men—represented •in his divinity, . . . i.e. •as he speaks to our conscience according to the holy law that we acknowledge, . . . has to be thought of as passing judgment according to the rigour of the law. We don't know how much our frailty can be pleaded on our behalf; and all we see is our transgression, together with the consciousness of our freedom making us wholly to blame for our violation of duty. So we have no reason to assume that there will be any kindness in the judgment passed on us.

² † We can't explain why so many ancient peoples have this idea, unless it's that the idea is present universally in human reason whenever men think about civil government or (by analogy with that) of world government. [Kant sketches the trinities that he says were present in Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, the religion of ancient Egypt, and the religion of the Goths. He concludes:] Even the Jews seem to have followed these ideas during the last period of their hierarchical constitution. When the Pharisees complained about •Christ's calling himself a son of God, the main object of their complaint seems to have been not the doctrine that God had a son but only that •he claimed to be that son.

(indulgently) for men's weakness, or despotically and merely according to his unlimited right; and we're to think of his laws not •as being sheerly *chosen* and wholly unrelated to our concepts of morality, but •as being laws addressed to man's holiness. **(2)** We must think of his kindness as consisting not in •an unconditioned good-will toward his creatures but in •his first looking at their moral character, through which they could please him, and only then •compensating for the short-fall in what they have been able to do about this. **(3)** [Kant's formulation of the third condition is needlessly difficult. It says that we shouldn't think of God's justice •as capable of being softened by our pleading and wheedling; or at the other extreme •as absolute in such a way that no man will escape condemnation, but rather •as looking at how well or badly men have obeyed the law and compensating for any short-fall which, just because they are 'children of men' [adapted from *Mark* 3:28], they couldn't help.]—In brief, God wants to be served under three specifically different moral aspects. It's not a bad way of expressing this to name three different (not physically, but morally different) personalities of a single being. This symbol of faith expresses also the whole of pure moral religion. If the latter didn't have this three-part differentiation, it would risk degenerating into an anthropomorphic servile faith; because men tend to think of the deity as a human overlord, and human rulers usually don't separate these three qualities from one another but often mix and interchange them.

But if this faith (in a divine trinity) were regarded not merely as •representing a practical idea but as •describing what God is in himself, it would transcend all human concepts—something that couldn't be revealed to human intelligence, a *mystery*. Faith in it, regarded as an addition to theoretical knowledge of God's nature, would be merely the recognition of a symbol of ecclesiastical faith that is

quite incomprehensible to men; and if they think they do understand it, they must be understanding it anthropomorphically and thus doing nothing whatever for moral betterment. Something can be **(i)** a mystery (in one respect) yet **(ii)** but capable of being revealed (in another). The way this can happen—the *only* way—is for the thing to be **(ii)** thoroughly understood and seen into in a practical context but **(i)** transcending all our concepts when taken theologically as a statement about the object in itself. The topic I have been talking about is of this kind; it can be divided into three mysteries revealed to us through our reason.

(1) The mystery of **the calling** (of men, as citizens, to an ethical state). The only way we can think of ourselves as entirely unconditionally subject to God's laws is by seeing ourselves as created by him; just as we can see him as the ultimate source of all natural laws only because he created all natural objects. But it is absolutely incomprehensible to our reason how beings are to be *created* for a *free* use of their powers. According to the principle of causality, the actions of a being that has been brought into existence must be purely the upshots of causes placed in him by •his creator; so they are all determined by •that external cause, which means that he is not free. So God's holy legislation, which is addressed to free beings only, can't through the insight of our reason be squared with the concept of the creation of such beings; rather, we must regard them as already existing free beings who are determined not •through their dependence on nature by virtue of their creation, but •through a purely moral necessitation that laws of freedom allow for, i.e. a call to citizenship in a divine state. [As in Pluhar's translation, the phrase 'as already existing' assumes that Kant's *schon als existierende* was a slip for *als schon existierende*. The point is that in thinking of men as free we must think of them as a going concern, sidelining any thoughts of how they came into existence.] Thus the call to this goal is

•morally quite clear, while for •speculation the possibility of such a calling is an impenetrable mystery.

(2) The mystery of **atonement**. Man as we know him is corrupt, and doesn't in himself at all square with that holy law. Still, if God's goodness has as it were *called him into existence*, i.e. called him to exist in a particular manner (as a member of the kingdom of Heaven), God must have some way of making up for man's lack of what it takes to do this—making up for it out of the fullness of his own holiness. But this goes against *spontaneity*, which is presupposed in all the moral good or evil that a man can have about him. According to that presupposition, a man can't get the credit for a moral good if it comes not from himself but from something outside him. So far as reason can see, then, no-one can through the abundance of his own good conduct and through his own merit stand in for someone else; and if such vicarious [see Glossary] atonement is accepted, we would have to be assuming it only from the moral point of view, because no amount of reasoning can save it from being an unfathomable mystery.

(3) The mystery of **election**. Even if a man's atonement by •someone else is possible, his moral-faith acceptance of it is a determination of •his will toward good; which presupposes that he has a God-pleasing disposition, though his natural depravity won't let him produce it through his own efforts. But that a heavenly grace should

•assist man in this, granting that help to one man and not to another, not according to the merit of their conduct but by an unconditioned decree [= 'a decree that isn't based on anything']; and that

•one portion of our race should be destined for salvation, the other for eternal damnation,

—this again yields no concept of a divine justice but must be attributed to a wisdom whose rule is for us an utter mystery.

As regards these mysteries, so far as they concern everyone's moral biography—

how it happens that there is moral good or evil at all in the world, and (if the evil is present in everyone always) how out of evil good could spring up and be established in any man whatever, or why, when this occurs in some, others are excluded

—God has revealed nothing of this to us, and if he did we wouldn't understand it.¹ It's as though we tried to explain and make comprehensible to ourselves *what happens* when a man exercises his freedom; God has indeed revealed, through the moral law in us, how he want us to exercise our freedom; but the *causes* through which a free action does or doesn't occur on earth is something that he has left in obscurity—a darkness that must defeat any human investigation of how the laws of cause and effect come to

¹ † There are usually no qualms about requiring novices to believe in mysteries. The fact that we don't comprehend them, i.e. can't see into the possibility of their objective truth, could no more justify us in refusing to accept them than it could justify our not accepting, say, •*the ability of organisms to reproduce*, which none of us comprehends but which we can't on that account refuse to admit, even though it is and will remain a mystery to us. But we understand very well what •this expression means to say, and we have an empirical concept of this ability, together with the consciousness that there's no contradiction lurking in it. Now, with every mystery offered for our belief we are entitled to require that we understand what it means; and this isn't a matter of merely knowing the meaning of each word separately; rather, the words taken together in one concept must admit of a single meaning that we can make sense of. Might God could allow this knowledge to come to us through inspiration whenever we earnestly wish for it? That isn't thinkable; there's no way we can *get* this knowledge because our understanding isn't constructed in a way that would let us *contain* it.

bear on an historical event that arose from freedom.¹ But all that we need concerning the objective rule of our behaviour is adequately revealed to us (through reason and Scripture), and this revelation is comprehensible to all men alike.

Three things that reason, heart, and conscience teach us and urge us to accept:

- that man is called by the moral law to a good course of life;
- that through the unquenchable respect he has for this law he finds within himself a justification for trust in this good spirit and for assurance that he will be able to satisfy it somehow;
- that, comparing the last-named expectation with the stern command of the law, he must continually test himself as though summoned to account before a judge.

[In the second item, 'satisfy it' translates *ihm genug thun* which is cognate to *Genugthuung* which in this version is translated by 'atonement'.]—To demand that more than this be revealed to us is presumptuous, and if such a revelation were to occur, it couldn't rightly be counted as something that all mankind *needed*.

The great mystery that comprises in one formula all [three items] that I have mentioned can be made comprehensible to each man through his reason as a practical and necessary religious idea; but we can say that in its role as the moral basis of religion (especially a *public* religion) it was first revealed when it was publicly taught and made the symbol of a wholly new religious epoch. [To make sure that the linking 'but' is understood: the mystery is built into everyone and thus has no history, BUT considered as the basis for a public religion it does have a history, did make a first appearance on the public stage.] Ceremonial

formulas usually have their own language, intended only for those who belong to a particular union (a guild or commonwealth), a language that is sometimes mystical and not understood by everyone. It is supposed, out of respect, to be used only for ceremonial acts (as when someone is to be initiated into a society that holds itself apart from others). But there's nothing private or set-apart about the highest goal of moral perfection of finite creatures; it is a goal that man can never completely reach, namely love of the law.

In conformity with this idea, the following would be a religious article of faith: *God is love*: in him we can revere **the Father**, the loving one whose love is a matter of being well-pleased with men so far as they measure up to his holy law; in him also we can revere **his Son**, . . . the archetype of humanity reared and beloved by him; and finally, so far as his well-pleaseness depends on men's qualifying for it—thus showing that his love is based on wisdom—we can revere the **the Holy Ghost**.

•START OF LONG FOOTNOTE•

[Kant starts this footnote by cramming into one daunting sentence the gist of the rest of the note. He then continues, more mercifully:] *Passing judgment* can be taken in two ways, **(a)** as concerning merit and lack of merit, and **(b)** as concerning guilt and non-guilt. **(a)** God, regarded (in **his Son**) as love, judges men on the basis of what merit is attributable to them over and above their indebtedness, and here the verdict is: *worthy*, or *not worthy*. He separates out as his own those to whom such merit can still be credited. The remainder depart empty-handed. **(b)** The sentence of the judge in terms of justice (of the *judge* properly so-called, under the name of **the Holy Ghost**) on those to whom no

¹ † Hence we understand perfectly well what freedom is •practically (when it is a question of duty), whereas we can't without contradiction even think of trying to understand •theoretically the causality of freedom. . . .

merit can be credited is *guilty* or *not guilty*, i.e. conviction or acquittal. The act of judging in **(a)** concerns the separation of the meritorious from the unmeritorious, both parties competing for a prize (salvation). ‘Merit’ is to be understood here in terms of having a moral disposition that is better than that of other men, *not* better than is demanded by the law (for there’s no such thing as doing more than—better than—our duty under the law). Worthiness also—like non-guilt—always has a merely negative meaning, ‘not unworthy’, i.e. the moral receptivity to such goodness.—So

(a) he who judges in the first capacity (as arbitrator) **makes a choice between two** persons (or parties) trying for the prize (of salvation); and

(b) he who judges in the second capacity (the real judge) **passes sentence on one** person before a court (conscience) which declares the final verdict between the prosecution and the defence.

If now it is assumed that though indeed all men are guilty of sin some among them might have merit, then the verdict of him who **judges from love** becomes effective. In the absence of this judgment, . . . the man would fall straight into the hands of him who **judges in righteousness**, and the inevitable outcome (·because of the man’s sins·) would be the judgment of condemnation.—That is how I think that the apparently contradictory passages ‘The Son will come again to judge the quick and the dead’ [adapted from 2 *Timothy* 4:1] and ‘God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved’ (*John* 3:17) can be reconciled, and can agree with the passage that reads, ‘He that believeth not in him is condemned already’ (*John* 3:18). . . . Anxious care over such distinctions in the domain of bare reason. . . . might well be regarded as a useless and

burdensome subtlety; and that’s what it *would* be if it were directed to a ·theoretical· inquiry into the nature of God. But because

in religious matters men are always led by their wrongdoings to appeal to God’s kindness, though they can’t get around his righteousness,

and because

a ‘kindly judge’, as one and the same person, is a contradiction in terms,

it’s clear that even from a ·practical point of view their concepts on this subject must be very wavering and internally incoherent, and that the correction and precise determination of these concepts is of great practical importance.

·END OF FOOTNOTE·

Not that we should call on him in terms of this multiple personality, because that would indicate ·several entities, whereas he is always just ·one. But we can call on him in the name of ·his Son·, the thing he loves and esteems above all else, the thing we want and morally ought to enter into moral union with.

The declaration of the theoretical belief that God has this threefold character is merely part of the classical formulation of an ecclesiastical faith, used to distinguish it from other historically based faiths. Few men are in a position to combine with this faith a concept ·of the Trinity· that is clear and definite (open to no misinterpretation); and discussion of it should be conducted only among teachers (as philosophical and scholarly expositors of a holy book) who are trying to reach agreement about how to interpret it. Not everything in it is suited to the intellects of ordinary folk, or to the needs of the present time; and a mere literal belief in it does more moral harm than good.

Fourth Essay: Service and pseudo-service under the sovereignty of the good principle or: Religion and *Pfaffentum*

[On the word 'principle' as used here and in the titles of the other three Essays, and on the word *Pfaffentum*, see the Glossary.]

The reign of the good principle is starting, and there's a sign that 'the kingdom of God is at hand' [*Matthew* 3:1-2], when the basic principles of that kingdom's constitution first become public. In the realm of the understanding, if the causes that are needed to bring something *x* into existence have generally taken root then *x* is *there*, even if the complete flowering of its appearance in the empirical world is still immeasurably distant. We have seen •that it is a uniquely special duty to unite oneself with an ethical commonwealth; •that if everyone performed his own private duty, that would lead to everyone's *happening* to agree in a common good, with no need for any special organisation; but •that there's no hope of such an agreement unless special arrangements are made for them to come together with a single goal, and a commonwealth under moral laws is established as a united and therefore stronger power to hold off the attacks of the bad principle. . . . We have also seen •that such a commonwealth, being a kingdom of God, can be undertaken by men only through religion; and, finally, •that this religion must be public (this being needed for a commonwealth), and must therefore be represented in the visible form of a church. Thus, the organising of a church is a task that is left to men to perform, and can be required of them.

But to found a church as a commonwealth under religious laws seems to require more wisdom (both of insight and of good disposition) than can be expected of men, especially given that it seems to require them to have *already* the moral goodness that the establishment of such a church aims to bring about. Actually it is nonsensical to say that men ought

to found a kingdom of God (like saying that they could set up the kingdom of a human monarch); God himself must be the founder of his kingdom. But although we don't know

what God may do directly to bring into actuality the idea of his kingdom,

we *do* know

(because we find this within ourselves) •our moral calling to become citizens and subjects in this kingdom, and •what we must do to fit ourselves for this role.

So this idea will oblige us to organise a church. If the idea was discovered and made public through scripture, God himself as founder of the kingdom is the author of its •constitution; whereas men, as members and free citizens of this kingdom, are the authors of the •organisation; and they have *this* task whether the idea came from scripture or was discovered through reason. Those among them who manage this organisation's public business compose its *administration*, as servants of the church, while the others constitute a partnership, the *congregation*, and are subject to the church's laws.

Now since a pure religion of reason as a public religious faith permits only the bare *idea* of a church (i.e. an *invisible* church), and since only the *visible* church that is based on dogmas needs to be and can be organised by men, it follows •that service under the sovereignty of the good principle in the invisible church can't be regarded as ecclesiastical service, and •that this religion has no legal servants acting as officials of an ethical commonwealth; each member of this commonwealth gets his orders directly from the supreme

legislator. [Kant adds that even within the pure religion of reason all right-thinking men are servants of God, but not *officials* and not servants of the visible church. Then he starts a new line of thought, saying that a church based on statutory [see Glossary] laws can be the true church only to the extent that something in it is driving it ever closer to pure faith of reason, so that eventually it will be able to jettison the historical element in its ecclesiastical faith; and when that is the case with a given visible church, its laws and officials can be seen as giving **service** to the church to the extent that] the officials are steadily working towards the final goal of a public religious faith, ·i.e. a faith based on bare reason·. On the other hand, the servants of a church who

- don't aim at this goal,
- hold that the maxim of continually moving towards it is damnable, and
- teach that the only route to salvation is through the historical and statutory element of ecclesiastical faith

can rightly be accused of giving **pseudo-service** to the church or of what is represented through this church, namely, the ethical commonwealth under the sovereignty of the good principle. The term 'pseudo-service' covers every case of persuading someone that he will be helped by doing x when x will in fact block the very help that he seeks. This occurs in a commonwealth when something that is of value only indirectly, as a *means* of complying with the will of a superior, is proclaimed to be, and is substituted for, what would make us directly well-pleasing to him—a substitution by which the latter's [whose?] intention is thwarted. [Kant also gives Latin words for service and pseudo-service—*cultus* and *cultus spurius*.]

1. The service of God in religion as such

Religion is (subjectively regarded) the recognition of all duties as divine commands.

·START OF A LONG FOOTNOTE·

This definition forestalls many erroneous understandings of the concept of religion—i.e. religion in general. I shall discuss two of these. **(1)** Religion doesn't have to involve any assertions of •theoretical belief, even belief in God's existence, because with our ignorance of suprasensible objects any such assertion might well be hypocritical. The 'belief in God' is merely a problematic hypothesis about the supreme cause of things [and Kant goes on to say that it's something we have in mind in our •practical moral strivings, as promising something about what those strivings may lead to. He continues:] This faith needs only the *idea of God*, to which all morally earnest (and therefore faith-based) work for the good must inevitably lead; it doesn't involve any theoretical knowledge that this idea has a real object. What, subjectively, does every man have a duty to believe? The minimum of knowledge—that it's possible that there may be a God. **(2)** This definition of *religion* in general forestalls the erroneous view of religion as a cluster of special duties relating directly to God. . . . There are no special duties to God in a universal religion, for God can receive nothing from us, and we can't act *for* him *or* on him. To wish to transform guilty awe of him into a special duty is to neglect the fact that *awe* is not a special act of religion but rather the religious frame of mind in all our actions done in conformity with any kind of duty. And when it is said that 'We ought to obey God rather than men' [adapted from *Acts* 5:29] this means only that when

- statutory commands, regarding which men can be legislators and judges,

come into conflict with

- duties that reason prescribes unconditionally, concerning whose observance or transgression God alone can be the judge,

the latter must take precedence. If we accepted ‘Obey God rather than men’ on the understanding that obeying God is obeying the statutory commands given out by a church, that would easily become the war-cry that hypocritical and ambitious *Pfaffen* [see Glossary] often use when they are rebelling against their civil superiors. If something morally permissible is commanded by the civil authorities, it is certainly a duty; but there’s nearly always great uncertainty about the permissibility of something whose moral status we know about only through divine revelation. . . .

•END OF FOOTNOTE•

Religion in which if I’m to recognise something as my duty I must first know that it is a divine command is religion that is *revealed* (or needs to be revealed); religion in which if I’m to accept something as a divine command I must first know that it is my duty is *natural* religion.

- (a) Someone who declares that natural religion alone is morally necessary, i.e. is duty, can be called a rationalist (in matters of belief).
- (b) If he denies the reality of all supernatural divine revelation, he is called a naturalist.
- (c) If he recognises revelation, but says that knowing and accepting it as real isn’t necessary for religion, he could be called a pure rationalist.
- (d) If he holds that belief in revelation is necessary for universal religion, he could be called a pure supernaturalist in matters of belief.

The (a) rationalist, by virtue of that very label, must keep himself within the limits of human insight. So he will

never argue as (b) the naturalist does, denying the intrinsic possibility of revelation in general or the need for revelation as a divine means for introducing true religion; for these are issues that can’t be settled by reason. So the only dispute we have going on here is between (c) the pure rationalist and (d) the supernaturalist in matters of faith: what (d) one holds to be necessary and sufficient for the one true religion (c) the other regards as merely incidental in it.

When religion is classified not in terms of its first origin and its intrinsic possibility (which divides it into •natural and •revealed religion), but in terms of characteristics that make it sharable with others, it can be of two kinds: either

- natural religion, of which (once it has arisen) everyone can be convinced through his own reason, or
- scholarly religion, which you can’t convince others of without guiding them through a course of learning.

This distinction is very important: you can’t tell whether a religion is qualified to be the universal religion of mankind merely •from its origin, whereas you can tell this •from whether it is capable of being passed on to everyone; and this capability is the essential character of the religion that is to be binding on everyone.

So a religion can be •natural but also •revealed, by being so constituted that men could and ought to have discovered it unaided, merely through the use of their reason, though they wouldn’t have come upon it so early, or over so wide an area, as is required. Hence a revelation of it at a particular time and place could be. . . .advantageous to the human race. Once the religion has been introduced in that way and made known publicly, everyone can convince himself of its truth by his own reason. In that case, this religion is objectively a natural religion, though subjectively one that has been revealed; so it is really entitled to be called ‘natural’. It could happen that the supernatural revelation •that launched it

publicly came to be entirely forgotten, without the slightest loss to the religion's comprehensibility, certainty, or power over human hearts. It is different with a religion that has to be classified as 'revealed', this being an upshot of its intrinsic nature. If a religion of that sort were not preserved in a completely secure tradition or in holy books as records of the revelation, it would disappear from the world unless there were a supernatural revelation—either publicly repeated from time to time or going on continuously within each individual—to enable such a faith to survive and to spread and propagate itself.

But every religion, even revealed ones, must contain certain principles of the natural religion. Why? Because *reason* must be used to link revelation to the concept of a religion, since the latter—being derived from the concept of being-obliged-by-the-will-of-a-moral legislator, is a pure concept of reason. So we can look at even a revealed religion as on one hand a natural religion and on the other a scholarly one, and to probe it to discover how much has come to it from one source and how much from the other.

If we plan to discuss a religion that is revealed or at least regarded as revealed, we have to select a specimen from history; we can't make ourselves clear without some use of examples, and unless we take these from history their possibility might be disputed. We can't do better than to expound our idea of revealed religion in general in terms of some book containing such examples, especially a book that is closely interwoven with doctrines that are ethical and consequently related to reason. We can then examine it, as one of a variety of books dealing with religion and virtue on the basis of a revelation,

- searching out whatever it contains that may be for us a pure and therefore a universal religion of reason,
- without aiming to push into the business of those

who are entrusted with the interpretation of that same book, regarded as the aggregate of positive doctrines of revelation, or to contest the interpretation they are led to by their scholarship.

Given that scholars and philosophers have the same goal, namely the morally good, it is advantageous to scholarship to have philosophers, using reason, arrive at the very point that scholarship expects to reach by another route. Here the New Testament, considered as the source of the Christian doctrine, can be the book chosen. In accordance with the plan I have described I shall now present two sections regarding the Christian religion—first as a natural religion, second as a scholarly religion, with reference to its content and to the principles it contains.

A. The Christian religion as a natural religion

Natural religion. . . . is a pure practical idea of reason which, despite its infinite fruitfulness, presupposes so little capacity for **theoretical** reason that everyone can be convinced of it well enough for **practical** purposes and can at least be morally required to conform to it. [The ellipsis in that sentence replaces a clause in which natural religion is said to consist of morality combined with the concept of God as the being that can make morality fulfill its purpose; with a mention also of human immortality.] This religion has the prime essential of the true church, namely being qualified to be universal, i.e. to be accepted by everyone. To spread it as a world religion, and to maintain it, there needs to be a body of servants (in Latin, a *ministerium*) of the purely invisible church but not officials—teachers but not headmasters—because

- the reason-religion of every individual
- doesn't constitute
- a church that is a union of everyone,

and the concept of *individual reason-religion* doesn't involve any thought of a universal church.

Such unanimity couldn't be maintained unaided, so it couldn't be spread to everyone unless it became a visible church. The only way to get universality is for there to be a union of believers in a *visible* church following the **principles** of a pure religion of reason. This church doesn't automatically arise out of that unanimity; and if the church were established, it wouldn't (as I showed above) be brought by its free adherents into the permanent condition of a commonwealth of the faithful, because in such a religion none of those who have seen the light believes that his religious situation requires fellowship with others. It follows that this special duty of men, namely their enduring union into a universal visible church, *won't happen* unless in addition to the natural laws that can be learned through bare reason there are statutory ordinances laid down by a legislative authority), and for this authority be a founder of such a *visible* church it must rest on a *fact* and not merely on *the pure concept of reason*.

Suppose there was a teacher of whom the following was true:

He is said—in an historical record, or at least a general belief that isn't basically disputable—to have been the first to expound publicly a pure and searching religion that everyone in the world could understand (so that it's a *natural* religion), whose teachings we can test for ourselves. He did this in defiance of a dominant ecclesiastical faith that was burdensome and not conducive to moral ends (a faith whose slavish 'service' was typical of all the merely statutory faiths that were current at the time). He made this universal religion of reason the highest and indispensable condition of every religious faith whatsoever, and then *added* to it

certain arrangements for ceremonies and observances designed to serve as means to bringing into existence a church founded on those **principles**.

Despite the contingent and *chosen* nature of these arrangements, we can't deny the label 'true universal church' to the church they are aimed at; and we can't deny to this teacher the prestige due to the one who called men to come together in this church—which he did without *loading* the faith with new regulations or *trying* to turn his original ceremonies into special holy practices that are essential in religion.

Given this description, you'll recognise the person who can be revered as the founder of the first true *church*; but not of the *religion* which, free from every dogma, is engraved in all men's hearts, because that wasn't *chosen* by anyone *and therefore doesn't have a founder*. What's the evidence for his dignity as someone sent by God? I'll answer that not by appealing to historical records but by citing some of his teachings as unchallengeable documents of religion in general; the very content of these is adequate ground for their acceptance; the teachings in question are those of pure reason—they are the only ones that carry their own proof, so that the credibility of the others has to depend on them.

[We now meet many references to Matthew 5–7, the 'Sermon on the Mount'. For the whole sermon, see pages 115–119.]

First, he holds

- that to make men well-pleasing to God what is needed is not *doing* their outer civil or statutory-church duties but *the pure moral disposition of the heart alone* (*Matthew* 5:20–48);
- that in God's eyes sins in thought are on a par with *sins of action* (5:28) and that holiness is, over-all, the goal men should work to reach (5:48);
- that to hate in one's heart is equivalent to killing (5:22) (this is just one example);

- that if you have harmed your neighbour, setting this right is between you and him, not through acts of divine worship (5:24);
- that the civil procedure for enforcing truthfulness, namely by making people speak under oath, harms respect for truth itself (5:33–37);¹
- that the human heart's natural but bad propensity should be completely reversed—the sweet sense of revenge being transformed into tolerance (5:39, 40) and hatred of one's enemies into charity (5:44).

What he intends by this, he says, is to fulfill the Jewish law (5:17); so obviously that law is being interpreted not through scriptural scholarship but through the pure religion of reason; because the law interpreted literally is flatly opposed to all those teachings. Furthermore, he doesn't neglect the misconstruction of the law that men allow themselves in order to evade their true moral duty and make up for this by performing their church duty; that misconstruction is the topic when he speaks of 'the strait gate' and 'the narrow way' (7:13).² He requires these pure dispositions to be shown in actions (7:16); and as for those who imagine that by invocation and praise of the supreme lawgiver in the person of his envoy they will win his favour despite their lack of good

works, he dashes their hopes (7:21). Good works, he says, should be performed •publicly, as an example for others to copy (5:16), and •cheerfully, not like actions extorted from slaves (6:16); and in this way (he says) religion, from a small beginning in the sharing and spreading of such dispositions, should through its inner power grow into a kingdom of God—like a grain of seed in good soil. . . . (13:31–33). Finally, he pulls all duties together into

- (1) one universal rule (covering men's **inner and outer** moral relations), namely: Perform your duty from no other incentive than *esteem for duty itself*, i.e. love God (the legislator of all duties) above all else; and
- (2) one more restricted rule (laying down a universal duty governing men's **outer** relations to one another), namely: Love everyone as yourself, i.e. further his welfare because of good-will that is •immediate and not •derived from thoughts of advantage to yourself.

These commands are not mere laws of virtue but precepts of holiness that we ought to strive for, and merely striving for it is called 'virtue'. Thus he destroys the hope of those who passively *wait*, hands in laps, for this moral goodness to come to them, as though it were a heavenly gift descending from on high. To anyone who doesn't *use* the natural predis-

¹ It's hard to see why religious teachers don't give more weight to this clear prohibition of that method—based on mere superstition, not on any appeal to conscience—of forcing confession before a civil tribunal. *Does it mainly rely on superstition?* Yes, for consider: a man who isn't trusted to tell the truth in a solemn statement affecting a decision concerning the rights of a human being (the holiest of beings in this world) is yet expected to be persuaded to speak truthfully by the use of an oath! All the oath adds to the original statement is the man's calling down on himself divine punishments (which he can't escape if he lies, oath or no oath), as though it were *up to him* whether that supreme tribunal would judge him. In the passage of Scripture cited above [*Matthew* 5:33–37], this procedure of confirmation by oath is represented as absurdly presumptuous, an attempt to bring about, as though by magical words, something that is really not in our power. But it is easy to see that the wise teacher, who here says that whatever goes beyond Yes, Yes! and No, No! in assurances of truth comes from evil, •also• had in view the bad *effect* of the use of oaths—namely that attaching importance to oaths comes close to permitting ordinary lies.

² The strait gate and narrow way that lead to life are the gate and way of good conduct in life; the wide gate and broad way, walked by many, is the church. He's not saying •that the church and its statutes are responsible for men being lost, but •that •they are misled by the assumption that going to church, acknowledging its statutes, and participating in its ceremonies are how God really wishes to be served.

position to goodness that lies in human nature (like a sum of money entrusted to him), lazily confident that no doubt a higher moral influence will make up for his deficiencies of moral character and completeness, the teacher says that even the good that his natural predisposition may have led him to do won't help to make up for this neglect (25:14–28) [taking Kant's citation of 25:29 to be a mistake].

As regards men's very natural expectation of an allotment of happiness proportional to a man's moral conduct, especially given the many sacrifices of happiness that had to be made for the sake of morality, he promises (5:11–12) a reward for these sacrifices in a future world; but this will depend on differences of disposition between •those who did their duty for the sake of the reward (or to escape deserved punishment) and •the better men who did it merely because it was their duty; the latter will be dealt with differently. Speaking of

a man governed by self-interest (the god of this world) who doesn't renounce self-interest but only refines it by the use of reason, extending it beyond the constricting boundary of the present,

the teacher says that this man has on his own initiative defrauded his master [self-interest] and gets him to make sacrifices on behalf of 'duty' (*Luke* 16:3–9). He has come to realise •that some time, perhaps soon, he must leave the world, and •that he can't take with him into the next world anything that he possesses here; so he decides to strike off from the account anything that he or his master (self-interest) is entitled to demand from needy people, getting,

in exchange for this, cheques (as it were) that can be cashed in the next world. His motive in these charitable actions is clever rather than moral, but it does conform with the letter of the moral law, and he may hope that this won't go unrewarded in the future.¹ Compare with this what is said of charity toward the needy from sheer motives of duty (*Matthew* 25:35–40), where those who

helped the needy without the idea even entering their minds that their action was worthy of a reward or that it obliged Heaven, as it were, to reward them

are. . . .declared by the judge of the world to be those really chosen for his kingdom, and it becomes evident that the teacher of the Gospel in speaking of rewards in the world to come wasn't trying to •make them an incentive to action, but merely to •present them. . . .as an object of the purest respect and greatest moral approval when reason views human life as a whole.

What we have here is a *complete religion* that can be presented to all men through their own reason, so that they'll understand it and accept it. It can and indeed ought to be an archetype for us to imitate (so far as that is humanly possible); and this is made evident to us through *an example*, with no need for external authentication of the truth of those teachings or the authority and worth of the teacher. (External authentication would have to involve scholarship or miracles, which are not matters for everyone; •so the religion couldn't be universally accepted.) When the teacher brings in older (Mosaic) legislation and example-giving as though to confirm what he is saying, he is really using them only as aids

¹ We know nothing of the future, and we oughtn't to try to know more than what reason ties to the incentives of morality and their goal. This includes the belief •that every good action will in the next world have good consequences for the person who performs it; •that therefore a man near the end of his life, however badly he has acted down the years, shouldn't be deterred from doing *at least one* more good deed that is in his power; and •that in doing this he has reason to hope that this deed, in proportion as his intention in it is purely good, will be worth more than those *actionless absolutions* that are supposed to compensate for the deficiency of good deeds without providing anything for the lessening of the guilt.

to introducing his teachings to people clinging wholly and blindly to what is old. These were men whose heads, filled with statutory [see Glossary] dogmas, were almost impervious to the religion of reason; bringing this religion to *them* was bound to be harder than bringing it to the reason of men who are uninstructed but also unspoiled. So it shouldn't seem strange that an exposition adapted to the prejudices of those times should now be puzzling and in need of painstaking interpretation; though everywhere in it a religious doctrine shines through, and is often pointed to explicitly—a doctrine that must be comprehensible and convincing to all men without any expenditure of scholarship.

B. The Christian religion as a scholarly religion

When a religion propounds, as necessary, dogmas that can't be known to be so through reason, but are nevertheless to be passed along to all men in all future ages without any corruption of their essential content, we must either

- rely on a continuous miracle of revelation, or
- regard the preservation of these dogmas as a sacred charge entrusted to the care of the scholars.

Even if at first this religion—including the parts of it that aren't confirmed by reason—was accepted everywhere on the strength of miracles and deeds, in later years the report of these miracles (along with the doctrines that stand or fall with it) will require an authentic and unchanging written instruction of posterity.

The acceptance of the fundamental principles of a religion is what is best called *faith*. So we'll have to examine the Christian faith on the one hand as

- a pure rational faith, which can be regarded as a faith freely assented to by everyone,
- and on the other as

- as a revealed faith that can be regarded as a commanded faith.

Everyone can convince himself, through his own reason, of •the evil that lies in the human heart and that no-one is free from; of •the need for him to be justified in God's eyes, and the impossibility of his ever achieving this through his own life-conduct; of •the futility of making up for his lack of righteousness by church observances and pious compulsory services, and of •his inescapable obligation to become a new man. To convince oneself of all this is part of *religion*.

But from the point where Christian doctrine is built not on bare concepts of reason but on *facts*, it can now be called not only 'the Christian religion' but 'the Christian *faith*'—on which a church has been built. The service of a church consecrated to such a faith is therefore twofold: •service owed to the church according to the historical faith, and •service due to it in accordance with the practical and moral faith of reason. In the Christian church both of these are needed: the first because the Christian faith is a scholarly faith, the second because it is a religious faith.

[Kant now presents two wickedly obscure paragraphs about the Christian faith considered as a scholarly faith that isn't vitally associated with a reason-based religion. After a puzzling remark about what the situation would be 'if all men were learned', i.e. were scholars, he presents two possible versions of this kind of Christian faith:

- (i) A faith that starts from unconditional belief in revealed propositions, with scholarship coming in merely as 'a defence against an enemy attacking from the rear';
- (ii) A faith in which scholarship determines what the revealed doctrine is, so that it's not the rearguard but the vanguard.

Kant takes a dim view of both of these, (i) because it would be a faith that was not merely •commanded but •servile,

and (ii) because in it] the small body of textual scholars (the clerics). . . . would drag along behind it the long train of the unlearned (the laity) who have no other access to the contents of Scripture. . . . [Kant squeezes into that sentence the remark that the ignorant laity include *die weltbürgerlichen Regenten*, which literally = ‘the cosmopolitan rulers’.]

The only alternative to these is a Christian faith in which the supreme commanding principle [see Glossary] in matters of doctrine is *universal human reason*, . . . and the revealed doctrine on which a church is founded—standing in need of scholars as interpreters and conservers—is cherished and cultivated as merely a means, but a most precious means, of making this doctrine comprehensible, even to the ignorant, as well as widely diffused and permanent.

This is the true service of the church under the sovereignty of the good principle; whereas the ‘service’ in which •revealed faith takes precedence over •religion is *pseudo-service*. It completely reverses the moral order, commanding unconditionally as though it were an **end** something that is really only a **means**. Belief in propositions that the unlearned can’t become sure of through reason or through Scripture (because Scripture would first have to be authenticated) would here be made an absolute duty and, along with other related observances, it would be elevated to the rank of a saving faith—one from which moral determining grounds of action were absent! It would be a slavish faith. A church based on this latter principle doesn’t genuine servants (*ministri* [Latin]), as does the other kind

of church; rather, it has commanding high officials. Even when (as in a Protestant church) these officials don’t appear in hierarchical splendour as spiritual officers clothed with external power—even when, indeed, they protest verbally *against* all that—they want to be regarded as the only chosen interpreters of a holy scripture, having •deprived the pure reason-based religion of its rightful role as *always* the scripture’s supreme interpreter, and •commanded that scriptural scholarship be used solely in the interests of the ecclesiastical faith. In this way they transform the service of the church (*ministerium* [Latin]) into a domination of its members (*imperium*), though they try to hid what they are up to by giving themselves the modest title ‘minister’. But this domination, which would have been easy for reason, costs the church dearly, namely, in the expenditure of much scholarship. . . .

The outcome of this state of affairs is as follows. The first propagators of Christ’s teaching described him as ‘the Messiah’, this being an intelligent device for getting the people to take in what they were saying; but this came to be taken to be a part of religion itself, valid for all times and peoples, creating an obligation to believe that *every Christian must be a Jew whose Messiah has come*. This doesn’t square with the fact that a Christian is not really bound by any law of Judaism (whose laws are all *statutory*), though this people’s entire holy book is supposed to be accepted faithfully as a divine revelation given to all men.¹ There’s great difficulty about the authenticity of this book (which isn’t anything

¹ † Mendelssohn ingeniously uses this weak spot in the customary presentation of Christianity to wholly reject every demand that a son of Israel change his religion. For, he says, since the Christians themselves say that the Jewish faith is the ground floor on which the upper floor of Christianity rests, the demand for conversion is like expecting someone to demolish the ground floor of a house in order to settle in on the second storey. [Kant then proceeds with a confident conjecture about what Mendelssohn’s real intention is here; he mixes this with comments of his own, without clearly separating the different ingredients. We can afford to let this go.] [In this footnote Kant is referring to Moses Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem*, of which this is a version: www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/mendjeru.pdf.]

like proved by the fact that Christians include passages from it. . . . in their books, in an effort to show its authenticity !). Before Christianity began, and even after that but before it had made much progress, Judaism hadn't gained a foothold among the scholarly public, i.e. it wasn't yet known to its scholarly contemporaries among other peoples; so its history wasn't yet subjected to cross-checks, as it were, and its sacred book owed its ·supposed· historical credibility sheerly to its antiquity. And there's another matter: it's not enough to know the book in translations and to pass it on to posterity in this form; the ecclesiastical faith based on it can't be certain unless there are, at all future times and among all peoples, scholars who are familiar with the Hebrew language (so far as a language *can* be known when we have only one book written in it). And these scholars will be needed not merely •to serve the interests of historical scholarship in general but •to assure the true religion for the world—a task with the salvation of mankind depending on it.

The Christian religion has had a similar fate: although its sacred events occurred openly under the very eyes of a scholarly people, its historical record was delayed for more than a generation before this religion gained a foothold among this people's scholarly public; so the authentication of the record must do without the corroboration of contemporaries. But Christianity has a great advantage over Judaism, namely that it is represented as •coming from the mouth of the first teacher not as a statutory [see Glossary] religion but as a moral one, and as thus •entering into the closest relation with reason, which enabled it, without help from historical learning, to be spread at all times and among all peoples with the greatest trustworthiness. But the founders of the first Christian communities found that they had to entwine the history of Judaism with them; this was a good idea in that situation—though perhaps only there—and this

·Jewish· history has come down to us in the sacred legacy of Christianity. But the founders of the church classified these opportunistic preaching devices as essential articles of faith, and added to their number by appealing either to •tradition or to •interpretations that acquired legal force from the councils or were authenticated through scholarship. As for •this scholarship, or at the opposite end of the scale •the 'inner light' that any layman can *say* he has, it is impossible to know how many changes the faith will still have to undergo through these ·two· agencies; but that's unavoidable if we seek religion outside us instead of within us. [This search 'within us' is, of course, consultation with one's own reason. We can understand Kant's putting that in a different box from the 'inner light' that fanatics claim to steer by (see page 46 above); but his classifying the latter as 'outside us' is a bit puzzling.]

2. The pseudoservice of God in a statutory religion

The one true religion contains nothing but **laws**, i.e. practical principles whose unconditional necessity we can become aware of, and which we therefore recognise as revealed ·to us· not empirically but through pure reason. Only for the sake of a *church* can there be **statutes**, i.e. ordinances that are held to be divine, and can be seen from the standpoint of our pure moral judgment to be contingent affairs that someone has *chosen*. [Kant works into that sentence a clause saying that there can be different forms of church, all equally good.] The view that this statutory faith (which in any case is restricted to one people, and can't be the universal world-religion) is essential to the service of God generally, and is what mainly counts towards someone's being a God-pleasing man, is religious illusion whose consequence is pseudo-service, i.e. pretended honouring of God through which we work directly against the service demanded by God himself.

·START OF FOOTNOTE·

Illusion is the deception involved in regarding the mere representation of a thing as equivalent to the thing itself. Thus a rich miser is subject to the illusion that •his thought of being able to use his riches whenever he wants to is an adequate substitute for •actually using them. The illusion of *honour* ascribes to praise by others, which is basically just their outward expression of a respect that they may not actually have, the worth that ought to be attached solely to the respect itself. Similarly with the passion for titles and orders: these are only outward representations of a superiority over others. Even madness has this name because it commonly takes a mere representation (of the imagination) for the presence of the thing itself and values it accordingly. [*Wahn* = 'illusion'; *Sinn* = 'mind'; *Wahnsinn* = 'madness'.] Now, if you are aware of having a means M to some end E (but haven't yet used it), you have only a representation of E; hence to content yourself with M as though it could take the place of E is a practical illusion; and that is my present topic.

·END OF FOOTNOTE·

A. The Universal Subjective Basis of the Religious Illusion

Anthropomorphism is almost inevitable when men are thinking about God and his being in **theoretical** contexts; it's harmless enough (if it doesn't influence concepts of duty);

but it is extremely dangerous in connection with our **practical** relation to God's will, and even for our morality; for here we create a God for ourselves,¹ and we create him in the form in which we think we'll find it easiest to •win him over to our advantage and •escape from the wearying continuous effort of working on the innermost part of our moral disposition. The principle that a man usually formulates for himself in this connection is this:

Everything that we do solely so as to be well-pleasing to the divinity (if it doesn't flatly *conflict with* morality. . . .) shows God our willingness to serve him as obedient servants, pleasing him by this obedience. . . .

[When is anthropomorphism supposed to go to work in this scenario? Not at 'we create a God for ourselves', because the footnote says that we have to do this, however 'pure' (and thus non-anthropomorphic) our concept of God is. Then perhaps at 'we create him in the form in which we think. . . .' etc.; but then one would expect Kant to insist that we decide what will please God by thinking about what pleases us; and that emphasis doesn't appear.] It's not just through sacrifices that men think they can render this service to God; ceremonies and even (as with the Greeks and Romans) public games have often had to play this role and make the divinity favourable to a people or even to one individual—according to men's illusion! But the sacrifices (penances, castigations, pilgrimages, etc.) were always held to be more powerful, more effective in winning the favour of Heaven, and more suitable for purifying sin, because they testify more strongly to unlimited (though not moral) subjection to God's will. The

¹ † Though it sounds dubious, there's nothing wrong with saying that every man creates a God for himself—indeed, *must* make himself a God according to moral concepts (bringing in the infinitely great attributes that go with the power to exhibit in the world an object that fits those concepts), in order to honour in him the one who created him. If someone else tells him about a being that he calls 'God', or even—if it were possible—such a being appears to him, he must first compare this representation—this telling or this appearance—with his ideal [see Glossary] in order to judge whether he is entitled to regard it and to honour it as a divinity. So there can't be a religion that *starts* from revelation alone; *before* any revelation could take effect there would have to a consultation with that concept, in its purity, as a touchstone. Without this all reverence for God would be idolatry.

more useless such self-torments are, and the less they are designed for the over-all moral improvement of the man who performs them, the holier they seem to be; just because they are utterly useless in the world and yet take great effort, they seem to be directly solely to the expression of devotion to God. Men say:

Although that act hasn't done God any good, he sees in it the good will, the heart, which is indeed too weak to *actually obey* his moral commands but makes up for that by its display of *willingness to do so*.

We see here the attraction of a procedure that has no moral value except perhaps as a means of elevating the powers of sense-imagery to go with intellectual ideas of the goal, or of suppressing them when they might go against these ideas.¹ We credit this procedure with having the worth of the goal itself, which is to say that we ascribe to •the frame of mind of leaning towards acquiring dispositions dedicated to God the worth of •those dispositions themselves. Such a procedure, therefore, is merely a religious illusion. It can take various forms, in some of which it appears more moral than in others; but in none of its forms is it a mere unintentional mistake. What is at work here is a *maxim* of attributing to the means an intrinsic value that really belongs to the end. Because of this maxim the illusion is equally absurd in all its forms, and as a hidden bias towards deception it's a very bad thing.

B. The Moral Principle of Religion Opposed to the Religious Illusion

I take the following proposition to be a principle requiring no proof:

Anything other than good life-conduct that a man supposes that he can do to become well-pleasing to God is mere religious illusion and pseudo-service of God.

I say 'believes that *he* can do'; I'm not denying that. . . .there may be something in the mysteries of supreme wisdom that *God* can do to transform us into men well-pleasing to him. But even if the church proclaimed that such a mystery has been revealed, it would be a dangerous religious illusion to think that we can make ourselves well-pleasing to God by •believing in this revelation as sacred history reports it to us, and inwardly or outwardly •acknowledging it. For this belief, as an inner declaration of one's firm conviction, is so thoroughly an action compelled by fear that an upright man wouldn't perform it. He might agree to do other things •demanded by the church•, because with any of *them* he would at worst be doing something superfluous; but in *this* one, declaring something whose truth he is not convinced of, he would be doing violence to his conscience. We're thinking about a man who makes that confession and convinces himself that, because in it he is acknowledging a good that has

¹ I have something to say here to those who, whenever they are stumbling over the distinction between the sensuous and the intellectual, think they find contradictions in *The Critique of Pure Reason*: When •sense-related items are said to further or hinder the pure moral disposition, which is an •intellectual item, these two utterly unlike principles mustn't be thought of as being in *direct* causal contact. As beings in the world of the senses, we can work *for* or *against* the law only •by working on• the *appearances* of the intellectual principle, i.e. on how we use our physical powers. . . .to produce actions; so that cause and effect can be represented as being of the same kind. [In that sentence the ellipsis replaces 'through free will', a puzzling phrase in that place.] But in what concerns the suprasensible (the subjective principle of morality in us, hidden in the incomprehensible attribute of freedom)—e.g. in the pure religious frame of mind—we have no insight into the relation of cause and effect in man. . . .; that is, we can't explain to ourselves the possibility of •actions, as events in the world of the senses, in terms of •man's moral constitution, as items for which he is accountable. Why not? Because •these are free acts and •the grounds of explanation of all events must come from the world of the senses.

been offered to him, it can make him well-pleasing to God; in his view it is something additional to good life-conduct in obedience to moral laws, because in it he is giving service *directly* to God.

(a) Reason doesn't leave us wholly without comfort regarding our not being (by God's standards) righteous. It tells us:

Anyone who with a disposition genuinely devoted to duty does as much as he can to fulfill his obligations (in a manner that at least continually *approximates to* complete harmony with the law), may hope that what is not in his power will be made up for *somehow* by the supreme wisdom (making permanent the disposition to this continual approximation).

But reason says this without presuming to say how this make-up will be given or to know what it will consist in; it may be so mysterious that God can't reveal it to us except in a symbolic representation of which we understand only what is **practical**, having no **theoretical** grasp what this relation of God to man might be. . . . [That is, we can't understand what this divine intervention *is*, only what it *can do for us*.] Suppose, now, that a particular church •claims to know with certainty *how* God makes up for that moral lack in the human race, and •consigns to eternal damnation all men who don't accept this story and acknowledge it as a religious principle (because they don't know anything about this supposed make-up, which isn't known to reason in a natural way)—who is here the unbeliever? Is it the one who *trusts*, without knowing how what he hopes for will happen; or the one who insists on knowing how man is released from evil and, if he can't know this, gives up all hope of this release? Basically, the latter isn't really much concerned to know this mystery (for his own reason tells him that it is useless to know something that he can't do anything about); he merely wants to know it so

as to make for himself a (perhaps inward) divine service out of believing, accepting, acknowledging, and valuing all that has been revealed—a service that could earn him Heaven's favour without his putting any effort into living a morally good life. . . .

(b) If a man departs *at all* from the above maxim [i.e. from the indented 'principle' at the start of this section], there are no limits to how much further the pseudo-service of God (superstition) may take him; because once this maxim has been left behind, it's for him to *choose* how to 'serve' God, as long as it's not something that directly contradicts morality. He offers everything to God, from

- lip-service, which costs him the least, to
- the donation of earthly goods that might better be used for the advantage of mankind, and even to
- the offering up of his own person, becoming lost to the world (as a hermit, fakir, or monk)

— everything except his moral disposition; and when he says that he also gives his 'heart' to God he is talking not about

- the disposition to live in a manner well-pleasing to God but
- the heartfelt wish that those offerings may be accepted in place of that disposition. . . .

(c) Once one has adopted the maxim of offering to God a 'service' that is supposed to please him and even (if need be) to propitiate him [i.e. get him to be forgiving], but isn't purely moral, there's no essential difference among the (as it were) mechanical ways of 'serving' him—nothing to make any of them preferable to any others. They are all alike in worth (or rather worthlessness); they are all deviations from the one and only intellectual principle of genuine respect for God, and it's mere affectation to regard oneself as more select because one's deviation is more *refined* than the deviations of those are guilty of a supposedly coarser degradation to sensuality. Whether the devotee

- goes regularly to church, or undertakes a pilgrimage to the sanctuaries in Loreto or in Palestine;

whether he

- brings his formulas of prayer to the court of Heaven with his lips, or by means of a prayer-wheel as the Tibetans do [Kant adds some detail about this]

it is all one, all equal in value, all a ·worthless· substitute for the moral service of God. What matters here is not a difference in the external form; everything depends on how we go about becoming well-pleasing to God—on whether we rely on •the moral disposition alone, exhibiting its vitality in actions that are its appearances, or on •pious posturing and donothingry.¹ But isn't there also a dizzying illusion of virtue, **soaring** above the limits of human capacity, that might be counted, along with the **creeping** religious illusion, as belonging to the general class of self-deceptions? No! The disposition towards virtue is concerned with something *real* which really is well-pleasing to God and is in harmony with the world's highest good. Admittedly, it may be accompanied by a conceited illusion that one actually measures up to the idea of one's holy duty; but this doesn't have to happen. . . .

It is customary, at least in the church,

- to give the name *nature* to what men can do by the power of the principle of virtue;
- to give the name *grace* to what serves to make up for the deficiency of our moral powers, and. . . .can only be wished for, or hoped for and asked for;
- to regard the two together as active causes of a disposition adequate for a God-pleasing course of life; and

- not only to distinguish them from one another but even to contrast them.

The conviction that we can distinguish the effects of grace from those of nature (those of virtue), or can actually produce the former within ourselves, is fanaticism. In fact we can't possibly recognise a suprasensible element in experience; still less can we influence something suprasensible so as to draw it down to us; though it's true that there sometimes arise stirrings of the heart making for morality, movements that we can't explain and must admit we are ignorant about: 'The wind blows where it likes, but you cannot tell where it comes from, etc.' [John 3:8]. To think one *observes* such heavenly influences in oneself is a kind of madness; no doubt there can be method in it (because those supposed inner revelations must always be attached to moral ideas and thus to ideas of reason); but all the same it's a self-deception that is harmful to religion. All we can say on this subject is:

There may be works of grace, which may be needed to make up for the short-fall in our effort to be virtuous.

We aren't capable of determining anything concerning the distinctive marks of such works of grace, let alone of doing anything to produce them.

The illusion of being able to move towards justifying ourselves before God through religious acts of worship is **(i)** religious superstition, just as the illusion of thinking one can accomplish this by working for a supposed communion with God is **(ii)** religious fanaticism. It is a **(i)** superstitious illusion to try to become well-pleasing to God through actions that anyone can perform without being a good man (by

¹ As a matter of psychological fact, the adherents of a denomination where rather less statutory [see Glossary] stuff is offered for belief feel that this makes them nobler and more enlightened, although they have retained so much statutory belief that they are not entitled to their contemptuous condescension—from their fancied heights of purity—towards their brothers in ecclesiastical illusion. Why do they have this attitude? It's because this difference of belief, slight as it may be, has them thinking of themselves as a little nearer to pure moral religion—despite their remaining attached to the illusion of thinking they can supplement it by means of pious observances in which reason is ·still passive·, only *less* passive.

professing statutory articles of faith, by conforming to church observance and discipline, etc.). It is called 'superstitious' because it chooses merely natural (not moral) means that can have absolutely no effect on what is not nature (i.e. on the morally good). An illusion is called **(ii)** 'fanatical' when the **means** it plans to use, being suprasensible, are not within man's power—never mind the inaccessibility of the suprasensible **end** aimed at by these means. Why are the means inaccessible? Because •having this feeling of the immediate presence of the supreme being, and •distinguishing it from every other feeling (even the moral feeling), would involve having an intuition for which there is no sensory provision in human nature. Because **(i)** the superstitious illusion involves means that many individuals can use, enabling them at least to work against the obstacles to forming a disposition well-pleasing to God, it is to that extent like reason, and is only contingently objectionable in transforming a mere means into an object immediately well-pleasing to God. The **(ii)** fanatical religious illusion, in contrast, is the moral death of reason; because without reason religion can't happen, since religion like all morality must be established on basic principles.

So the principle that an ecclesiastical faith must have to remedy or prevent all religious illusion is this: The faith must contain within itself, along with the statutory articles that it can't yet completely do without, a principle *to establish the religion of morally good life-conduct as the real goal*, so as eventually to be able entirely to do without the statutory articles.

C. *Pfaffentum* as a Government in the Pseudoservice of the Good Principle

[† In a footnote linked to that heading, Kant explains that the word *Pfaffentum* [see Glossary] benignly signifies •the authority of a spiritual father while also censoriously implying •the spiritual despotism that is found in all ecclesiastical forms, however modest and popular they declare themselves to be. He adds that when he compares different sects he doesn't mean to treat the customs and regulations of any one of them as worse than those of any other. The note concludes:] All deserve the same •respect, in that their forms are the attempts of poor mortals to represent the kingdom of God on earth as something perceivable through the senses, but also the same •rebuke when they take the. . . .representation of this idea in a visible church to be the thing itself. [•Spiritual despotism and •taking the representation to be the thing itself—you might think about how Kant sees these as connected.]

The veneration of powerful invisible beings that was extorted from helpless man through natural fear rooted in the sense of his weakness didn't begin with a religion but rather with servile worship of a god or of idols. When this worship took a certain publicly legalised form it became a •*temple service*, and it didn't become an *ecclesiastical worship*—a •*church worship*—until its laws had gradually come to be tied in with men's moral education. An historical faith was the basis for both of these, until people finally came to see this faith as merely provisional—a symbolic presentation of a pure religious faith, and and a means of promoting it.

We can recognise a tremendous difference in •manner but not in •principle between

•a Tungus shaman and •a European prelate ruling over church and state alike,

or, setting aside the faiths' heads and leaders and focusing

on how their adherents present themselves, between

- the wholly sensuous Vogul who starts the day with a bear's paw on his head and the short prayer 'Strike me not dead!' and
- the utterly *unsensuous* Puritan in Connecticut;

because their principles put them in the same class, namely the class of those who let their worship of God consist in faith in certain statutory dogmas or the performance of certain arbitrary rites—things that can never bring any moral improvement. The only ones outside that class are those who aim to find the service of God solely in the disposition to live a morally good life; what distinguishes them from the others is their having moved on to a wholly different principle which is far nobler than the others have, namely a principle by which they acknowledge themselves members of an (invisible) church whose members include all well-meaning people—a church whose essential nature fits it, and it alone, to be the true universal church.

All of them—i.e. all the faiths I have been criticising—aim to manage to their own advantage the invisible power that presides over men's destiny; they differ only in their conceptions of how to achieve this. If they think that this power is a thinking being whose *will* determines their fate, all they can do is to decide *how* they can become pleasing to him through what they do or allow. If they think of him as a moral being, their reason easily convinces them that the way to earn his favour must be their morally good life-conduct, and especially the pure disposition as the subjective principle of such conduct. But perhaps the supreme being wants also to be served in some way that we can't know through bare reason—by actions that we can't see any intrinsic moral value in but that we willingly perform either •because he commanded them or •in order to convince him of our submissiveness to him. . . . If these two are to be united—i.e.

if we are serve God both •by living morally with the right disposition and •by doing other things that we think he has commanded or would be pleased by—then necessarily either

- each of them is regarded as a way of pleasing God directly, or
- one of them is regarded as a means to the other, the real service of God.

It is self-evident that the moral service of God is directly well-pleasing to him. But this service can't be recognised as the highest condition of divine approval of man. . . .if the other kind of service is also regarded as in itself directly pleasing to God; for if that were the case then no-one could know what his duty was because no-one could know which service was worthier in a given case, or how the two would supplement each other. So actions with no intrinsic moral value should be accepted as well-pleasing to God only as means to furthering morally good conduct, i.e. only as done for the sake of the moral service of God.

Now the man who performs actions with nothing intrinsically God-pleasing (nothing moral) about them, as a means to earning immediate divine approval of himself and thereby the attainment of his desires, is under the illusion that he possesses an art of bringing about a supernatural effect by wholly natural means. I'll call such attempts *fetishism*. (A more usual term is *sorcery*; but that suggests dealings with the devil, whereas the attempt I am discussing can be conceived to be undertaken, through misunderstanding, with good moral intent.) Someone who thinks he can produce a supernatural effect must believe that

he has an effect on God, using him as a means to bring about in the world a result for which his own unaided powers—even his insight into whether this result would be well-pleasing to God—would not be adequate.

Even in his own conception of it, what he is attempting is absurd.

But if a man tries, not only •by means that make him immediately an object of divine favour (i.e. by the active disposition to live in a morally good way) but •by performing certain ceremonies, to make himself worthy of supernatural help to supplement his impotence; and if his aim in performing them is solely to make *himself* capable of receiving that help by improving his moral disposition—then he is indeed counting on something supernatural to make up for his natural impotence, but not as something he can •bring about by influencing God’s will but only as something he can •receive, something he can hope for but can’t bring to pass. But if he thinks that •ceremonial• actions that in themselves seem to contain nothing moral or well-pleasing to God will serve as a means—even as a condition—of getting the satisfaction of his wishes directly from God, then he is a victim of illusion; viz., the illusion that though he doesn’t have physical control over supernatural help or moral receptivity for it, he can still *produce* it. He thinks he can do this by natural acts that have no connection with morality. . . .and could be performed by the most wicked man as well as by the best. . . . In making this use of ecclesiastical ceremonies and the like he is trying to conjure up divine assistance by magic, as it were. There’s no conceivable law according to which •physical events could make a difference to the workings of a •moral cause.

Thus, anyone who

- gives priority to obedience to statutory laws, requiring a revelation as being necessary to religion, and
- regards this obedience not merely as •a means to having a moral disposition but as •what is needed to become *immediately* well-pleasing to God;
- making the attempt to live a morally good life sec-

ondary to this historical faith (instead of vice-versa), transforms the service of God into mere fetishism, and practises a pseudo-service that undercuts all work toward true religion. When we’re trying to unite two good things, so much depends on the order in which they are united! Distinguishing these two •and getting them the right way around• is what the real Enlightenment consists in: it make the service of God primarily a free service and hence a moral service. If someone deviates from this distinction •or reverses the priority of the two kinds of service• then for him •the freedom of the children of God is replaced by •the yoke of a law, the statutory law. Because this law unconditionally requires belief in something that can only be known historically and therefore *can’t* be convincing to everyone, it is for a conscientious man a far heavier yoke¹ than all the lumber of piously ordained ceremonies could ever be. If a man wants to conform with an established ecclesiastical commonwealth, all he needs is to *perform* these ceremonies; he needn’t to confess inwardly or outwardly a belief that they are institutions founded by God; and it’s that

¹ ‘That yoke is easy, and the burden is light’ [Matthew 11:30] where the duty that binds every man is imposed on him by himself through his own reason, so that it’s something he takes upon himself freely. Only the moral laws, taken as divine commands, are of this sort; of these alone the true church’s founder could say ‘My commands are not hard to obey’ [1 John 5:3]. This means only that these commands are not burdensome because everyone sees for himself the necessity of obeying them, so that nothing is here forced on him; whereas despotic commands to do things that we can see no value in, though imposed on us for our best interests (but not through our own reason), are a kind of drudgery that no-one submits to unless compelled to do so. •But the heaviness-of-yoke comparison also goes the other way•. The actions. . . .commanded by those moral laws are precisely the ones that a man finds the hardest; he would cheerfully replace them by the most burdensome pious drudgery if it the latter could count as equivalent to the others.

sort of confession that really burdens the conscience of a conscientious person.

Pfaffentum [see Glossary], therefore, is the constitution of a church dominated by fetish-service; and that's the situation in every church whose basis and essence consists not of principles of morality but of statutory commands, rules of faith, and ceremonies. In some types of church the fetishism involves so many performances carried out so mechanically that it seems to crowd out nearly all of morality and religion along with it, and to be trying to *replace* them—a fetishism that borders closely on paganism. But despite my speaking of 'so many' and 'bordering closely' what we have here is not a matter of *more* or *less*: the difference between worthy and worthless depends on the nature of the supremely binding principle. If this principle imposes submission to a statute as a slavish service rather than the free homage that ought to be paid to the moral law, and if this submission is unconditionally necessary, then—however few or many ceremonies and rituals it involves—this faith is a fetish-faith through which the masses are ruled and robbed of their moral freedom by subservience to a church (not to religion). The structure of this church (its hierarchy) can be monarchic or aristocratic or democratic; that's merely a matter of organisation; with any of those forms the underlying *constitution* is always despotic. Wherever the laws of a church's constitution include statutes laying down what is to be believed, a *clergy* rules—one that thinks it can actually dispense with reason and even, eventually, with scriptural learning. Its basis for that is its belief that

as the uniquely authorised guardian and interpreter of the will of the invisible legislator, it has the sole authority to administer the prescriptions of belief and so, furnished with this power, it doesn't need to convince but merely to command.

Aside from the clergy there is only the laity (including the head of the political commonwealth); so the church eventually rules the state, not exactly with force but through its influence on men's hearts, and also through a dazzling promise of the advantage the state is supposed to get from the unconditional obedience that the people have become accustomed to by the influence of spiritual discipline on their thought. Thus the habit of hypocrisy surreptitiously undermines the integrity and loyalty of the subjects, makes them cunning in the pretence of service not only in church duties but even in civic duties, and like all mistakenly accepted principles brings about the exact opposite of what was intended.

* * * * *

All this inevitably results from something that at first sight looks harmless—a switch in the order of the uniquely saving religious faith's principles, a change in which principle was given first place as the highest condition of salvation with the other subordinated to it. It is appropriate, it is reasonable, to assume that not only . . . scholars or subtle reasoners will be called to this enlightenment regarding their true welfare—for the entire human race should be capable of having this faith, even . . . those who are most ignorant and have the smallest conceptual resources must be able to lay claim to such instruction and inner conviction. [The first ellipse in that sentence replaces 'wise men after the flesh'; the second replaces 'the foolish things of the world' [1 *Corinthians* 1:26,27].] It does indeed seem as though an historical faith—especially if the concepts needed to understand its narratives are wholly anthropological and markedly suited to sense-perception—is of just this kind. For what is easier than to take in such a sense-based and simple narrative and to share it with others, or to repeat the words of mysteries when there's

no need to attach a meaning to them? How easily such a faith gains entrance into everyone's mind, especially given the great advantage it promises! How deeply rooted does belief in such a narrative's truth become, based as it is on a report accepted as authentic for a long time past! Thus, such a faith is indeed suited even to the most ordinary human capacities. However, although the announcement of such an historical event, as well as the acceptance of the rules of conduct based on it, are not mainly (let alone exclusively) the preserve of scholars and philosophers, these are not excluded from it; so doubts arise, partly about its truth and partly about how to interpret it; so many doubts that it would be utterly absurd to adopt such a faith as this—subject as it is to so many controversies (however well-meant)—as the supreme condition of a universal faith, the only one leading to salvation.

But there is an item of *practical* knowledge which rests solely on reason and requires no historical doctrine, and yet

- lies as close to every man, even the most simple, as though it were literally engraved on his heart;
- is a law that has only to be named to get everyone to agree about its authority; and
- carries with it in everyone's consciousness an unconditionally binding force;

namely the law of morality. What is more, this knowledge, unaided, either •leads to belief in God or at least •shapes the concept of him as a moral legislator; so it guides us to a pure religious faith that is not only comprehensible by everyone but also in the highest degree worthy of respect. It leads to this faith so naturally that if you care to try the experiment you'll find that the complete faith can be elicited from anyone just by asking him questions, without giving him any instruction in it. So it's not only **prudent** to start with this knowledge and let the historical faith that

harmonises with it follow; it is also our **duty** to make it the supreme condition under which alone we can hope to share in whatever salvation a religious faith may promise. The historical faith can be regarded as universally binding and admitted to have some validity (for it does contain universally valid teaching) but only as warranted by the interpretation it gets from pure religious faith. And in the other direction, the moral believer can get input from the historical faith when he finds it adding to the vitality of his pure religious disposition. In this way (and no other) the historical faith can have a pure moral worth, because here it is free and not coerced through any threat (for then it can never be sincere).

Now, given that the service of God in a given church is directed primarily to the pure *moral* veneration of God in accordance with the laws prescribed to humanity in general, the question arises: in that church should the content of religious preaching concern •the doctrine of godliness alone or •the doctrine of virtue alone? The doctrine of godliness is perhaps the best candidate for the referent of the word *religio* as it is understood today.

Godliness involves two states of the moral disposition in relation to God:

- fear of God is this disposition in obedience to his commands from bounden duty (the duty of a subject), i.e. from respect for the law;
- love of God is the disposition to obedience from one's own free choice and from approval of the law (the duty of a son).

So both involve, along with morality, the concept of an overseeing suprasensible being with the attributes needed for carrying out the highest good that morality aims at but is beyond our powers. If we go beyond our moral relation to the idea of this being and try to form a concept of his nature, there's always a danger that we shall think of it

anthropomorphically and hence in a manner directly hurtful to our moral principles. Thus the idea of such a being can't subsist by itself in speculative reason; even its origin, and still more its power, are wholly based on its relation to our . . . determination to duty. Now, in the first instruction of youth and even in sermons, which is more natural:

- to expound the doctrine of virtue before the doctrine of godliness? or
- to expound the doctrine of godliness before that of virtue (perhaps without mentioning the doctrine of virtue at all)?

The two doctrines obviously stand in necessary connection with each other. But, since they aren't things of one kind, this is possible only if one of them is conceived and explained as •end, the other merely as •means. The doctrine of virtue, however, subsists on its own (even without the concept of God), whereas the doctrine of godliness involves the concept of something that we represent to ourselves as the cause making up for our short-fall with respect to the final moral goal. So the doctrine of godliness can't on its own constitute the final goal of moral endeavour, but can only serve as a means of strengthening that which in itself *does* make a better man, namely the virtuous disposition. It does this by reassuring and guaranteeing this endeavour (as a striving for goodness, and even for holiness) in its expectation of the final goal that it can't achieve by itself. The doctrine of virtue, in contrast, is taken from the human soul. Man *already has it all*, though in an undeveloped form; it doesn't have to be extracted through inferences using subtle reasoning [see Glossary], as does the religious concept.

- In the purity of this concept of virtue,
- in our awakening awareness of our ability to master the greatest obstacles within ourselves, a capacity that otherwise we wouldn't have guessed that we had,

- in the human dignity that a man must respect in his own person and in his own efforts to achieve it

—in all this there's something that so exalts the soul, leading it to the very deity who is worthy of adoration only because of his holiness and as legislator for virtue, that man is willing to be *sustained* by it because he feels himself to a certain extent ennobled by this idea. This happens before he gives this concept the power of influencing his maxims—long before he reaches the concept of a world-ruler who transforms this duty into a command to us. If he *started* with this latter concept, there would be a risk of •dashing his courage (which is of the essence of virtue) and •transforming godliness into a fawning slavish subjection to a despotically commanding power. The courage to stand on one's own feet is itself strengthened by the doctrine of atonement when it **comes after** the ethical doctrine: it portrays as wiped out what can't be altered, and opens up to us the path to a new mode of life. If this doctrine ·of atonement· is made to **come first**, then

- the futility of trying to undo what has been done (expiation),
- a man's fear about whether he *qualifies* for this atonement [see page 64],
- his view of himself as completely incapable of goodness, and
- his anxiety about sliding back into evil

must rob a man of his courage. . . . [resumed on page 103]

·START OF A LONG FOOTNOTE·

The various kinds of faith among peoples seem gradually to give them a character—revealing itself outwardly in civil relations—which is later attributed to them as though it were a feature of the national temperament. Thus **Judaism** in its original set-up in which a people was to separate itself from all other peoples through every conceivable observance (some

of them very arduous) and to refrain from all intermingling with them, drew down on itself the charge of *misanthropy*. **Mohammedanism** is characterised by *pride* because it finds confirmation of its faith not in miracles but in victories and the subjugation of many peoples, and because its devotional practices are all of the spirited sort.(†) The **Hindu** faith gives its adherents the character of *faint-heartedness*, for reasons opposite to those of the Moslems.—Now surely it is not because of the inner nature of the **Christian** faith but because of how it is presented to the heart and mind that the charge of faint-heartedness can also be brought against it in regard to those who have the most heartfelt intentions towards it but who, starting with human corruption and despairing of all virtue, place their religious principle solely in *piety* (meaning the principle of a passively waiting for godliness to be given by a higher power). Such men never place any reliance in themselves, but look about them in perpetual anxiety for supernatural help, and regard this very self-contempt (which is not humility) to be a means of obtaining favour. . . .

[This paragraph is a sub-footnote, tagged to the above remarks about Mohammedanism.] † This remarkable phenomenon (of an ignorant though intelligent people's pride in its faith) may also come from its founder's fancy that he alone had renewed on earth the concept of God's unity and of his suprasensible nature. He would indeed have ennobled his people by rescuing them idolatry and the anarchy of polytheism if he was entitled to credit himself with this achievement! As regards the characteristic of the third type of religious fellowship, the Christian, which is based on a misconceived humility: when someone's consideration of the holiness of the law leads him to lower his self-conceit in evaluating his own moral worth, the upshot of that should not be •contempt for himself but rather •a resolve. . . .to approach ever nearer to agreement with this law. [The note ends with remarks

about how the name 'virtue' has fallen out of favour, and about the deep wrongness of 'hypocritical devotion'.]

•END OF FOOTNOTE•

. . . [picking up from page 102] and reduce him to a state of sighing moral passivity that doesn't tackle anything great or good, and only looks for what it can get by merely wishing for it.—In what concerns the moral disposition, everything depends on the highest concept under which one subsumes one's duties. When reverence for God is put first, with virtue second, this object of reverence becomes an idol, i.e. he is thought of as a being whom we may hope to please not through morally upright conduct on earth but through adoration and ingratiating; and religion is then idolatry. But godliness is not a *substitute* for virtue, . . .but virtue's completion, enabling us to be crowned with the hope of the ultimate achievement of all our good purposes.

D. The Guide of Conscience in Matters of Faith

[In the next few pages 'conscience' translates *Gewissen*; and 'certain' and 'certainly' translate *gewiß*, which can also be written *gewiss*. The latter words are in bold type, to help you to decide whether that overlap is significant.]

The question here is not •how conscience ought to be guided (you don't need to guide your conscience; you just need to have one), but •how it can serve as a guide in the most perplexing moral decisions.

Conscience is a state of consciousness that in itself is duty. But how can this be? The consciousness of all our representations seems to be necessary only for logical purposes, and therefore only in a conditional manner when we want to clarify our representations; so (it seems) a state of consciousness can't be unconditional duty.

One oughtn't to venture anything that risks being wrong—that is a moral principle that needs no proof. Hence the consciousness that an action that I intend to perform is right is an unconditional duty. Whether an action is over-all right or wrong is judged by the understanding, not by conscience. And it's not absolutely necessary to know, concerning all possible actions, whether they are right or wrong. But concerning the action that I am planning to perform I must not only •judge and form an opinion that it is not wrong but •be **certain** of this; and this requirement is a postulate of conscience, to which is opposed probabilism, i.e. the principle that the mere opinion that an action may well be right is a good enough reason for performing it. So conscience could also be defined as follows:

Conscience is the moral faculty of judgment [*Urtheilskraft* = 'power of forming beliefs or opinions or conclusions'] passing judgment [*richtende* = 'passing judgment in the legal sense'] on itself;

except that this definition wouldn't be much use with a prior explanation of the concepts it involves. Conscience doesn't pass judgment on actions as cases falling under the law; that's what *reason* does in its subjectively practical role. . . . What happens when conscience is at work is that *reason passes judgement on itself*: it •asks whether it really has carefully undertaken that appraisal of actions (as to whether they are right or wrong), and it calls on the man as a witness for or against himself, on the question of whether this careful appraisal did or didn't take place.

Take, for instance, an inquisitor who clings tightly to the uniqueness of his statutory faith

next phrase: *bis allenfalls zum Märtyrthume,*

literally meaning: even to the point of martyrdom,

perhaps meaning: even to the point of condemning to death

people who don't share it,

but perhaps instead meaning: even to the point of undergoing martyrdom himself in defence of it,

and who has to pass judgment on a so-called heretic (otherwise a good citizen) who is charged with unbelief. Now if he condemns this man to death, I ask which of these we should say:

(a) He has judged according to his conscience (erroneous though it is),

or, whether he •merely erred or •consciously did wrong,

(b) He is guilty of an absolute lack of conscience.

In support of (b) we can tell him to his face that in such a case he could never be quite **certain** that by acting in this way he wasn't acting wrongly. Presumably he was firm in his belief that a supernaturally revealed divine will. . . .permitted him, if it didn't actually impose it as a duty, to wipe out the supposed unbelief along with the unbeliever. But was he really strongly enough convinced of such a revealed doctrine, and of this interpretation of it, to venture on this basis to kill a man? That it is wrong to deprive a man of his life because of his religious faith is **certain**, unless (to allow for the most remote possibility) a divine will made known in some extraordinary way has ordered it otherwise. But if the inquisitor thinks that God *did* once utter this terrible command, he can't be absolutely **certain** of this, because he has it only on the basis of historical documents; this 'revelation' has reached him only through men, and has been interpreted by men, and even did it appear to have come from God himself it's at least possible that in this instance someone made a mistake (as when Abraham thought God had commanded him to slaughter his own son like a sheep). So the inquisitor ·in condemning the heretic to death· would *risk* doing something extremely wrong, and that would be

acting without his conscience coming into play. That's how it is with every historical faith, every faith based on appearances: there is always a possibility of error in it. So it shows a lack of conscience to follow such a faith when what it commands or permits *may* be wrong, i.e. may conflict with a human duty that is **certain** in and of itself.

[Kant adds that even if actions of some kind are morally permissible, it is wrong for clerics to insist—on the basis of 'revelation', i.e. of mere history—that the faithful must perform them or else be thrown out of the church. In developing this point, he edges across from actions to beliefs. The trouble with requiring the laity to believe something that the clerics believe on historical grounds is that it leaves thoughtful folk having to profess something that they know isn't **certain**. In conclusion:] Here the layman's spiritual superior goes against conscience by forcing others to believe something that he himself can't be wholly convinced of. . . . There may be truth in what is believed but also untruthfulness in believing it (or even in the mere inner profession of it), and this is in itself damnable.

As I noted in the footnote on page 96, men who have made even the slightest beginning in freedom of thought,¹ having previously been under a slavish yoke of belief (e.g. the Protestants), immediately regard themselves as more ennobled (as it were) the less in the way of clerically pre-

scribed stuff they are required to believe. The exact opposite holds with those who haven't yet been able to, or wanted to, to make an attempt of this kind. Their principle is: *It is advisable to believe too much rather than too little*, on the ground that what they do over and above the call of duty at least can't hurt and might even help. This illusion makes a principle of *insincerity* in religious confessions—a principle that is made easier to accept by the expectation of religion's making up for every mistake, including insincerity along with the rest. It gives rise to the so-called 'security maxim' in matters of faith, namely:

If what I profess regarding God is true, I have hit the mark; if it is untrue but not in itself forbidden, I haven't done anything wrong, but have merely believed it superfluously and burdened myself with an unnecessary inconvenience.

The hypocrite regards as *nothing* the risk arising from the insincerity of his profession, the violation of conscience, involved in proclaiming even before God that something is **certain** when knows that it's not of a kind that could possibly merit unconditional confidence. The genuine security maxim—the only one compatible with religion—is just the reverse of that:

If something x can be known to me as the means or the condition of salvation not through my own reason

¹ Even quite able people say such things as that a certain (1) people struggling for legal freedom, or (2) the bondmen of a landed proprietor, 'aren't yet ripe for freedom'; and more broadly that (3) mankind in general 'isn't yet ripe for freedom of belief'. I confess that I don't know what to make of such talk. It implies that *freedom will never arrive*, because one can't *ripen* to this freedom without *being* free already (one must be free if one is to make efficient use of one's powers in struggling for more freedom). The first attempts will be crude, of course, and usually will put the freedom-seekers in a more painful and more perilous situation than they were in when still under orders from others but also under their care; but that has to be put up with, because they'll never ripen with respect to reason except through their own efforts (which they can make only when they are free). When those who hold power in their hands, constrained by the circumstances of the times, postpone until very far into the future the removal of (1-3) these three bonds, I have nothing to say against them. But to make it a principle that those who are once subjected to them are not fit for freedom, and that one is justified in keeping them from it indefinitely, is to usurp the prerogatives of God who created men for freedom. Ruling in (1) state, in (2) household, and in (3) church is certainly *easier* if one adopts this principle; but is it *more just*?

but only through revelation, and can be brought into my belief-system only on the strength of an historical faith, and if x doesn't contradict pure moral principles, then I can't indeed believe and profess it as **certain**, but nor can I reject it as being **certainly** false. Still, without settling that question I expect that whatever is valuable in x will bring benefit to me as long as I don't disqualify myself by morally bad life-conduct based on a bad moral disposition.

In this maxim there is genuine moral security, namely security in the eye of conscience (and more than this can't be required of a man); whereas the greatest danger and insecurity attend the supposedly prudential tactic of craftily evading any harmful consequences of not professing, because the person who adopts it, by siding with both parties risks incurring the disfavour of both.

Let the author of a creed, let the teacher of a church, indeed let *any* man who is convinced that some dogmas are divine revelations, ask himself:

Do you really dare to assert the truth of these dogmas in the presence of him who knows the heart, at the risk of losing all that is valuable and holy to you?

I would need a very dim conception of human nature. . . .not

to anticipate that even the boldest teacher of faith would have to tremble at such a question.¹

But if this is so, how is it consistent with conscientiousness •to insist on a declaration of faith that admits of no restriction, and •to proclaim that the boldness of such an assertion is in itself a duty and a service to God? Taking this line strikes to the ground the human freedom that is absolutely required in all moral matters, such as the adoption of a religion; and doesn't leave room even for the good will that says 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!' [Mark 9:24]²

General Remark

[On page 27 Kant says that this General remark could be entitled 'Means of Grace'.]

Anything good that a man can do through his own efforts under laws of freedom can be called *nature*, in contrast to what he can do only with supernatural assistance, which is called *grace*. We aren't using 'nature' here—as we do in other contexts—to refer to a physical property distinguished from freedom; we use it here merely because we at least recognise the laws of this capacity (laws of virtue), which

¹ The man who has the audacity to say that anyone who doesn't believe in this or that historical doctrine as a sacred truth 'is *damned*' ought to be able to say also: 'If what I'm now telling you is not true, let me be damned!'. . . .

² † [This note begins with a flowery invocation of sincerity, and then a distinction between sincerity and candour (roughly, distinguishing (said → believed) from (believed → said)). Then:] We have in our nature a predisposition to sincerity, though its cultivation is neglected; if we didn't have that, the human race would be, in its own eyes, an object of the deepest contempt. But this quality of mind is exposed to many temptations and entails many sacrifices, and hence calls for moral strength, i.e. virtue (which has to be worked for); it must be guarded and cultivated earlier than any other, because the opposed propensity is the hardest to eradicate once it has been allowed take root. Now compare •that •care for the protection and development of sincerity• with •our usual manner of upbringing—especially in regard to. . . .doctrines of faith—where accuracy [*Treue*] of memory in answering questions relating to these doctrines, without regard to the sincerity [*Treue*] of the confession itself (which is never put to the test), is accepted as sufficient to make a believer of someone who doesn't even understand what he declares to be holy! Having made that comparison, you won't be surprised by the insincerity that produces nothing but inward hypocrites.

gives reason a visible and comprehensible clue to it, analogous to our knowledge of nature in the other sense of the word. In contrast to that, we're wholly in the dark about when, what, or how much, *grace* will achieve in us, and reason is left with no clue about the laws according to which grace might occur—as about the supernatural in general (and morality, regarded as holiness, is supernatural).

The concept of something supernatural joining up with our deficient moral capacity, and even with our disposition (not wholly purified, and certainly weak) to perform our entire duty, is transcendent; it is a mere idea [see Glossary], and no experience can assure us that there's something real corresponding to it. And even taken as an idea in a merely practical context it is still very risky, and hard to reconcile with reason, because anything that is to count as morally good conduct on our part must happen not through *outside* influence but solely through the best possible use of *our own* powers. But there's no *proof* that the two can't be reconciled, because although there's nothing supernatural in the concept of freedom itself, the *possibility* of freedom is just as incomprehensible to us as is the supernatural factor that we would like to assume as a supplement to the workings—which are indeed *ours*, but are deficient—of our freedom.

We at least know, regarding freedom, the *moral laws* according to which it ought to be determined. But we can't *know anything at all* about •supernatural aid—whether a certain moral power that we detect in ourselves really comes from •it, or on what occasions and under what conditions •it may be expected. Thus, apart from the general assumption that

what nature can't achieve in us will be effected by grace, provided we have made the maximum use of our own powers,

we can't make any use of this idea, either as to •how (beyond a continuous effort to live a morally good life) we might draw its help down on us, or •how we might determine on what occasions to expect it. This idea is wholly transcendent; and we would do well to keep it at a respectful distance as something sacred, so as to avoid two dangers: •under the illusion of performing miracles ourselves or observing miracles within us, we make ourselves unfit for any use of reason; •we allow ourselves to be drawn into the slack attitude of waiting in idle passivity to receive from above something that we ought to look for within ourselves.

Now, *means* are all intermediate causes that a man has in his power to achieve a certain purpose; and he doesn't—he *can't have*—any means of becoming worthy of heavenly assistance except an earnest attempt to improve his moral nature in every way that is possible *for him*, thus making himself capable of receiving divine aid in completing that improvement; for the divine aid he is waiting for is aimed purely at *his* morality. It was to be expected *a priori* that the impure man wouldn't seek this aid *there* but rather in certain sensuous arrangements (that he does have in his power but that can't make him better, though he looks to them to achieve this very result in supernatural fashion); and this is what actually happens. . . .

The true (moral) service of God, which the faithful must offer as •subjects in his kingdom but no less as •citizens of it (under laws of freedom), is itself invisible just as the kingdom is. That is, it's a service of the heart ('in spirit and in truth' [John 4:24]). It can only consist in •the disposition to obey all true duties as divine commands, not in •actions aimed directly at God. But for a man the invisible needs to be *represented through* something that is visible (perceptible through the senses); indeed, for practical purposes it needs to be *accompanied by* something sense-perceptible. . . . This

is a means of simply picturing to ourselves our duty in the service of God; it wouldn't be easy for us to do without it, but it's extremely likely to be misunderstood: through an illusion that steals over us, it is easily held—and often *is* held—to be the service of God itself.

This alleged service of God, when reduced to its spirit and its true meaning—namely, to a disposition dedicating itself to the kingdom of God within us and outside us—can be divided. . . .into four observances of duty; and certain corresponding rites that aren't necessarily connected to these observances but have been associated with them because they (the rites). . . .have long been regarded as useful means arousing and sustaining our attention to the true service of God. The observances are all based on the intention to further the morally good.

- (1) Firmly establishing this goodness in ourselves, and repeatedly arousing in our mind the disposition towards it (**private prayer**);
- (2) Spreading goodness abroad by coming together on days legally assigned for this, in order that religious doctrines and wishes (along with corresponding dispositions) may be expressed there and thus be generally shared (**churchgoing**);
- (3) Passing goodness on to posterity by receiving new members into the fellowship of faith, as a duty; also instructing them in goodness (**baptism**, in the Christian religion);
- (4) Maintaining this fellowship through a repeated public ceremony which makes *enduring* the union of these members into an ethical body, according to the principle of the equality of their rights and of their shares in all the fruits of moral goodness (**communion**).

When someone undertakes something in the realm of religion not as purely moral but as a means of making himself well-pleasing to God and thus, through God, of satisfying all his wishes, this is *fetish-faith*. It is the conviction that

something that can produce no effect at all according to natural laws or to moral laws of reason will unaided bring about what is wished for, if we firmly believe that it will do so and accompany this belief with certain ceremonies.

Even where the conviction has taken hold that everything in religion depends on moral goodness, which can arise only from action, the sensual man still looks for a secret path by which to evade that arduous condition: if only he honours the custom (performs the ceremony), he thinks, God may well accept it as a substitute for the act itself. . . . Thus in every kind of faith man has devised for himself certain practices as means of grace, though in some faiths the practices are not—as they are in the Christian faith—related to practical concepts of reason and to dispositions conforming to them. (There are, for instance, the five great commands in the Mohammedan faith: washing, praying, fasting, almsgiving, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. [Kant adds that almsgiving (not the others) would be morally acceptable, like the Christian practices, if it were done with a virtuous motive, but it isn't:] In this faith, almsgiving is consistent with *extorting from others* what is then offered as a sacrifice to God in the person of the poor.)

There can be three kinds of illusory belief that involve the possibility of our overstepping the bounds of our reason in relation to the supernatural (which is not, according to the laws of reason, an object of either theoretical or practical use).

- (a) The belief in miracles. The belief that we can encounter in experience something whose occurrence

we ourselves can recognise—according to the objective laws of experience—to be impossible.

(b) The belief in mysteries. The illusion that our best moral interests require us to include among our concepts of reason something that our reason can't form any concept of.

(c) The belief in means of grace. The illusion of being able to bring about by natural means something that is for us a mystery, namely, the influence of God on our morality.

I have dealt with **(a)** and **(b)** in the General Remarks following the second and third Essays in this work [pages 46 and 77]. So now it remains for me to discuss **(c)** the means of grace. (Not to be confused with *works* of grace,¹ i.e. supernatural moral influences in relation to which we are merely passive; the imagined experience of these is a fanatical illusion that is all a matter of feelings.

(1) Prayer, thought of as an internal ceremonial service of God and hence as a means of grace, is a superstitious illusion (a fetish-making); for it is merely a declared wish directed to a being who doesn't need to be *told* about the inner disposition of the wisher. It doesn't accomplish anything, and it doesn't discharge any of the duties which, as commands of God, we are obliged to fulfill; so God is not really served by it. A heartfelt wish to be well-pleasing to God in all our doings and allowings—i.e. the disposition in all our actions to perform them as though this were in the service of God—is the spirit of prayer that can and should be present in us 'without ceasing' [1 *Thessalonians* 5:171]. But clothing this wish (even if only inwardly) in words and formulas. . . . [continued on page 111]

·START OF LONG FOOTNOTE ON PRAYER·

In **(i)** the wish that is the spirit of prayer, the man is trying only to affect *himself* (to enliven his disposition by means of the idea of God); whereas in **(ii)** the other wish, where he declares himself in words, and so outwardly, he tries to affect *God*. In **(i)**, a prayer can be offered with perfect sincerity by someone who doesn't presume to be able to affirm that the existence of God is wholly certain; in **(ii)** prayer that reports a wish to God, he supposes this supreme being to be present in person, or at least he adopts (even inwardly) a frame of mind *as though* he were convinced of God's presence—his thought being that even if this isn't so, pretending that it is at least can't harm him and may win him some favour. Thus, complete sincerity can't be found in **(ii)** the verbal prayer as it can in **(i)** the pure spirit of prayer.

You'll find the truth of this last remark confirmed if you think about a man who is pious and well-meaning but limited in regard to these purified religious concepts, whom someone else takes unawares (not praying aloud, but merely) behaving in a way that indicates prayer. You don't need prompting from me to expect this man to fall into confusion or embarrassment, as if he were in a situation he should be ashamed of. But why? It is because a man caught talking aloud to himself is suspected for the moment of having a slight attack of madness; and the same suspicion arises (not altogether unjustly) if a man is found, *all alone*, in an occupation or attitude that is appropriate only if he sees *someone else*—which the man in our example doesn't.

Now the teacher of the Gospel has expressed the spirit of prayer most admirably in a formula—[known as 'the Lord's Prayer'; see page 117, verses 9–13]—that has made all verbal prayer dispensable, including the verbal praying of this very

¹ † See the General Remark after the first Essay, page 22.

prayer. There's nothing in it but the resolution to live a morally good life; and that, combined with our awareness of our frailty, carries with it the persistent wish to be a worthy member of the kingdom of God. So it doesn't contain any request for something that God in his wisdom might well refuse us, but simply a wish which, if it is genuine (active), *of itself* achieves its object of becoming a man well-pleasing to God. Even the wish for the means of staying alive (the wish for bread) *for one day* and expressly not for longer is the effect of a felt need that is merely animal, and is more •a confession of what *nature* wills in us than •a special deliberate request for what *the man* wills. It would be of the latter kind if the request were for bread *for another day*, and that is what this prayer clearly enough does *not* ask for.

A prayer of this sort is made in the moral frame of mind (animated solely by the idea of God), and as the moral spirit of prayer it brings about its object (being well-pleasing to God) *of itself*; so it is the only kind of prayer that can be prayed with faith, meaning *prayed with assurance that the prayer will be heard*, because only morality *in us* gives rise to this assurance. Even with a request for this day's bread alone, no-one can be assured that it will be heard, i.e. that God's wisdom necessitates its being granted; it may perhaps square better with this wisdom to let the suppliant die today for lack of bread. The project of trying to divert God from the plan of his wisdom (in our favour) by insistently battering him with requests—that is not only a preposterous but also a presumptuous illusion! Hence we can't hold, of any prayer for a non-moral object, that it is sure to be heard, which means that we can't pray for such an object *in faith*. [Kant adds that even prayer for a moral object (such as one's own improvement), when it's an attempt to get God to do what we ought to do for ourselves, may well not be granted, and so] a man can't pray even for this in faith.

In the light of all this we can explain what might be going on in a miracle-working faith (which would always be united with an inner prayer). From these two truths—

- God can't lend a man any power to bring about effects supernaturally (for that is a contradiction); and
- a man can't work out, on the basis of the concepts he forms for himself of good ends that are possible on earth, what divine wisdom judges in these matters, and so he can't use the wish he nurtures within himself to steer the divine power for his purposes;

—it follows that a gift of miracles, I mean a gift where it's up to the man himself whether he has it ('If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, etc.' [Matthew 17:20]), is, taken literally, unthinkable. If such a faith is to mean anything at all, it is simply an idea of the overwhelming importance that the man's moral nature would have if he had it (as we never do) in its entire God-pleasing completeness, a greater importance than all other causes that God in his supreme wisdom may have at his disposal. It is therefore a basis for confidence that if we were ever to become wholly what we ought to be and (in continued approximation) could be, nature would have to heed our wishes—but under these circumstances those wishes would never be unwise.

As for the uplift that is sought in churchgoing, public prayer is not a means of grace but an ethical ceremony, whether it consists in •united singing of the hymn of faith, or •a formal address to God through the mouth of the clergyman and in the name of the whole congregation, and embracing all the moral concerns of men. Such an address, since it presents these as a public concern in which each individual's wish should be represented as united with everyone else's toward the same goal (the ushering in of the kingdom of God), is better than private prayer in two ways:

- (a) It raises feelings to the point of moral exaltation (whereas private prayers, because they are made without this sublime idea, gradually lose through habituation their influence on the mind);
- (b) It has in itself a more rational basis than private prayer does for clothing the moral wish that constitutes the spirit of prayer in a formal address;

and it does its work without thinking of the supreme being as present, or thinking of the special power of this rhetorical device as a means of grace. For here there is a special purpose, namely to energize the moral motivating forces of each individual through a public ceremony representing the union of all men in a common desire for the kingdom of God; and this can't be done better than by speaking to this kingdom's sovereign just as though he were present in that particular place.

·END OF LONG FOOTNOTE·

[picking up from page 109] can, at best, possess only the value of a *means* by which that disposition of ours may be repeatedly enlivened, and can have no direct bearing on the divine approval; and for this very reason it can't be a duty for everyone. Why not? Because a means can be prescribed only to someone who needs it for certain purposes, and not all men *need* this means (in which a man who is really conversing internally with himself purports to be speaking more intelligibly with God). What we should be doing is to work for this goal ·of moral improvement· by continually clarifying and elevating our moral disposition, so that this *spirit of prayer* may be thoroughly enlivened within us and the verbal form of prayer (at least as directed to our own advantage) finally fall away. The verbal prayer—like everything that is aimed at a given goal indirectly—rather *weakens* the

effect of the moral idea (which, taken subjectively, is called 'devotion'). Thus the contemplation of the divine creation's •wisdom in the smallest things and of its •majesty in the great—which isn't a new thing but has recently grown into the highest wonder—is a power such that the mind

- is put by it into the *sinking* mood called *worship*, where the man shrinks almost to nothing in his own eyes; and also
- in the light of its own moral determination is put into such an *elevated* state that mere words. . . . would have to pass away as empty sound because the emotion arising from such a vision of the hand of God is inexpressible.

In the religious part of their life men are prone to transform something that really concerns only their own moral improvement into something involving attendance at court, ·so to speak·, in which usually the humiliations and glorifications are the less felt in a moral way the more they are expressed in words. So it is all the more necessary to teach children (who still stand in need of words), in their earliest years, that the language used (even if used only inwardly. . . .) has no value in itself and serves only to enliven the child's disposition to a course of life well-pleasing to God—the words being merely an aid to the imagination. If this isn't understood, all these devout declarations of awe risk producing nothing but hypocritical veneration of God instead of a practical service of him—a service that never consists in mere feelings.

(2) **Churchgoing**, thought of as the ceremonial public service of God in a church, is as a visible representation of the community of believers not only •a means to be valued by each individual for his own edification¹ but also •a duty directly obliging them as a group, as citizens of a divine state to be presented here on earth; provided that this church doesn't involve ceremonies that might lead to idolatry and thus burden the conscience—e.g. certain prayers to God, with his infinite mercy personified under the name of a man; for such representation of God as something perceptible is contrary to the command of reason: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, etc.' [Exodus 2:4]. But the desire to use it as in itself a means of grace, as though God were directly served by our churchgoing and had attached special favours to the celebration of this solemnity (which is merely a sense-perceptible representation of the universality of religion), is an illusion that fits the cast of mind of a good citizen in a political commonwealth. . . .but contributes nothing to the character of such a man as a citizen in the kingdom of God—indeed it debases that character by functioning as a deceptive veneer that conceals the bad moral content of the man's disposition from the eyes of others, and even from his own eyes.

(3) The one-time ceremonial initiation into the church-community—i.e. someone's first acceptance as a member of a church (in the Christian church through **baptism**)—is a highly significant ceremony that lays a grave obligation •on the initiate (if he is in a position to confess his faith) or •on the witnesses who pledge themselves to take care of his education in this faith. This aims at something holy (developing a man into a citizen of a divine state); but this act. . . .is not in itself holy or a means to this person's holiness or receptivity to divine grace in this individual; so it is not a *means of grace*, however exaggerated the early Greek church's esteem for it was—they thought that it could instantly wash away all sins. At this point the illusion publicly revealed its kinship with an almost more-than-pagan superstition.

(4) Then there is **communion**—the often-repeated ceremony of renewal, continuation, and propagation of this ecclesiastical community under laws of equality, a ceremony that can be performed after the example of the church's founder (and also in memory of him), through the formality of sharing a meal at the same table. This contains within itself something great, expanding the narrow, selfish, and quarrelsome cast of mind among men, especially in matters of religion, toward the idea of a world-wide moral community;

¹ [In this footnote, 'edification' translates *Erbauung*; each means 'moral improvement', and each can also mean 'construction (of a building)'; this ambiguity is at work in the footnote.] The best meaning we can assign to this word seems to be: *the moral effect that a person's devotion has on him*. This effect isn't a matter of feelings, because *they* are already comprised in the concept of *devotion*; though most of those who are supposed to be devoted (and therefore called 'devotees') think that feelings are *all* it's a matter of. So the word 'edification' must signify *devotion's effect in actually improving the man*. This improvement actually happens only if the man systematically sets to work, •lays deep in his heart firm principles couched in well-understood concepts, •erects on that basis dispositions to perform the duties connected with these principles (the strength of each disposition being proportional to the importance of the duty), •strengthens and secures these dispositions against the onslaughts of the desires, and thus as it were •*builds* a new man as a temple of God. It's easy to see that this building can't go up quickly; but it must at least be evident that *something* has been accomplished. But men believe themselves to be greatly edified (through listening or reading and singing) when absolutely nothing has been built, indeed when no hand has been put to the work; presumably because they hope that this moral edifice will rise up of itself, like the walls of Thebes, to the music of sighs and yearning wishes.

and it is a good means of enlivening a community's disposition towards the brotherly love that it represents. But to assert that God has attached special favours to the celebration of this ceremony, and to make it an article of faith that this ceremony, this mere •church action, is also a •means of grace—this is a religious illusion that can only work *against* the spirit of religion. ·If it were accepted·, *Pfaffentum* [see Glossary] would be the dominion of the clergy over men's minds, usurped by claiming that they were entitled to exclusive possession of the means of grace.

* * * * *

There's a common basis for all such contrived self-deceptions in religious matters. Among the three divine moral attributes

holiness — mercy — justice

men usually turn directly to the second, so as to avoid having to face the daunting task of conforming to the requirements of the first. It is troublesome to be a good •servant (always hearing only about one's 'duties'); a man would rather be a •favourite, where much is overlooked and, when duty has been too grossly violated, everything is atoned for through the agency of someone who is favoured in the highest degree—while the man remains the slack servant that he was. But in order to satisfy himself that his plan has at least some chance of working, the man transfers his concept of *man* (including his faults) to the deity. ·Here is how that works for him·:

Even with the best ruler of our race, •legislative rigour, •beneficent mercy and •scrupulous justice don't (as they should) operate separately to produce a moral effect on the subject's actions, but *minge* in the human ruler's thinking when reaching his decisions, so that

one has only to circumvent one of these attributes, the frail wisdom of the human will, to get the other two to go the way one wants; and our man hopes to achieve the same thing with God by applying himself solely to his mercy.

(That's why it was important for religion that God's attributes—or rather his relations to man—should be kept separate through the idea of a threefold personality, this being applied analogously to God so as to make each attribute or relation separately recognisable.) To this end the man busies himself with every conceivable ceremony designed to mark how greatly he •respects the divine commands, so that he won't have to •obey them; and in order that his mere wishes may serve also to *make good* his disobedience of these commands, he cries 'Lord! Lord!' so as not to have to 'do the will of his heavenly father' [both phrases from *Matthew* 7:21]. In this way he comes to conceive of the ceremonies in which certain means are used to enliven truly practical dispositions as being in themselves means of grace; he even proclaims that the belief that they are such is an essential part of religion (the common man thinks it is the whole of religion); and he leaves it to all-gracious providence to make a better man of him, while he busies himself with •piety (a passive respect for divine law) rather than with •virtue (using his own powers to fulfilling the duty he ·says he· respects). What is meant by the word 'godliness' (the true religious disposition) is the *combination* of piety and virtue.

When the illusion of this supposed favourite of Heaven rises to the point where he fanatically imagines feeling special works of grace within himself (or even imagines that he has been in secret conversation with God!), he at last comes to hate virtue and to hold it in contempt. So it's no wonder that religion is openly criticised for still doing so little for men's improvement, and that the inner light ('under a

bushel' [*Matthew* 5:15]) of these 'favourites' doesn't shine forth outwardly in good works. . . . The teacher of the gospel has himself told us of the empirical evidence by which every man can know others, namely *by their fruits*, and every man can know himself in the same way. But up to now we haven't seen that those who think they are extraordinarily favoured (the chosen ones) are *any* better than the naturally honest man who can be relied on in social intercourse, in business, and in trouble; on the contrary, the chosen ones as a group can hardly stand comparison with him—which proves that the right course is not to go from pardoning grace to virtue but rather from virtue to pardoning grace.

THE END

The Sermon on the Mount [see page 87 above.]**Matthew Chapter 5**

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other

also.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew Chapter 6

1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Matthew Chapter 7

1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.