

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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Contents

Preface to the First Edition	1
Preface to the Second Edition	6
First Essay: The bad principle existing alongside the good, i.e. The radical evil in human nature	8
1. The Original Predisposition to Good in Human Nature	11
2. The Propensity to Evil in Human Nature	13
3. Man is bad by Nature	15
4. The Origin of Evil in Human Nature	19
General remark: Restoring the Original Predisposition to Good to its Power	22

Second Essay: The conflict of the good with the bad principle for command over man	29
1. The good principle's legal claim to dominion over man	31
A. The personified idea of the good principle	31
B. The objective reality of this idea	32
C. Difficulties that oppose the reality of this idea, and their solution	34
2. The bad principle's legal claim to dominion over man, and the conflict between the two principles	43
General remark	46
Third Essay: The victory of the good over the bad principle, and the founding of a kingdom of God on Earth	50
1. Philosophical account of the good principle's victory in founding a Kingdom of God on Earth	51
A. The ethical state of nature	51
B. Man ought to leave his ethical state of nature in order to become a member of an ethical commonwealth	52
C. The concept of an ethical commonwealth is the concept of a people of God under ethical laws	53
D. The only way humans can bring about a people of God is through a church	54
E. The constitution of every church originates in some historically revealed faith (call it ecclesiastical faith), which is best based on a holy scripture	55
F. Ecclesiastical faith has pure religious faith as its highest interpreter	59
G. The gradual transition of ecclesiastical faith to the exclusive sovereignty of pure religious faith is the coming of the Kingdom of God	62
2. Historical account of the gradual establishment of the dominion of the good principle on Earth	68
General remark	77
Fourth Essay: Service and pseudo-service under the sovereignty of the good principle, or Religion and <i>Pfaffentum</i>	83
1. The service of God in religion as such	84
A. The Christian religion as a natural religion	86
B. The Christian religion as a scholarly religion	90
2. The pseudoservice of God in a statutory religion	92
A. The Universal Subjective Basis of the Religious Illusion	93
B. The Moral Principle of Religion Opposed to the Religious Illusion	94
C. <i>Pfaffentum</i> as a Government in the Pseudoservice of the Good Principle	97
D. The Guide of Conscience in Matters of Faith	103
General Remark	106

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.

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 viceroys become 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.