

# Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason

by  
Immanuel Kant

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Also included are short summaries of the *Critique Of Pure Reason* ([page vi](#)), the *Grounding to the Metaphysic Of Morals* ([page xiii](#)), the *Critique Of Practical Reason* ([page xv](#)) as well as *Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason* ([page xvii](#)).

To skip these summaries and go directly to the translation of *Religion*, click [here](#).

See [Translator's Notes](#) for information about the numbering of paragraphs and footnotes, and the translation of certain words.

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## Translator's Notes And Summary

### Background Material To Kant's Work On Religion

To set the stage for Kant's treatment of his work on religion, I want to start from the beginning of his critical thinking, namely his [Critique of Pure Reason](#) (*CPR*), where he presents first a validation of human understanding in formulating experience, and then shows the inability of pure reason to extend human knowledge beyond the limits of experience. To skip this recap and go directly to the translation of *Religion*, click [here](#). As a helpful preparation for novices to Kant I suggest a perusal of [Kantland](#).

### Critique of Pure Reason

#### Brainarium and Appearances

We begin with the notion of the brainarium.<sup>1</sup> As we all know, light comes from the sun, for example, illuminates some object, e.g., a tree, and some of the light is absorbed by the tree and some is reflected into a human eye and is inverted by the eye lens relative to the actual tree out before us and is projected onto the retina (upside down and inverted left and right). It is then converted into electrical impulses and sent along the optic nerve into the brain<sup>2</sup> and there a projection arises (where the inversion caused by the lens is corrected), and in that projection we see shapes popping up to us, in this example: the tree. These shapes, colored and toned as they may be, Kant calls appearances (*Erscheinungen*).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore the rainbow and the rain that we occasionally spy in the distance are, strictly speaking, projections within our individual brainariums and *as such* do not have any existence at all when we are not looking at them, e.g., every time we blink both, rainbow and rain, go out of existence for a brief moment. Indeed even the space and time in which we view these appearances are nothing more than the way we look at the appearances in the brainarium, for certainly here and there (as well as now and before) are never in the appearances as such at all, but only in the way that we look at them. It is one thing to see a tree, and another to see it there and now. Kant calls time and space the form of our perspective (*Anschauung*<sup>4</sup>) or “take” on the appearances, i.e., the way we *look at* appearances.

#### Hume's Academic Skepticism and Kant's Endeavor

First [David Hume](#) and then Kant asked this question: since all that we can ever know or view is prompted and given always only and entirely through the brainarium, and since there is nothing abiding or enduring or necessary about the appearances arising there, popping up as they do, how did we ever come to the notion that these appearances are not all there is and that there is something else apart from these appearances, something that these appearances merely represent and depict (*Vorstellen*)? Obviously (and this was realized by both Kant and Hume) this “something else” is something that we ourselves have added to the appearances within brainarium. Hume's understanding (based on his famous [table](#)) contradicted the

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<sup>1</sup> This notion was suggested to me by [Schopenhauer](#)'s take on the *CPR*. It is not a term that Kant utilized.

<sup>2</sup> With most of the impulses from the right eye being conveyed to the left brain hemisphere and from the left eye to the right hemisphere.

<sup>3</sup> This projection within brains might be compared to a planetarium or a giant cyclorama.

<sup>4</sup> In English discourses on Kant this term is almost always rendered with “intuition.” For more on this see [Anschauung](#).

very system of human knowledge that he had erected, and as a result he became an “academic skeptic.”<sup>5</sup> But whereas Hume decided to give up, Kant took on this task in the *CPR*, the task of ascertaining how we ever came to realize that the appearances were not things on their own, but merely our own representation of things,<sup>6</sup> the way things *appear* to us when looked at and considered.

### Mathematics as Model for the A Priori and Synthetic Knowledge

Kant took a look at mathematics and especially geometry, and thought about a triangle and realized that there is nothing in the concept of a triangle (namely three distinct straight line segments with every endpoint being a common endpoint of two of these segments) that tells us that each side is shorter than the other two combined. Hume thought mathematics was analytical, and we see here that he was mistaken, for the knowledge of this property of the length of the sides cannot be gleaned by any analysis of the concept of the triangle. But both Hume and Kant also realized that this knowledge could not be empirically obtained by inspection, i.e., it could not be that we learn about triangles the way we learn about tables or toothbrushes, for that learning only tells us what we have experienced thus far, e.g., that every triangle inspected so far shows every two sides are greater than the remaining side, but not that this property of the length of the sides *must* be this way. And what we do is to exercise our capacity for looking at something before our eyes (e.g., a face in the cloud) and in this case tracing out in mid-air the outline of a triangle, and we are able to “see” the triangle, via our imagination, not just picturing it in our head, but placing a triangle in space before us and actually seeing it there in space and where we are able to point it out to others also to see.<sup>7</sup> And so we don’t examine existing triangles we may run across for this purpose. Instead we ourselves provide the object *a priori* (before experience), i.e., construct a triangle in space, for it is only then that we can first realize that every two sides must be greater than the third, for if that were not true we wouldn’t be able to construct any triangle at all. And this knowledge is what Kant called both *synthetic*, i.e., not derived from the concept of an object, and *a priori*, i.e., independently of any experience with an empirical object; even though all that is before us is a so-called pure perspective<sup>8</sup> in space.

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<sup>5</sup> See this excerpt ([Sections 118 & 119](#)) from his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Here Hume has to give up on his own system of knowledge that he had just enunciated, and enter into “academic skepticism.” Hume knew that he could not have recognized the constancy of his table by reference to the empirical appearance (for every time the size he viewed changed with the distance), and so he must have dreamed up this constant table. But this conflicted with everything he had established in his own theory of knowledge. In fact he was intent in refusing to acknowledge that reason and understanding could provide any objective and empirical knowledge of things, and that all such knowledge was empirical and derived from experience; and to think otherwise was delusional.

<sup>6</sup> If we were to consider appearances as real things just as they appear to us, then a tree I am approaching would be approaching me just as well and would be physically changing size as the distance between us diminishes. And since faces and other objects appearing in clouds come and go, even so we would expect all objects to be able to pop up and then vanish or change size and shape, including also Hume’s table. Indeed, what does Hume’s table look like when no one is looking at it?

<sup>7</sup> Usually this examination of triangles would be drawn on a blackboard or on paper, but this would be just as *a priori* and pure as the tracing out of a triangle in mid air.

<sup>8</sup> Kant used  $7+5=12$  as another example of the need for the perspective in space in order to recognize mathematical facts. Consider 7 and 5 and the concept of sum as long as you will, says Kant, and you will never come to 12. The way we do it is to let the fingers of a hand represent the 5 and start with the 7 in mind and count 8 9 10 11 and then finally 12 on the fingers. This is synthetic and *a priori*. See [Seven Plus Five](#).

So we have the capacity to provide objects to the appearances in the brainarium<sup>9</sup> and this capacity of ours is valid for geometry and mathematics, for it is only in this way that our recognition of these objects can be represented and sighted in pure space and time (as indicated by our triangle example cited just above). We recognize them because we have put them there ourselves and then have actually seen them there, e.g., the imaginary triangle in space before us. Kant maintains that had Hume realized this fact of our knowledge of mathematics and geometry, he would also have realized that it was both synthetic and a priori, and then he would have figured out the *CPR* before Kant and would have expressed it much better than Kant himself did.

### **Provision of the Object of Experience**

Now, Kant is saying to Hume, we know that we cannot determine the size of your famous [table](#) by looking at it, for all we get in that way are changes, growing smaller and larger depending on the distance from us. And yet we both know that the table does not change size and that we are looking at merely the appearances of this unchanging table in the brainarium. Since we can't get the knowledge of this uniformity of existence from experience, and yet we know it anyway, it follows that we have ourselves provided the object (the thought and constant-size 'table' per its concept as opposed to its appearance), just as we did with the triangle. And so what we have is this: we provide the "object of experience" via the concept which then the appearance of the table in the brainarium represents to us in the space and time of our looking. By means of this object of experience, e.g., the 'real table' that we think, we come to recognize the appearances as such, i.e., we come to realize that all we see and sense is limited to the brainarium. And so our presumption in providing this object of experience, this notion of a flat surface elevated by legs, leads us to recognize the table and that it is abiding and it is only our perception of it that changes; and this recognition is the justification for providing the object of experience from our own understanding makeup.

### **The Capacity of Understanding**

The details of this process are quite involved (and while we all comply with this process, we, unlike Kant, don't pay attention to the process itself). We have a mental capacity called the understanding, a capacity for making connections, e.g., of putting two and two together into a four, or putting a top and legs together (conceptually) into a table. There are various connections that our capacity for understanding can make, e.g., cause and effect, and which Kant calls the categories.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Affinity of All Appearances**

Based on this connective understanding as an a priori capacity for making connections (and preceding all experience) and by our very nature as understanding beings, we make the universal assumption that all appearances are connected in one way or another, remotely or directly. This is the single most comprehensive and fundamental assumption we ever make with regard to empirical knowledge (and this universal connection, direct or remote, Kant calls the "affinity of all appearances"). Based on this assumption we are on the lookout for connections and then are alert to the hint of such so that when anything suggestive in this regard appears to us, e.g., coincidences, we are open to the possibility of connection which then (per the assumed affinity) captures our interest and leads to an investigation and experimentation and finally then to a recognition.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This indicates that the appearances then are representation of things, and not actual things on their own. And otherwise, treating appearances as real things, we are caught in the trap of thinking that Hume's shrinking table (as we get further away from it) actually itself grew smaller.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to cause and effect we can make connections in terms of subject and predicate, degrees of intensity of sensations, constancy of material quantity (as in the constant size of the table), causation and reciprocity, and then also judge these connections in terms possibility, actuality and necessity.

<sup>11</sup> See a detailed treatment of this process in [Circles In The Air](#).



### Application of the Categories

Once we recognize Hume's table as an actual object (which is then represented by the appearances of that table within the brainarium), we assume the constant size of that table as one of the connective devices (here a so-called analogy) of our understanding (categories) which is called constancy of the quantity of matter, and then we look for a connection between the different appearances, e.g., the cause of the variations in the size of the table, and find it in our perspective as on-lookers, and so where the varying appearances (of the table) are all unified as different appearances or looks of one and the same thing as perceived from different angles and times and distances.<sup>12</sup> This is a synthetic endeavor, with the object of experience being provided by our capacity for understanding and connection. And the recognition arises in seeing the diverse appearances as simply our own representations of these real objects as appearances within the brainarium.<sup>13</sup>

### Unified Understanding

So briefly then, and regarding Hume's table, the presumption of universal connection (the affinity) of all appearances in the brainarium (based on the categorical, connective makeup of human understanding) leads us to take notice of certain coincidences, and then to experimentation and finally to the unification of the appearances via the table (supplied by our imagination in accordance with our capacity of understanding) such that the appearances are all bound together as various representations or views or looks of the one and same unchanging table.<sup>14</sup>

### Causation

Consider the category of causation. Our categorical mode of thinking and understanding is so constituted that for us the term "event" (something happening) is considered to be a synonym for the term "effect" such that upon the sighting of an event we are prompted via this category to look about for the cause, for we know there is a cause since (per this principle) all events are effects, i.e., effects of something preceding, which was a necessary condition (the cause) for the reality of this state of things as events.

### Experience Justifies the Application of the Categories

Accordingly Kant has shown the propriety in our presumption in providing objects to the world of the brainarium by showing the necessity of our doing so in our realization and recognition of the brainarium. In a word: in the same way that we provide a triangle in order to establish the relationship of the lengths of the sides with each other, we provide a table via a concept. By means of this concept we are able to look upon the various appearances as the way the table looks or appears under difference conditions, e.g., the distance from the viewer or dim versus bright light or now painted red and earlier black. And so in this way Kant justifies the use of the categories of the understanding by showing that it is only by means of them that any experience can arise in the first place. Hume showed that experience is our source of knowledge of objects, and Kant shows that this experience itself is a function of the makeup of our human understanding. Indeed even the perceptions, constituting experience for Hume in terms of frequency and intensity, are themselves first prompted by, and thus dependent upon, Kant's categories of understanding.

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<sup>12</sup> [Schopenhauer](#), in his study of Kant, maintained that the eye was the first object of experience that we recognize. And this will have followed upon experiments which were based on the constancy of the object (per the understanding [and only per Kant]) and then the category of cause and effect (which prompts the experiments involved with looking at the object at different distances). See also the [Recognition of Dreams](#).

<sup>13</sup> The reader may find it interesting to investigate the phenomenon of the two "ghost fingers" when looking past a single upraised finger near the nose (by people with two eyes). See also the [Doubling Finger of Thomas Reid](#).

<sup>14</sup> This is covered in excruciating detail by Kant in his [CPR](#), beginning on or near page 683.

### Dealing with Objects Independently of the Brainarium

Now Kant wants to see what happens when we seek to do this with regard to objects apart from any possible brainarium. And this is the primary purpose of his [Critique of Pure Reason](#) (in a section called the Dialectic beginning on or near page 298). Here pure reason itself ventures out beyond the world of a possible brainarium into a realm of pure Ideas<sup>15</sup> and draws what it sees as very plain, rational and necessary conclusions. Here the objects we conceive of, unlike those of experience, cannot be presented in the brainarium and thus can only be thought about and not experienced.

### Abandoning Appearances in Pursuit of Soul, Free Will and God

This analysis becomes much more complex than that with the understanding. In the realm of Ideas (where the brainarium can provide no touchstone of our presumptions), i.e., apart from the brainarium where alone our concepts and dreams can be tested in experience and perception, we *believe* we just have to make sure we don't contradict either science (and experience) or ourselves in our thinking, and otherwise we can assert what we will quite gratis. Here we find it is natural for pure reason to lead us to the Ideas of the soul, free will and God (among others). Kant shows in great detail how it is that we are dealing with a confusion which is similar to the mirage we see of water on the distant, dry road in warm weather which always vanishes when approached, only here the illusion is a product of our own rationality when confused by words. This confusion (which leads to this illusion) arises by leaving the realm of the appearances of the brainarium and sailing out in thought to consider Ideas, and confusing words relevant to experience with words which express what cannot be given in any experience.

### Advent of Rational Confusion

Very briefly it goes like this: We know there is something apart from the brainarium, such that our appearances are just that, i.e., representations of that something and not things on their own. This is the assumption we make regarding the appearances, that they are altogether representations of a single nature, and thus that they are all connected in one way or another. So we conceive of a something, the “thing on its own” apart from the brainarium, and assume that it is subject to the laws of nature and so treat it as the object of experience, which can be represented by appearances.<sup>16</sup> But the fact that we are limited to the brainarium, and thus to the connective laws of nature (per the categories of the understanding), does not affect the thing on its own. And so we properly think of the thing on its own as entirely independent of all human looking, or looking of any kind (of our senses). But then when we want to speak about the thing on its own in the sciences of the brainarium (science of nature) we are actually speaking of the object of experience, i.e., anything to the extent it appears in the space and time of a possible human brainarium in accordance with laws of a single nature, and this is essentially an appearance.

This is very important and needs to be grasped. We conceive of the thing on its own in order to deal with the appearances, but then in dealing with the appearances we think not of the thing on its own and entirely independent from all human looking, but of the object of experience which is subject to human perspective. The confusion and illusion arise by speaking of the thing on its own as being the same as the object of experience, and which is true with regard to science and experience, but is false with regard to things on their own and independently of appearances.<sup>17</sup>

There are three subjects which are of particular importance in the Dialectic, namely: the soul, free will

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<sup>15</sup> Here Idea (with upper case I, and a technical term for Kant) denotes a concept for which no corresponding object can be located within a brainarium, i.e., as an appearance.

<sup>16</sup> This is what was done above in conceiving of a table as a real object.

<sup>17</sup> In the [Transcendental Aesthetic](#) of the *CPR*, No. 8 and Par. 5, on or around page 71, we see that commonly we speak of the rainbow as a mere appearance and the rain itself as the thing on its own. But from a transcendental basis both the rainbow and the rain are appearances in the brainarium and what the thing on its be independently of all looking is always merely an unknown something.

and God.

### The Soul

Looking first to the reasoning regarding the soul, we note that reason wants to get to the unconditioned of the category, which the understanding has provided and proven in the construction of the object of experience and of the ensuing experience with that object. With regard to the soul, while the understanding must remain with a Transcendental Object = X = soul, to which our thoughts, feelings, desires, etc., are connected, and so which is always empirically conditioned, reason wants to reach beyond that and find the unconditioned which must be (we are certain, or so we think!) embedded in that object, that soul.

And it goes like this: We conceive of a thinking entity which must exist (in order that thinking might exist) and call it substance, i.e., enduring. This is the major premise. Then in the minor premise we note that we ourselves are thinking entities, and then finally we conclude that we, therefore, *must* also exist, e.g., without end.

But here we are making a fallacious deduction, for the thinking entity thought in the major premise is indeed unconditioned and thus absolute, but the thinking entity of the minor premise (my own soul) is an object of experience (hence represented as an internal appearance via my thinking) and so relates to the thinking being of the premise as the *appearance* of a tree relates to a tree, i.e., they are different. So we conceive of an object (the thinking entity) that is necessary, but are not able to give it an identical object in the minor, but rather only the *appearance* of an object, and thus we cannot draw any conclusion whatsoever. It's like apples and oranges, and the confusion arises by means of the term "thinking entity" which can be thought in two related, and yet very distinct, ways, i.e., we confuse the representation of an object (the thinking of "I" in the minor) with the object itself (the I in the major). The *representation* of the soul must be simple, identical, etc., but this does not make the soul *as object* simple, etc.

### Free Will

Next we turn to the question concerning free will, and here we will be dealing with what Kant calls the [Four Antinomies](#) page 376 (and where with each there are two contradictory statements, *each of which can be proven to be true* by pure reason). In the first two of the antinomies we discover, per Kant's analysis, that both of the contradictory statements are actually false, while in the latter two we see that both are, or could be, true at the same time. In the [3rd Antinomy](#), for example, we prove and compare: 1. "all actions are determined by necessary laws of nature" and 2. "some actions are determined through a free will." We find the confusion of these latter two analogies to be of this sort: in England to drive on the left side is to drive on the right side, and to drive on the right side is to drive on the wrong side; but which then makes driving on the left side driving on the wrong side, and which makes it wrong to drive on either side. Here we are using one term "right" to mean "proper" in one case and to mean "opposite of left" in the other case, and so there is no contradiction at all, just a different and confusing sense in the two assertions. In one case the thing on its own means the object of science, while in the other it means something independent of all human perspective. Again this problem has to do with the difference between the thing on its own and the object of experience.

### God

Finally, and with regard to God, we conceive of a being which is absolutely perfect, and we (and especially per [Descartes](#)) want to assert that an object or being that exists is obviously more perfect than the same object, which is merely thought, and so we conclude, via pure reason, that the concept of such an absolutely perfect being must include existence, for else (without existence) it would contradict its own concept and not really be perfect (where existence is treated here as a predicate like power and knowledge). Indeed we are also led to a *necessary* being by pure reason looking for the ultimate cause of the brainarium world. There must be such a being and what better being could there be besides this absolutely perfect being. So pure reason is satisfied in its conclusion of the necessary existence of God.

The main problem with this reasoning involves the misuse of the term "is" as the expression of existence.

The little word “is” is a connective device (of subject with predicate) as in “the tree is tall;” it is not a predicate, as though one might say, “the tree is is.” So even though we can dream up perfect beings all we want to, there is still a question as to whether such a being exists so that we could rightly say, “that thing is,” i.e., it exists. And if we dream up a being with all predicates except one (let it be “existence”), and then we say that being exists, then we must mean that it exists with just those predicates, and not with the missing predicate, for otherwise we would be speaking of two different things, as though “the tree with leaves” and “the tree without leaves” were two different trees (and not the same tree in different seasons).

### **Conclusions of the Critique of Pure Reason Regarding Soul, Free Will and God**

The conclusion then of the *CPR* is that we are able to think the soul and free will and God *consistently* with the sciences of the brainarium world, but we are not able to recognize them as existing objects; and the concepts we have of them, their Ideas, may be empty of any content, empty with respect to any actual something corresponding to them. In a word, Kant finishes the *CPR* in the role of an agnostic with regard to these three important rational Ideas. We cannot say whether the soul, free will and God exist or do not exist, or are anything more than grand Ideas.

Now we are ready to depart from the realm of theoretical and speculative knowledge and enter that of practical matters, where we are dealing with our actions and motives, not with what we know, but rather with what we do or ought to do. Before we investigate whether our reason can be of utility in a practical sense, i.e., concerning what we do (rather than what we think and know), we must establish some concepts and a framework. This we will undertake in an examination of the Grounding to the Metaphysic of Morals (*GMM*).

## **Grounding to the Metaphysic of Morals <sup>18</sup>**

### **Duty**

Here we wonder about the meaning of a good will and investigate it in terms of duty (which means a good will in the face of incentives contrary to the moral law). Immediately we find that duty is commonly understood as acting for the sake of the law (where the law is as yet undetermined, and so could be conceived of as being externally imposed). Where did such a notion come from? How does it arise in our consciousness?

### **Origin of Duty**

We investigate the origins of this duty and see that the source of duty cannot be experience. So we turn to reason and find that reason is able to issue three sorts of principles for action, i.e., rules of skill (efficiencies in constructions), counsels of prudence (recommendations for happiness) and laws of morality (categorical imperatives). The first two are analytical and their compulsion is self-evident.<sup>19</sup> Only the moral needs a justification. We now must turn to pure reason and conceive of a realm of free beings and discover in that way that each person in that realm would issue his own laws in this format: in order to exclude all subjective influence I must conceive of the law as requiring me and all people to universalize our maxims,<sup>20</sup> and to treat these maxims as though they were laws of nature. We also see that this thinking requires us to realize that we and all members of this free realm would be purposes on our own and never

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<sup>18</sup> For a more extensive summary see [Summary](#).

<sup>19</sup> They are both also hypothetical (and not categorical) and means that they are binding under the assumption that we want to obtain some effect, e.g., construct a table. Also the counsels of prudence are only recommendations and suggestions, for no one really knows what personal happiness consists of. It is prudent to work and save when young for the conditions of old age, for example, but this would not hold for someone who has no expectation of living that long.

<sup>20</sup> Maxims are personal rules or principles of conduct.

simply means to someone's happiness, be it our own or another's.<sup>21</sup> Now the question arises: how could such a notion of a realm of free beings be meaningful to us as humans individually and personally?

### **Our Interest in the Moral Law**

We know now analytically that a free realm would be ruled by the moral law (for freedom cannot be subject to laws of nature and yet it cannot be lawless), and so we must ask: assuming we were in fact free, how could such a synthetic a priori requirement to universalize our maxims be possible for us? We assume our own freedom and that of all rational beings, and accordingly see that all would be bound by the moral law (again: this is still only analytical). But how could such a notion (a free realm and the moral law) that we have rationally dreamed up be of any interest to us? We do in fact take an interest, but what is required for us to do this? In the first place we have to conceive of ourselves as "intelligible beings," who are subject to the moral law in an intelligible realm of free beings, and who also have a sensitive nature, which is revealed to us in the brainarium of experience. Accordingly we come to take an interest in this law by understanding in this dual way of existence how we might be free and thus responsible for universalizing our maxims (which otherwise would be impossible to fathom in the sensible existence in the brainarium). And now we can also understand how a categorical imperative could arise and be meaningful. For the intelligible being (commonly thought of as a "soul" or "spirit") would, as a matter of course, be responsive to, and bound by, the moral law. But a sensitive being would have incentives to promote happiness before the moral (and in that wise to function according to laws of nature), and so the categorical imperative means that we are obligated to act in a certain way (in the intelligible realm), but also that we don't have to act in that certain way (in the brainarium realm), but merely "ought to." But, again, this doesn't prove that we are free or that we are subject to the moral law. All we have done so far is to establish the necessary conditions for a recognition of any freedom and any subjugation to the moral law, and thus what duty and a good will are. There is as yet no recognition of freedom or of any obligation to the moral law.

Now that we can understand what is necessary for a human to conceive that he is free and subject to the moral law of universalized maxims, we can turn to discover how it is that we find ourselves in fact bound by, and subject to, this moral law via our human, rational and emotional makeup. This is one of the tasks of the [\*Critique of Practical Reason\*](#), CPrP.

### **Critique of Practical Reason**

When we delve into practical matters with Kant, we will find we have a rational *need* for all three of the objects we sought in vain in the *CPR*, i.e., free will, an immortal soul and God. And since there is no reason in theoretical and speculative reasoning that would prevent their existence, Kant will take advantage of them for his practical purposes.

### **Freedom as a Fact**

Kant presents two proofs of human freedom, the so-called scientific and the popular.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Hence no one may consider any person (one's self or another) as a mere means, but always primarily as a thing of intrinsic worth and dignity.

<sup>22</sup> The following two topics are a brief condensation of Kant's [proof of freedom](#) from the standpoint of the moral recognition both of scientists and non-scientists from his *CPrR*, beginning on or near page 35.

### Scientific Proof

According to the first proof someone who thinks he possesses free will should be considered by scientists to be as deranged as [Locke's "glass man"](#),<sup>23</sup> who studiously avoids falling and sharp blows because of his fear of breaking into shards. But scientists do not treat people who count themselves as possessing free will as anything other than normal.

### Popular Proof

Regarding the popular proof of free will, the reason goes as follows: suppose someone asserts that if he could go to some house and satisfy his most passionate desire, it simply would be irresistible; ask him if he could resist if he saw a gallows upon which he would hanged when he finished with his delight. He will, of course, admit that he could indeed resist the draw of that desire. But then ask him if he were told by his governor to lie in order that an innocent person, whom the governor hates, could be executed, would he be able to give up his life for the sake of this person. He may not be able to say with certainty how he would actually choose, but the pause he takes to consider the matter means that it is possible he would choose truth and his own death, and that pause and consideration means he possesses free will.<sup>24</sup>

### What is the Purpose of the Moral Law?

And so we now have freedom as a meaningful fact, but then we also have a rational problem which needs attention. By virtue of reason itself, it doesn't make the least bit of sense to do something which is simply inane, i.e., without purpose. But this would mean that the moral law, which needs no purpose in its command, still needs a purpose in order to satisfy rationality, for otherwise it is to be counted as silly or inane. And so unless we can find a purpose, the moral act stands in a gulf between two precipices, adherence to a law of reason and rational rejection of inanity, i.e., deliberate, purposeless action.

### Highest Good

This needed purpose to the moral law and freedom Kant calls the Highest Good (and some others call Justice). The highest good that human rationality can conceive of has a component of happiness which is proportionate to one's moral worth and where everyone *can* achieve to moral perfection. In order that this Highest Good be a practical purpose for the moral law, we have to believe that we can achieve to, or at least approach on a continuing basis, the required state of moral perfection contained in its concept.

### Immortality

And looking now into possible eternities of existence, we see that for the Highest Good to be this necessary purpose, we must believe that we are going to live longer than our earthly span of life and that this purpose will indeed be attained, i.e., approaching ever nearer to moral perfection and to the requisite and commensurate happiness. In this way Kant introduces eternal life as necessary for our wanting to strive in pursuit of this moral perfection now, and for seeing it as a practical goal.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The example of the "glass man" is not utilized by Kant but is introduced by this translator as a clearer explanation of what Kant means in this difficult section.

<sup>24</sup> The feeling of moral respect that arises upon the conception of the moral law is unique in Kant's view. Normally a feeling arises only per the prompt of some exposure, e.g., a great drama or music. The moral feeling arises only by virtue of the Idea of the moral law, and not otherwise.

<sup>25</sup> Kant doesn't get into this, as far as I know, but it is an interesting thought that in the time span of the earthly part of this continuing existence (that I am here imagining), I may be establishing something which becomes a fixed part of my being after this earthly element, and thus something which will continue as my eternal character. He does allude to such in [Part II](#) of his work on religion (on or near page 68).



## Existence of God

Now with God it is a bit easier. Since it is incoherent to speak of the apportionment of happiness to moral perfection by means of the laws of nature, the only way that the Highest Good can be conceived of as a practical, i.e., attainable, goal is if there is an omnipotent and omniscient Moral Judge (God) who can discern our worthiness for happiness and can compel nature to provide the commensurate happiness.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

And so this [CPrR](#) shows not only that pure reason is practical, but also that practical reason is able to direct us toward our highest, individual and social good, i.e., a state of moral perfection coupled with commensurate perfection in happiness (both individually and for the world).

Thus the agnostic of the [Critique of Pure Reason](#) ends up with moral certitude concerning the existence of God in the [Critique of Practical Reason](#). And so while in theoretical matters, he plays the part of an agnostic, in a moral sense he is a believer in God. And the same holds true for an immortal soul. As Kant puts it: "I am *morally* certain of the existence of God and of a future world."<sup>27</sup>

## Transition to Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason

The next step is to see how reason can guide us in advance with reference to any communications or relationships with this God. For now we will attend to Kant in his work entitled [Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason](#) (also referred to as *Religion* in this treatment of that work).

## Only Hope for Moral Improvement for the World

First, however, since we will be talking about making progress toward the moral perfection called for by the Idea of the Highest Good, we will extrapolate here on Kant's thinking regarding atheism, and why religion offers the only hope for this goal. The assertion of the non-existence of God reduces the moral law to an inane vanity.<sup>28</sup> As such it is hardly to be expected that people would actually be moved to comply with this moral law, except when convenient or perhaps merely for show. Now while most people may continue to treat others pretty much as they are used to doing, even though, intellectually speaking and given atheism, morality would be a total vanity, this tendency will slowly vanish, and we will be left in a world where the moral law is a joke or treated as quaint. And with it vanishes the basis of the dignity of human beings. Consider only a safe case to profitably cheat, perhaps even with no (noticeable) harm being done to anyone (see footnote 26 cited just above): could anyone be expected to resist such a temptation if the moral law is meaningless? Can we expect that such a world, where it is universally recognized that the moral respect is an evolutionarily determined property (such as compassion or animal pity) and which can be overcome with therapy and practice, could lead to moral perfection? Accordingly, it seems Kant wants to say, if there is any hope for the moral improvement of the world, it will arise by means of religion.

A conclusion we can already draw is this: it is morally necessary to posit the existence of God (and an immortal soul) to make meaningful progress toward moral perfection and to expect commensurate happiness (by means of the Highest Good). Accordingly then, for any study of religion, since this moral treat-

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<sup>26</sup> See [CPrP](#), Existence of God on or near page 162.

<sup>27</sup> [Canon of Pure Reason](#), Concerning Opinion, Knowledge and Belief, Par. 17.4-5, on or near page 652 of the *CPR*.

<sup>28</sup> See also [Sagan and Kant](#) and the [Lecture For An Atheist Youth Camp](#) for a discussion on why atheism cannot be expected to help the world make serious progress toward moral perfection.

ment is the only rationale we have for the existence of God,<sup>29</sup> it follows clearly that the one thing we can say about any God that we might worship is that the commands of that God could never call for violations of the moral law. Indeed we can be sure that this God (so conceived and postulated via practical reason) will want us to strive for moral perfection. And so whatever we come to think of concerning any God, it will have to do with the moral perfection of the human.

Now we are prepared to examine what a rational religion for the humans would look like.

## Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason

### Brief Overview

In this work on religion Kant wants to lay out to the biblical theologian at the university a way that can help steer the human race toward moral perfection.

Despite a natural structure for good (including most especially respect for the moral law) we can discern an evil defect in the human species, a propensity for seeking ways around the moral law when it is in conflict with self-love, and a willingness to violate that law “if the price is right.” Since this propensity is a free and discretionary (albeit still very natural) choice of each individual and made before memory (and infecting even the best people), it can be overcome only by converting via a resolute determination to put the moral law first before self-love.

The individual will face a host of ills as a result of such a conversion, some of which he would not have to endure except for the conversion, and he will always have to struggle with temptations until the end of life. These ills he may count as atonement for his pre-conversion, wrongful disposition, as long as he does not claim credit for his good actions subsequent to his conversion. And the only confidence he can have for the strength of his conversion arises via experience.

Due to a competitiveness which is inherent in human society and concerns rank, there is no reasonable basis for any hope for moral perfection for either the individual or the species unless people of a like (and moral) mind and spirit team up and form a society for a joint effort. The thinking here is of an ethical commonwealth, where people freely come together to encourage each other in their striving for personal, moral perfection and to cooperate for moving toward world, moral perfection and the Highest Good. Such an endeavor is only feasible by means of a church as a divinely proclaimed, moral commonwealth, where the moral law is supreme as the measure of one’s pleasing to God, and where this supreme standard cannot be changed. In this way an existing historical faith can be used as a vehicle for the invisible, moral, universal and free Church of God, and the sacred histories can be understood in a morally strengthening way, rather than simply factually. Over time this vehicle can become less important, and its ecclesiastical elements even dispensable, as the moral religious core shines through with more intensity and clarity; though the rituals, statutory ordinances and creeds can always be retained for purposes of solidarity and moral invigoration, but without imposing upon the conscience of any individual.

Finally we will consider a given, historical belief (the Christian) and examine it and see that it has a clear moral core and teaching and that it is encased in a “husk” of mysteries and miracles (perhaps very efficacious for the original introduction to a people encumbered in a slavish way of religious thinking, i.e., pre-modern Jews), and how this husk is eventually to be considered as non-essential and dispensable. Associated with such an historical belief is a natural propensity to corrupt the worship of God and make it into a cult, where we are made pleasing to him without having to become morally better (superstition), or where

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<sup>29</sup> As we saw earlier in the *CPR*, the pure rational proof of the existence of God was flawed and not conclusive. There we could prove neither the existence nor the non-existence of God. Our only basis for a rational belief in God arises via the moral respect per the [CPrR](#).



## Translator's Notes And Summary

we even seek to seduce him into doing our bidding through bribery (sorcery or fetishism), or finally by obtaining direct communications with him (fanaticism) and without need for other people. The pure moral core of the Christian church must be attended to and expressed in all interpretations and determinations of the church. The supreme principle is this: God can only be immediately pleased with a disposition and determination to a moral course of living, and that everyone must do their very best on their own toward this goal before expecting any assistance from God.

## Summary By Part

### Preface I

In his first-edition preface to *Religion* Kant reminds the reader that while no God is needed in order to determine the moral law and one's duty to that law (per the [CPrR](#)), God follows as a *consequence* of that law, namely every practical law must aim toward some purpose, and the moral law aims toward the Highest Good of moral perfection coupled with commensurate happiness, and that happiness can only be provided by an omnipotent, all wise and moral judge, i.e., God. And the fact of the Highest Good is also something which every morally inclined person will want, even if he is not sure of his own capacity to achieve to the requisite moral perfection. It is Kant's hope that the biblical theologians at the university will consider this *Religion* and find it useful in their ultimate mission, i.e., the moral perfection of the world.

### Preface II

In the second-edition preface Kant notes primarily that a historical belief could be represented by a large circle, and within that circle would be a smaller one which would represent that portion of the belief which is pure religious (moral) belief, and which is the domain of the philosopher (and thus the focus of this current work).

## Part I - The Indwelling Of The Evil Principle Alongside The Good, Or The Radical Evil In Human Nature

Kant finds it necessary to think of the human as either good or evil, and not both. What is meant by good and by evil is not so much the actions that a person undertakes as rather the maxim (rule of personal conduct) by which the individual discretion<sup>30</sup> is determined to actions.

Kant reminds us that our discretion is a free discretion, i.e., that we can choose to act independently of the laws of nature by complying with the laws of reason concerning a realm of free beings, and where the law of that realm is the moral law, i.e., the requirement that we undertake actions only according to maxims which we can universalize and treat as valid for all.<sup>31</sup>

All humans have a makeup or structure for good, be it in our animal needs, or in our rationality in the pursuit of happiness, or finally in our personhood, which arises from the respect that we naturally feel as rational beings for the moral law (all of which, except the latter, can be misused, e.g., drunkenness [animality] or jealousy arising from comparing ourselves with others [a function of our rationality]).

Now the only way that the incentive of the moral law (known as moral respect) can be meaningful to a person (and not just wishful thinking) is to turn that incentive into a maxim for the discretion, e.g., always tell the truth, i.e., regardless of circumstances, i.e., categorically. In this context we have set the stage for a

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<sup>30</sup> With "discretion" (*Willkür*) we are to understand a capacity to pursue incentives, *if we so choose*. It is "up to us;" it is our decision; we can go after the perceived incentive if we want to. If a drink is offered to me, for example, and I see that I can have it by taking it in my hand, then I can decide if I want to go for it and have a drink. It's a matter of my discretion; it is a matter of personal choice. It is voluntary.

<sup>31</sup> If I say it is OK for me to lie, I must say it is OK for all to lie. But that would remove the belief in all promises and thus negate the feasibility of promises. Thus this cannot be universalized, and so accordingly lying is immoral.

conflict between the incentives of self-love and those of the moral law, and this leads to the evil which is in the human, namely a temptation to put self-love above the moral law.

This evil is expressed, not as a structure (which would contradict the moral structure), but as a propensity or tendency for finding a way around the moral command when there is a conflict with personal happiness and self-love. There is a stepwise descent into evil: taking the moral law seriously, but then failing to comply and pleading weakness in competition with the inclinations toward self-love; and next taking the law seriously, but then supporting it with prudent and non-moral reasons, e.g., don't lie because keeping lies consistent with each other is too difficult, which dilutes the strength of the moral law. And finally there is the actual, imputable evil itself, namely: suppressing the moral requirement and giving self-love free rein, and where the moral law is then only complied with when convenient and not costly. This propensity belongs to the human species and thus affects every person, even the best. But still it is only an temptation and can be resisted, although often requiring considerable fortitude.

History is replete with examples of this moral depravity, all the way from the behavior of savages to civilized society to even to the relationships between nation-states. And we seek to avoid acknowledging this evil through a false way of judging actions. Instead of looking to the supreme maxim of an action to see if it is good or evil (moral or selfish), which is the correct measure of our morality, we focus on the outcome of the action and utilize such expressions as "no harm done" to mean that the person perpetrating such action is acceptable and is to be judged a good person, at least "not really bad," even though that person's supreme maxim will be evil (self-love over the moral). For example, a person who is willing to lie only when it is safe and profitable may never find it safe and profitable to do so, and thus will have no reason, according to this way of thinking, to judge himself as morally amiss and as anything other than a truthful person. And yet all the while he is essentially a liar, and lacking merely an appropriate occasion to lie. In this way we consider the *legality* of actions (not lying because of no occasion to do so) and ignore the *morality* (not lying due to the moral law).

Now we turn to how the scriptural explanation of the origin of evil in a world, which was created good, might be useful in explaining this evil. The first persons, according to this explanation, were created good adults. Upon hearing of the moral command (the "No" of [Genesis 3](#)) they chafed and opted for other reasons to comply (the forbidden fruit didn't look tasty anyway), i.e., diluting the rule (per the first paragraph of this page), and that took their minds off of the command. When they decided, having been prompted by an evil spirit, that it might taste good after all, and that no harm would be done (God being absent and they wouldn't be caught), they decided to be disobedient. And so without looking for a way around the commandment (which is the human propensity now), they were confronted with a reason and a way to get around it per the suggestions of this external (and inexplicable) evil spirit. Thus it was said that they fell into evil/sin from innocence. Accordingly the difference between innocence and the propensity to evil is that the first adults never sought to avoid obedience, while with all humans since then such avoiding is their propensity, i.e., they are on the look out for a way around the moral command when compliance is inconvenient or costly. And it really doesn't make any difference with regard to the person committing an unlawful act, whether the temptation comes from without (via an evil tempter) or from within (personal propensity), for in no case is one to commit such an act.

Kant concludes with the good news that since this propensity (opting for self-love first) is freely chosen (even before memory) it can be changed, and we can resolve to subdue it (even if it cannot be eradicated) by making a resolute act of our discretion to put the moral law always first over self-love, no matter the temptations.

In the General Remarks to this first part Kant notes that the notion of "works of grace" are conceivable, but are also meaningless for the individual (in a practical sense), since the most that can be aroused rationally is a hope of divine assistance to one's own effort to achieve to moral perfection, but only upon the consciousness of doing all that one can on one's own to reach that goal. It is because this principle is em-

bedded in the Christian religion that it counts as a moral religion, and indeed the only one in human history.<sup>32</sup>

## **Part II - The Struggle Of The Good Principle With The Evil For The Control Of The Human**

We now turn our attention to the matter of moral perfection. Given the human's propensity to evil, what is called for is a conversion, i.e., a discretionary, sincere and resolute dedication of one's soul to act always first according to the moral law; and so as a reversal of the pre-conversion maxims such that now the moral law will become supreme, and only then self-love (in second place). We will now examine what is entailed with such a conversion.

The Greek philosophers were close to the mark in their emphasis upon preparation for the battle which must be waged morally; a preparation they quite rightly called "virtue." But they were mistaken in thinking that the only reason people preferred the inclinations of the senses (pleasures, etc.) over the moral law was just foolishness, such that if people could ever be rightly educated they would have a good chance of moral success. They did not recognize the *propensity* to evil which possesses all in the human species.

When we want to conceive of the purpose of creation (given our moral background) we come necessarily to the concept of a human who could be called the Son of God (the personification of the Good Principle), namely a person who is dedicated to the moral law first, and remains true to this despite all sorts of enormous temptations, even to the point of a gruesome death. This is the picture of what the convert is aiming for. This notion is not fantasy, for we all know that we ought to be such a person ourselves (objective reality of the Principle). For this reason we have no basis to doubt the reports of such a person, of whom there is good evidence of having lived such a perfect life.<sup>33</sup>

There are three difficulties in considering the matter of conversion:

1. How can the convert, who will remain inadequate throughout his life with regard to moral perfection, be considered by God as a morally good person? The solution lies in remembering that looking at the human in time is the form of *human* looking, while God sees the world in its completion instantaneously (independently of time), and so can look at the disposition of the person striving for moral perfection and see that person as already successful and finished.
2. How can we know that we have truly converted and are not just fooling ourselves? The only way is through experience, for it is impossible for us to see ourselves as God does (we look always in terms of time and the appearances of things), and we cannot rely on our own self-inspection of any feelings of perfection. Thus we can only judge ourselves by our conduct in time in the face of challenges and temptations. Based on this experience we can be assured (though not certain) of the authenticity of our conversion and, encouraged by that, to continue the struggle with renewed vigor. Or, if we have fallen back and failed multiple times, we will have good reason to seriously question our commitment to the good principle, i.e., our conversion, and a need to make a sincere commitment and redouble our efforts.
3. Finally how can the sins of the pre-convert (the "old man") be paid for by a due punishment according to Divine Justice. The situation is so: the new (morally disposed) person is not due any punishment in his new status, but he also cannot count the good that he does from henceforth as payments for the sins of the old man (for this good is a duty and so does not provide a surplus of good to offset the previous

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<sup>32</sup> As Kant will point out later, "religion" is a technical term, while "faith" is the more common term.

<sup>33</sup> Here Kant will have in mind the scriptural reports of Jesus.

evil). The solution works out in this wise: the correct assessment of evil or goodness is the disposition (reflecting the supreme maxim, i.e., the moral law first and foremost for a converted person). Accordingly we can speak of the evil or the goodness as infinite, for the evil or good actions arise per the maxim, but only in accordance with opportunities for action. And therefore, since the opportunities are conceivably infinite, the willing evil of the pre-convert is infinite, and so the punishment due to the old man is infinite. But now we are dealing with the convert who is due no punishment. Here then we find the solution in the meaning of the act of conversion itself. By making the conversion, the person is opening himself to a (potential) infinity of ills as a result of no longer being able to utilize immoral actions of self-love first in one's living. This infinity of new ills faced by the convert as a result of the conversion then counts as payment for the punishments due for the (potentially) infinity of sins of the pre-conversion person. The only conditions are that the convert not complain about the ills of life, nor claim credit for the good that he will do from now on.

Finally we can come to a large (Christian) canvas, as it were, and picture this struggle in the converted state as the struggle of two persons against one another (as opposed as day and night, one good and one evil, the Son of God versus the [Prince of the World](#)), and each trying to justify himself and his claim in the eyes of an unbiased judge. The historical role of the Jews here is essentially incidental; they did at least preserve the meaning of the original possession of all things by the Son of God. The actual struggle began with the Son of God (Jesus<sup>34</sup>) and his challenge to the common understanding of right and wrong, and good and evil. Here the Son of God is greatly tempted and does not yield, but rather dies for the sake of goodness and for the good of all people (even his enemies); hence the Prince of the World wins physically. But then Jesus, in the role of the Son of God, was able to introduce and set loose a new spirit<sup>35</sup> and understanding in the hearts of people, whereby the Prince of the World was finally recognized as the true enemy. As a result there arose a growing, united effort on behalf of the Good Principle by those of that new spirit. And this has proven to be a challenge to the Prince of the World. And so the convert can now have that same spirit, which motivated Jesus, and can walk along that new path of righteousness. But the convert is to expect a continuing struggle (as an embodiment of the Son of God) with the Prince of the World within himself (the moral law versus self-love).

In the General Remarks to Part II we can see that due to the morally confused state of the Jews of that earlier time, the introduction of the new belief (by Jesus) could easily have required miracles in order to convince those people to abandon that state and to convert to the Good Principle. But miracles are of no use now and are not to be seriously considered (and are to be mentioned only as figments of speech<sup>36</sup>).

### **Part III - The Victory Of The Good Principle Over The Evil And The Establishment Of A Kingdom Of God Upon The Earth**

Now we turn to weigh expectations in this struggle between the convert (as the Son of God in intention) and the Prince of the World (the internal tempter, or propensity to evil) with regard to both individual and world moral perfection.

It is highly unlikely that any progress toward moral perfection can be made in this world if it is up to each individual alone; indeed not even if all people were individually committed to that perfection. For while

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<sup>34</sup> Kant never mentions Jesus by name in *Religion*, but refers to him often by implication, and does use the title "Christ" on occasion.

<sup>35</sup> This spirit might be conceived of as a flame (set by Jesus) which ignites other souls and spreads itself throughout the world and through time. See [Jesus Without A Stenographer](#).

<sup>36</sup> When the doctor says it will take a miracle to save someone's life, he means that person is expected to die.

the human is actually simple on his own and his needs easily satisfied, he finds himself in competition with others in society for rank, and never wants to appear poor in their eyes, and where there are ever new opportunities to seek gain at the expense of other people (and thus temptations to evil). In this way society itself naturally draws each individual away from the resolution of the conversion, i.e., from compliance with the moral law first. Accordingly the outlook is bleak for each individual on his own, and essentially hopeless for the world.

There is a single hope and it lies in the notion of a union of kindred spirits for the express purpose of furthering the Highest Good both individually and jointly and especially with regard to moral perfection. This is an ethical commonwealth (like a political commonwealth, but where membership is voluntary and the concern is not legal, i.e., not touching external actions, but rather moral actions, which deals with the internal).<sup>37</sup> It has a single law, which is to be considered as imposed by God (in order that it be absolute for the commonwealth, and never subject to change), namely: God can only be pleased by humans having a sincere dedication to a moral disposition and a moral course of living. Accordingly this commonwealth will be a church, which is invisible and includes all people striving toward this disposition and dedication without regard to any historical belief. This invisible church can be represented by a visible and historical church, where all well-intending people are invited to join and take part. Such an endeavor must be guided by morally edifying interpretations of sacred histories, and by scholarship regarding their literal and original meanings, and by a clear principle that the moral course of living is the single means of pleasing God, and where all else, e.g., rituals, creeds, etc., can have meaning only as vehicles promoting this moral course of living.<sup>38</sup> The solitary goal of this church is the Highest Good possible in the world. Since this joint endeavor constitutes the single hope for moral world perfection, such cooperation is called the “peculiar duty of the species” to itself, namely to convert and join with other converts for a unified effort.<sup>39</sup>

Kant wants to give an example of how an existing, historical and ecclesiastical belief might be merged with a purely religious (moral) belief, namely how an atonement is unified with the principle of the practical belief. The historical belief might have it that God reached out and provided a new start (via atonement) for the humans, and one which would not fail. The moral belief is practical and where an atonement cannot be expected except we first strive toward perfection with all our power. From a theoretical standpoint we can note that we cannot recognize an atoning sacrifice except by putting ourselves rationally in the place of the Savior. The goal of this historical belief in atonement is a morally perfect individual and world.<sup>40</sup> The same goal holds for one who is dedicated to the Idea of the Son of God as his model and without reference to any historical belief.<sup>41</sup> The result is the same: aiming for moral perfection. And so there is no theoretical difference between the two, and it just depends on where one wishes to start (from the historical belief or from the pure, rational, religious belief). In such a way the historical ecclesiastical church could be infused with the pure moral belief (representing the universal religion), and where it wouldn't make any difference as to how one wanted to start and proceed. And even though its sordid his-

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<sup>37</sup> Since it is due to the competition of human society that we are tempted to violate the moral law, it follows that a society must be available to counter this via cooperation, i.e., an ethical commonwealth.

<sup>38</sup> The term “religion” refers to presumption that all moral duties are also the commands of God and instilled in all humans. See [III.1.V 3](#) and [III.1.V 8](#).

<sup>39</sup> It is “peculiar” because otherwise with a duty a person can comply without question, but here, since it is a duty to join with others, there is no guarantee that others will have a like desire to link together for this moral purpose. However, since it is a duty for every human being, it can be expected that such morally intended persons will be found.

<sup>40</sup> For example, according to the historical faiths God sends Jesus to die for the sins of the world, and where the convert knows that he has a fresh start to work toward his moral perfection, and then proceeds to work toward become morally perfect as this Jesus was morally perfect.

<sup>41</sup> See the [Son of God](#).

tory does not offer much assurance of Christianity being the representative of the true moral belief, we have the original teachings of its founder [Jesus], and can see the promise in that, and can return to its moral foundations and make a fresh start.

So that's the way out of our moral plight and disfunction. We can make moral progress, but only all together. And while there is no earthly guarantee that we'll be successful, such success is the promise of the historical Christian faith.

In the General Remark to this part we consider the role of mysteries. In general, and using the Holy Trinity as a metaphor, we are to consider one and the same God in a three-fold manner: as legislator of all law (of nature and of freedom), as the good regent of the earth, and as the judge of all. Such mysteries are primarily the concern of the theologians and scholars, and not of much interest or importance for the common person.

#### **Part IV - Service And Pseudo-Service Under The Rule Of The Good Principle, Or Religion And Clericalism**

In this final part we want to look at the various ways that God might be served by humans in the Church. God will have founded this Church, but the humans are in charge of its organization and operation. And given human nature, this is always questionable, i.e., regarding human capacity and willingness for the promotion of moral perfection and right living. We now want to see if the Christian belief might call for an active service directed toward moral perfection alone, or whether there is a pseudo-service,<sup>42</sup> where we negate the intentions of the founder of that belief by making the means for working toward pleasing God, i.e., toward moral perfection, equal to the actual pleasing of God per se, without concern for actual moral improvement.

We can look at the gospel stories as a pure rationalist does, and see them as a motivation for the human in striving for moral perfection, though not necessarily true, but still as useful instruments, and which provide a sufficient, moral core for the Christian beliefs. Or we can look at them as a supernaturalist does, and see the appearance of statutes and even arduous regulations (emanating, as a sort of clutter, out of the Jewish culture from which Christianity arose) and which must be accepted on divine authority as true and necessary to believe, which authority resides in a select group of people, the ecclesiastical authorities. And this arises in different degrees, from churches with prelates determining the conscience of the individual to Protestants, who are still beholden to scripture as law and source of regulation, which are required for salvation.<sup>43</sup>

Humans have a propensity for fashioning their gods after the image of earthly kings, and where these gods can be influenced by the human with flattery and offerings, much like the manipulations at human, royal courts. Here we come upon *superstition*, where we comply with certain statutory articles in order to be appear more pleasing to God, and to mitigate our continuing moral laxity, and perhaps to have God improve us morally so that we don't have to work at it. Or sometimes we come even to *fetishism* (sorcery), where we seek to make deals with God and undertake certain burdens in anticipation of the granting of a wish of personal interest, much like a commercial transaction. And then there is *fanatical religious delusion*, where we believe to have direct and immediate contact with God without need for rea-

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<sup>42</sup> Here "pseudo" is to be understood as "not authentic or real, but without the intention to deceive."

<sup>43</sup> The Protestant will think of himself as free of the constraints of ecclesiastical law and will have a tendency to look down on the Roman Catholics as slavish. But he still has laws from the scriptures and thus is in the same boat with the Catholics, varying only in degree. [This is an example provided by the translator and only possibly implied by Kant.]



son or revelation. The general point and hope with pseudo-service is to become pleasing to God and obtain his favor without having to engage in the arduous struggle for moral perfection.

Accordingly then, and with an eye toward a free, moral and universal church, we must embed in any belief system, which has an ecclesiastical basis, a clear principle that the goal of the church is to reach a point where those ecclesiastical and historical foundations no longer need to be asserted in conscience, even if the verbiage might be retained for purposes of solidarity with the past and with other members of the church. In that case the invisible Church of God would be represented by such an ecclesiastical church.<sup>44</sup> If that liberty of conscience cannot be expressed in the historical church by some clear principle, then there can be little expectation that it can develop into the visible representation of the invisible and true Church of God.

We need to understand that all alleged communications of God, and all interpretations of those communications, are subject to the moral law, such that no alleged interpretation calling for an immoral action can be treated as valid. Indeed no one should engage in any action, unless he is certain that the action is not unjust. Abraham, for example, was duty bound to reject any call to slay his innocent son, and should never have considered such as an actual command of God.<sup>45</sup>

In the General Remarks to this final part Kant makes clear that while there may be such things as means of grace (obtaining the favor of God via non-moral actions, e.g., prayer or church attendance), these are totally unknown and cannot be discerned by the human, and thus cannot be expected through any manipulative actions. Practically speaking, means of grace are to be ignored. The most that can be hoped for is some assistance and support to one's sincere, moral striving.

All in all this part, and the entire *Religion*, indicate that the rational convert must move from virtue to God's favor, and not from favor to virtue.

## Conclusion<sup>46</sup>

Kant's intention in his *Religion* (and this harkens back to his prefaces) is to suggest to the biblical theologians and the interpreters of their scriptures that they might consider using only a moral justification for all beliefs and interpretations, either directly or through a scriptural discipline toward virtue, so that their faith and their church might serve as a representation of sanctifying faith and of the true church, hence one accessible to all people (which an historical church, imposing upon the conscience with required beliefs, cannot expect), and in that way intentionally lead the world toward moral perfection.

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<sup>44</sup> Here Gandhi, for example (and perhaps), would be a member in the invisible church, i.e., in sincere pursuit of moral perfection for himself and his world. Also the mark of the universal church might be the rejection of the scriptures as a source of law for the Christian, and where the individual makes that determination for himself and with the authority of [John 5:1-18](#) (where Jesus reportedly violates the existing law), and with universal brotherly and sisterly love as his maxim of action. Such a liberation might well be exemplified in the blessing of same-sex marriages by any church that claims to be universal, i.e., encompassing all well-intending persons, and striving for moral perfection for themselves, and in concert for the world. Such as this might be properly described as completing the Reformation. See also [St. Paul And The Identification Of Heterosexuals And Homosexuals](#).

<sup>45</sup> See essay on [defending Abraham against Kant's charge of immoral conduct](#).

<sup>46</sup> This conclusion is not part of *Religion*, and is composed by the translator.



## The Gist Of Christianity<sup>47</sup>

In an effort to express the teachings of Christianity in a simplified way, it is helpful to make a distinction between the practical and the theoretical elements.

### Practical

First we consider the practical, and find the two great commandments of action. The first and greatest is to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength.<sup>48</sup> As Kant has indicated ([CPrR](#), on or near page 111, No. 17.6) this love means to comply with His commandments *cheerfully*. And these commandments are summarized in the second of the two great commandments,<sup>49</sup> namely: to love our neighbor as we do ourselves. And our neighbor, as we learn,<sup>50</sup> means all people, including our enemies.<sup>51</sup> Specifically we learn<sup>52</sup> that we are not to repay evil with evil, but indeed are to bring a stop to the bickering and back-and-forth fighting and hatred that has so tormented human life throughout history.<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly and essentially then we are to cheerfully love our neighbor (including) our enemies as we do ourselves. Thus the practical requirements of Christianity are simple to comprehend, even if very difficult to comply with.

The question might arise, "What about participation in church? Isn't that to be expected of a Christian?" Kant replies that such participation in a church is needed, but not just of a Christian as such, but of all humans. That is the "peculiar duty" of the human species to itself as a whole, as it is the only hope for any person, and certainly for the world, to make real progress toward moral perfection. (Kant's *Religion*, [Part III, Section II, Par. 2](#), beginning on or near page 96.) Also in participating in such a church a person is not compelled to sincerely believe that all the creeds, confession and rituals are actually and specifically ordained by God. (*Religion*, [Part IV, Section II, Par. 6](#), beginning on or near page 146.)

### Theoretical

Now we can turn to the theoretical and find here such considerations as belief in a Holy Trinity, a virgin birth, affirmations of faith, [transubstantiation](#), resurrection, heaven and hell among many others. This provides fodder for the scholars and professional Christians to haggle over and muse about, but which are of little interest to the ordinary Christian who has a difficult neighbor or enemy (or hateful thoughts) to contend with.

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<sup>47</sup> This summary of Christianity is also not a part of *Religion*, but is suggested by the translator as influenced by his reading of this work.

<sup>48</sup> See ([Mark 12:28-30](#)).

<sup>49</sup> Per [Mark 12:28-34](#), [Matthew 7:12](#), [Matthew 22:36-40](#), [Romans 13:8-10](#) and [Galatians 5:14](#).

<sup>50</sup> See [Luke 10:25-37](#).

<sup>51</sup> A Samaritan (the good neighbor in this parable per the Luke citation) was hated by the Jews of Jesus' day.

<sup>52</sup> See [Matthew 5:38-48](#).

<sup>53</sup> Per [Matthew 5:23-24](#).



# Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason

by Immanuel Kant

Translation by Philip McPherson Rudisill

## Preface to the First Edition

- 1.1 Morality, to the extent it is based on the concept of the human as a free being, but who also for that very reason is obligated to unconditional laws by means of his own reason, has no need of the Idea of another being above himself in order to recognize his duty, nor of another incentive beyond that of the law itself in order to observe it.
- 1.2 At least it would be his own fault if such a need should arise within him. But then it would also be a need which cannot be remedied by anything else; because what does not arise from himself and his freedom provides no substitute for any deficiency of his morality.—
- 1.3 In no way, therefore, does morality require the aid of religion (neither objectively concerning desires, nor subjectively concerning one's ability). On the contrary, by means of pure, practical reason, it is sufficient of itself.<sup>1</sup>—
- 1.4 For since its laws obligate us through the sheer form of the universal, legislative character of the maxims<sup>2</sup> taken in accordance with that universality as the supreme (indeed unconditioned) condition of all purposes, it has in general no need of any material basis for the determination of the free discretion\* [*Willkür*], i.e., no purpose either for recognizing what duty is or for inducing the performance of that duty. Indeed when it comes to duty, morality can easily be abstracted from all purposes, and certainly should be.
- 1.5 So, for example, in order to know whether I should (or even can) remain truthful in my witness before a court of law, or be faithful concerning the responsibility for someone's welfare which has been entrusted to me, there is no reason for me to inquire about a purpose which I might want to effect with my testimony. For it is all the same to me as to what that purpose might be. Indeed anyone, whose truthful testimony is required and who finds it necessary to look about for some purpose, is already an unworthy person.<sup>3</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Those, for whom the merely formal determination basis in general (lawfulness) will not suffice for the determination basis in the concept of duty, will then insist that this basis cannot be encountered in a self-love directed toward one's comfort and ease.
- 1.2 But then there remain only two grounds for this determination, one being rational, namely personal perfection, and the other empirical, i.e., happiness of others.—

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<sup>1</sup> The determination of what is moral is independent of any consideration of God. Since the only viable acceptance of the existence of God arises from a moral consideration (a thesis of the [CPrR](#) per page xiii above), it is a necessary assumption that God calls for the moral on the part of the humans.

<sup>2</sup> A maxim is a personal principle of action, e.g., don't waste time or resources in the accomplishment of some task.

<sup>3</sup> This would be like a person being required to give a testimony in court and having first to consider what advantage might be attained by telling the truth or telling a lie.

## Preface to the First Edition

- 1.3 Now if with the first they don't already mean the moral, which can only be a solitary one (namely a will unconditionally obedient to the law)—in which case they are caught in a circle—then they would have to mean the natural perfection of the human to the extent it is subject to development, and of this there can be many (such as skill in the arts, the sciences, in taste, in dexterity of the body, and the like).
  - 1.4 But perfected skill is always good only conditionally, i.e., only under the condition that its usage not conflict with the moral law (which alone commands unconditionally). Perfected skill made into a purpose, therefore, cannot be a principle of the concepts of duty.
  - 1.5 The same holds also of a purpose directed toward the happiness of other humans.
  - 1.6 For an action must be weighed in advance on its own by means of the moral law before it can be directed to the happiness of others.
  - 1.7 Promoting the happiness of others, therefore, is only conditionally a duty and cannot serve as the supreme principle of moral maxims.
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- 2.1 But even though morality has no need of the representation of some purpose, one which would have to precede the determination of the will, it could still easily be that there would be a necessary reference to such a purpose, i.e., not involving the basis, but rather as the necessary consequence, of the maxims which are taken on as commensurate to those laws.<sup>4</sup>
  - 2.2 For without any reference to a purpose, no determination of the will can take place in the human, because the will cannot be without some effect. The conception of such a purpose, even if not as a determination basis of the discretion nor as intentionally preceding that determination, must still be incorporated as a consequence of that determination, i.e., a result through the law (*finis in consequentiam veniens*). Without this purpose as a consequence there can be no satisfaction for a discretion, i.e., without a definite object, neither objective nor subjective (which it has or should have), as the intended action. For while there must be an instruction to act, there would be no indication as to the purpose of that act.<sup>5</sup>
  - 2.3 So indeed morality has no need of a purpose for the right action. Far rather the law, which contains the formal condition of the usage of freedom in general, is sufficient for that action.
  - 2.4 But from morality a purpose still emerges, for it is impossible for reason to be indifferent to the question regarding what is to be accomplished by this right action and concerning which, assuming we did not have the ability to accomplish this entirely, we might still at least align our doing and forbearing upon a purpose for their coordination.
  - 2.5 And so this purpose is indeed only the notion of an object which contains, unified together within itself, the formal condition of all purposes as we should have them (duty), and simultaneously all conditions cohering with those purposes which we have (happiness commensurate to the compli-

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<sup>4</sup> And so while a purpose cannot be sought in order to determine the use of the moral law, it can very well be that there will be a purpose which is necessary to the law itself, and so which would be a *consequence* of the moral determination. Accordingly then a purpose is necessary for any rational action, including, therefore, the moral action, but not as preceding or affecting the determination of that moral action, but rather as following upon that determination and as its effect.

<sup>5</sup> Unless there is some purpose to be attained, there can be no *rational* action; e.g., it would be irrational to fish in a pond in which you know there are no fish, or wash a thoroughly clean car, and so where nothing is to be attained or accomplished. It would be different if the fishing or washing were a punishment or a practice in developing a skill. As a further example, we are required to obey traffic laws, e.g., specific speed limits, regardless of any purpose. But there is a purpose, namely the efficient and safe movement of traffic. And without some such a purpose traffic laws would be an absurdity.

ance with those duties). This is the Idea of a Highest Good in the world, for the possibility of which we must assume a higher moral, holy and all powerful being which alone can unify both of these elements.<sup>6</sup> But this Idea (considered practically) is still not empty, for it aids our natural need in the thinking of some sort of final purpose for all our doing and forbearing together, which final purpose can be justified by reason. The failure to satisfy this natural need would be a hindrance to moral resolution.<sup>7</sup>

2.6 But the most distinctive aspect here is that this Idea of the Highest Good arises *from* morality and is not its foundation. It is a purpose which, required of itself, already presupposes moral foundations.

2.7 Morality, therefore, cannot be indifferent as to whether or not it fashions a concept of a final purpose of all things (where, in order to agree together, the count of its duties cannot, of course, be increased, but where it still devises for itself a particular reference point for the unification of all purposes). It is in this way alone that objective, practical reality can be provided for a connection of the purposefulness ascribed to freedom with the purposefulness of nature, which connection we cannot dispense with at all.

2.8 Let's assume there were a person who revered the moral law and moreover (and which is hardly avoidable) happened to think about what sort of world he, if led by practical reason, would likely fashion if that were within his power. Let's assume further that this person would have to include himself as a member of that world.

If the choice were simply up to him, he would not only choose a world as the moral Idea of the Highest Good entails,<sup>8</sup>

he would also want a world in general to exist because the moral law calls for the Highest Good possible through us to be effected. And he would want this even if, in accordance with this Idea, he sees himself in danger of forfeiting much in happiness because of the possibility of failing to be adequate to the demands of this law, which reason makes the condition of happiness.

Thus he would feel necessitated by reason itself to make this judgment about himself without bias and just as though he were judging a stranger. In this way each person proves the morally impressed need within himself to think of a final purpose for his duties as their effect.<sup>9</sup>

3.1 The moral concept, therefore, leads inexorably to religion, and there it expands into the Idea of a powerful, moral legislator apart from the human,\* in whose will the ultimate purpose (of the cre-

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<sup>6</sup> The Highest Good, per [CPrR](#), entails moral perfection coupled with a commensurate degree of happiness.

<sup>7</sup> We can determine our duty independently of any purpose to the moral law. But then without a purpose there is the temptation of considering our duty as a mere vanity, and with such thinking we would easily come to be lacking in moral fervor. Since this purpose, the Highest Good, requires a God for implementation of the happiness commensurate to moral perfection (which the Highest Good calls for) this may be Kant's essential argument against atheism. See discussion of [atheism and morality on page xvii](#) above.

<sup>8</sup> This would entail the possibility of moral perfection and then a happiness commensurate with the degree of the perfection actually attained.

<sup>9</sup> This person would want happiness to be commensurate with the degree of moral perfection in order to find meaning in his duties in compliance with the moral law. Otherwise, again, his moral duties would seem to be a vanity and without import, a waste of time and energy.

ation of the world) consists, and which can be, and at the same time should be, the ultimate purpose of the human.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The proposition "there is a God," thus "there is a Highest Good in the world," if this (as an article of belief) is to arise merely from morality, is a synthetic assertion a priori. For even though it is assumed only in a practical sense, it still goes out beyond the concept of duty, which is provided through morality. And since this concept of duty presupposes no material for the discretion, but only its formal laws, the proposition concerning God's existence cannot be developed from it analytically.<sup>10</sup>
- 1.2 But then how is such a proposition a priori possible?
- 1.3 The agreement of this proposition with the mere Idea of a moral legislator of all humans is indeed identical with the moral concept of duty in general, and so to this extent the proposition which commands this agreement would be analytical.<sup>11</sup>
- 1.4 But the assumption of God's existence means more than the mere possibility of such an object.
- 1.5 The key to the solution of this task, to the extent I believe I have an insight, can only be indicated here without elaboration.
- 2.1 Purpose is always an object of attraction, i.e., an immediate desire to possess something through some action, in the same sort of way that the law (with its practical commands) is an object of respect.
- 2.2 An objective purpose (i.e., one we are supposed to have) is a purpose which is imposed upon us by reason alone.
- 2.3 That purpose which contains the unavoidable and, at the same time, sufficient condition of all others is the ultimate purpose (*Endzweck*).
- 2.4 Personal happiness is the subjective, final purpose of rational beings of the world. (They have this purpose by virtue of their nature such that they are dependent upon objects of sense, and so it would be inane to say that they *ought* to have this purpose.) All practical propositions which have this final purpose of personal happiness as their basis are synthetic, but at the same time empirical.
- 2.5 But that everyone ought to make the Highest Good possible in the world his final purpose is a synthetic, practical proposition *a priori* and indeed an objectively practical one, advanced by pure reason, because it is a proposition which goes out beyond the concept of duties in the world and attaches a consequence to those (an effect) which is not contained in the moral laws and, therefore, cannot be developed from them analytically.
- 2.6 These laws command utterly, be their effect what it will. Indeed they require us to abstract entirely from the effect when it concerns a particular action. In this way they make duty an object of the greatest respect without proposing or imposing a purpose (and an ultimate purpose) which would have to constitute a recommendation for that action and an incentive for the implementation of our duty.
- 2.7 All people could also have here enough to do if they would hold merely to the prescription of pure reason in the law (as indeed they certainly should).
- 2.8 Why do they need to know about the result of their moral actions which the course of the world will bring about?
- 2.9 For them it is enough that they do their duty. And it may very well be that things don't work out in this earthly life, and that happiness and worthiness never meet here.

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<sup>10</sup> The moral law requires certain actions as duty, and there is no reference here to anything else, e.g., to any God; thus, no analytical connection.

<sup>11</sup> Conceptually speaking, a universal moral legislator would call for precisely what the human finds to be his moral duty. But as mentioned in Kant's next sentence, this would be speaking merely of Ideas and would not provide any basis for the existence of God.

## Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason

- 2.10 Now it is one of the unavoidable limitations of the human and his practical rational capacity (which perhaps holds for all other beings in the universe as well) to look about with every action for its consequence in order to discover what could be serviceable to him as a purpose in this, and also what could prove the purity of the intention, the purpose being, of course, last in the execution (*nexu effectivo*), but first in the representation and intention (*nexu finali*).
- 2.11 Now in this purpose, even if it is imposed upon him by reason alone, the human seeks something which he can love. Therefore the law, which infuses him with respect alone, even though not recognizing that "something to be loved" as a need, still expands itself in aid of that for the assumption of the moral, final purpose of reason under its determination bases, which is the proposition to make the Highest Good possible in the world his final purpose. This proposition is a synthetic proposition *a priori* which is introduced through the moral law itself and whereby nonetheless practical reason expands itself beyond that moral law, which is possible by referring it to the natural feature of the human of having to think a purpose to all actions apart from the law (which feature makes it into an object of experience). This proposition, just like the theoretical and likewise synthetic propositions *a priori*, is only possible by containing the principle *a priori* of the recognition of the determination basis of a free discretion in experience, to the extent this, which the works of morality lay out in their purposes, provides objective, even if only practical, reality to the concept of morality as a causality in the world.—
- 2.12 But now if the most rigorous observation of the moral laws as cause of the production of the Highest Good (as a purpose) is to be thought, and because the capacity of the human is insufficient to effect the happiness in the world harmonious with the worthiness to be happy, an all sufficient moral being must be assumed as a world ruler in order for this to occur under its provision, i.e., morality leads inexorably to religion.

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- 4.1 If in the holiness of its law morality recognizes an object of the highest respect, then it introduces an object of adoration upon the step of religion as the highest cause completing that law, and appears in its majesty.
- 4.2 But everything, even the most sublime, is diminished in human hands when they appropriate that Idea for their use.
- 4.3 Now what can be truly honored to such an extent, since respect for that is unrestrained, is necessitated to accommodate such forms which can obtain esteem only through coercive laws. And what can be exposed of itself to the public critique of each person must be subjected to a critique which possesses force, i.e., a censure.

[Translator's Note: the following three paragraphs are very technical and involve disputes between different departments of the university and can be skipped by clicking [here](#).]

- 5.1 However, since the command to obey the governor is also moral, and obedience to that, as with all duties, can be attached to religion, it is appropriate for a treatment dedicated to the determined concept of religion to render an example of this obedience. But this cannot be proven by merely attending to the law of a single arrangement in the state while remaining blind to all others, but rather only as unified through a united respect for all.
- 5.2 Now a theologian who regulates books can be engaged either as caring merely for the welfare of the soul, or also simultaneously for the wellbeing of the sciences, the first simply as pastor, the second also as scholar.
- 5.3 It is incumbent upon the theological scholar in a public institution, to which (under the name of a university) all sciences are entrusted for cultivation and as a defense against interferences, to limit the presumptions of the pastoral theologian to the condition that his censure wreak no havoc in

the field of the sciences. Now if both are biblical theologians, then the scholar, as a member of the university and of the faculty which is empowered to deal with this theology, would possess the superior censure; because concerning the first matter (the health of the soul) both are uniquely commissioned, but concerning the second (the health of the sciences) the theologian, as a university scholar, still has a special function to administer.

- 5.4 If we deviate from this rule, we will end up where we have been before (in the time of Galileo, for example), i.e., in order to diminish the pride of the sciences and to spare himself the pain of dealing with them, the biblical theologian could even dare to disrupt astronomy or other sciences, e.g., the ancient histories of earth, and like the crowds who find no capacity, or not enough seriousness, to defend themselves against troublesome attacks, may even lay waste to everything around them and constrain all attempts of human understanding by means of a straitjacket.<sup>12</sup>
- 6.1 But in contrast to the biblical theology there stands in the field of the sciences a philosophical theology, which is a domain entrusted to another faculty.
- 6.2 The latter must have complete freedom to expand itself as far as its science reaches. But it must remain within the bounds of sheer reason. In the certification and explication of its propositions it utilizes the histories, languages and books of all people including, therefore, the bible, but only for itself. It may not seek to insert these propositions into the department of the biblical theologian in order to make him abandon his public teaching, for this is the privilege of the clergy. However, if it is determined that the philosophical theology has exceeded its boundaries and has encroached upon the field of biblical theology, the latter (considered merely as chaplain) has the right of censure. But as soon as there is doubt as to whether this encroachment has occurred and so, therefore, the question arises as to whether this have happened through a writing or through another public lecture of the philosophical faculty, only the biblical theologian, as a member of his faculty, is entitled to make the ultimate censure, and for the reason that his faculty is also directed to care for the second interest of the commonwealth, i.e., the flowering of the sciences, and has just as much validity in this as the philosophical theologian.
- 7.1 And indeed in such cases this theological faculty is entitled to the first censure, and not the philosophical; because the former alone is privileged for certain teachings, but the latter (philosophical) promotes an open, free traffic with its teachings. Hence only the former can bring complaints about an injury having occurred to its exclusive right.
- 7.2 But doubt about an intrusion is easily avoided, in spite of the proximity of both teachings to each other and of the concern about encroachment of the boundaries by the philosophical theology, if we will only consider that this disturbance does not occur by the philosophical theology borrowing something from the biblical in order to use it for its intention (for the biblical theologian will not want to admit that his faculty does not contain much that is common with the teaching of sheer reason, moreover also even something for the historical science or for the scholarship of language, and something relevant to their censure). We assume here also that what is borrowed is needed in a sense appropriate to sheer reason, but also perhaps of a meaning displeasing to the

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<sup>12</sup> At the time of [Galileo, the Roman Catholic Church](#) had decided upon a particular nomenclature for the universe such that the moon was a perfectly smooth sphere. When Galileo invited prelates of this church to examine the moon through his telescope in order to see that this was not true, they refused, preferring rather to remain with their dogma, and asserted that to question their dogma by being willing to subject it to an empirical test would be a denial of their faith. Galileo was subsequently censured for asserting (along with [Copernicus](#)) that it was the earth that moved around the sun and he was forced to recant and to spend the remainder of his life under house arrest.



theological department! but rather only to the extent that the philosophical theology introduces something into what is borrowed, and wants to align it in that way to a purpose other than what is permitted in its institution.—

- 7.3 Therefore, for example, one cannot say that the teacher of natural right, who borrows some classical expressions and formulas for his philosophical doctrine of justice from the teaching of the Codex of the Romans, is invasive if, as often happens, he utilizes them in a slightly different sense in which they might be taken according to the expositors of the Codex; provided only that he does not want the actual attorneys or even the courts to utilize them in a like manner.
- 7.4 For if that did not belong to his competence, then one could turn around and blame the biblical theologian or the statutory jurist for having encroached countless times upon the domain of philosophy because, since they cannot dispense with reason nor, when concerning science, with philosophy, both must borrow very often from philosophy, even though only for their mutual benefit.
- 7.5 But if the view taken by the theologian is to have as little to do with reason as possible in religious matters, then we can easily foresee which side would suffer the loss. For a religion which declares war on reason without reservation will finally not be able to sustain itself.—
- 7.6 I venture to suggest whether it would not be beneficial, after the completion of the academic instruction in biblical theology, to always include at the end a particular lecture about the pure philosophical doctrine of religion (which utilizes everything, including the bible) according to a guide as to how this book (or even another, if one can have a better book of the same sort) is requisite for the thorough preparation of the candidates.—
- 7.7 For the sciences gain solely through their differentiation, to the extent each first makes up a whole, and only afterwards is there an attempt to treat them as a unity.
- 7.8 Here the biblical theologian may be at one with the philosophical or believe himself obligated to refute him; if he will only listen to him.
- 7.9 For only in this way can he be armed in advance against all difficulties which the philosophical theologian might make for him.
- 7.10 But to conceal this, or even to decry it as ungodly, is a pitiful expedient which will not pass muster. But to mingle both and for the biblical theologian only occasionally to take fleeting glimpses of these difficulties would be a lack of seriousness where finally no one rightly knows what it may be with the religious doctrine as a whole.
- 8.1 Following this are four parts in which, regarding religion for the nature of the human, which is burdened by a partly good structure and a partly evil structure, I portray the relationship of the good and evil principles just as though two self-existing effectual causes were influencing the human. The first part has already been published in the *Berlin Monthly Review* of April, 1792, but due to the precise coherence of the material, which contains the complete exposition through the attached three parts here, it needed to remain in this publication.
- 9.1 The reader is requested to excuse the spelling varying from my own in the first proofs due to the variety of the hands which have worked on the manuscript and to the shortage of time which remained available to me for review. [This sentence was removed in the publication of the second edition.]

## Preface to the Second Edition

- 1.1 In this edition, apart from correcting typographical errors and a few improved expressions, nothing is changed.
- 1.2 The newly appended supplements are indicated with a cross positioned (†) under the text.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.1 Concerning the title of this work (for qualms have been expressed with respect to an intent hidden within it) I note that since revelation can also at least still encompass a pure religion of reason within itself, but not vice-verse, I will be able to consider the former (revelation) a wider sphere of belief which encompasses the latter (pure rational religion) within itself as the more narrow sphere (not as two circles next to each other, but rather as concentric circles). The philosopher must adhere within the inner circle as a pure rational teaching (from sheer principles a priori), and hence must abstract from all experience.
- 2.2 Now from this standpoint I can also make the second attempt, namely to go out from any revelation held as such and, by removing the pure rational religion (to the extent it makes up a system in itself), merely hold the revelation (as an historical system) fragmentarily to moral concepts and see whether this not lead back to the same pure, rational system of religion, which indeed would be sufficient for actual religion, though not in any theoretical intention (to which even the technically practical of the instructional method would have to be counted as a contrived teaching), though still in a morally practical intention. The actual religion as a rational concept a priori (which remains after the removal of all empirical elements) occurs only in this regard.
- 2.3 If this is appropriate, we will be able to say that between reason and scripture not only is tolerance encountered, but even unity, such that whoever pursues the one (under the direction of moral concepts) will not fail to meet the other together with it.
- 2.4 If this were not the case, then we would either have two religions in a single person, which is absurd; or one religion and one cult, in which case, since the latter is not a purpose on its own (as is the case with religion), but rather only has a value as a means, both would often have to be shaken together in order to combine them for a short time. But like oil and water, they would soon separate and the pure moral (the rational) religion would float to the top.
- 3.1 That this unification, or its attempt, be an entirely fitting occupation of the philosophical researcher of religion and not an attack upon the exclusive right of the biblical theologian, I have already noted in the first preface.
- 3.2 Since then I have found this assertion introduced in the moral writings of the late Michaelis<sup>2</sup> (First Part, Pages 5-11), a man well versed in both disciplines, and which he has exercised throughout his entire work, without encountering there anything which were prejudicial to the rights of the higher faculty.
- 4.1 Since the judgments about this document on the part of worthy men (mentioned and unmentioned) appear very late in our region (which is the case with all literary works from afar), I have not been able to consider them, at least not as much as I would have wished, especially in the case

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<sup>1</sup> This translator has ignored this indication and treats the added text in the same way as the earlier text.

<sup>2</sup> This is apparently a reference to [Johann David Michaelis](#).

## Preface To The Second Edition

of the Annotations *qua-edam theologicae*, etc., of the renown [Dr. Storr](#) in Tuebingen, who with his usual acumen and with diligence and care (worthy of the greatest thanks) has critiqued this work. And while I have every intention of replying, I don't trust myself to promise due to the difficulties which old age presents, especially with the treatment of abstract Ideas.—

- 4.2 One assessment, in the *Greifswalder New Critical News* 29th piece, I can dispense with just as quickly as the reviewer has done with the document himself.
- 4.3 For in his judgment it is nothing other than an answer to my own proposed question: "how is the ecclesiastical system of dogma in its concepts and theorems possible according to pure (theoretical and practical) reason?—
- 4.4 “This attempt, therefore, does not in any way concern those who know and understand his [Kant’s] system so little that they could demand this and for whom, therefore, it were viewed as non-existent.”—
- 4.5 I shall now give a reply. In order to understand this document with respect to its essential content, only the common moral is needful, without appeal to the *Critique of Practical Reason* and even less to the theoretical; and if, for example, virtue, as preparation for dutiful actions (with regard to their legality), is called *virtus phaenomenon*, but the same thing, as unwavering disposition for such actions out of duty (regarding their morality), is called *virtus noumenon*, then these expressions are used only for the sake of the schools. But the material itself is easily understood in the instruction of children or sermons, even if expressed in different words.
- 4.6 If we could only extol these expressions concerning the mysteries of the divine nature ascribed to the religious doctrine which, as though they were entirely popular, are introduced into the catechism, but would first have to be changed later into moral concepts if they are to be understandable for every person!

Koenigsberg, January 26, 1794.

## PART I - The Indwelling Of The Evil Principle Alongside The Good, Or The Radical Evil In Human Nature

- 1.1 That the world is in a sorry state is a lament as old as history, as old as the even more ancient legends. In fact it is as old as the most ancient of all fictions, the religion of the priesthood.
- 1.2 All of these would have the world begin as good in a golden age, from a life in paradise, or from an even happier life in a community with divine beings.
- 1.3 But this happiness they quickly let vanish as a dream.<sup>1</sup> For then there is the decline into evil (a moral evil which the physical evil always accompanies, like a married couple), a hastening into woe with accelerated ruin\* such that now (and this “now” is itself as old as history) we live in the last days with the day of judgment and the end of the world standing at the door. Indeed in some areas of India the judge and destroyer of the world, Ruttren (otherwise known as Siba or Shiva), is already worshiped as the empowered God following the abdication of the weary preserver of the world, Vishnu, from the position he assumed from the world creator, Brahma, many centuries earlier.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 *Aetas parentum, peior avis, tulip  
Nos negates, mox daters  
Progenies vitiosiore.* Horta.<sup>2</sup>

- 2.1 More recently, but with far less propagation, we have the contrary and heroic opinion which has taken root, albeit only among philosophers and, in our time, primarily among pedagogues, namely that the world advances in precisely the opposite direction (even if barely discernible), i.e., from bad to better, at least that such a structure is found in human nature.
- 2.2 But this opinion, if the talk is of moral good or evil (and not rather of civilizing the world), they certainly have not drawn from experience. For here history in all times is arrayed too mightily against them. Presumably it is merely a well intended presupposition of the moralists from [Seneca](#) to [Rousseau](#) to promote the patient cultivation of the germ for goodness which, perhaps, lies within us . . . if only we could count on such a natural foundation in the human.
- 2.3 To this we can also add that since one must assume a person to be naturally healthy with respect to the body, i.e., as he is usually born, there would also be no reason not to assume him to be naturally just as healthy and good with respect to the soul.
- 2.4 Hence it would seem that nature herself were conducive in cultivating this moral foundation for good in us.
- 2.5 *Sanabilibus aegrotamus malis, nosque in rectum gents natura, si sanari velimus, adiuvat,*<sup>3</sup> according to Seneca.

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<sup>1</sup> Consider the myth of [Pandora's box](#).

<sup>2</sup> “The age of our fathers, worse than that of our grandfathers, produced nothing worthier for us, and we will soon generate an even more corrupted race.” Horace

<sup>3</sup> “We suffer with curable fragility, and nature will aid us, who are rightly born, if we want to be cured.”

- 3.1 Now since it is possible that people are mistaken in both of these alleged experiences, we ought to consider whether a middle way might not be possible, namely whether the human, as a species, is neither good nor evil, or even both of these together, i.e., partly good and partly evil?—
- 3.2 A person is not evil because his actions are evil, i.e., unlawful, but rather because his actions are composed in such a way that we can infer evil maxims in him.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.3 Now through experience we are able to notice actions which are contrary to law, and indeed, at least with regard to ourselves, that they are consciously contrary to law. But we cannot observe maxims, not even within ourselves. And so the judgment that the perpetrator of an evil act were an evil person cannot in total confidence be based on experience.
- 3.4 In order, therefore, to call a person evil, it would have to be possible to conclude a priori from some consciously evil actions, or even from a single one, to an evil maxim lying as basis, and from this to a basis lying generally to the subject of all particular morally evil maxims, which basis in turn is a maxim.<sup>5</sup>
- 4.1 A comment is in order here at the outset to avoid any confusion concerning the expression “nature.” Usually this is understood to mean the opposite of a basis of action from freedom and in this sense would be in direct contradiction to the predicates of “morally good or evil.”<sup>6</sup> But here we are thinking only of the subjective basis of the utilization of one’s freedom (under objective moral laws), and this will precede before each and every deed which can be obvious to sense, be this basis where it will.<sup>7</sup>
- 4.2 But, on the other hand, this subjective basis must itself be an act of freedom (for otherwise the use or misuse of the discretion on the part of the human could not be attributed to him with respect to moral laws, and the good or evil in him could not be termed moral).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Actions themselves are amoral per se, e.g., both a surgeon and a murderer can put a knife into someone’s chest. What counts for the moral inquiry is the subjective and personal principle of action, i.e., the maxim. What is evil is an evil maxim, and this then can lead to actions which, by virtue of that maxim, are evil, i.e., violations of the moral law. We say “can lead” because right actions can also arise via an evil maxim, e.g., don’t tell a lie unless it is safe and profitable, and where we never find a situation where it is safe and profitable, and so where we always tell the truth and so, empirically speaking, we present an image of moral integrity, even though our disposition (our willingness) is evil.

<sup>5</sup> Since we cannot know for sure through experience that an evil act means an evil maxim, the recognition of an evil person, if we are going to be able to make such a judgment of someone, will have to be done a priori, i.e., independently of experience. This suggests perhaps that a person with a moral disposition might commit an evil act by virtue of having lost self control through anger, for example, and so where the evil action would not denote an evil maxim.

<sup>6</sup> Freedom means a capacity to act independently of the laws of nature. This is presented and treated in the *CPR* (the [Third Antinomy](#)) on or near page 376 and in the *CPrR* on or near page 35.

<sup>7</sup> Since this subjective basis arises before any overt act, it can be considered as a natural act, i.e., it is customary and expected that people will choose in this way.

<sup>8</sup> This selection of a maxim before the act is not observable (occurring, as it does, before memory), but still it must be a free act.

## The Indwelling Of The Evil Principle Next To The Good, or The Radical Evil In Human Nature

- 4.3 Hence the basis of evil cannot lie in an object determining the discretion through natural impulses, but only in a rule which the discretion itself composes in order to make use of one's freedom, i.e., in a maxim.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.4 But we cannot go further and inquire about the subjective basis of one's assumption of this maxim nor why the contrary one was not in the human.
- 4.5 For if this basis were finally itself no longer a maxim, but rather a mere natural urge, then the usage of freedom would be traced back entirely to the determination through natural means. But this would be self-contradictory.<sup>10</sup>
- 4.6 If we say, therefore, that the human is good by nature or evil by nature, this is just another way of saying that he contains a primitive foundation\* (which is unfathomable to us) for the assumption of good or evil (counter-legal) maxims. And this would hold universally for the human in general. Accordingly then, through this foundation the individual simultaneously expresses the character of his species.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 That the first, subjective basis of the adoption of moral maxims is not subject to inquiry is already provisionally understandable, for since this adoption is free, the basis for it (why, for example, I have taken on an evil, and not far rather a good, maxim) cannot be sought in an incentive of nature, but rather always again in a maxim. And since this must likewise have its basis, no determination basis of the free discretion can or should be introduced apart from maxims. Hence we will always be referred infinitely further back in the series of subjective determination foundation without being able to come upon the first basis.<sup>11</sup>
- 5.1 Of this character, therefore, (concerning the distinction between the human and other possible rational beings) we will say that it is innate to him. And yet at the same time we will steadfastly insist that nature does not bear the guilt (in case he is evil) nor is entitled to any credit (if he is good), and that the human himself is author of this character.
- 5.2 But because the first basis of the adoption of our maxims, which in turn must always reside in a free discretion, cannot be a factor which could be given in experience, the good or evil in the human (as the subjective, first basis of the adoption of this or that maxim with regard to the moral law) is termed innate in the sense that it is taken as the basis before all usage of freedom given in

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<sup>9</sup> If the discretion were determined by an impulse, it would not be free but a work of nature. As a free act it must be a willful (discretionary) selection of the evil or good maxim as the standard for the production of actions according to principles.

<sup>10</sup> For, as stated before, freedom is a capacity for acting independently of the laws of nature. Hence even though it is incomprehensible, it is necessary to attribute the fundamental maxim of the discretion to a free act of the discretion.

<sup>11</sup> We must accept the fact of the freedom of the discretion in the choice of an evil maxim (because it cannot be a function of the laws of nature) even though this choice precedes all memory. An evil maxim denotes the supremacy of self-love over the moral law. This also suggests that when we learn about the moral law we realize that we have already violated it. See also Part I. [Par. 10.1](#).

experience (from the earliest age of youth back to birth), and so it is represented as simultaneously present in the human at birth; but not that birth is the cause of it.<sup>12</sup>

### Remark

- 6.1 Returning now to the two hypotheses introduced earlier,<sup>13</sup> we see that the basis of the conflict is a disjunctive proposition, namely that the human (by nature) is either morally good or morally evil.
- 6.2 And as we mentioned, it is easy enough to ask whether this disjunction is correct, and whether someone might not just as easily assert that the human is by nature neither; or even whether someone might counter that by saying the human is both at the same time, namely in some ways good, in others evil.
- 6.3 Indeed experience seems to confirm this mean between the extremes of good and evil.
- 7.1 But it is very important with moral teaching in general to avoid as long as possible any admission of a moral "between," either in actions (*adiaphora*) or in the human character, because with such double meaning all maxims run the danger of losing determination and stability.
- 7.2 One commonly terms those who are committed to this severe way of thinking "rigorists" (a name which is supposed to denote blame, but which is actually quite laudatory). Accordingly then we can call their opposites "latitudinarians."
- 7.3 The latter, therefore, are either latitudinarians of neutrality and might be called indifferentists; or they are latitudinarians of coalition, and can be called syncretists.\*

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Letting the good = a, then its contradictory opposite would be the not-good.
- 1.2 Now this is the consequence either of a mere absence of a basis for good which = 0, or of a positive basis of its opposite = -a.
- 1.3 In the latter case the not-good can also be called a positive bad.<sup>14</sup>
- 1.4 (With regard to pleasure and pain there is a similar mean, such that pleasure = a, pain = -a, and the state where neither of the two is encountered = 0.)

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<sup>12</sup> At this point we simply want to establish that this free discretion is innate to us, and is not to be blamed on nature, and that we make our choice freely before any external utilization or expression of our freedom. Perhaps this is reflected in the early selfish acts of children in not wanting to share their toys with others.

<sup>13</sup> See Par. 3 above.

<sup>14</sup> If a good maxim = a, then it were possible that the person were not good by simply not having any maxim regarding good or evil at all; and the opposite of the good would be = 0, a mere lack. But the not-good might also be a positive bad, i.e., = -a, even though, paradoxically, in Kant's example "a" is a negative.

## The Indwelling Of The Evil Principle Next To The Good, or The Radical Evil In Human Nature

- 1.5 Now if the moral law in us were not an incentive for the discretion, then the moral good (the concurrence of discretion with the law) would = a, and not-good would = 0; but this latter, the mere consequence of the lack of a moral incentive, would = a x 0.<sup>15</sup>
- 1.6 But now there is an incentive in us = a.<sup>16</sup> Consequently the absence of the agreement of the discretion with that (= 0) is only possible as a consequence of an actual, contrary determination of the discretion, i.e., a contrary striving of that = -a, i.e., only through an evil discretion. And therefore between an evil disposition and a good one (an internal principle of the maxims), according to which the morality of the action must be evaluated, there is no mean.<sup>\*\*17</sup>

<sup>\*\*</sup> Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 A morally indifferent action (*adiaphoron morale*) would be merely an action ensuing from laws of nature which stand, therefore, in no relationship at all to moral law as does the law of freedom. Such action would not be a factor (*Faktum*) and with respect to which neither command nor prohibition nor even permission (legal authorization) occurs or is needed.<sup>18</sup>
- 8.1 The reply to the question cited according to the rigorous way of decision<sup>\*19</sup> is based upon the following remark which is important for morality, namely: freedom of discretion is of an entirely peculiar quality in that it can be determined to an action by no incentive except to the extent the human has made a maxim out of that incentive (has turned it into a universal rule, according to which he intends to act). Only in this way, therefore, can an incentive, regardless of what it might be, coexist with the absolute spontaneity of discretion (of freedom).<sup>20</sup>
- 8.2 In the judgment of reason, however, the moral law is itself an incentive, and whoever turns it into a maxim, is morally good.<sup>21</sup>
- 8.3 In the case, therefore, where the law does not determine someone's discretion with respect to an action bearing on the law, a contrary incentive must have influence on his discretion. And since this can only occur by means of the presupposition that he turns this incentive (hence also the de-

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<sup>15</sup> Thus without regard to a moral incentive for the discretion, the not-good would simply be the negation of the good = a x 0, and there would be no positive evil or good, i.e., no incentive in this moral regard at all.

<sup>16</sup> This was established in the [CPrR](#), that respect for the moral law is an incentive for all humans, though, of course, not necessarily the supreme maxim. It might be of this sort: obey the moral law whenever it is convenient.

<sup>17</sup> Since there is in fact a moral incentive, the only way that we could come to a negation of this is via a positive evil, i.e., an evil maxim. And so there is no 0 possible here in this regard, but only +a and -a. And so the human is either good or he is evil; but he cannot be both.

<sup>18</sup> This could be sneezing, bike riding, cooking breakfast, and other mundane activities of life.

<sup>19</sup> I.e., whether the human is good or evil, either the one or the other.

<sup>20</sup> Presumably to seek an incentive without a maxim would be impulsive or reflexive, and this would always be directed by laws of nature and hence would not be free. Or also the mere thinking about an incentive without a maxim for attaining it would be simply dreaming.

<sup>21</sup> This is established in the *CPrR*, [The Incentives Of Pure Practical Reason](#) on or around page 96.



violation from the moral law) into a maxim, then his disposition with regard to the moral law is never indifferent (never neither of the two, never neither good nor evil).<sup>22</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Professor [Schiller](#), in his masterful treatment (*Thalia* 1793, 3rd Part) [about grace and dignity](#) in morality, disapproved of this way of representing obligation, as though it entailed a subservient<sup>23</sup> frame of mind. But since we are united in the most essential principles, I cannot allow a division here. We need only make ourselves understandable to one another.—
- 1.2 I freely admit that I can attach no gracefulness to the concept of duty precisely because of the dignity of the latter.
- 1.3 For it contains unconditioned necessity with which gracefulness is in direct contradiction.
- 1.4 The majesty of the law (like that on Sinai) instills awe (and not fright, which repels; and certainly not fascination, which invites familiarity). This awe awakens respect in the subordinate for his commander. But in this case, since this law lies within us ourselves, it awakens a feeling of the sublime of our own determination, which moves us more than any beauty.—
- 1.5 But virtue, i.e., the steadfast disposition to precisely fulfill one's duty, is also in its consequences more benevolent than everything that nature or art can accomplish in the world. And the splendid picture of humanity, present in this its form, does indeed permit attachment with the graces, but which, if the talk is of duty alone, remain at a respectful distance.
- 1.6 But if consideration is given to the encouraging consequences which would spread in the world, if it found admission everywhere, then morally directed reason would draw sensitivity into play (through the imagination).
- 1.7 Only after vanquished monsters does [Hercules](#) become Musaget, at which work those good sisters recoiled.<sup>24</sup>
- 1.8 These attendants of Venus Urania are paramours in the train of Venus Dione as soon as they are involved in the business of the determination of duties, and want to assign the incentives for them.<sup>25</sup>—
- 1.9 Now if one asks which is the aesthetic constitution, the temperament, as it were, of virtue: courageous, hence glad, or fearful and downcast? an answer is hardly necessary.
- 1.10 The latter slavish mentality can never take place without a hatred for the law. And the glad heart in compliance with one's duty (not the ease in acknowledging it) is an indication of genuineness in the virtuous disposition, even in the piety, which does not consist in the self-pity of remorseful sinners (which is quite equivocal and usually only an internal reproach for having acted contrary to rules of prudence), but rather in the determined resolution of doing better in the future. This then, fired by a

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<sup>22</sup> Since the moral law is an incentive, if it were alone it would determine the discretion. And so in a case involving the moral law where the law is not complied with, we would have to be dealing with another, evil maxim (incorporating another incentive, self-love) to override the moral maxim. Hence if not moral, the disposition would have to be evil. Thus the human would have to be one or the other, either good or evil.

<sup>23</sup> The German term is "karthäuserartig" which seems to refer to the [Carthusian](#) order of monks where many live as hermits for prayer and contemplation, and who depend upon the work of other monks for their sustenance.

<sup>24</sup> First is one's duty (slaying the monsters), and then there is time for beauty. Only after complying with his duty does the hero become leader of the muses.

<sup>25</sup> The former is the goddess of sacred beauty, and the latter of sexual beauty. When the followers of the former begin to dabble with justifications for duty, they end up in the camp of the latter. See [The Sublime, Terror and Human Difference](#) by Christine Battersby.

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good advance, has to effect a glad mentality without which one is never certain of cherishing the good, i.e., of assuming it into one's maxim.<sup>26</sup>

- 9.1 But he can also not be good in some ways, and evil in others.
- 9.2 For if he is good in one way, then he has turned the moral law into a maxim. But then, since the moral law for compliance with duty in general is only a single and universal one, if he were also at the same time evil in another way, the maxim universally regarding that would simultaneously be a particular maxim; which is contradictory.\*<sup>27</sup>

\* Kant's annotation.

- 1.1 The ancient moral philosophers, who quite well probed everything which can be said about virtue, did not neglect these two questions.
- 1.2 The first they expressed so: whether virtue would have to be learned (therefore whether the human, by nature, were indifferent between virtue and wickedness)?
- 1.3 The second asked: whether there were more than one virtue (hence could it be that the human might be virtuous in some regards, and wicked in others)?
- 1.4 Both were rigorously denied by them, and quite properly so; for they treated virtue on its own in the Idea of reason (as the human should).
- 1.5 But when one wants morally to estimate this moral being, the human, in the appearance (*Erscheinung*), i.e., as he allows of being known to us in experience, then one can answer the two cited questions affirmatively. For there he is not judged on the scales of pure reason (by a divine court), but rather according to empirical measures (by a human judge).<sup>28</sup>
- 1.6 This is treated further in a subsequent section.
- 10.1 To have the one or the other disposition as an innate property of nature will also not mean here that it is not acquired by the human who adopts it, i.e., that he is not its originator; but only that it was not acquired in time (that the one or the other has been always present since youth).
- 10.2 The disposition, i.e., the first subjective basis of the assumption of maxims, can only be a single one, and covers all usage of freedom universally.
- 10.3 But it must also have been taken on through a free discretion, for otherwise it could not be ascribable to the actor.
- 10.4 But from this assumption nothing can be recognized concerning the subjective basis or cause (although questions about this remain unavoidable; because otherwise a maxim would have to be

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<sup>26</sup> See also Philip Blosser: "[A Problem In Kant's Theory Of Moral Feeling.](#)"

<sup>27</sup> Suppose I make a universal rule to always do what is moral. And so if I also had a maxim which indicated to act differently under certain circumstances, i.e., sometimes, then that would be a contradiction; for "always moral" excludes "sometimes not moral." And so not only can we not be amoral here, we also cannot be sometimes evil and sometimes good.

<sup>28</sup> In a legal court we look for the intention of a wrongful act. In the moral court we are not concerned about the specific act, but rather about the disposition. In this latter case we might be dealing with an evil disposition, but from which a good action ensues, e.g., to not tell a lie due to the difficulties of keeping details straight would present a good action, but which would arise from an evil disposition.

introduced in which this disposition were taken on, which then would require its own basis just as well).

- 10.5 Therefore, since we cannot derive this disposition, or far rather its supreme basis, from any sort of a first act of discretion (in time), we call it a property of the discretion which comes from nature (even though in fact it is based in freedom).<sup>29</sup>
- 10.6 But when speaking of the human and we say of one that he is good or evil by nature, we do not mean the individual (where then one person could be assumed good by nature, another evil), but rather are authorized to mean the entire species. Furthermore, this can be proven only if in anthropological research it indicates that the foundations, which authorize us to attribute one of the two characters to a human as innate, are so construed that there is no basis for exempting a person from that, and that it, therefore, holds for the entire race.

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<sup>29</sup> Thus we can say that a person naturally makes a free choice for either the good or the evil maxim.

## I. The Original Structure For Good In Human Nature

1.1 With regard to its purpose, we can fittingly assemble the structure [*Anlage*] into three classes as the elements of the determination of the human:

1. The structure for animality of the human as a living being;
2. That for his humanity as a living and simultaneously a rational being; and
3. That for his personhood as a rational being and, at the same time, one capable of accountability.\*

\* Kant's annotation.

1.1 This class cannot be considered as already contained in the concept of the preceding one, but rather as a particular structure, and necessarily so.

1.2 For it does not at all follow from the fact that a being is rational, that the being contains a capacity for determining the discretion unconditionally through the mere representation of the suitability of its maxims for universal legislation.<sup>1</sup>

1.3 The most rational heavenly being might still have need of certain incentives derived from objects of desire in order to determine its discretion, and might even apply the most rational deliberation concerning the greatest sum of incentives as well as the means of attaining the determined objective through them, and still without ever imagining the possibility of such a something as the moral law which announces itself as an incentive on its own, and indeed as the highest.

1.4 Were this law not given within us, we would not be able to coax it out rationally or talk the discretion into it. And still this law is the only thing making us aware of the independence of our discretion from a determination through all other incentives (via our freedom), and with this simultaneously to make us aware of the responsibility for all of our actions.<sup>2</sup>

2.1 1. The structure for animality in the human can be brought under the general heading of the physical and merely mechanical self-love, i.e., such for which reason is not required.

2.2 It is three fold: first for the maintenance of itself; secondly for the propagation of its kind through the drive for sex and the maintenance of what is produced through interbreeding (the offspring); and thirdly for community with other humans i.e., the drive for companionship.—

2.3 All sorts of vices can be grafted onto these (but which do not spring from that structure as their root).

2.4 They may be called the vices of the coarseness of nature and, in their highest deviation from natural purposes, animal vices, e.g., intemperance, lust and wild lawlessness (with regard to other humans).

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<sup>1</sup> A maxim will be moral if it can be universalized. Thus a maxim to lie if profitable would not be moral, for if it were universalized then no one would be able to believe another person and so it would destroy the meaning of promises. Thus it cannot be universalized; hence it is not moral.

<sup>2</sup> See [CPrR](#), No. 6, 2nd Task on or near page 36.

- 3.1 2. The structure for humanity can be brought under the general heading of a love which, though physical, still possesses a comparative self-love (for which reason is required), namely to judge oneself as happy or unhappy only in comparison with others.
- 3.2 From this arises the inclination to obtain value in the opinion of others, and indeed originally only for equality, i.e., to permit no one the upper hand, and connected with a continuing concern that others might endeavor to do that themselves. And from this there gradually arises an unjust desire to elevate oneself over others.—
- 3.3 From this, namely from envy and rivalry, we can position the greatest vices: secret and public enmity against all whom we view as enemies. These do not actually arise of themselves from nature as their root, but rather, given the troubling competition of others for a hated supremacy over us, they are inclinations to procure such over others as a precautionary measure for the sake of security. For nature still wanted to utilize the Idea of such a competition (which in itself does not exclude reciprocal love) only as an incentive for culture.
- 3.4 Hence the vices which sprout from this inclination can also be called vices of culture. In the highest degree of their wickedness (since then they are merely the Idea of a maximum of evil which surpasses humanity) they are called devilish vices in, e.g., jealousy, ingratitude, gloating.
- 4.1 3. The structure for personhood is the receptivity for respect for the moral law as a self-sufficient incentive of discretion.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.2 The receptivity for the mere respect for the moral law in us would be the moral feeling, which still of itself does not constitute a purpose of the natural structure, but rather only to the extent it is an incentive of discretion.<sup>4</sup>
- 4.3 Now since this is only possible by the free discretion taking it into its maxim, the quality of such discretion is the good character. This, as generally with every character of the free discretion, is something which can only be developed. But there must still be a structure in our nature for the possibility of this, and from which utterly nothing wicked can sprout.
- 4.4 The Idea of the moral law alone, with the inseparable respect for it, a person cannot additionally term a structure for personhood. It is the personhood itself (the Idea of humanity considered entirely intellectually).
- 4.5 But that we take this respect as an incentive into our maxims, the subjective basis for this seems to be an addition to personhood and, hence, deserves the name of a structure in aid of that.<sup>5</sup>
- 5.1 When we consider the three cited structure according to the conditions of their possibility, we find that the first one has no rationality as root, the second has practical reason, but serviceable only

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<sup>3</sup> By virtue of respect for the moral law the individual can be considered as a person. See Par. 4.4 below.

<sup>4</sup> So the capacity for respect for the moral law is a purpose of the natural disposition to the extent it is an incentive for the discretion, i.e., has been incorporated in a maxim of action.

<sup>5</sup> It is one thing to respect the moral law, and another to take that respect into one's maxims as the supreme principle.

## The Original Structure For Good In Human Nature

for other incentives,<sup>6</sup> and the third alone has reason practical of itself, i.e., unconditionally legislative. All these structures in the human are not only (negatively) good (not conflicting with the moral law), but rather are also structures for good (they promote compliance with that law).

- 5.2 They are original, for they belong to the possibility of human nature.
- 5.3 The human can indeed use the first two contrary to their purpose, but can eradicate none.
- 5.4 With structures of a being, we understand not only the component parts which are requisite to it, but also the form of their combination in order to be such a being.<sup>7</sup>
- 5.5 They are original if they belong necessarily to the possibility of such a being. They are contingent if the being were possible on its own even without them.
- 5.6 We need to note that our discussion here is of no other structures than those which refer immediately to the capacity for desire and the usage of discretion.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This would then entail the use of practical reason in pursuit of one's happiness, e.g., a maxim of working hard while young and healthy in order to be better prepared for old age.

<sup>7</sup> Incidentally Kant has a concept of "incongruent counterparts." An example would be the left and right hands which are identical in description, and yet they are different and cannot wear the same glove. So here the parts are combined differently in making up the whole. And so the whole is not merely a function of these parts, but of the arrangement of these parts and of their relationships to each other.

<sup>8</sup> Accordingly we are not here concerned with our capacity or structure for such as thinking and looking and recognizing objects or appreciating literature and music.

## II. The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature

- 1.1 With propensity (*propensio*) I understand the subjective basis of the possibility of an inclination (habitual craving, *concupiscentia*) to the extent it is contingent with humans.\*
- 1.2 It is distinguished from a structure in that it can be innate, but still is not to be portrayed as such, but rather if the person is good, it can be considered as acquired, or if evil as incurred, by the person himself.<sup>1</sup>—
- 1.3 But here the discussion is only of the propensity to actual evil, i.e., moral evil. Since this is only possible as a determination of the free discretion (and where this in turn can be assessed as good or evil only through its maxims), it must consist in the subjective basis of the possibility of a deviation of the maxims from the moral law, and if this propensity may be assumed as universally belonging to the human (therefore, as a character of the race) it will be termed a natural propensity of the human to evil.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.4 We might add that the ability or inability of the discretion arising from the natural propensity for accepting the moral law into one's maxims or not can be called a good or an evil heart, respectively.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Propensity is actually only the predisposition for desiring a delight which, when once experienced, produces craving.
  - 1.2 Hence all savages possess a propensity to intoxicants. For even though many of them are not at all familiar with addiction and so, therefore, do not have any appetite for things which effect that, still they need only to be allowed to try it once in order to produce an appetite for it, an appetite which can hardly be eradicated.<sup>3</sup>—
  - 1.3 Between propensity and desire, which presupposes familiarity with the object of desire, we find instinct which is a felt need to do or enjoy something whereof we do not yet have any concept (like the drive of some animals to construct things or the instinct for sex).
  - 1.4 Beginning with the desire there is finally yet a gradation of the framework of intensity, namely passion (not the emotional state, for this belongs to feelings of pleasure and pain), which is an inclination which excludes self control.
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- 2.1 We can conceive of three different levels of this propensity.  
First there is the weakness of the human heart in compliance with the assumed maxims in general, or the frailness of human nature.

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<sup>1</sup> We can consider a propensity to be innate, but not as a structure, but rather our own effect. We have chosen to do good or evil and are to get credit or blame, respectively, for having done so.

<sup>2</sup> It is easy to assume that all humans have this propensity to evil; and even though not all will select an evil maxim, still all will be *tempted* to do so under the appropriate circumstances.

<sup>3</sup> A person might have a propensity for sweets, but which is unknown because that person has never been exposed to sweets. And so the craving is there, but in a sleeping mode, as it were, and needing a stimulation to be awakened and called into play, and in that way also recognized.

## The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature

Secondly we have the propensity for mixing nonmoral incentives with the moral (even if it is with a good intention and occurs under maxims of the good), i.e., impurity.

And thirdly there is the propensity for the appropriation of evil maxims, i.e., the evilness of human nature or the human heart.

- 3.1 First, the fragility (*fragilitas*) of human nature is even expressed in the complaint of an apostle: intentions I have indeed, but lack performance,<sup>4</sup> i.e., I take up the good (the law) into the maxims of my discretion; but this, which objectively is an irresistible incentive in Idea (*in thesi*), is subjectively (*in hypothesisi*) the weaker (in comparison with the inclination) when the maxim is to be complied with.
- 4.1 Secondly, the impurity (*impuritas, improbities*) of the human heart consists in this: the maxim is indeed good with respect to the object (regarding the intended compliance with the law) and perhaps also of sufficient strength for execution, but is not purely moral, i.e., the moral law has not been taken up as a sufficient incentive alone, as it should be; but rather has (often and perhaps always) needed other incentives beyond the law in order, by means of them, to determine the discretion to what duty requires.<sup>5</sup>
- 4.2 In other words, actions conformable to duty do not arise solely from duty.
- 5.1 Thirdly, the evil (*vitiositas, pravitas*) or, if you will, the corruption (*corrupt*) of the human heart, is the propensity of the discretion for maxims replacing incentives of the moral law with others (which are not moral).
- 5.2 It can also be called the perversity (*perversitas*) of the human heart, because it inverts the moral order with respect to the incentives of a free discretion. And even though actions which are thoroughly good legally can still ensue, nonetheless, in this way, the manner of thinking is spoiled at its roots (which concerns the moral disposition). It is for this reason that the human is denominated as evil.<sup>6</sup>
- 6.1 We can note that here that the propensity to evil is attributed even to the best people (regarding actions). And this must happen if we are to prove the universality of this propensity to evil among humans, or what means the same thing here, that it is embedded in human nature.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See [Romans 7:19](#).

<sup>5</sup> For example: instead of directly adhering to the moral maxim of no lying, we add a maxim of not telling a lie because it is dangerous and we might be caught. Furthermore, the assumed maxim in this and the former level is moral, but is sometimes overcome through frailness (first level) and crippled through dilution (second level).

<sup>6</sup> In general this might entail a maxim for being morally correct whenever it is advantageous, but not otherwise. And then perhaps it happens always to be advantageous, and so where legally good actions always arise. And then the mistaken impression arises that one is a moral person. And so, we see that it is this third level of propensity that qualifies the human species to be denominated as evil.

<sup>7</sup> To be universal this propensity to evil must infect *all* humans. This is not to say that all humans would be evil, but only that this *propensity* is present in all and awaits merely the opportunity to reveal itself. A propensity is not a necessity, and it is possible to resist it. See last footnote in this [Section II on page 24](#).



- 7.1 But there is not (or at least may not be) any difference between a person of good mores [*Sitten*] (*bene moratus*) and a morally good person (*moraliter bonus*) with respect to the agreement of actions with the law. The only distinction has to do with the law not always, and perhaps never, being the solitary and supreme incentive for the former; while it always is with the latter.<sup>8</sup>
- 7.2 Of the former (good mores) we can say that the person complies with the letter of the law (i.e., concerning actions which the law requires); but of the latter (the morally good) that he obeys the spirit of the law (the spirit of the moral law consists in the law being sufficient of itself for an incentive).
- 7.3 What does not proceed from this belief is sin<sup>9</sup> (regarding the way of thinking).
- 7.4 For if other incentives beyond the law itself (e.g., concerns of honor, self-love in general, or even kind-hearted instincts such as sympathy) are needed to determine the discretion to legitimate actions, then it is quite accidental that these also agree with the law. For they could just as easily lead to transgressions.
- 7.5 In such a case the maxim, with regard to the goodness by means of which all moral worth of a person must be estimated, is still contrary to the law, and the person with nothing but good actions is still evil.<sup>10</sup>
- 8.1 The following discussion is still necessary to determine the concept of this propensity.
- 8.2 Every propensity is either physical and belongs to the discretion of the human as a natural being; or else it is moral, i.e., belongs to his discretion as a moral being.—
- 8.3 In the first sense there is no propensity to a moral evil; for this must arise from freedom. And a physical propensity (which is based on sensitive drives) for any sort of a usage of freedom, be it for good or evil, entails a contradiction.
- 8.4 Therefore, a propensity to evil can only adhere to the moral capacity of the discretion.
- 8.5 But now nothing is morally (i.e., attributably) evil except what is our own deed.
- 8.6 But with the concept of a propensity, on the other hand, we understand a subjective, determination basis of the discretion which proceeds before the act. Hence this propensity itself is not yet an act. And thus in the concept of a mere propensity to evil there would be a contradiction if this expression could not be taken in two different ways, but which still permit of unification in the concept of freedom.
- 8.7 Now the expression of a deed in general can be considered in the following two ways. First there is the usage of freedom where the supreme maxim (conforming to the law, or conflicting with it)

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<sup>8</sup> Example: Two people are driving at the speed limit in a school zone. One is driving so for the safety of school kids, while other is driving so to avoid being captured on the traffic camera and being fined. The second driver is of good mores while the first driver is a morally good person, at least in this regard.

<sup>9</sup> [Romans 14:23b](#).

<sup>10</sup> And so the good that ensues from such a person (in the third level) is incidental and not a result of a good disposition attuned to the moral law above all else.

is taken up into the discretion. And then secondly there is also the usage of freedom where the actions themselves (regarding their content, i.e., the objects of the discretion) are undertaken in accordance with that maxim.<sup>11</sup>

- 8.8 The propensity to evil is now a deed according to the first meaning (*peccatum originarium*) and at the same time, taken in the second meaning, it is the formal basis of every deed contrary to law, which, with respect to the material (of the deed), conflicts with that law and is termed vice (*peccatum derivativum*). And the first guilt remains even if the second (proceeding from incentives which do not consist in the law itself) were frequently avoided.<sup>12</sup>
- 8.9 The former is an intelligible act, recognizable merely through reason without any condition of time. The latter is sensible, empirical and given in time (*factum phaenomenon*).<sup>13</sup>
- 8.10 Now the first (and especially so in comparison with the second) is called a mere propensity, and because it cannot be eradicated (except by the supreme maxim having to be the good maxim, but which in that propensity itself is assumed as evil), it is considered innate. But this is especially so because we can no better explain why it is that within us the evil has corrupted precisely the supreme maxim—even though this is our own act—than we can explain a basic property which adheres to our nature.<sup>14</sup>—
- 8.11 In what was just said, it is understandable why at the very beginning of this section we sought the three sources of the morally evil solely in what affected the supreme basis of the acquisition of, or compliance with, our maxims according to laws of freedom; and not what affects our sensitivity (as a receptivity).<sup>15 16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I might have a maxim to steal, but only if it is safe and profitable. This might be called the establishment of a principle, where I take up the maxim, but yet with no action. This would be my disposition. And then upon an appropriate opportunity I would steal, which is a usage of freedom in accordance with the maxim.

<sup>12</sup> With reference to the preceding footnote, if an opportunity for a safe and profitable theft did not arise, then no such act would occur and it would appear (empirically) that I were honest. But I would still be guilty of a willingness to steal according to my maxim, and would be lacking merely the opportunity for implementation of that maxim. See also the footnote to 7.1 above.

<sup>13</sup> The former is a choice for evil maxims, while the latter, dependent upon conditions in time, arises only upon the opportunity for implementation of the maxim. Thus a person might be evil (having evil maxims) and yet never commit an act contrary to the moral law. The lack of the evil act would be entirely circumstantial, i.e., no opportunity for utilization of the maxim will have yet arisen.

<sup>14</sup> We can no more explain our propensity to evil than we can explain how the form of our looking is in terms of time and space, e.g., noticing something as now or earlier, and as here or there.

<sup>15</sup> And so the good or evil has nothing to do with the material or content of our desires and actions, but solely with the supreme maxim of acting, i.e., whether it can be universalized and held as valid for all people (which is a sufficient mark of the moral) or not.

<sup>16</sup> It seems there are four levels of morality for the human: 1. Steadfast commitment to the moral law even when faced with severe temptations (see [II-I-A & B](#)) and well exemplified by the biblical Jesus. 2. Sincere commitment to the law, but weakness with regard to compliance, 3. Moral intention, but diluted by non-moral interests, and then 4. Morally evil via a willingness to violate the moral law when it is safe and profitable. Moral levels 2-4 are the three levels of propensity covered in this present section. And also, taking pleasure in the sheer violation of the moral law per se, a conceivable 5th level of evil, is not human, but rather diabolical and accordingly is not considered here as relevant (see [I-III-8.5](#)).

### III. People Are Evil By Nature

*Vitiis nemo sine nascitur.* Horat.<sup>1</sup>

- 1.1 After the preceding section, the proposition that the human is evil can mean nothing other than he is conscious of the moral law and still has taken into his maxim the (occasional) deviation from it.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.2 Being evil by nature means that this holds for him as a member of his species. But this is not to mean that such a quality might be inferred from the concept of his species (of a human in general, for then the evil would be necessary), but rather that he cannot be judged otherwise according to what is known about humans through experience. In other words: it can be presupposed as subjectively necessary in each person, even the best.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.3 Now this propensity itself can be considered as morally evil. Therefore it is not a natural structure, but rather something which can be attributed to the person. For that reason it would have to consist in unlawful maxims of discretion. But given now the fact of freedom, it follows that these maxims must be viewed as contingent. But then this consideration would not comport with a universality of this wickedness if the subjective, supreme basis of all maxims were not interwoven and rooted, as it were, in humanity itself, regardless of how that might be. It follows, therefore, that we will be able to term this a natural propensity to evil. And since the individual must still always himself be guilty, we can term it a radical, innate (and nonetheless still always self-incurred) evil in human nature.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.1 Now that such a corrupted propensity would have to be rooted in people, we can spare ourselves a formal proof through the swarm of thundering examples which experience clearly positions before us in the deeds of humans.
- 2.2 If one wishes examples from that state in which some philosophers hoped especially to encounter the natural goodness of the human nature, namely from the so-called natural state, he need only compare that hypothesis with the acts of unprovoked gruesomeness in the murder scenes on Tofoa, New Zealand, the Navigator Islands and the incessant ones in the vast deserts of northwestern America which (as [Captain Hearne](#) reported) don't even accrue to anyone's advantage,\* and he will have more vices of crudeness than he needs to dissuade him from this opinion.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "No one is born without some fault." [Horace](#)

<sup>2</sup> A person may not realize this because a propensity has to be prompted as it was with the [savages and alcohol](#). And so one must be exposed to a temptation to realize one's willingness to violate the moral law.

<sup>3</sup> Even Jesus per [Luke 4:1-14](#) was *tempted* by Satan, and thus he possessed the same propensity as all humans. But he did not succumb to these temptations.

<sup>4</sup> Thus it is expected that a human, faced with a severe choice between self-love and the moral law, would look for a justification to violate the law, or at least a way out the situation. And while this maxim (calling for violation of the law) would be an act of freedom (and hence not objectively necessary), it would still be considered natural and customary and expected for all humans to choose self-love over the moral law. See also [Par. 5](#) in the previous section and especially Par. 5.2.

<sup>5</sup> And so it seems the human has a propensity for enjoying the torments of others and, like any propensity, this is only apparent upon the occasioning opportunity.

- 2.3 But if one is confident that human nature reveals itself better in the civilized state (in which it can develop its natural structures more completely), then he will have to listen to a long and melancholy litany of complaints of humanity:

of secret unfaithfulness, even with the most intimate friendship, such that a tempering of trust in mutual confidences between even the best of friends is counted among the universal maxims of prudence;<sup>6</sup>

of a propensity for hating those to whom we are obligated, with which every benefactor must always reckon;

of a hearty well-wishing, which still permits the remark that "there is something in the misfortune of our best friends which does not displease us;"<sup>7</sup>

and of many others concealed under the appearance of virtue, not to mention those vices which we don't even hide because a wicked person of the general stamp we call a good person.

If this is reviewed, the observer will have enough of the vices of culture and civilization (the most vile of all) to want to shield his eyes from human conduct in order not to subject even himself to yet another vice, namely that of misanthropy.

- 2.4 But if he is still not satisfied, then he need only merge the above two in that marvelous mode called international affairs where civilized nations stand vis-à-vis one another in a relationship of a raw state of nature (a continuing state of war), and are firmly resolved never to depart from that. Then he will notice in the public affairs precisely contradictory, and yet nevertheless indispensable, principles of the great societies called states,\*\* which no philosopher has yet been able to bring into accord with morality nor yet (frustratingly) to suggest any improvement which would harmonize with human nature. This is so much the case that the philosophical [chiliasm](#),<sup>8</sup> who hoped for a state of a perpetual peace based on a federation of nations as a world republic, was ridiculed as mentally raptured, just as much as the theologian who waits upon a complete, moral improvement of the entire human race.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Just as the eternal war between the Arathapescau and Hundsribben tribes of America has no other intention except merely butchery.
- 1.2 Courage in war is the highest virtue of the savages in their opinion.
- 1.3 Even in the civilized state it is an object of amazement and a basis of the exceptional respect, which such a standing demands and which is its sole merit. And this merit is not without some basis in reason.
- 1.4 For that the human could have something and make himself into a purpose, which he can value even higher than his life (his honor), whereby he renounces all personal advantage, still proves a certain sublimity in his structure.
- 1.5 But nevertheless the ease with which the victors praise their grand deeds (of butchery, of slaughter without mercy, etc.) enables us to see that they are actually concerned with no other purpose than the domination and the destruction they can effect.

\*\* Kant's annotation

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<sup>6</sup> This also means a lack of spontaneity and candor and where caution is always in order. See [Loss Of Spontaneity](#).

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps a propensity to enjoy the new and relatively higher status provided by this misfortune to our friend.

<sup>8</sup> From a *theological* doctrine stating that Jesus will reign on earth for 1,000 years.

## Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason - Part I

- 1.1 If we view this history of theirs merely as the phenomenon of the structure of humanity, which is hidden from us internally for the most part, then we can become aware of a certain mechanical-like process of nature in accord with purposes which are not those of the societies, but rather purposes of nature.
  - 1.2 As long as a state has another adjacent state which it might hope to subdue, it strives to enlarge itself through the subjugation of this other and, therefore, also to make itself a universal monarchy, a state of things in which all freedom is extinguished and along with it (as its consequence) also virtue, taste and science.
  - 1.3 But this monster (in which laws gradually lose their power), after having swallowed all neighboring states, finally dissolves of itself and separates through uproar and discord into many smaller states which, instead of striving toward a union of states (a republic of free, allied peoples), simply and of itself starts the process all over again in order never to cease the war (this scourge of the human race) which, even though it is not so incurably evil as the grave of the universal absolute power (or also a confederation in order not to permit despotism to veer away in any state), still this, as a sage once said, makes more evil men than it eliminates.
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- 3.1 Now in the first place the basis of this evil cannot be positioned in the sensitivity of people, as we are usually wont to do, nor in the natural inclinations arising from that.
  - 3.2 For not only do these have no direct reference to wickedness (as far rather to that which can prove the power of the moral disposition by providing an opportunity for virtue<sup>9</sup>), and so we do not have to answer for their existence (and also cannot, for since they are innate we are not their originator). However we are certainly responsible for the propensity to evil which, by touching the morality of the subject, hence by being encountered in him as a freely acting being, must be attributable to him as a guilty party. And this is quite aside from its deep roots in the discretion, for which reason we must say that it is to be found in the human by nature.<sup>10</sup>—
  - 3.3 And secondly the basis of this evil can also not be positioned in a corruption of morally legislative reason, as though this itself could eradicate the respect of the law in itself and deny the obligation from that law; for that is utterly impossible.
  - 3.4 To think of oneself as a freely acting being and still as independent of the law (the moral law) commensurate with such freedom would be the same as thinking of a cause being effective without any law (for the determination according to laws of nature is no longer applicable due to freedom), and this contradicts itself.<sup>11</sup>—
  - 3.5 In asserting a basis for the morally evil in the human, therefore, the sensitivity contains too little; for by eliminating the incentives which can arise from freedom, it reduces the human to a mere animal creature. On the other hand a wicked reasoning (an utterly evil discretion), as it were, liberating itself from the moral law, contains too much, because antagonism against the law becomes

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<sup>9</sup> There is no way of demonstrating or measuring one's moral strength except in the face of obstacles such as the desire and inclination to do what is wrong, and by overcoming those obstacles. A person might be morally strong, but this cannot be known except by overcoming such obstacles.

<sup>10</sup> This suggests a proof that the human is evil by nature.

<sup>11</sup> It is only by virtue of our respect for the moral law that we can recognize our own freedom from the necessity of the laws of nature. Without that law we would have no concept of freedom. Freedom would be merely the capacity for doing as one feels like, and that would be subject to laws of nature.

itself an incentive (for without any incentive the discretion cannot be determined<sup>12</sup>). And this would make the subject a diabolical being.—

- 3.6 But neither of these two is applicable to the human.
- 4.1 But now even if the existence of this propensity to evil in human nature can be established experientially through the actual conflicts in time of the human discretion against the law, this still does not teach us about its actual constitution nor about the basis of this conflict. On the contrary, because it concerns a referral of the free discretion (where the concept, therefore, is not empirical) upon the moral law as an incentive (the concept of which is likewise purely intellectual), the makeup of this propensity must be recognized a priori out of the concept of evil, to the extent it is possible according to laws of freedom (of obligation and accountability).
- 4.2 Here now is the development of this concept.
- 5.1 Regardless of the maxims, no human (not even the worst) denies the moral law or proclaims disobedience as a rebel would do.
- 5.2 Far rather this law forces itself irresistibly upon him by virtue of his moral structure. And if no other incentive worked against it, he also would always take it into his supreme maxim as the sufficient determination basis of his discretion, i.e., he would be morally good.
- 5.3 But due to his natural structure (which at the same time is also blameless), he still clings to the incentives of sensitivity, and also takes them into his maxim (according to the subjective principle of self-love).
- 5.4 Now if he took these incentives of sensitivity into his maxims as sufficient of themselves alone for the determination of the discretion without heeding the moral law (which is still within him), he would be morally evil.
- 5.5 But since he naturally takes up both into his maxims, where he would also find each sufficient for the determination of the will if it were alone, then if the distinction of the maxims depended merely upon the distinction of the incentives (the material of the maxims), namely whether the law or the sensitive drives rendered the maxims, then he would be simultaneously morally good and evil. But this we know (per the Introduction<sup>13</sup>) is contradictory.
- 5.6 The distinction, therefore, as to whether the human be good or evil does not lie in the distinction of the incentives which he takes up into his maxims (not in their material), but rather in the subordination (in their form), i.e., which of the two he makes the condition of the other.<sup>14</sup>
- 5.7 Consequently the human (even the best) is evil only by inverting the moral order of the incentives in their assumption into his maxims, namely he takes up the moral law along with the law of self-love into the maxims, but he is aware that one cannot exist next to the other, and so one would have to be subordinated to the other as its supreme condition. He then makes the incentive of self-

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<sup>12</sup> In this case we would be left with no action. For there would be no reason for any action, nothing to be gained or accomplished.

<sup>13</sup> See Part I, Indwelling of the Evil Principle, [Par. 9](#).

<sup>14</sup> Self-love is expressed via a maxim and respect for the moral law is also expressed via a maxim; and so the question becomes: which is supreme in the case of a conflict, self-love or the moral law?

love and its inclinations the condition of compliance with the moral law, where instead the latter [the moral law], as the supreme condition for the satisfaction of the former in the general maxim of the discretion, should be taken up as the exclusive incentive.<sup>15</sup>

- 6.1 At this inversion of the incentives through his maxims against the moral order, the actions can still turn out to be just as legally correct as though they had arisen from genuine principles. Assume that reason used the unity of the maxims in general, one that is proper for the moral law, merely in order to insert unity of maxims among the incentives of inclination under the name of happiness, a unity which is otherwise not fitting for them (e.g., that truthfulness, if one were to assume it as a principle, relieved us from the anxiety in maintaining agreement among our lies and of entangling ourselves in their serpentine coils), then the empirical character would be good, while the intelligible would still be evil.<sup>16</sup>
- 7.1 Now if a propensity to that inversion of the incentives lies in human nature, then there is a natural propensity to evil in the human. And this propensity itself, because it still must ultimately be sought in a free discretion, i.e., can be attributed, is morally evil.<sup>17</sup>
- 7.2 This evil is radical because it corrupts the basis of all maxims. At the same time, as a natural propensity, it cannot be eradicated through human power because this could only occur through good maxims which, if the supreme subjective basis of all maxims is presupposed to be corrupted, cannot take place. But nonetheless it must be possible to prevail over it because it is encountered in the human as a freely acting being.<sup>18</sup>
- 8.1 The malignity of human nature, therefore, is not so much malice, taking this word in a rigorous sense, namely as a disposition (subjective principle of maxims) for taking evil as such into the incentives of one's maxims (for that is diabolical). Rather it is far more the perversity of the heart which now, concerning the consequences, may be called an evil heart.<sup>19</sup>
- 8.2 This can persist together with a generally good will. And it arises from the frailty of human nature in not being strong enough in compliance with one's accepted principles, coupled with the impu-

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<sup>15</sup> This would also be the case if I obeyed the moral law as though it were merely an arbitrary imposition of God and if I were doing merely what was required in order to get some reward, but where I would then be evil, for in that case I would show my willingness also to do evil deeds if I understood that those were commanded as necessary for the reward.

<sup>16</sup> This inclination may mean a propensity to unify all maxims under the general rubric of happiness. This would mean that the supreme maxim is a pursuit for happiness alone, and the moral actions would be undertaken only because it would be thought easier to achieve happiness in that way, a sort of Epicurean system. It would be our choice, per our discretion, to make self-love superior to the moral law, and to comply with the law only as convenient to self-love.

<sup>17</sup> In [Par. 1.5 of Kant's footnote to Par. 2.2](#) in the introduction to Part II, we learn that the actual evil is in not wanting to withstand the inclinations when they are opposed to the moral law.

<sup>18</sup> To corrupt the basis of all maxims means that we have a natural propensity voluntarily to chose to let the maxim of the incentives of self-love be supreme when there is a conflict with the moral law; and so we don't actually reject respect for the moral law as rather subjugate it to prudence and personal happiness.

<sup>19</sup> We never establish a maxim to do evil (which would make us diabolical). Moral evil consists in putting self-love before the moral in cases of conflict.



urity of not isolating the incentives (even of well intended actions) from one another according to moral guidelines, and hence finally, when it comes down to it, to look only to the conformity of the actions with the law and not to their derivation, i.e., not to the law as the solitary incentive.<sup>20</sup>

- 8.3 Now even if from that an illegal action and a propensity to that, i.e., vice, does not always arise, nevertheless the way of thinking in construing the absence of that illegal action for a commensurability of one's disposition with the law of duty (and thus as a virtue) (and in which case we do not consider the incentive of the maxim at all, but rather look only to the compliance of the law with respect to the letter) may be termed a radical perversity in the human heart.<sup>21</sup>
- 9.1 This innate guilt (*reatus* [debt])—so termed because it can be perceived so early (as the usage of freedom in the human always expresses itself) and still must have arisen from freedom and hence is chargeable—can be judged in its first two levels (of frailty and impurity) as unintentional (*culpa* [fault]), but in the third level as intentional guilt (*dolus* [deceit]). In this third level it has as its character a certain malignity of the human heart (*dolus malus* [evil deceit]) to deceive one's self regarding one's own good or evil disposition, and if an action does not have evil as a consequence, which it could have had according to his maxim, not to be disturbed by his disposition but rather to hold one's self as justified before the law.<sup>22</sup>
- 9.2 Hence the clear conscience of so many people (conscientious in their own mind), if in the midst of actions where the law was not utilized as counsel, at least not for the most part, they fortunately avoided the evil consequences. And they actually imagine themselves meritorious and don't feel guilty of such trespasses as they see burdening others. But they do not inquire as to whether it not rather be due to good fortune, and whether, according to the way of thinking which they could uncover within themselves (if they would do so), they might also have been burdened with similar vices had not incapacity, temperament, upbringing and circumstances of time and place, which lead to temptation (clearly things for which we cannot be held accountable), kept them at a distance from such.<sup>23</sup>
- 9.3 This dishonesty of making a smokescreen which inhibits the establishment of a genuine moral disposition within us also spreads externally to the deceit and deception of others. This, if it is not to be called wickedness, certainly deserves the epithet of worthlessness and lies in the radical evil of human nature, which (by sowing discord in the moral judgmental capacity with respect to how

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<sup>20</sup> To avoid the admission of self-love first, we formulate moral maxims and then plead weakness in violating them. Next we add incentives of self-love along with the moral law. Finally we just go ahead and recognize that self-love is first with the moral law a tag-along. But we don't like to admit this to ourselves and so look to the consequences instead of the ordering of the maxims (where evil, self-love, is supreme). This harkens back to [Par. 2.1 of The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature](#) in Part I.

<sup>21</sup> A radical inversion means not merely that we make self-love the supreme unifying principle of all actions, but additionally count ourselves as virtuous, i.e., if we don't actually violate the moral law in the empirical realm, even though we are willing to do so per the intelligible realm (and our supreme maxim), we count ourselves as proper and upright people. A common expression is "no harm done," meaning we don't have to inquire about the supreme maxim.

<sup>22</sup> The evil is in being willing to take the letter of the law for the spirit of the law. The very willingness to do that is an innate evil. We typically hold the conscience to the outcome and do not look to the supreme maxim from which the outcome ensued.

<sup>23</sup> Thus we can imagine a supreme maxim of self-love in cases where people don't realize this because they don't seek to discover it and where actual conflicts don't arise due to a host of extraneous circumstances.



we are to consider a person, and by making accountability within and without entirely uncertain) constitutes a rotten stain on our race, which, as long as we do not expose it, inhibits the germ of goodness from developing as it otherwise would very well do.<sup>24</sup>

- 10.1 A member of the English Parliament once asserted in the heat of debate that [every man has his price](#).
- 10.2 If this is true (which then everyone may judge of himself<sup>25</sup>), if there is nowhere any virtue for which a degree of temptation cannot be found sufficient to topple it, if the evil or good spirit wins us for its side based only on which side offers the most and affords the quickest payment, then it might well be said what the apostle said of humans in general, "there is here no distinction, they are all sinners—there is no one who does good (according to the spirit of the law), not even one."<sup>26\*</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The actual proof of this damning judgment of a morally regulative reason is not to be found in this section, but rather in the preceding one.<sup>27</sup> This present section contains only the certification of that judgment through experience, but which can never uncover the root of the evil in the supreme maxim of the discretion with regard to the law, which, as an intelligible act, precedes all experience.<sup>28</sup>—
- 1.2 From this, i.e., from the unity of the supreme maxims at the unity of the law to which it refers, it may be seen why the principle of the exclusion of the middle between good and evil would have to lie as the basis to the human's pure intellectual evaluation. That principle, however, can be the basis to the empirical evaluation of a sensitive deed (the actual doing and forbearing) such that there would be a

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<sup>24</sup> It is a smokescreen because we can think of ourselves as moral because the results of the deeds are what would also result from the moral law, if that were our supreme maxim. The morality of the actions, so to speak, is placed in the effects of the actions themselves and not in the maxims which are of a wicked (inverted) heart. In this way we don't have to recognize our own evil, and can consider ourselves to be morally proper and upright.

<sup>25</sup> The conclusion will be that this is to be expected in all people, even though we don't want to see it in ourselves. Here we see the evil propensity of the human race, that we all have our price for violating the moral law, but which is not clear to most of us due to lack of opportunity and which we would rather not consider.

<sup>26</sup> This seems to refer to [Romans 3:9-18](#).

<sup>27</sup> See [Part I-II The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature, Par. 5.2 and 6.1](#), and last footnote to [Par. 8.11](#). And consider especially [Par. 1](#) of this present part III, essentially a summary of the previous part II, as a possible proof that Kant is referring to.

<sup>28</sup> Experience teaches that we have this propensity. Here we are searching for what has to happen in order for this propensity to belong to human freedom. The way it works then (as indicated above) is this: we combine the maxims of happiness and morality by subordinating the latter to the former. And we normally don't realize this because we look to the legality of the action as the moral standard, and not at the moral order of the maxims (self-love versus the moral law). And so the legality (of the action) can be right and the morality (the maxim) wrong. In this way we are able to fool ourselves into thinking we are better than we are.

## People Are Evil By Nature

middle between these extremes, a negative one of indifference on the one hand, one preceding all education, and a positive one of mixture on the other, being partly good and partly evil.<sup>29</sup>

- 1.3 But the latter is only the evaluation of the morality of the human in the appearance, and in a final judgment is subject to the former.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> On the intelligible level we have seen that the supreme maxim will be either self-love or the moral law. But on an empirical basis, where we consider the actual actions arising from the maxims, we can see that we could have some actions which are moral and some which are not.

<sup>30</sup> What counts morally is the maxim on the intelligible level and not the empirical character of the actual actions (the appearances of the actions).

#### IV. The Origin Of Wickedness In Human Nature

- 1.1 Origin (the first) means the descent of an effect from its first cause, i.e., from what is not in turn an effect of another cause of the same type.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 It can be considered as either a rational origin or a temporal one.
- 1.3 In the first meaning only the existence of the effect is considered; in the second, the occurrence of the effect is also considered, hence with a reference to it as an event to its cause in time.
- 1.4 If the effect is referred to a cause, but which is connected to it according to laws of freedom (as is the case with the morally evil), then the determination of the discretion, regarding its actualization, is not thought of as connected with its determination basis in time, but rather merely in the representation of reason, and cannot be derived from any preceding state. The latter, on the other hand (considering time as a factor), must always happen if the evil action is referred to its natural cause as an event in the world.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.5 To seek the temporal origin of free actions as such (as though they were natural effects) involves, therefore, a contradiction. The same also holds for the moral makeup of the human to the extent it is considered contingently, because this indicates the basis of the usage of freedom which (as with the determination basis of the free discretion in general) must be sought solely in rational representations.
- 2.1 Now regardless of how the origin of the morally evil may be constituted in the human, the most unsuitable way of representing it (concerning its spread and advancement throughout all members of our race and in all generations) is that of its coming to us from the first parents by heredity; for we can say of the morally evil just what was said of the good by the poet: *Genus, et proavos, et quae non fecimus ipsi, vix ea nostra puto*.<sup>3\*</sup>—
- 2.2 And yet it is noteworthy that if we investigate the origin of evil, we do not at first take the propensity to that (as *peccatum in potentia*) into account, but rather only consider the actual evil of given actions, according to the internal possibility of that evil and what must join together in the discretion for execution.<sup>4</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Each of the three so-called higher faculties (of the universities) would make this inheritance understandable in its own way: namely either as hereditary illness, or hereditary debt, or hereditary sin.

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<sup>1</sup> A flower can be considered as the effect of a seed (along with moisture, nutrients, etc.), but then that seed will have come from an earlier flower. This earlier flower cannot be counted as the first origin of the flower in general, for it will also have arisen from an earlier flower, and so from a cause of the same type.

<sup>2</sup> A person may have chosen an evil maxim for dishonest self enrichment, but the empirical representation of this evil act (of so choosing) would not arise until an opportunity for implementation. So the evil maxim would have a rational origin, while the evil action itself would arise in time.

<sup>3</sup> "Origin, forefathers and what we have not done ourselves, I hardly count as ours."

<sup>4</sup> See [Part I-II Two Deeds](#).

## Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason - Part I

- 1.2 1. The school of medicine would represent this hereditary evil somewhat as the tapeworm which, since it is not found in an element apart from us nor (in this form) in any other animal, prompts the opinion among scientific historians that it must have been present in our first parents.
  - 1.3 2. The school of law would view it as the legal consequence of the receipt of an inheritance left to us which is encumbered with a heavy wrongdoing (for to be born is nothing more than to acquire usage of the goods of the earth to the extent they are indispensable for our continuation).
  - 1.4 Therefore we must pay the price (penance) and still be dispossessed from our holding at the end (through death).
  - 1.5 How just is justice!
  - 1.6 3. The school of theology would view this evil as our personal participation with our first parents in the rubbish of a defeated insurrection, either by having taken part ourselves at the time (although no longer conscious of it), or only just now by being born under the rule of this insurrectionist (as prince of this world) and being more pleased by his goods than the rule of the heavenly commander, and not possessing sufficient fidelity to tear ourselves away and, therefore, must also participate in his lot with him.
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- 3.1 Now if one seeks the rational origin of each evil action, it must be considered as though the person had just entered from a state of innocence.
  - 3.2 For regardless of what his previous conduct may have been and what sort of influential, natural causes may be present, whether from within or without, his action is still free and not determined through any of these causes and, therefore, can and must always be judged as an original usage of his discretion.
  - 3.3 He should have refrained from it, whatever the temporal circumstances and connections may have been; for by no worldly cause can he cease being a freely acting being.
  - 3.4 It is also quite proper to hold a person accountable for the consequences arising from his previously free, though illegal, actions. But with this we mean only that we are not compelled to acknowledge such an evasion nor to make out whether these consequences might be free or not, because an adequate basis of accountability is already present in the admittedly free action which was their cause.<sup>5</sup>
  - 3.5 But if someone had become ever so wicked up to the immediately present free action (so that habit had become a second nature), it was still not only his duty to be better, it is his duty even now to become better. And so he must be able to do so, and if he does not he is just as capable of, and subject to, accountability at the moment of the action as though he were gifted by a natural structure for good (which is inseparable from freedom) and had crossed over to evil from the state of innocence.—
  - 3.6 We cannot, therefore, inquire regarding the temporal origin, but rather must look merely to the rational origin of this act in order to determine the propensity (if there is such), i.e., the subjective, universal basis for the assumption of a trespass in our maxim and, where possible, to explain it.<sup>6</sup>
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- 4.1 Now the representational manner used in the scriptures to portray the origin of evil as a beginning in the human race agrees with this. For it is presented in a story where what must be thought of as

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<sup>5</sup> If a person freely intoxicates himself, for example, and then has an accident as a result which causes harm to others, then even though the harm was not intended, this person is still held to be responsible.

<sup>6</sup> See Part I, Section II, [The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature, Par. 8.7.](#)

first, regarding the nature of the matter (without regard to the temporal circumstances), appears as such according to time.

- 4.2 According to this story, evil does not begin from a propensity to evil which lies as a basis, because then the beginning of evil would not have arisen out of freedom.<sup>7</sup> Rather it arises instead from the sin (i.e., a violation of the moral law seen as a divine command). But the state of the human, before every propensity to evil, is called a state of innocence.
- 4.3 The moral law preceded as a prohibition ([Genesis 2:16-17](#)), which is always the case with the human as an impure being who is tempted by inclinations.<sup>8</sup>
- 4.4 Now instead of complying with this law directly as the sufficient incentive (which alone is unconditionally good and where no further deliberation is needed), the human looked about for other incentives ([3:6](#)) which can be good only contingently (namely to the extent no infringement occurred to the law) and, if one thinks of the action as consciously arising from freedom, made a maxim to comply with the law of duty not for the sake of duty but rather, at best, also with regard to other intentions.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.5 With that he began to doubt the rigor of the law, which excludes the influence of all other incentives, and then finagled a way (via rational subtlety) to reduce obedience to the law to the mere conditioned obedience of a means (under the principle of self-love).<sup>\*</sup> In this way then the weight of the sensitive drives finally overcame the incentive of the law in the maxim for action, and so sin ensued ([3:6](#)).
- 4.6 *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur.*<sup>10</sup>
- 4.7 That we do likewise daily, hence that "in Adam all have sinned"<sup>11</sup> and still sin, is clear from the above. The only difference is that with us an innate propensity for trespass is presupposed, but not with the first person, but for him only innocence with respect to time, for which reason the trespass with him is called a fall into sin. With us in contrast it is represented as ensuing from the innate wickedness of our nature.
- 4.8 But this propensity, however, means nothing more than this: when we want to introduce an explanation of evil regarding its beginning in time, we would have to follow the causes of every intentional trespass back to a previous period of our life to that point when the use of reason had not yet developed, hence to a propensity (as a natural foundation) for evil—the source of evil—which for that reason is called innate.<sup>12</sup> This is not necessary nor feasible with the first person, who is represented as already endowed with his full rational capacity, because otherwise that foundation

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<sup>7</sup> If at the beginning of the world there had already been a propensity to evil, then that would have been part and parcel of the human makeup, and so would have been an effect of nature and not freedom.

<sup>8</sup> Accordingly then the first command that the human child would understand would be a prohibition, a "No."

<sup>9</sup> For us this is the second of the three levels of the propensity to evil mentioned in [Part I, II, Par. 2.2](#).

<sup>10</sup> "You will be reported in the legends by a changed name."

<sup>11</sup> [Romans 5:12](#).

<sup>12</sup> This may suggest that when we learn of the moral law we realize that we have already violated it. See also Radical Evil [Par. 10.1](#) for the assertion that a propensity is acquired before memory.

(the evil propensity) would have had to be innate. Accordingly his sins are represented as having been generated immediately from innocence.—

- 4.9 But we must seek no temporal origin of a moral makeup which is to be attributed to us, as unavoidable as this may be if we want to explain its contingent existence (hence also the scripture, conformable to this our weakness, may have made this origin representable in this way<sup>13</sup>).

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 All professed homage paid to the moral law, but still without awarding it the preponderance in one's maxims as the incentive which is sufficient unto itself over all other foundations for the determination of the discretion, is hypocritical. And the propensity to that is internal deceit, i.e., a propensity to lie to oneself concerning the interpretation of the moral law to its detriment ([III.5](#)). For this reason the Bible (the Christian part) calls the originator of evil (which lies within us ourselves) the liar from the beginning,<sup>14</sup> and so characterizes the human with regard to what seems to be the primary basis of evil within him.
- 5.1 But the rational origin of this disorder of our discretion with regard to the type, making subordinated incentives supreme in its maxims, i.e., this propensity to evil,<sup>15</sup> remains unfathomable for us, because it must be attributed to us ourselves, consequently the supreme basis of all maxims would in turn require us to adopt an evil maxim.
- 5.2 Evil could have arisen only from the morally evil (not from the mere limitations of our nature). And yet the original structure (which still no one other than the human himself could spoil, if this corruption is to be ascribed to him) is a structure for good. For us, therefore, no conceivable foundation is available through which the moral evil in us could first have arisen.—
- 5.3 This incomprehensibility, together with a closer determination of the evil aspects of our race, the scripture expresses in the historical narration\* by presupposing it indeed at the beginning of the world, but not in the human, but rather in a spirit of an originally more lofty determination [*Bestimmung*]. In this way, therefore, the first beginning of all evil in general is represented for us as unfathomable (for whence then that spirit of evil?), and the human is represented as fallen into evil through seduction and so, therefore, not as fundamentally spoiled (according even to the first structure for good<sup>16</sup>), but rather, in contrast with a tempting spirit, as capable of an improvement. Thus we are represented as a being to whom the temptations of the flesh cannot be considered as a mitigation of our guilt, and so with the first, who still always has a good will along with his spoiled heart, there remains a hope for a return to the good from which he is fallen.

\* Kant's annotation:

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<sup>13</sup> The scriptures will have avoided an explanation of an intelligible basis and will have used the notion of a temporal beginning due to the inability of the common person to comprehend the intelligible well enough in the explanation of the rise of evil within us.

<sup>14</sup> [John 8:44](#).

<sup>15</sup> Here we have again the fundamental propensity to evil in the human, i.e., taking both the moral incentives and the incentives for happiness and subordinating the former to the latter in case of a conflict. And this includes such as, for example, refusing to lie, but not because that is wrong, but because it is so difficult to keep lies straight. See Part I, Section II, [Par. 4.1](#).

<sup>16</sup> This first structure is our animality, per Part I, Section I, [The Original structure For Good In Human Nature, Par. 2.1](#).

## The Origin Of Wickedness In Human Nature

- 1.1 What is said here must not be viewed as though it were an exegesis of scripture, which lies beyond the purview of sheer reason.
- 1.2 One can explain the manner of using an historical presentation morally without deciding whether such be the meaning of the writer or merely our own insertion. But we can do this only if it is true of itself and without historical proof and, simultaneously, if it is the only one by means of which we can extract something from a scriptural passage which can serve to improve us, and what would otherwise only be an unfruitful increase in our historical knowledge.
- 1.3 We must not needlessly dispute about something and its historical appearance which, be it understood in this way or that, makes no contribution to us becoming better persons if what can be contributed in that way can be recognized also without historical proof and indeed must be recognized without that.
- 1.4 The historical recognition, which has no reference here valid for every person inwardly, belongs to the *Adiaphora* (or peripheral matter) which each may take as he is edified by it.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This hearkens back to the [First Preface, Par. 4.1](#), where we want to use the scriptures as a means for the moral improvement of mankind, and regardless of the intent of the original author of these writings.

**General Remark**  
**Concerning The Reconstruction Of The Original Structure**  
**For Good In Its Power**

- 1.1 What the human is or is to become in a moral sense, i.e., good or evil, he must do or have done himself.
- 1.2 Both must be an effect of his free discretion. For otherwise it could not be attributed to him, and so morally he would be neither good nor evil.
- 1.3 If it is said that he is created good, then that can mean nothing more than he was created to do good, and that the original structure in the human is good. But this does not make the human himself good; for only after he has incorporated incentives containing this structure into his maxims (which must be left entirely to his own free choice) does it arise that he makes himself good; and where otherwise he remains evil.
- 1.4 If you still assume that becoming good or getting better requires supernatural assistance, then this could consist only in a reduction of obstacles, or even in a positive support. But the human must first make himself worthy of receiving this, and must take on this assistance (which is considerable) himself, i.e., take up the positive augmentation of his power in his maxims. In this way alone is it possible that any good can be imputed to him and that he can be recognized as a good person.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.1 Now the possibility that a naturally evil person could remake himself into a good person is something that exceeds all our concepts. For how can an evil tree bring forth good fruit?<sup>2</sup>
- 2.2 However, since an originally good tree (with respect to its structure) has produced bad fruit,\* according to the acknowledgement presented earlier, and since the descent from good into evil (when one considers that this arises through freedom) is no more comprehensible than the reconstitution of good from evil, the possibility of such a reconstitution cannot be disputed.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.3 For regardless of that descent, the command that we are to become better people still reverberates undiminished in our soul. And so we must also be able to become better, even if what we can do alone were insufficient of itself and merely a means for making ourselves receptive of a higher, and for us unfathomable, support.<sup>4</sup>—

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<sup>1</sup> While supernatural assistance may be possible, it is still up to the individual to transform his disposition so that the supreme maxim is the moral. And so while we may hope to have the support of God in our endeavor toward moral perfection, we cannot wait for this nor expect God to accomplish what we can do on our own. This will be investigated more later in Part III.

<sup>2</sup> [Matthew 7:18](#).

<sup>3</sup> Since the original structure in the human includes the morally good, it is not comprehensible how he could have freely chosen evil. But since this is a fact, it must also be possible, though equally incomprehensible, for the human to choose to return to the good.

<sup>4</sup> Thus we must strive for the Good Principle on our own and do all that is in our capacity. If that is not sufficient, then by virtue of our own sincere striving we have reason to hope that what is lacking will be supplemented. But the condition of every meaningful hope is that we are doing the best we can on our own.



## General Remarks Concerning the Reconstruction of the Original Disposition for Good in Its Power

- 2.4 Here, of course, we must assume that a germ of the good remains in its entire purity, a germ not subject to elimination or corruption. This can certainly not be the love of self\*\* which, when taken up as a principle of all our maxims, is precisely the source of all evil.<sup>5</sup>

\* Kant's annotation

- 1.1 The tree, good in structure, is not yet such according to deed. For if it were, then of course it could not produce bad fruit. It is only if the human takes into his maxims the incentives provided within him for the moral law that he will be considered a good person (the tree as an utterly good tree).<sup>6</sup>

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Words which can take two entirely different meanings frequently hinder persuasion from the clearest grounds for a long time.
- 1.2 Just like love in general, self-love can also be divided into benefit and contentment (*benevolentiae et complacentiae*), and both must be rational (which actually goes without saying).
- 1.3 Taking the first into one's maxims is natural (for who would not want everything to work out for one's benefit all the time?)
- 1.4 But it is rational to the extent that partly, with regard to the purpose, only that which can exist together with the greatest and most enduring welfare is chosen, and partly it is chosen as the most fitting means to each of these component parts of happiness.
- 1.5 Reason appears here as a servant of the natural inclination. And the maxim we assume on account of this has no relationship to morality.
- 1.6 And if this maxim is made into the unconditioned principle for the discretion, then it is the source of an unforeseeable and great conflict with morality.—
- 1.7 Now the rational love of contentment on its own can be understood as being pleased in those already cited maxims directed toward satisfaction of the natural inclinations (to the extent this purpose is obtained through compliance with them). And here it is one and the same with the love of benefit toward oneself. One is pleased with one's self in the same way as a merchant, who is successful in his business speculations, is delighted with the maxims of his good insight exemplified by that success.
- 1.8 Or the maxim of self-love of an unconditioned contentment on its own (not of profit or loss as the consequence of actions dependent upon that) would be the inner principle of satisfaction which is only possible for us under the condition of the subordination of our maxims to the moral law.
- 1.9 No person, for whom morality is not a matter of indifference, can find contentment, or indeed avoid bitter discontent with himself, upon the consciousness of maxims within him which do not accord with the moral law.
- 1.10 One might call this a rational love of self which inhibits all admixture of other causes of satisfaction from the consequences of one's actions (under the name of a happiness to be procured by that) according to the incentives of discretion.
- 1.11 Now since this latter denotes the unconditioned respect for the law, why would anyone turn about in a circle by unnecessarily burdening the clear understanding of the principle through the expression of a rational self-love, but which is moral only under the latter condition (for one can love one's self in a moral way only to the extent that one is conscious of making respect for the law the highest incentive of his discretion)?
- 1.12 According to our nature, happiness for us, as beings dependent upon objects of sensitivity, is foremost and what we unconditionally crave.

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<sup>5</sup> Ultimately then the internal conflict is in deciding which is to be the supreme maxim, that of self-love or that of self respect (via the moral law).

<sup>6</sup> While there is a structure for the morally good, i.e., a capacity for that, it still depends upon us taking the incentives of (respect for) the moral law into our supreme maxim in order to count as good ourselves.

- 1.13 As beings endowed with rationality and freedom, this very happiness, according to our nature (when one will so term that which is innate with us), is not by far the first object of our maxims, nor also unconditionally so. Rather that first object is the worthiness to be happy, i.e., the agreement of all our maxims with the moral law.
- 1.14 This is the condition under which alone the wish for happiness can objectively accord with legislative reason, and it is in this that every moral precept consists. And the moral way of thinking also consists in the disposition to wish for anything only in this conditioned way.
- 3.1 The re-establishment of the original structure to good in us, therefore, is not the acquisition of a lost incentive to do good. For this, which consists in the respect for the moral law, can never be lost, and if it were, could never be regained.
- 3.2 It is, therefore, only the establishment of the purity of the moral law as the supreme basis of all our maxims, according to which that law is not merely to be connected with other incentives<sup>7</sup>—and certainly not to be subjected to these,<sup>8</sup> i.e., the inclinations, as conditions—but rather is to be taken up in the maxims in its entire purity as an incentive for the determination of the discretion and completely sufficient of itself.
- 3.3 The original good is holiness of the maxims in compliance with one's duty, thus entirely for the sake of duty. Accordingly then, the human who takes up this purity into his maxim, even though, of course, not yet for that reason holy himself (since between the maxim and the deed there still remains a great distance), is already on the way to that holiness, approaching it in an infinite advance.<sup>9</sup>
- 3.4 Now the resolute commitment, including preparation, to comply with one's duty is also called virtue, according to lawfulness as its empirical character (*virtus phaenomenon*).
- 3.5 It has, therefore, the enduring maxim of lawful actions, and this regardless of the origin of the incentives which the discretion needs for this.
- 3.6 In this sense, therefore, virtue is gradually acquired, and is called such after a long habit (in compliance with the law) through which the human is transformed from having a propensity to vice into a contrarily directed propensity through the gradual reform of his conduct and strengthening of his maxims.
- 3.7 Now for this a change of heart is not necessary; but only a change in the mores and habits (*Sitten*).
- 3.8 The human counts himself virtuous when he feels himself fortified in his maxims to do his duty, even though not from the highest basis of all maxims (namely from duty), but rather from benefits, e.g., from intemperance to moderation due to health, from deceit to truthfulness due to honor, from unfairness to civil, moral decency for the sake of peace or profit, etc.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See the propensity of impurity per Part I, [The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature, Par. 4](#).

<sup>8</sup> Here we refer back to the propensity of evil maxims per Part I, [The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature, Par. 5](#).

<sup>9</sup> Wesleyans often say: "While I am far from perfect (i.e., holiness), I'm not as far as once I was, and I am on the way."

<sup>10</sup> This seems to be a reflection of Part I, [The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature, Par. 4](#), where we look at the impurity of mixing the moral and self-love incentives together.

- 3.9 And all this according to the lauded principle of happiness.
- 3.10 But becoming not merely a law compliant, but rather a morally good, person (pleasing to God), i.e., virtuous according to the intelligible character (*virtus noumenon*), which, if he recognizes something as duty, has need of no other incentive than this representation of duty itself, no one can expect through a gradual reform as long as the foundation of the maxims remains impure. Rather this state of the morally good must be produced through a revolution in his disposition (a transition to the maxim of holiness).<sup>11</sup> For he can become a new person only through a sort of rebirth, as though through a new creation ([John 3:5](#), compared with [Genesis 1:2](#)) and alteration of the heart.<sup>12</sup>
- 4.1 But if the very foundation of his maxims is corrupt, how is it possible that the human could bring about this revolution through his own powers and become a good person of himself?
- 4.2 And yet duty still commands him to do this, and it never commands the impossible.
- 4.3 This cannot be reconciled in any other way except by having the revolution hold for the thinking, and letting the gradual reform hold for the sensitivity (where the reform opposes the obstacles erected by the sensitivity), and in that way becoming possible for the human.
- 4.4 That is to say: if in a single, unalterable resolution he converts the supreme basis of his maxims, by which he was an evil person (and with this puts on a new person, as it were), then according to his current principle and way of thinking he is a subject who is receptive to the good. But he is a good person only in a continuous effect and progression. In other words: through the purity of the principle, which he has taken on for the supreme maxim of his discretion, and through the stability of that principle, he can hope to find himself on the good (though narrow) way<sup>13</sup> of a continuing advance from bad to better.<sup>14</sup>
- 4.5 In the eyes of God, who penetrates the intelligible basis of the heart (i.e., all maxims directing the discretion), for whom, therefore, this infinity of advance is unity, this is the same thing as an actually good person (one pleasing to God).<sup>15</sup> And to this extent such an alteration can be considered as a revolution. But for a judgment by humans, who can only estimate such a person and the strength of his maxims according to the priority which they win over the sensitivity in a span of time, it can only be viewed as a continuous striving for improvement, and hence as a gradual reform of the propensity to evil as a perverted way of thinking.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This conversion is the subject of [Part II - The Struggle Of The Good Principle With The Evil](#).

<sup>12</sup> And so what is called for is not merely a morally correct action, but rather a morally correct action *resulting* from a morally pure disposition.

<sup>13</sup> [Matthew 7:13-14](#).

<sup>14</sup> Accordingly the revolution (conversion) is instantaneous with respect to the thinking and gradual with respect to habits and actions.

<sup>15</sup> This is an anticipation of the 1st difficulty covered in Part II, First Section, [C\) Difficulties Concerning The Reality Of This Idea And Their Solution](#).

<sup>16</sup> The implication is that the supreme maxim is now the moral, even though trespasses will occasional still arise due to mistakes, bad habits and failures to think things through (and which should grow less and less with practice over time).

- 5.1 From this it follows that the moral education of the human would have to begin not with the improvement of habits and mores (*Sitten*), but rather with the transformation of the way of thinking and with the establishment of character; although ordinarily one proceeds otherwise and fights against vices individually, but which leaves their general root unaffected.
- 5.2 Now even the most limited person can discern the impression of an increasingly greater respect for a duty-conformable action the more he removes other incentives in thought, incentives which could have influence on the maxim of action through self-love. Even children are capable of locating the least hint of an admixture of unauthentic incentives; for then the action immediately loses all moral worth.<sup>17</sup>
- 5.3 By introducing the example of even good people (concerning the legality of their actions), and letting the moral apprentices judge the impurity of several maxims from the actual incentives of their actions, this structure for good is incomparably cultivated and gradually goes over into the thinking manner such that mere duty of itself alone raises in their hearts a noteworthy heft for agreement.
- 5.4 To teach only admiration of virtuous actions, regardless of how much sacrifice they may have cost, is not yet the proper spirit which the mind of the student should maintain for the moral good.
- 5.5 For regardless of how virtuous a person may be, still everything which he can ever do for the good is still only duty. But doing one's duty is nothing more than doing what is in the usual moral order, and hence does not deserve to be admired.<sup>18</sup>
- 5.6 This admiration is far rather a plebiscite of our feelings for duty, just as though compliance with it were something extraordinary and meritorious.
- 6.1 But there is something in our souls which, when kept properly in view, we cannot cease observing with the highest astonishment, and also where the admiration is both proper and uplifting for the soul. And this is the original, moral structure within us in general.—
- 6.2 What is that in us (each may ask himself) by which we, as beings continually dependent by nature upon so many needs, are still simultaneously elevated so much above these in the Idea of an original structure (within us) that we consider them altogether as nothing and ourselves even as unworthy of existence if we indulge ourselves in their delights (which still alone can make life desirable) in opposition to a law through which our reason powerfully commands, though still without promising or threatening anything?
- 6.3 The weight of this question every person of the most ordinary capability must intimately feel who has been instructed previously about the holiness which lies in the Idea of duty, but who has not yet ascended to the investigation of the concept of freedom which first arises from this law.\* And

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<sup>17</sup> Compare a married person, who seeks to avoid adulterous affairs because it is simply too much trouble and too dangerous, with a married person who does the same, but solely because of a devotion to his or her vows of marriage. And again this seems to be a reference to Part I, Section II., [The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature, Par. 4.1](#), where we look at the impurity of mixing the moral and happiness incentives together.

<sup>18</sup> This is precisely the point of Jesus' parable of the master who does not thank his servant for doing his duty. See [Luke 17:10](#).

even the incomprehensibility of this structure, proclaiming a descent from the divine, must excite the mind and strengthen it for sacrifices, and which can only encourage respect for one's duty.

- 6.4 To frequently activate this feeling for the sublimity of his moral determination is an especially praiseworthy means for the arousal of moral attitudes, and indeed because it works directly in opposition to the innate propensity for the inversion of the incentives in the maxims of our discretion, and indeed to re-establish in its purity the original moral order among the incentives as the unconditional respect for the law. It is the highest condition of all acceptable maxims, and with this the structure for good in the human heart.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The concept of freedom of the discretion does not precede the consciousness of the moral law within us, but rather is inferred only from the determinability of our discretion through this law as an unconditioned command. One can soon be convinced of this by asking whether he also be certainly and immediately conscious of a capacity for overcoming every incentive for trespass, regardless of how great (*Phalaris licet imperet ut sis falsus, et admoto dictet periuria tauro*<sup>19</sup>).
- 1.2 Everyone will have to admit that, faced with such a temptation, he does not know whether he might not waver in his resolution.
- 1.3 Nonetheless duty commands him unconditionally to remain true to this law. And from this he concludes quite properly that he would also have to be able to do so, and that his discretion, therefore, is free.<sup>20</sup>
- 1.4 Those, who delude themselves that this unfathomable property be entirely understandable, are deceived through the word "determinism" (the proposition of the determination of the discretion through internal, sufficient bases) as though the difficulty consisted in uniting this with freedom. But no one thinks like this. The problem rather is how "pre-determinism," according to which discretionary actions as events have their determining basis in the preceding time (which, with all that this contains, is no longer in our power), might exist together with freedom according to which the action as well as its opposite in the moment of occurrence must be in the power of the subject. That is what we would like to comprehend, and what will never be comprehended.<sup>21</sup>
- 2.1 There is no difficulty at all in uniting the concept of freedom with the Idea of God as a necessary being, because freedom does not consist in the contingency of the action (that it is not at all determined through bases), i.e., not in indeterminism (that doing good or evil would have to be equally possible to God, if one is to call his action free), but rather in the absolute spontaneity which runs a danger with pre-determinism alone where the determination basis of the action is in the preceding time, thus such that the action is no longer in our power but rather is in the hand of nature determining us irresistibly. But then here, because in God no time series is to be thought, this difficulty vanishes.

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<sup>19</sup> "Even if [Phalaris](#) commands you to lie and to perjure yourself at the penalty of the present steer." This is a reference to an hollow iron form of a bull into which enemies and non-conformists would be placed and then slowly roasted alive.

<sup>20</sup> This reasoning is presented in the [CPrR](#), No. 6, 2nd Task on or around page 36. Science would ordinarily have to consider a person who counts himself as free and responsible for his actions as insane; but due to the respect for the moral law on the part of all people, including scientists, such people are not counted as mental impaired. And an example is given there in that No. 6 of how the common person must consider himself as free due to the demands of the moral law.

<sup>21</sup> Even though the possibility of freedom cannot be comprehended, it still cannot be doubted by the individual for himself and for other humans.

- 7.1 But isn't this re-establishment of the moral order through the application of one's own power in direct opposition to the proposition of the innate corruption of the human's ability to do good?
- 7.2 Most certainly with regard to the comprehensibility (i.e., concerning our insight into the possibility) of how all of what is to be represented as an occurrence in time (alteration) and, to this extent, necessary according to natural laws, could at the same time coincide with its opposite as possible through freedom under moral laws.<sup>22</sup> But this is not contrary to the possibility of this re-establishment itself.
- 7.3 For if the moral law commands us to be better people, then it follows inexorably that we must be able to become so.
- 7.4 The proposition of the innate evil is of no use whatsoever in the moral dogmatic, for the proscriptions of that moral dogmatic contain precisely these duties and remain also in our power, whether an innate propensity for trespass be in us or not.<sup>23</sup>
- 7.5 In the moral aesthetic, however, this proposition will say more, but still no more than this: in the moral education of the innate, moral structure for good we cannot begin from a natural innocence, but rather must start again from the presupposition of a maliciousness in the discretion with respect to its maxims contrary to the original moral structure and, because the propensity for this evil cannot be eradicated, with an unrelenting counter-effort against that propensity.
- 7.6 Now since this leads merely to an unending progression from bad to better, it follows that the transformation of the disposition of the evil person into that of a good person is to be placed in the alteration of the supreme, internal basis of the assumption of all his maxims in conformity with the moral law, to the extent the new basis (the new heart) is now itself immutable.
- 7.7 But now a person cannot attain to a conviction of this in a natural way, neither through immediate consciousness nor through the evidence of the course of living he has led up to that moment. For the depth of the heart (of the subjective, first basis of his maxims) are inscrutable even for himself. But on the way which leads to that, and which has indicated to him a disposition improved at its foundation, he must be able to hope for success through the application of his own power and also because he is supposed to become a good person. But he is to be judged as morally good only according to what can be attributed to him as his own achievement.<sup>24</sup>
- 8.1 Against this imposition of self improvement, human reason, annoyed at the moral treatment of nature and under the pretext of a natural incapacity, musters up all sorts of contaminated religious Ideas (even going so far as to conjure up for God Himself the principle of happiness as the supreme condition of His commands).
- 8.2 But all religions can be divided between those entailing the courting of favors (which is sheer cult) and those which are moral, i.e., the religion of the moral course of living.

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<sup>22</sup> See [Third Antinomy](#) of *The Critique Of Pure Reason*.

<sup>23</sup> Hence it doesn't matter whether there is a propensity for finding a way around the demands of the moral law within us, or whether a temptation arises independently of us (which was treated in Part I, [The Origin Of Wickedness In Human Nature](#), as though arising from an evil spirit). In either case we are faced with a temptation to violate the moral law and are required to resist that temptation.

<sup>24</sup> This latter situation concerning experience touches on the second difficulty in Part II, C) [Difficulties Concerning The Reality Of This Idea And Their Solution, Par. 2](#).

- 8.3 According to the former a person charms himself into thinking either that God could easily make him eternally happy without any need of him becoming a better person (through a cancellation of his debts); or also, in case this did not appear possible, even to think that God could easily make him into a better person without him having to do anything other than to ask for it. And since for an omnipotent being this is nothing more than wishing, it would have required nothing at all. And if such could be accomplished through a mere wish, then everyone would be good.<sup>25</sup>
- 8.4 But according to the moral religion (and among all the known religions<sup>26</sup> there has never been but one, namely the Christian) there is a principle that each person would have to do as much as he can on his own to become a better person. And only when he has not buried his innate treasure ([Luke 19:12-26](#)) and only after having utilized his original structure for good in order to become a better person can he hope that what is not in his power will be supplemented through a higher assistance.<sup>27</sup>
- 8.5 Furthermore it is not absolutely necessary that the person know in what this supplement consists. Perhaps it is even unavoidable that if the way in which this occurs were revealed at a certain time, different people at a different time would make different concepts of it, and indeed in all sincerity.
- 8.6 But then there is the very valid principle, namely: "it is not essential and, therefore, not necessary for everyone to know what God does or has done for one's blessedness," but only what the person himself needs to do in order to become worthy of such support.\*

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 This general remark is the first of four which are appended to each part of this essay, and which can lead to the headings of 1. Works of Grace, 2. Miracles, 3. Mysteries, 4. Means of Grace.—
- 1.2 These are the *Parerga*<sup>28</sup> of religion within the limits of pure reason, as it were. They don't belong within these limits, but still border on them.
- 1.3 Reason, in the consciousness of its incapacity for satisfying its moral needs, spreads itself outward to exuberant Ideas which could supplement this deficiency, but still without appropriating them as an expanded possession.
- 1.4 It does not dispute the possibility or actuality of the objects of those Ideas, but cannot take them up into its maxims for thinking and acting.
- 1.5 It indeed counts upon there being more in the unfathomable field of the supernatural than it can make understandable, but what were necessary for the supplementation of the moral incapacity will come to pass also unrecognizably for its good will with the belief, which (concerning the possibility of this) we could call the reflecting, because the dogmatic belief, which is heralded as knowledge, seems to be improper or misguided. For to remove the difficulties regarding what stands fast of itself (the practical), if it concerns transcendental questions, is a peripheral matter (*paregon*).
- 1.6 If we wanted to introduce such also morally transcendent Ideas into religion, they could be expressed according to the order of the four classes cited above, namely:

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<sup>25</sup> This is treated extensively in [Part IV](#).

<sup>26</sup> For the meaning of the term 'religion' see [Part III-1-V, 3](#) and also [V, 8.1](#),

<sup>27</sup> In the [CPrR](#), Dialectic V (Existence Of God As A Postulate) on or around page 162, we read in a footnote: "The Christian moral, because it furnishes its precepts (as it also must be) so purely and non-indulgently, removes all confidence of the human in being fully adequate, at least in this life, but still also in turn comforts us, that, if we act as well as is in our power, we can hope that what is not in our capacity comes to us from elsewhere, whether we know in what manner or not."

<sup>28</sup> Appendix or accessory.



## Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason - Part I

1. the alleged internal experience (works of grace), fanaticism,
2. the alleged external experience (miracles), superstition,
3. the presumed enlightenment of the understanding with regard to the supernatural (mysteries), illuminism, illusion of the adept, and
4. the ventured attempt to effect the supernatural (means of grace), [thaumagology](#),

But then their insertion would result in the total confusion of a reason going out beyond its limits, and indeed in an allegedly moral (God-pleasing) intention.—

- 1.7 But concerning this general remark to the first part of the present treatment in particular, the solicitation of the works of grace is of the latter sort (beyond the limits of reason) and cannot be taken up into the maxims of reason if reason remains within its boundaries. This holds in general for anything supernatural, because it is precisely with this that all rational usage ceases.—
- 1.8 For it is impossible to make it theoretically discernible to any degree (that they are works of grace and not internal, natural effects) because our usage of the concept of cause and effect cannot be extended beyond the objects of experience, hence not beyond nature. But the presupposition of a practical utilization of this Idea is entirely self-contradicting.
- 1.9 For, as utilization, it would presuppose a rule of what good we (in a certain intention) have to do in order to achieve something. But to expect a working of grace means precisely the opposite, namely that the (moral) good would not be ours, but rather the act of another being. Therefore, we could acquire it only through doing nothing. But this contradicts itself.
- 1.10 Therefore, we can admit it as something which is incomprehensible, but not take it up into our maxims for any use, neither theoretical nor practical.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> And so while a divine supplementation of our powers might be possible, it remains incomprehensible and in any case cannot be of any use to us in our maxims.



## PART II - The Struggle Of The Good Principle With The Evil For The Control Of The Human

- 1.1 In becoming a morally good person it is not sufficient merely to allow the germ of goodness which lies in our race to develop unhindered, for there is a contrarily disposed cause of evil within us to be challenged. All the ancient moralists understood this very well, especially the Stoics with their watchword "virtue," which indicates courage and bravery (both in Greek and Latin), and which, therefore, presupposes an enemy<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 In this respect the term "virtue" is a splendid one, and the fact that it is often ostentatiously misused and ridiculed (even as recently also the word "enlightenment") is not detrimental to its use.–
- 1.3 For requiring courage is already halfway to infusing it. In contrast the lazy, faint-hearted way of thinking (in morality and religion), i.e., awaiting help from outside while mistrusting oneself, will entirely exhaust all powers of the human and even makes him unworthy of this help.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.1 And yet these stout men mistook their enemy. He is not to be sought in the natural, though undisciplined, inclinations which present themselves openly to each person's consciousness. He is rather an invisible enemy, as it were, who conceals himself in rationality and for that reason is all the more dangerous.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.2 They summoned up wisdom against foolishness, which can easily be mistaken for inclinations, instead of invoking it against evil (that of the human heart) which secretly undermines the disposition with soul-spoiling principles.\*

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 These philosophers obtained their universal, moral principle from the dignity of human nature, i.e., freedom (as independence from the power of the inclinations). And a better and more noble foundation they could not have found.
- 1.2 Now the moral law they drew immediately from rationality which, in this way, was solely legislative and utterly commanding through this law. And so it was objective concerning the rule, and also subjective with respect to the incentives. And if one attributes an unspoiled will to the person in the resolute incorporation of these laws into his maxims, everything was rendered quite properly.
- 1.3 But the error lay in the last supposition.
- 1.4 For regardless of how early we might direct our attention to our moral state, we find that it is no longer *res integra* (untarnished), but rather that we must begin by driving from its realm the evil which has already settled there (but which we would not have to do if we had not already incorporated it into our maxims). In other words, the first truly good that a person can do is to depart from evil. And this evil

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<sup>1</sup> In the General Remarks to the Part I, [Par. 3.4](#), Kant speaks of virtue as preparation for compliance with one's duties.

<sup>2</sup> This subject will be covered in detail in [Part IV](#).

<sup>3</sup> This invisible enemy is our propensity for imitating the moral command by means of prudence and in that way diminishing its authority, and then by the subsequent descent into the inversion of the maxims (making self-love supreme over moral law). And then there is the move to moral blindness by taking the consequence of the action, e.g., "no harm done," as the measure of moral worth rather than the maxim leading to the action where, for example, harm was actually intended. This propensity is treated in [Part I](#).

lies not in the inclinations, but rather in the inversion of the maxims and thus is to be sought in freedom itself.<sup>4</sup>

- 1.5 The inclinations only make the execution of the contrarily opposed good maxims more difficult. But the actual evil consists in not wanting to withstand those inclinations when they lead to trespass. And it is this disposition that is the true enemy.
  - 1.6 The inclinations are only an opponent to principles in general (be they good or evil). And to this extent the former, ennobling principle of morality as preparation (discipline of the inclinations in general), is advantageous for the guidance of the subject by means of principles.
  - 1.7 But to the extent there should be specific principles of the morally good and nonetheless no maxims, then another opponent of this good must be presupposed in the subject, an opponent whom virtue is to resist in battle. Without this resistance all virtues, while not splendid vices as some church fathers would have them, would still be splendid paltriness, because while the rebellion is often quelled in that way, the rebel himself is never subdued and eliminated.
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- 3.1 Natural inclinations, considered on their own, are good, i.e., without reproach, and it is not only vain to want to eradicate them, but it would also be damaging and reprehensible. Instead we must tame them so that they do not mutually destroy one another, but rather can be brought harmoniously into a whole called happiness.<sup>5</sup>
  - 3.2 But the rationality providing this is called prudence.
  - 3.3 Only the morally illegitimate is evil on its own, utterly objectionable and to be eradicated. But reason, which teaches this (but even more when it directs it in an action), is alone deserving of the name of wisdom. In comparison with this wisdom, vice can indeed also be called foolishness, but only when reason feels strong enough to scorn it (and all incitements to it) and not merely as a fearful being to hate and to be armed against.
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- 4.1 If, therefore, the Stoic thought of the moral battle of the human merely as the struggle with his inclinations (innocent as they are per se) and to the extent they had to be subjugated as obstacles to compliance with his duty, then because he assumed no particular positive principle (as evil on its own), he could not position the cause of a trespass in anything other than a failure to resist inclinations. But this failure itself is contrary to duty, i.e., it is a trespass, and not merely a natural shortcoming. And so the cause of this failure cannot in turn be sought in the inclinations (without falling into a vicious circle), but only in what the discretion, as free discretion, determines (in the internal first basis of the maxims which are in agreement with the inclinations). Hence it is easy to see how philosophers, to whom an explanatory basis, which remains eternally veiled in darkness\* and, although unavoidable, is still unwelcome, could so mistake the actual opponent of goodness, whom they erroneously believed to have overcome in the struggle.<sup>6</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

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<sup>4</sup> This inversion, i.e., putting self-love before the moral law, is itself a deliberate act of the individual per [Part I-II Proclivity For Evil](#).

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps I desire to be intoxicated and I desire good health, and these can be at odds with each other. And so here a routine might be called for to unify them, e.g., via a controlled drinking, under the rubric of happiness and prudence.

<sup>6</sup> The inclinations are not evil. And the evil is also not the weakness in resisting the inclinations (although this is the first downward step per Part I, The Propensity For Evil In Human Nature, [Par. 3.1](#)). The actual evil is in the inversion of the maxims, i.e., putting self-love above the moral, [Par. 5.1](#) of the same section.

## The Struggle of the Good Principle with the Evil for the Control of the Human

- 1.1 It is a very common supposition of moral philosophy that the existence of the morally evil in the human is easily explained through the power of the incentives of sensitivity on one side, and the impotence of the incentive of reason (respect for law), i.e., from weakness, on the other.
  - 1.2 But then the morally good in the human (in the moral structure) would have to be even more easily explained. For the comprehension of the one, without that of the other, is not even thinkable.
  - 1.3 But now the capacity of rationality to become master of all opposing incentives through the mere Idea of a law is utterly incomprehensible. Hence it is also inconceivable how the incentives of sensitivity can become master over such an esteemed reason.
  - 1.4 For if all the world should proceed in accordance with the proscriptions of the law, we would say that everything proceeds according to the natural order, and it would not even occur to anyone to inquire as to its cause.
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- 5.1 Hence it should not seem strange that an apostle would represent this invisible enemy, who corrupts principles and who is known only through its effects upon us, as being apart from us and indeed as an evil spirit: "we are not battling with flesh and blood (the natural inclinations), but rather with princes and powers, i.e., with spirits."<sup>7</sup>
  - 5.2 This expression seems to have been made not so much for the expansion of our knowledge out beyond the natural world as rather to take a concept which is unfathomable to us and make it graphic [*anschaulich*] for practical employment. And in aid of the practical, by the way, it makes no difference whether we position the tempter within us ourselves or apart from us, for we are just as guilty in either case, because we would not be seduced by him if we were not already secretly in league with him.\*—
  - 5.3 We will now divide this entire consideration into two sections.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 It is a peculiarity of Christian morality to represent the morally good as distinguished from the morally evil as heaven is from hell, and not as it is from earth. Such a representation, which is graphic and, as such, appalling, is still, with respect to its meaning, philosophically correct.—
- 1.2 For it serves to prevent the good and the evil, the realms of light and darkness, from bordering on one another and from being thought as merging into one another through gradual degrees (of greater and lesser holiness), and rather for them to be represented as separated from one another by an immeasurable gulf.
- 1.3 The entire dissimilarity of the principles by which a person can be a subject of the one or the other of these two kingdoms, and simultaneously the danger which is connected with the assumption of a closer relationship of the properties which qualify for the one or the other, justify this manner of representation which, even with the horror which it entails, is nonetheless quite sublime.

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<sup>7</sup> [Ephesians 6.12](#).

## First Section - The Claim Of The Good Principle For The Control Of The Human

### A) Personified Idea Of The Good Principle

- 1.1 That which alone makes a world an object of divine resolution and a purpose of creation is humanity (rational finite beings in general) in its full moral perfection, and concerning which, and as its highest condition, happiness is the immediate consequence in the will of the supreme being.<sup>1</sup>—
- 1.2 Such a person, who alone is pleasing to God, "is in Him since eternity."<sup>2</sup> The Idea of this person proceeds from his very being. To this extent he is not a created thing, but rather God's begotten son; "the word (the becoming!) through which all other things have their being, and without which nothing exists which was made" (for it was for his sake, i.e., that of the rational creature in the world—for so it can be thought with respect to his moral determination—that all things were made.)—
- 1.3 "He is the splendor of his Glory." —
- 1.4 "In him has God loved the world" and only in him and through the assumption of his attitudes can we hope "to become children of God," etc.
- 2.1 Now the elevation of ourselves to this Ideal of moral perfection, i.e., the archetype of the moral disposition in its entire purity, is a general human duty and for which this very Idea itself, presented to us by reason for emulation, can strengthen us.
- 2.2 But precisely because we are not the originator of it, but rather it has taken place in the human without our understanding how human nature could ever have been receptive for such, it is more advisable to say that this archetype came down to us from heaven and that it took on humanity (for how the human, who is evil by nature, could discard the evil from himself and elevate himself to the Ideal of holiness is just as impossible to conceive as how it could be that this Ideal could assume humanity [which of itself is not evil] and descend to the human).<sup>3</sup>
- 2.3 This unification with us, therefore, can be viewed as a state of humiliation of the Son of God, when we portray that divinely disposed person as an example for us as he, though himself holy and, as such, deserving of no suffering, still took such suffering upon himself in great measure in order to promote the good of the world. In contrast to this divinely disposed personage, the person who is never free of blame, even if he has assumed the same disposition, can still view the sufferings which he encounters, regardless of how they may come, as deserved by him.<sup>4</sup> Hence he must

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<sup>1</sup> This moral perfection is presented in the [Critique Of Practical Reason](#), beginning on or near page 159, and this commensurate happiness, a work of God, on or near page 162.

<sup>2</sup> This and the remaining quotations of this paragraph are from [John 1](#).

<sup>3</sup> It is hard to fathom the origin of the moral structure in the human, hence we can speak of it as a specific intention of the Divine. See Part I, I. The Original structure For Good In Human Nature, [Par. 4](#).

<sup>4</sup> This is considered in Part II, C) Difficulties Concerning The Reality Of This Idea And Their Solution, beginning with [Par. 4.1](#) and which concerns the atonement that must be made for one's sinful disposition and how this is to be considered rationally.

view the unification of his disposition with such an Idea as unworthy, even though it serves him as an archetype.

- 3.1 Now the Ideal of a humanity pleasing to God (hence of a moral perfection to the extent possible for a finite being who is subject to needs and inclinations) we cannot think otherwise than through the Idea of a human who not only performs all human duties himself and simultaneously spreads goodness to the greatest possible extent through teaching and example, but also, even though tempted by the greatest enticements, is prepared to undergo the severest sufferings, ending in the most gruesome death, for the sake of the world and even of his enemies.—
- 3.2 For the human can make no concept of the degree and strength of a power such as that of a moral disposition except by representing it as surrounded by obstacles and beset by the greatest possible temptations, and still emerging victorious.
- 4.1 In a practical belief<sup>5</sup> in this Son of God (to the extent he is portrayed as having taken on human nature) the human can now hope to become pleasing to God (thereby also blessed), i.e., by being conscious of such a moral disposition himself. In such a practical belief he can believe and activate a confidence (which is based on himself) that, given similar temptations and sufferings (just as they were made the touchstone for that Idea), he would hold unwaveringly to the archetype of humanity and adhere to his example in true discipleship. Such a person, and only such a person, is authorized to consider himself as one who is a not-unworthy object of divine pleasure.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A practical belief is focused on actions and sincere intentions, as opposed to a merely theoretical belief. See also [The Gist Of Christianity](#) on page xxiii of this translation.

<sup>6</sup> A practical belief means a possession of the same moral disposition as this Son of God and an ensuing, or at least a growing, confidence of pleasing God.

## B) Objective Reality Of This Idea

- 1.1 In a practical sense, this Idea has its reality completely within itself.
- 1.2 For it lies in our morally legislative rationality.
- 1.3 We should conform to this, and hence we must also be able to conform to it.
- 1.4 If we first had to prove the possibility of a person conforming to this archetype, as is absolutely necessary for concepts of nature (in order that we not run into the danger of being held in check through empty concepts), we would have to entertain reservations in admitting to the moral law even the appearance of an unconditioned and still sufficient determination basis of our discretion. For how it would be possible for the mere Idea of a legality in general to be a more powerful incentive than all the conceivable ones taken from the side of advantage can neither be penetrated by reason nor verified through examples of experience. And indeed because, with regard to the first, the law commands unconditionally, and touching the second, even if there had never been a person who complied with this law with unconditional obedience, the objective necessity to be such a person still radiates of itself and without abatement.
- 1.5 In order, therefore, to make the Idea of a person who is morally pleasing to God into a model for us we have no need of any example from experience. For it already lies of itself in our reason—
- 1.6 But who, in order to recognize a person as such an example corresponding with that Idea, would demand for confirmation anything more than what he sees, i.e., an entirely blameless, meritorious course of living, and indeed as much as one can require? Would he, perchance for the sake of verification, demand miracles apart from this which would have to happen through or for that person? Such demands simultaneously denote a moral disbelief, namely a lack of belief in virtue, which no belief based on the proof of miracles (which is only historical) can replace. And indeed the reason for this is because only the belief in the practical validity of that Idea lying in our rationality has moral value. (And also only our rationality can authenticate miracles to be such which might arise from the good principle, but it cannot derive any authentication from these for the good principle).<sup>1</sup>
- 2.1 Precisely for that reason an experience must be possible in which the example of such a person is given (to the extent that one can expect and require the basis of proof of the internal, moral disposition from an external experience in general) because, according to the law, it is reasonable that every person should render an example of this Idea himself; for the archetype of this always remains in our reason. Indeed no example in an external experience is adequate in this regard, for it does not reveal the internality of the disposition, but rather only permits inference, though not with rigorous certainty. (For even the internal experience of the human does not allow him to thoroughly inspect the depths of his own heart as though, through self-observation, he might acquire quite certain knowledge of the basis of his maxims which he professes, and of their purity and steadfastness).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From the good principle we could assume that such miracles might arise; but we cannot use the assertion of miracles to certify the embodiment of the good principle. Kant touches on this subject again in the General Remark to Part II, [Par. 3.5](#).

<sup>2</sup> In the “Difficulties” of Part II, [Par. 2.1](#), Kant looks at the matter of discerning one’s own disposition via experience.

## Objective Reality Of This Idea

- 3.1 Now if such a genuine godly disposed person were ever at some time to descend to earth from heaven, as it were, who provided an example of a person pleasing to God through teaching, living and suffering, as much as can be demanded of external experience (with the archetype of such a person remaining to be sought nowhere else than in our own rationality) and if by means of all that this person had produced an unforeseeable great moral good through a revolution in the human race; even then we would have no reason to assume anything else about him except that he be a naturally sired human (because such a person [a naturally sired human] also feels obligated to render such an example himself). However it would not be possible to utterly deny that he could indeed be a supernaturally begotten person.
- 3.2 For practical purposes, the presupposition of such a person so [supernaturally] begotten can be of no advantage to us because the archetype to which we subsume this appearance must still always be sought within us ourselves (even though we are natural people), the existence of which in the human soul remains inconceivable enough for us. Hence apart from any supernatural origin, we are not necessitated to assume this archetype as hypostatized in a particular human.
- 3.3 The elevation of such a holy one above all weakness of human nature, according to everything which we are capable of comprehending, would far rather interfere with the practical application of the Idea of that holiness to all his followers.
- 3.4 For even if that nature of a God-pleasing human were thought so far, as human, that he were encumbered with just the same needs, consequently also with the same suffering, with just the same natural inclinations, therefore with just such temptations to trespasses as we are burdened with, but still (to the extent as would be thought superhuman) the unalterable purity of his will, not perchance won by struggle but naturally innate, would simply not let any trespass be possible; then in such a case the distance from the natural human would be so infinitely great that such a divine human could no longer be presented to the natural human as an example.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.5 The latter would mean that if I were given an entirely holy will, then all temptations to do evil would be of no avail with me; if I were given the internal, most perfect certainty that after a short life upon earth I (as a result of that holiness) should immediately partake of the entire eternal splendor of the Kingdom of Heaven, then I would not only willingly, but indeed even gladly, take on all suffering, regardless of how difficult that might be, and including even the most gruesome death. For I would have the splendid and close exit before my eyes.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.6 Indeed the thought that that divine person were eternally in actual possession of this nobility and this blessedness (and did not first have to earn them through such suffering), and that he renounced these for the sake of totally unworthy beings, indeed even for his enemies, in order to save them from eternal destruction; such a thought would have to turn our minds to admiration, love and gratitude toward him. Likewise the Idea of the conduct of such a perfecting rule of morality would also be valid for us as a precept for compliance. But he himself could not be represented to us as an example for imitation, thus also not as a proof of the practicality and feasibility of such a pure and elevated moral good.\*

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<sup>3</sup> See the footnote to the section on the “Duality of Light” in the posting on [A Trinity: No more absurd than the Left and Right Versions of Hand](#) for how a divine person might still be entirely human with respect to consciousness.

<sup>4</sup> This may describe the disposition of some [Muslim martyrs](#) who will gladly face suffering and death, thinking that they are complying with the will of God, and expecting an immediate resurrection in some paradise as a result (in contrast to those who die naturally and must wait for the [Day of Judgment](#) to obtain their reward or punishment).



\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 There is, of course, a limitation to human reason which is simply intrinsic to it, namely our inability to think any moral worth of any importance to the actions of a person without simultaneously making them or their expression representable in a human way. However we do not in that way assert that this would actually have to be the case (*κατ' ἀλήθειαν*). For in order to make supernatural properties comprehensible to us, we always have need of a certain analogy to a natural being.
  - 1.2 For example, a philosopher poet once attributed to the human, to the extent he fought a propensity to evil within himself, a rank on the moral ladder of beings (if for no other reason than he knew to overcome that propensity) which were higher than even the inhabitants of heaven who, due to the holiness of their nature, are beyond all possible temptation.
  - 1.3 ("The world with its deficiencies—is better than a kingdom of angels without will." [Haller](#).)
  - 1.4 To this representational manner the scripture, in order to make the love of God for the human race comprehensible to us in our degree, condescends by attributing to him the greatest sacrifice which only a loving being can do in order to make even unworthy ones happy ("therefore God so loved the world,"<sup>5</sup> etc.). And this even though rationally we cannot make any concept as to how an all sufficient being could sacrifice something of his happiness or be divested of a possession.
  - 1.5 That is the schematism of the analogy (for exposition) which we cannot dispense with.
  - 1.6 But to transform this schematism into a determination of the object (for the expansion of our knowledge) is anthropomorphism, which has the most disadvantageous consequence in a moral intention (in religion).<sup>6</sup>—
  - 1.7 Here I only want to remark parenthetically that in the ascension from the sensitive to the supersensitive we can indeed schematize (make a concept comprehensible through an analogy with something sensitive), but on no account can we conclude from the analogy of what is fitting to the sensitive, that it would have to be attributed also to the supersensitive (and so in that way to expand our concept). And this is simply because such an inference would work against all analogies. Such an inference, because we necessarily need a schema for a concept to make it understandable for us (to illustrate it with an example), would want to draw the conclusion that it would also necessarily be fitting for the object itself as its predicate.<sup>7</sup>
  - 1.8 Even though I cannot make the cause of a plant (or every organic creature and the purposeful world in general) comprehensible to me except by means of an analogy to a craftsman in relationship to his work (e.g., a clock), i.e., that I attribute understanding to it, I cannot say that the cause itself (of the plant, of the world in general) has understanding, i.e., as though attributing understanding to it were not merely a condition of my being able to comprehend it, but rather also of the possibility of it being a cause.
  - 1.9 Between the relationship of a schema to its concept and the relationship of that schema of the concept to the matter itself is no analogy at all, but rather an enormous leap (*μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*) which leads directly into anthropomorphism, concerning which I have given the proof elsewhere.
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- 4.1 This same divinely disposed, though entirely human, teacher would nonetheless be able truly to speak of himself as though that Ideal of the good were vividly described within him (in teaching and conduct).
  - 4.2 For then he would only be speaking of the disposition which he himself makes into the rule of his actions, but which, since he can use it as an example for others, but not make it visible of itself,

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<sup>5</sup> [John 3:16](#).

<sup>6</sup> Anthropomorphism will become of great importance when we come to Part IV.

<sup>7</sup> See [CPR](#) on or around page 161 for a treatment of schema.



## Objective Reality Of This Idea

he presents to them externally through his teaching and actions: "which of you convicts me of a sin?"<sup>8</sup>

- 4.3 But assuming no proof to the contrary, it is consistent with fairness to attribute the blameless example of a teacher regarding what he teaches (if moreover this is a duty for everyone) to nothing other than the purest disposition.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.4 Such a disposition with all suffering (undertaken for the good of the world and thought in the Ideal of humanity) is now perfectly valid for all humans before the highest justice for all time and in all worlds, i.e., if the human makes his own disposition similar to that, as he ought to do.
- 4.5 It will, of course, always remain a justice which is not ours to the extent this disposition would have to consist in a course of living conformable to that (pure) disposition completely and without fault.
- 4.6 But a dedication of the disposition of the teacher for the sake of the follower would still have to be possible if the follower is to be united with the disposition of the archetype. To make this comprehensible, however, there are yet serious difficulties which we now want to present.

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<sup>8</sup> [John 8:46](#).

<sup>9</sup> This might also hold for [St. Francis of Assisi](#) who can seem to have been a replication of Jesus, at least in Francis' later years.

### C) Difficulties Concerning The Reality Of This Idea And Their Solution

- 1.1 The first difficulty, in reference to the holiness of the Legislator and given the deficiency of our own righteousness, makes us doubt the attainability of the Idea of a humanity within us as pleasing to God and can be presented as follows:
- 1.2 The law says "be holy (in your course of living) as your father in heaven is holy,"<sup>1</sup> for that is the Ideal of the Son of God which is given to us as a model for emulation.
- 1.3 But the remoteness of the good, which we are to effect within us, from the evil from whence we start, is infinite and to this extent, concerning the deed, i.e., the commensurability of our course of living with the holiness of the law, is not attainable in any period of time.
- 1.4 Nevertheless the moral constitution of the human is to concur with this commensurability.
- 1.5 It must, therefore, be placed in the disposition, in the universal and pure maxims of the agreement of conduct with that law, as the germ from whence all good is to be developed. This proceeds from a holy principle which the person has taken on in his supreme maxim.
- 1.6 This constitutes a change of mind which must also be possible because it is a duty.—
- 1.7 Now the difficulty consists in this: how the disposition can hold for the act which is always deficient (not in general, but rather at every moment of time).
- 1.8 The solution, however, is based on the following: the action, as a continuing progression from a deficient good to an improvement *ad infinitum*, remains always deficient in our estimation, limited as we must unavoidably be to conditions of time in our concepts of the relationship of cause and effect. This is so much the case that within ourselves we must always view the good in the appearance, i.e., according to the deed, as inadequate to a holy law. But this infinite advance toward suitability with this law, due to the disposition from which it is derived (which is supersensitive), can be judged by someone who knows the heart in a pure intellectual perspective (*Anschauung*) as a completed whole, even with respect to the deed (the course of living).<sup>\*</sup> In this sense the human, regardless of his continuing deficiency, can nonetheless expect to be pleasing to God in general, regardless of what point in time his life might be interrupted.

<sup>\*</sup> Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 It should be well noted that we do not want to say here that the disposition is to make up for the deficiency in the compliance with duty, and in this way to make good the actual evil in this infinite series (it being far rather presupposed that the God-pleasing moral quality of the human be actually encountered in this disposition). Rather the disposition, which represents the position of the totality of this series in the infinitely progressing approach, only compensates for the inseparable deficiency of the existence of a being in time in general, never completely to be what one is to become conceptually. The making good of the transgressions arising in this advance will be considered in the solution of the third difficulty.
- 2.1 The second difficulty rises to prominence when, in view of this moral good itself with reference to divine benevolence, we consider the human in his striving toward goodness. It pertains to the moral blessedness by which we understand not the assurance of an enduring satisfaction with our physical state (liberation from ills along with the enjoyment of continually increasing pleasures),

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<sup>1</sup> [Matthew 5:48](#).

but rather a state of the actuality and persistence of a disposition ever advancing into goodness (never falling from that) for an enduring "seeking the Kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup> If one were only confidently assured of the immutability of such a disposition, it would be the same as knowing one's self already in possession of this Kingdom, for then the person so disposed would already trust of himself that "everything else (concerning physical happiness) would develop."

- 3.1 Now we could certainly refer someone with this wish and who is concerned about such confidence to the verse: "his (God's) spirit gives witness to our spirit, etc.,"<sup>3</sup> i.e., whoever possesses such a pure disposition, as is required, will already feel of himself that he could never fall so far as to find evil enticing again. But there is always such a precarious cultivation of such alleged feelings of supernatural origin, and one never deceives himself more readily than in what promotes a favorable opinion of himself.
- 3.2 It also does not at all seem advisable to be encouraged to such a confidence, but rather much more suitable (for morality) "to procure one's salvation with fear and trembling"<sup>4</sup> (a hard saying which, if misunderstood, can drive one to the darkest fanaticism). But without any confidence in one's once adopted disposition, any persistence in continuing in that would hardly be possible.
- 3.3 But this confidence arises from the comparison of one's previous course of living with his resolute intention, and without any transmission of a soothing or a fearful fanaticism.—
- 3.4 For the person who, from the era of his adopted principles of goodness onward, has perceived throughout a sufficiently long life their effect upon the deed, i.e., upon his ever improving course of living, and finds occasion to conclude from that only the presumption of a fundamental improvement in his disposition, can still also reasonably hope that since such advance, if only its principle is good, increases the power for even further improvement, he will not again forsake this path during his earthly life, but rather will press onward toward further improvement with even more courage. Indeed if a further life with different circumstances yet awaits him after the present one, then based on all appearances he may hope he will continue in pursuit of that according to the same principle and draw ever closer to the always illusive goal of full perfection, because he, based on what he has already perceived regarding himself, may consider his disposition to be fundamentally improved.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.5 On the other hand consider a person who, after frequently attempted resolutions to improve, never found himself steadfast, who constantly fell back into evil, or even had to perceive in himself during the course of his life to have fallen always deeper from evil into chagrin as though on a downward slope. Such a person cannot reasonably fashion any hope to be able to do better if he might live longer here or if a future life awaited him, because with such indications he would have to view the corruption as rooted in his disposition.

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<sup>2</sup> [Matthew 6:33](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Romans 8:16](#).

<sup>4</sup> [Philippians 2:12](#).

<sup>5</sup> This might touch on the biblical examples of [Zacchaeus](#) and the [thief on the cross](#) in a comparison. The latter exhibits a change of heart at the end of his life, while the former also reflects such a change, but much earlier. Zacchaeus will be able to continue his new course and gain confidence of his willingness and ability to so continue, while the thief is entire bereft of any of this (and has only faith). Now while the two hearts are conceived to be the same, only one (that of Zacchaeus) will eventually include the confidence and assurance that arises upon experience. See footnote to Part II-General Remark 3 [Par. 3.3](#).

- 3.6 Now the first is a look into an unbounded, though desirable and happy, future, while the second looks to an equally unbounded misery, i.e., into a blessed or damnable eternity for both people, according to how they evaluate it. These are representations which are forceful enough to serve the first party as a comfort and strengthening in the good, and the other as an awakening of the guiding conscience in order to do as much to interrupt that evil as possible, hence in both cases to serve as incentives. And yet it is not necessary to presuppose objectively an eternity of good or evil for the fate of the human dogmatically as a doctrine\* with its alleged knowledge and assertions which only transcend the limits of rational insight.
- 3.7 Therefore, one's awareness of the good and pure disposition (which can be called a good spirit ruling us) includes also the confidence in its endurance and steadfastness, though only mediately, and is the comforter (*Paraklet*<sup>6</sup>) if our moral lapses give us concern about its durability.
- 3.8 Certitude with respect to this is neither possible nor, as much as we can tell, morally conducive for the human.
- 3.9 For (and this is to be well noted) we cannot base this confidence on an immediate consciousness of the unalterability of our attitudes, because we cannot thoroughly inspect these. Rather we must always infer the unalterability only from the consequences of our disposition in our conduct, but which inference, because it is concluded only from perceptions as appearances [actions] of the good and evil attitudes, can never especially and securely make apparent the strength of these, and least of all when one thinks to have improved his disposition toward the anticipated end of life. For an empirical proof of the genuineness of the disposition is lacking, because no further course of living is given as the basis for a verdict of our moral worth. And despair (for which, however, human nature itself, at the gloom of all prospects out beyond the limits of this life, provides that it not break out into wild despondency) is the unavoidable consequence of a rational evaluation of his moral state.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Among the questions out of which the questioner, even if they could be answered for him, would still be unable to make any sense (and which for that reason are termed childish), is also this one: whether the punishments of hell are finite or eternal?
- 1.2 If the former were taught, then the fear would arise that some (even as all who believe in purgatory, or as that sailor in [Moore's "Voyages"](#)) would say: "then I hope that I will be able to endure it."
- 1.3 But if the other were asserted and counted as a symbol of belief, then in opposition to the intent, which one has with that symbol, a hope would arise for a complete exoneration after even the most reprobate life.
- 1.4 For since in the moments of the last regrets at the end of life, the cleric questioned for advice and comfort must always find it gruesome and inhumane to inform the dying person of his eternal condemnation, and finding no intermediate between this and the complete exoneration (but rather either eternal punishment or none at all) he has to muster hope for him for the latter, i.e., to promise a speedy transformation into a man pleasing to God. For then, because there is no more time for the embarkation into a moral course of living, the means replacing that become contrite professions, formulas of belief and even solemn vows of a new life if the present one might continue longer.—
- 1.5 That is the unavoidable consequence of presenting as dogma the eternity of a future fate conformable to a course of living led here. Instead the person himself should be admonished to conceive of a future state based on his previous moral one, and to infer on his own to that state as the naturally expected consequence of that previous state. For there the unboundedness of the sequences of that eternity under the rulership of evil (to move him to undo what has happened according to his own actions, as far as possible, through reparation or substitution, even before the end of life) will have the same moral effect for him as can be expected from the announced eternity of that

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<sup>6</sup> In the Christian's New Testament this refers to the Holy Spirit.

## Difficulties Concerning The Reality Of This Idea And Their Solution

fate. But this would be without the entailing disadvantage of the dogma of the eternal punishment (to which incidentally neither rational insight nor exegesis of scripture authorizes). For the evil person in life already anticipates this easily procured pardon or, at the end of life, believes it has to do only with the demands of divine justice on him, which he satisfies with mere words, while the rights of humans remain empty here and no one receives his due again (this is such a common termination of this type of expiation that an example of the contrary is almost unheard of).—

- 1.6 But if someone is concerned that his reason will judge him too leniently through his conscience, he is mistaken and, I believe, very much so.
- 1.7 For precisely because reason is free and is to speak about him, i.e., the person, it is incorruptible. And if one only says to him in such a state, that it is at least possible that he will shortly have to stand before a judge, then one may leave him to his own reflection which will judge him, in all likelihood, with the greatest rigor.—
- 1.8 I want to add a couple of remarks.
- 1.9 The common byword, "all's well that ends well," can indeed be applied to moral cases, but only when that ending well is understood as the person becoming a genuinely good person.
- 1.10 But in what way can any person recognize himself as such, since it can only be inferred from an ensuing and persistent moral course of living, but for whom there is no more time at the end of life?
- 1.11 This byword can be more easily admitted with regard to happiness, but still only with reference to the standpoint from which the individual views his life, not from the beginning, but from the end, by looking back from that point.
- 1.12 Endured sufferings leave no painful reminders if one sees one's self already secure, and are rather an exultation which makes the enjoyment of the now occurring happiness all the more tasty. And this is so because enjoyments or pains (as belonging to sensitivity), contained in the time series, vanish with time and do not make up a whole with the now existing enjoyments of life, but rather are supplanted by the subsequent ones of happiness.
- 1.13 But if someone applies this saying to the evaluation of the moral worth of his life led up to that time, then he can be quite mistaken to so judge it, even though he has ended it with right living.
- 1.14 For the morally subjective principle of the disposition, by which his life must be evaluated, is (as something supernatural) not of the sort that his existence can be thought as divided into portions of time, but rather only as an absolute unity. And since we can infer the disposition only from the actions (as the appearances of that disposition), our life will come into consideration in aid of this estimation only as a unit of time, i.e., as a whole. But then the accusations from the earlier part of life (before the improvement) will speak just as loudly as the applause at the latter part, and the triumphant tone of "all's well that end's well" might be quite muted.—
- 1.15 Finally, with the teaching concerning the duration of punishment in another world there is another teaching which is closely related, although not identical, namely: "that all sins must be forgiven here." Accordingly the account would have to be entirely closed with the end of life, and no one would be able to hope in some way to rectify there what was left amiss here.<sup>7</sup>
- 1.16 But this can no more be proclaimed as a dogma than the proceeding one, but rather is only a principle according to which practical reason prescribes the rule in the usage of its concepts of the supernatural, i.e., to be satisfied in admitting to its ignorance of the objective make up of that supernatural.
- 1.17 It says only this: we can only infer whether we are people pleasing to God or not from our course of living up until now, and since that way comes to an end with this life, the accounts are closed for us, and their net total must tell us whether we can hold ourselves to be justified or not.—
- 1.18 Moreover, if instead of constitutive principles of the recognition of supernatural objects (the insight into which is impossible for us) we were to limit our judgment to the regulative principles (those being content with the possible practical usage of these principles), it would fare much better in many ways

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<sup>7</sup> This is in contrast to C. S. Lewis' [\*The Great Divorce\*](#), according to which there is a chance for those in hell.

for human wisdom not to hatch alleged knowledge, concerning which we fundamentally know nothing at all. For baseless and gratuitous rationalizing, though glistening for a while, finally results in the disadvantage of the morality arising from it.

- 4.1 Now to the third and, seemingly, greatest difficulty which represents each human in the presence of Divine Justice as reprehensible regarding the evaluation of his entire course of living, even after he has set upon the way of goodness.—
- 4.2 Regardless of how successful a person may have been with the adoption of a disposition for good or even of how persistently he continues in a course of living conformable to that disposition, still he started from evil and it is never possible to eliminate this guilt from his charge.
- 4.3 He cannot view the lack of any new trespasses since his change of heart as though that were payment for old ones.
- 4.4 And by continuing a moral course of living he also cannot produce any surplus above what he is always obligated to produce; for it is always his duty to do all the good that he can.—
- 4.5 This original guilt, preceding generally before every good that a person might ever do and being precisely what is meant by "radical evil" (see Part I), cannot be erased by another person, at least not as far as our reasoning of law leads us. For it is not a transferable obligation which could be assigned like a monetary debt (where the lender does not care whether the debtor himself pays, or someone else pays for him). Rather it is something utterly personal, namely a sin-debt, which only the guilty can bear, and not the innocent, no matter how generous the latter may be in wanting to do so on behalf of the guilty.<sup>8</sup>—
- 4.6 Now the morally evil (transgression of the moral law as a divine command and called sin) entails infinite violations of the law, but not because of the infinitude of the Supreme Legislator whose authority was violated by those transgressions<sup>9</sup> (for we understand nothing at all concerning effusive relationships such as that between the human and the highest being). Instead it has to do with an evil in the disposition and the maxims in general (somewhat like general principles in comparison to individual violations), and for which reason entails an infinite breach (which is quite different from a human court of law which looks only to the specific crime and hence only to the deed and the disposition inferred from that, but does not consider the general disposition).<sup>10</sup> And so it follows that every person would have to expect infinite punishment and exile from the Kingdom of God.
- 5.1 The solution of this difficulty is based on the following: the verdict of someone who knows the heart must be thought of as being derived only from the general disposition of the defendant, and not from the appearances of that disposition, i.e., not from actions deviating from or concurring with the law.

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<sup>8</sup> Thus no one can expect the death of Jesus to count as a personal atonement.

<sup>9</sup> This is called the [Satisfaction Theory of Atonement](#).

<sup>10</sup> In the criminal courts we do not examine a person's general disposition but look merely to the intent with regard to a specific crime, as to whether it were intended or not and why. With regard to the disposition in general, the only limit to the amount of evil that could arise (assuming now an evil disposition) would depend entirely upon circumstances. In this regard then, and not considering the specific wrongs, this evil disposition can be considered as infinitely evil. This is anticipated in [Par. 6.1](#) of People Are Evil By Nature of Part I.

- 5.2 But we now assume a disposition for good in a human, it having gained the upper hand over the previously mighty evil principle. And here then the question becomes whether the moral consequence of the evil disposition, the punishment (i.e., the workings of the displeasure of God on the subject), might also be applied to him now, given his current status as one with the improved disposition and such that he is already an object of divine pleasing?
- 5.3 Since the question here is not whether the punishment decreed for him can conform to divine justice before his conversion (concerning which there is no doubt), the punishment (in this inquiry) should not be considered as having been completely applied before the improvement.
- 5.4 But then also after the conversion, since the person now walks on a new path and is another person morally, punishment cannot be assumed to be commensurate with this new quality (of a person pleasing to God). And yet supreme justice, before which an offender can never go unpunished, must be satisfied.
- 5.5 Since punishment, therefore, cannot be reconciled with divine wisdom either before or after the conversion, and yet is still necessary, it would have to be thought of as exercised in the state of the conversion itself, and in that way to be conformable to that wisdom.
- 5.6 Hence we must see whether certain ills can be considered as already contained in this state through the concept of a moral conversion, ills which the new goodly disposed person incurred of himself (in another referral) and can be viewed as such punishments\* by means of which then divine justice is satisfied.—
- 5.7 The conversion itself is a departure from evil and an entry into goodness, the discarding of the old person and the adopting of the new. For the person subject to sin (hence also to all inclinations to the extent they entice sin) perishes so that a life of righteousness may ensue.
- 5.8 But as an intellectual determination there are not two moral acts separated by an intervening period, but rather only a single one; the forsaking of evil being only possible by means of the good disposition which effects the entrance into goodness, and vice-versa.
- 5.9 The good principle, therefore, is just as much in forsaking the evil disposition as it is in adopting the good, and the pain which properly accompanies the evil disposition rises up entirely in the good.
- 5.10 The departure from the corrupted disposition into the good (as "the death of the old man, crucifixion of the flesh"<sup>11</sup>) is already itself a sacrifice and an entry into a long series of woes of life which the new man takes upon himself in the disposition of the Son of God, i.e., merely for the sake of goodness, but which actually belong as punishment to the old man (for morally they are different people).<sup>12</sup>
- 5.11 Therefore, even though he is just the same physical person (with respect to his empirical character as a sense being) and deserving of punishment and as such must be condemned by any moral court of law, hence also by himself, still in his new disposition (as an intelligible being) he is morally another person before a Divine Judge, to whom this new disposition represents the deed.

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<sup>11</sup> [Romans 6:6](#).

<sup>12</sup> This "sacrifice" must mean that some ills arise by virtue of the good disposition that would not have arisen under the old disposition, because now, since sin is eschewed, many ills which could be avoided by sin, e.g., telling lies, are no longer an option.



And this new disposition in its purity as that of the Son of God, which he (the new person) has taken upon himself or (if we personify this Idea) who himself carries the guilt of sin as proxy for the former and so then also for all who believe in him (practically), sufficiently satisfies supreme justice through suffering and death as redeemer and, as advocate, enables them to hope to appear before their judge as justified. Except that (in this manner of representation) all suffering which the new person must\*\* continuously shoulder in life, dying as he does to the old, is depicted in the Representative of humanity as a death suffered once and for all.<sup>13</sup>—

- 5.12 Now here is that surplus beyond the merit of works, which was lacking above, and a merit which is ascribed to us by grace.
- 5.13 Now the attribution of goodness to us immediately—as though we were already in full possession of it here and now, even though in our earthly life (and perhaps even for all future time and in all worlds) it is always a mere becoming (namely to be a person pleasing to God)—is something to which we have no rightful claim\*\*\* (according to our empirical self knowledge). Indeed, as far as we know ourselves (evaluating our disposition not immediately, but only according to our deeds), the plaintiff in us would much sooner render a judgment of condemnation.
- 5.14 It is, therefore, always a verdict from grace, even though (based on a sufficiency which for us lies only in the Idea of an improved disposition, but which God alone knows) it is entirely commensurate with eternal justice if we, for the sake of that good in the belief, will disclaim all responsibility.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The hypothesis for considering all ill in the world as punishment for past trespasses cannot be assumed as fabricated either as an aid to [theodicy](#) or as an invention for the benefit of the priestly religions (of the cults) (for it is too widespread to have been thought up so artificially). Rather it lies suspiciously close to human reason, which is inclined to couple the course of nature with the laws of morality, and very naturally produces this from the thought that we should first seek to become better people before we can demand to be freed from the ills of life or to compensate for them through surpassing prosperity.—
- 1.2 For that reason the first human (in the Holy Scriptures) is represented as condemned to work if he wanted to eat, and his wife to painful childbearing and both of them to death, all because of their trespass (although it is not at all clear how such creatures, provided with animal bodily parts, might have expected any other destiny if they had not committed this trespass).
- 1.3 With the Hindus humans are nothing else than spirits (termed [Devas](#)) imprisoned in animal bodies as punishment for previous crimes, and even a philosopher ([Malebranche](#)) refused to attribute any soul to irrational beasts (and along with this also no feeling) rather than admit that horses would have to suffer so much woe "still without having eaten from forbidden hay."

\*\* Kant's annotation:

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<sup>13</sup> Now the good "new man" (in disposition and intention) will suffer in this evil world as a result of his goodness, e.g., refusing to lie or cheat, and this suffering would have belonged rightly to the "old man" as a sinner (evil disposition). And so the new good person takes on this and all natural suffering without complaint and counts that as an atonement for the sins of the evil person whom the good person now replaces (morally). Jesus, per Christian scriptures, does the same thing as the new good person does, and indeed as representative for all new "reborn" people who will trust in him practically and join him in a dedication to righteousness. Jesus might be considered here as an "elder brother" who dies in order to show the way to his siblings (the rest of humanity), namely that they must convert, i.e., die to sin in order to live for righteousness.



## Difficulties Concerning The Reality Of This Idea And Their Solution

- 1.1 Even the purest moral disposition produces with the human, as a finite being, nothing more than a continuous becoming of a subject pleasing to God with regard to the deed (which is encountered in the sense world).
- 1.2 With respect to the quality (since it must be conceived as supernaturally established) it can and should be holy indeed and conformable to its archetype. But with respect to the degree—how it is revealed in actions—it always remains deficient and infinitely removed from the former.
- 1.3 Nevertheless this disposition takes the place of the act as its completion because it contains the basis of the continuing advance for the supplementation of this deficiency, as an intellectual unity of a whole.
- 1.4 But now the question arises: can he "in whom there is (or must be) nothing blamable" believe himself to be justified and nonetheless still reckon the suffering, which he encounters on the road to ever increasing goodness, as punishment, therefore acknowledge with this a culpability, and thus also a disposition displeasing to God?
- 1.5 Yes, but only in the quality of the person whom he continually removes.
- 1.6 That which would be due him as punishment in that quality (of the old man, and that means all the suffering and woes of life in general) he cheerfully takes upon himself in the quality of the new person merely for the sake of the good. Consequently to this extent they are not punishments and are not reckoned as such by him. The expression means only that all ill and suffering which he encounters, which the old person would have had to count as punishment, and which he also, to the extent he dies to that old person, really counts as such, which he receives in the quality of the new person, are so many occasions for testing and practicing his disposition for the sake of the good, concerning which even that punishment is the effect and simultaneously the cause, hence also of that satisfaction and moral happiness which consists in the consciousness of his advance into goodness (which is a single act with the forsaking of the evil). On the other hand, just the same woes in the old disposition not only would have had to hold as punishment, but rather would have to be accepted as such because, considered even as mere ill, they are exactly opposite of what the human with such a disposition makes into a goal as physical happiness.<sup>14</sup>

\*\*\* Kant's annotation (but which is only presumed to apply to this location):

- 1.1 But rather only receptivity, which is all that we can attribute to ourselves for our part. But the counsel of a superior for the conveyance of a good, for which the subordinate has nothing further than the (moral) receptivity, is called grace.
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- 6.1 Now the question may yet arise concerning this deduction of the Idea of a justification of the person who, guilty as he may be, has been transformed by a disposition pleasing to God: does it have any practical application and what could that be?
  - 6.2 We are not to overlook what positive usage could be made of that for religion and for the course of living, since in that investigation there lies as foundation the condition that he who is touched by that is actually already of the required good disposition, in aid of which (as its development and promotion) all practical usage of moral concepts are actually focused. For concerning com-

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<sup>14</sup> According to Kant, therefore, when we take on the principle of the morally good, i.e., acceptance of community in the vernacular of the Christian, perhaps, this will put us at a relative disadvantage to the world of experience, for there we can no longer take refuge in deception, etc., and this is a direct result of our commitment to the good principle, and so, therefore, an ill, as such, is added to existence which should not be there in a morally perfect condition. But these are accepted by the convert as payments which would be due from him, as ills, in the body of the old man; and the new (morally committed) person is willing to consider them in that light, and so, therefore, not complain about them as unjust.

fort, such a disposition already entails this (as comfort and hope, though not as certitude<sup>15</sup>) for him who is conscious of that disposition.

- 6.3 It is, therefore, to this extent only the reply to a speculative question, but which cannot be silently ignored because otherwise a charge could be brought against reason that it is utterly incapable of uniting divine justice with the hope for an acquittal of the human from his guilt. This would be a reproof which could be disadvantageous in several respects, especially morally.<sup>16</sup>
- 6.4 But the negative utility, which can be derived from it for religion and morality in aid of each and every person, is quite broad.
- 6.5 For we see from the cited deduction that it is only under the presupposition of the complete conversion that the person, weighed down with guilt in the face of divine justice, is permitted to think of absolution. Hence all expiations, be they of the penitent or ceremonial type, all appeals and praises (even those of the substitutional Ideal of the Son of God) cannot replace the former, or, if this is already present, cannot increase its validity before that court in any degree. For this Ideal must be taken up into our disposition in order to take the place of the deed.<sup>17</sup>
- 6.6 Another contains the question about what a person is promised or what he has to fear regarding his course of living at the end of his life.
- 6.7 Here he must first be familiar with his character at least a little. Hence even if he believes an improvement has taken place in his disposition, and at the same time has drawn into consideration the old (corrupted) disposition from which he has departed, and is able to estimate what and how much of the earlier disposition he has discarded, and which quality (whether pure or still mixed) as well as what degree the presumed new disposition has in order to subdue the old disposition and to secure him against a relapse into that evil; he will still have to search this out throughout his entire life.
- 6.8 Since, therefore, he can obtain no secure and definite concept of his actual disposition through an immediate consciousness, but rather can only infer it through his course of living actually led, he will be able to think for the judgment of the future judge (of the awakened conscience in himself, simultaneously calling in his empirical self knowledge) no other state for his transformation than the exhibition of his entire life for review at some point, not merely just a segment and perchance the latter and most favorable for him. But of himself he would link with this exhibition the prospect in a life continued yet further (without placing any limits), if it had lasted longer.
- 6.9 Now here he cannot permit the disposition recognized earlier to stand for the deed, but rather vice-versa, he is to assume his disposition from the deeds standing before him.
- 6.10 What does the reader really think? will merely this thought, which recalls for the person (who does not need to be the worst) much that he had otherwise carelessly forgotten long ago, when

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<sup>15</sup> This was presented and considered in paragraphs 2 and 3 above.

<sup>16</sup> Without a hope for such acquittal the human could hardly be expected to convert and undertake a new course of living.

<sup>17</sup> It would seem then that for someone to think that the death of Jesus were a payment for his own sinful nature, he would have to be conscious of having taken on the disposition of the Son of God. In this wise the death of Jesus here would be considered as that of a leader who (although he does not personally deserve punishment) takes on an action which is necessary for his followers (but not for himself), namely dying to sin in order then to live for righteousness.

one does not say any more than he have cause to believe that someday he will stand before a judge for his future fate to be judged according to his course of living led up until then?

- 6.11 If one questions the judge in the person himself, the judge within, he will severely condemn himself, for he cannot bribe his own reason. But if he thinks of a judge separate from himself, such that information concerning him will come from other sources, then he has much to be taken from the excuse of human weakness to apply against any severity, and in general thinks he can hoodwink the judge. Or else through remorseful self torments, not from a true disposition of improvement, he thinks to forestall the judge's punishment advancing upon him, or to soften him with supplications and pleadings, also with formulas and credibly rendered declarations. And if he is given hope in this way (according to the proverb that all's well that ends well), then he calculates very early so as not to forfeit too much of the enjoyable life unnecessarily, and then close to the end of it still to settle his accounts quickly and in his own favor.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> There is a speculation that Constantine the Great put off Christian baptism, which was seen to take away all his former sins, until the end of his life in order not to be constrained by morality in his actual ruling, but still to find forgiveness at the end. See the General Remarks to Part IV, [Par. 11](#).

## Second Section - The Rightful Claim Of The Evil Principle To The Hegemony Over The Human And The Struggle Of Both Principles Against Each Other

- 1.1 The Christian portion of the holy scriptures presents this intelligible moral relationship in the form of a history where two principles in the human (in opposition to each other as are heaven and hell, and represented as persons apart from him) not only want to test their might against one another, but also, as though before a highest judge, to make their respective legal claims valid (one party as plaintiff against, and the other as defender of, the human).
- 2.1 The human was originally positioned as possessor of all good of the earth ([Gen 1:28](#)), though still only as tenant (*dominium utile*<sup>1</sup>) under his Creator and Lord as superior (*dominus directus*<sup>2</sup>).
- 2.2 Simultaneously an evil being is introduced (how it came to be so evil as to become unfaithful to his lord, since it was originally good, is not known). Through his fall this being has lost everything that he might have possessed in heaven, and will now create another possession for himself on earth.
- 2.3 Now since he is a being of a higher type—a spirit—and can take no pleasure from earthly and corporeal objects, he seeks to acquire hegemony over minds such that the parents of all humans might become disloyal to their superior and dependent upon him instead. In this way then he will succeed in establishing himself as the supreme lord of all possessions of the earth, i.e., as the prince of this world.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.4 Now one might wonder why God did not utilize his power against this traitor,\* and at the very beginning destroy the kingdom which he had intended to establish. But the rule and government of the highest wisdom over rational beings deals with them according to the principle of their freedom such that they will only have themselves to thank for whatever good or evil happens to them.
- 2.5 Here, therefore, to spite the good principle, a realm of evil was established to which all humans who were descended (in a natural way) from Adam<sup>4</sup> were subjected, and indeed by their own agreement (because the illusion of the goods of this world derive their appeal from the abyss of this ruin<sup>5</sup>), and for which reason they were dispossessed.
- 2.6 Now indeed the good principle secures its legal claim for sovereignty over the human through the erection of a form of government which was established merely upon the public, exclusive homage to its name (in the Jewish theocracy). But since here the minds of the subjects remained disposed toward no other incentives than the possessions of this world such that they wanted to be ruled in no other way than through reward and punishment in this life, but for which also no other law was adequate except which partly imposed burdensome ceremonies and customs, partly in-

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<sup>1</sup> Useful tenant.

<sup>2</sup> Rightful owner.

<sup>3</sup> See [Prince of this world](#).

<sup>4</sup> The first human according to Genesis, and treated above in Part I, [The Origin Of Wickedness In Human Nature](#).

<sup>5</sup> The goods of the world appear paltry indeed from the perspective of heaven, but very appealing from the perspective of the fallen state (this present world).

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deed moral ones (but only such by means of which an external pressure took place, therefore only civil ones, where in no case did any consideration arise concerning the inner state of the moral disposition), this arrangement did not cause any real injury to the kingdom of darkness, but rather only served to keep the inextinguishable right of the first possessor in mind.—

- 2.7 Now later in this very people, since it felt fully all the ills of a hierarchical constitution (and this perhaps through the moral teachings of freedom by the Greek wise men, deeply affecting the slavish mentality, and which teachings had obtained gradual influence on this people, who had for the most part been brought to an awakening, hence was ready for a revolution), there suddenly appeared a person whose wisdom was even purer than the preceding philosophers, like one descended from heaven, and who, although authentically a human with regard to his teaching and example, still announced himself as an emissary of such a heavenly origin, and who in original innocence was not included in the contract which entrapped the remainder of the human race with the evil principle\*\* through its representatives (the first fore-parents and “therefore had no part with the prince of this world.”<sup>6</sup>
- 2.8 With this the rulership of that worldly prince was endangered.
- 2.9 For this man, entirely pleasing to God, withstood a temptation to join in assenting to that contract. And others also in faith (*gläubig*) took on the same disposition, and so this prince of the world forfeited precisely this many subjects, and his kingdom ran in danger of being completely destroyed.
- 2.10 Thus he also offered to make this God-pleasing man the beneficiary of his entire realm if he would only pay homage to him as proprietor.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.11 But since this temptation did not succeed, the prince of this world not only removed from this alien on his territory everything which could make his earthly life pleasant (down to the direst poverty), but also raised against him all sorts of persecutions used by evil-minded people to embitter someone’s life, suffering which only well disposed people can feel very deeply, defamation of the pure intention of his teaching (in order to remove all adherents from him), and even persecuted him all the way to the most humiliating death, but still without in any way justifying anything against him through this assailing of the dedication and candor in his teaching and example for the good of the totally unworthy.
- 2.12 And now the result of this struggle!
- 2.13 The outcome here can be considered as legal or as physical.
- 2.14 If we look to the latter (which strikes the senses), then the good principle is the loser. After much inflicted suffering the good person had to give up his life in this strife,\*\*\* because he incited an insurrection in an alien domain (which possesses power).
- 2.15 But since the kingdom in which principles rule (be they good or evil) is not a kingdom of nature but rather of freedom, i.e., such where a person can manage things only to the extent that he has command over minds, a kingdom, therefore, in which no one is a slave (a thrall) except that he wills to be so and only as long as he will, it was precisely in this way that this death (the highest rung of suffering of a person) was the display of the good principle, namely of humanity in its moral perfection, as an example for emulation by every person.

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<sup>6</sup> [John 14:30](#).

<sup>7</sup> [Luke 4:1-13](#).

- 2.16 The representation of this good principle should be, and also could be, of the greatest influence on human minds for his (and indeed for every) time by showing the freedom of the children of heaven and the servitude of a mere son of earth in the most dramatic contrast.
- 2.17 But the good principle is not merely for a certain time, but is descended from heaven to humanity in an unrecognizable way from the very origin of the human race (as everyone must admit who attends to its holiness and likewise to the incomprehensibility of the connection of that with the sensitive nature of the human in the moral structure) and rightfully has its first residence in humanity.
- 2.18 Since it appeared, therefore, in an actual human as an example for all others: "so did he come into his own possession and his own did not receive him, but to those who did receive him, who believed on his name, he gave power to become the children of God,"<sup>8</sup> i.e., through this example (in the moral Idea) he opened the gate to freedom for all people who, like himself, wanted to die to everything which had chained them to the earthly life at the expense of righteousness. And under him and his rule there gathered "as his possession a people, who were eager for good works,"<sup>9</sup> while leaving those who prefer moral servitude to fend among themselves.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 [P. Charlevoix](#) reports that as he narrated about everything evil to his Iroquois catechists, i.e., what the evil spirit brought into the originally good creation and how he still continually sought to thwart the best divine arrangements, one of them demanded indignantly why God did not slay the devil? To this Charlevoix candidly had to admit that on the spur of the moment he could come up with no answer.

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 To so imagine the possibility of a person free of the inborn propensity to evil by having him be born of a virgin mother is an Idea of reason accommodating itself to a moral instinct, as it were, which is difficult to explain and yet still not deniable. This is namely where we view the natural procreation, since it cannot happen without the sensuous desire of both parties, but still seems also (regarding the dignity of humanity) to bring us into close kinship with the common animal species as something which we are to be ashamed of—a representation which is surely the actual cause of the alleged holiness of the monk's status—which, therefore, seems to us to be something immoral, something incompatible with the perfection of a person, and yet implanted into his nature and, therefore, to be inherited also as a evil structure by his descendants.—
- 1.2 Now conformable to this obscure representation (sensitive on one side, but yet moral and hence intellectual on the other) is the Idea of a birth of a child tainted by no moral flaw, and which was dependent upon no sexual activity (virginal). But here there is still difficulty with this in theory (concerning which, however, nothing at all is necessary to be determined in the practical intention).
- 1.3 For according to the hypothesis of [epigenesis](#), the mother, who arose through the natural procreation of her parents, would still be tainted with that moral flaw, and thus even with a supernatural procreation would still transmit at least half of it to her child. Hence in order for this not to be the result, the system of preexistence of the germ in the parents, but not the development in the mother (because in that way that consequence would not be avoided), would have to be assumed only in the male part (not that of the *ovulorum* but rather of the *animalcul.* sperm.). And then with a supernatural pregnancy this male part could be of no effect. And so this sort of representation could be defended for that Idea theoretically.<sup>10</sup>—

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<sup>8</sup> [John 1:9-13](#).

<sup>9</sup> [Titus 2:14](#).

<sup>10</sup> The Roman Catholic doctrine of the [Immaculate Conception](#) was to deal with this very point.

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- 1.4 But what is the point of all this theory, for or against, if it is sufficient practically to present the Idea as a model, a symbol of (this victoriously resisting) humanity elevating itself above the temptation for evil?

\*\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Not that he sought death (as [D. Bahrdt](#) poetically imagined) in order to promote a good intention through a brilliant example to incite a sensation; for that would be suicide.
- 1.2 For one may indeed risk the danger of losing his life or suffering death at the hand of another if it cannot be avoided. And this would not constitute being unfaithful to an irremissible duty. But no one may dispose of his life as a means, regardless of the purpose, and in that way be the cause of his death.—
- 1.3 But also not (as the [Wolfenbüttel](#) fragments suspect) that he had dared to endanger his life not for a moral, but for a merely political, though forbidden, purpose in order to topple the priestly government and to put himself in their place with temporal power. For his admonition to his disciples at the Passover supper to repeat the meal in his memory, after he had already given up hope of retaining his life, argues against this. And this, if it had been the remembrance of a failed worldly intention, would have been a vexing admonition, raising resentments against the cause, and hence contradicting itself.
- 1.4 However this remembrance could also concern the failure of a very good, morally pure intention of the master, namely to effect a public revolution (in the religion), even with his death, by toppling the ritual belief (threatening every moral disposition) and the esteem of the priest of that belief (to which the arrangement of gathering his disciples at Easter, dispersed in the land, might have aimed). Concerning this, of course, we can even now lament that it did not succeed. But still this was not in vain, but rather, after his death, was incorporated into a secret, spreading, religious alteration, though with much suffering.
- 3.1 Therefore, the moral result of this struggle on the part of the hero of this history (up to his death) is actually not the victory over the evil principle, for that kingdom still abides, and in any case a new epoch must arise in which it will be destroyed.—Rather there is only a breach in its power, no longer to hold those (who had been subject to it for so long) against their will. This is accomplished by opening up for them another, moral rule (for the human must stand under some rule) as refuge in which they can find protection for their morality if they wish to abandon the old rule.
- 3.2 By the way, the evil principle will still always be called the prince of the world in which those adhering to the good principle may be made ready for the physical sufferings, sacrifices and vexations of self-love, which are represented here as persecutions by the evil principle. For the worldly prince has rewards in his kingdom only for those who have made the earthly good to be their final goal.
- 4.1 One easily sees that if this lively and, probably also for its time, singular, popular, representational manner is stripped of its mystical husk, it (its spirit and rational meaning) was practically valid and binding for the whole world for all time because it touches every person close enough for him to recognize his duty in it.
- 4.2 This meaning consists in this: that there is utterly no salvation for the humans except in the most fervent assumption of genuine moral principles into their disposition; that this assumption does not work against the often blamed sensitivity, but rather against a certain, self-guilty perversion or, as some want to term this malignity, a deception (*fausseté*) (Satan's stratagem, whereby evil is come into the world). This is a corruption which lies in all humans and can be overcome by nothing except the Idea of the morally good in its entire purity, with the consciousness that it really belongs to our original structure and that one would only have to be assiduous in maintaining it from all impure additives and to incorporate it deeply in our disposition in order to become con-

vinced through the effect which it gradually has on the mind, that the fearful power of evil can erect nothing against it ("the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"<sup>11</sup>). And in order that we do not supplement the lack of this confidence superstitiously through an expiation, which does not presuppose any change of mind, or fanatically through alleged (merely passive) internal illumination<sup>12</sup> (and so being held accordingly always remote from the good based on self-activity), we shall undergird the human with no other sign than that of a well-led course of living.—

- 4.3 By the way, an endeavor such as this, to seek that sense in the scriptures which is harmonious with the holiest that reason teaches, cannot only be permitted, it must far rather be considered a duty.\* And in so doing we can recall that the wise teacher said to his disciples about someone who went his particular way, but who at the end still had to come out at the same goal: "do not rebuke him; for who is not against us, is for us."<sup>13</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 By means of which one can allow that he not be the only one.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [Matthew 16:18](#).

<sup>12</sup> In [Part IV](#) we shall consider superstition, sorcery and fanaticism and how they are detrimental for a rational religion.

<sup>13</sup> [Mark 9:40](#).

<sup>14</sup> Since this is a duty for every person, we are to understand that other such people may be found who will want to unite with others of a like spirit and intention. This unification with others is important for continuing steadfastly in the new resolve and will be discussed in Part III.



## General Remark

- 1.1 If a moral religion is to be established (a religion which is not to be placed in ordinances and observances, but rather in the disposition of the heart for compliance with all human duties as divine commands), then all miracles which couple history with its introduction finally make the belief in miracles in general dispensable. For it betrays an inexcusable degree of moral disbelief if one ascribes no other, sufficient authority to the precepts of duty, as they are originally inscribed in the heart of the human by reason, except they be confirmed by miracles: "if ye do not see signs and wonders, you will not believe."<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 Now it is, however, quite suitable for the common way of human thinking that when a religion of just cult and observances reaches its end and is to be replaced by one founded in spirit and in truth (the moral disposition), the introduction of the latter is historically accompanied and needlessly adorned, as it were, with miracles in order to announce the demise of the old cult, which would have had no authority at all without miracles. Indeed, arguably also to win the adherents of the old cult for the new revolution, the new religion is presented now as the fulfillment of a former ancient model of what in the new one is found to be the ultimate purpose of providence. And under such circumstances it cannot be of any benefit to contest that narration or interpretation when the true religion has finally arrived and which can preserve itself now and forever by means of rational foundations, and where at the time of its introduction it had need of such supportive measures. Otherwise one would rather want to assume that the mere belief and repetition of incomprehensible things (which everyone can do without for that reason being a better person, or becoming one in that way) were a way, and indeed the only way, of pleasing God.<sup>2</sup> And we must counter such a presumption with all our power.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.3 It may be, therefore, that the person of the teacher of the religion which is uniquely valid for all worlds is a mystery, that his appearance on earth as well as his departure from it and his blameless life and his suffering are sheer miracles, indeed that the historical record certifying the narration of all those miracles is itself a miracle (a supernatural revelation). And in this way we could rely altogether on their value, indeed can still honor the husk, which served to set into public motion a teaching, the authentication of which rests upon a certificate which is retained in each soul and cannot be eradicated and which has no need of miracles. We can do this as long as we do not make the usage of this historical report into a part of the religion such that its knowledge, belief and confession were something whereby we could make ourselves pleasing to God.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.1 But concerning miracles in general, it seems that rational people never want the belief in miracles to come into fashion, even though they are not inclined to deny that belief; which is to say they believe in miracles theoretically, but do not affirm them in practice.

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<sup>1</sup> [John 4:48](#).

<sup>2</sup> In the [General Remark](#) to Part III consideration will be given to mysteries and how they are to be considered in a rational religion.

<sup>3</sup> This is taken on and covered in some detail in [Part IV](#), and especially beginning at [IV.II](#).

<sup>4</sup> Let us now have two people, one a Christian the other not, and let them both want and seek to do good in all things. Kant would have us believe that both of these are pleasing to God, and the knowledge of the Christian story is not material in this regard. Kant does not assert that a person might not be happier or possess more peace of mind by believing what Jesus did for him, but merely that this knowledge would not have any role on the morality of his actions or on his acceptance by God.

- 2.2 Hence wise governments have always admitted and indeed, under the teaching of public religion, have even legally accepted the opinion that miracles took place in olden times, but have never allowed recent miracles.\*
- 2.3 For the ancient miracles were already gradually so settled (*bestimmt*) and limited by authorities that no confusion could be occasioned by them in the commonwealth. But they always had to be concerned about the effects which new miracle workers could have on the public peace and established order.
- 2.4 But if one asks how the word "miracle" is to be understood, then (since we are actually only fitted to know what it is for us, i.e., for the practical usage of our reason) we can explain it in this wise: it is an event in the world, the effecting laws of the causes of which are, and must remain, utterly unknown to us.
- 2.5 Here one can think either of theistic or demonic miracles, with the latter dividing into angelic (*agathodämonisch*) or devilish (*kakodämonisch*) miracles, of which, however, enquiry touches only the latter because the good angels (I don't know why) supply little or nothing at all to speak about.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Even teachers of religion, who annex their articles of belief onto the authority of the government (orthodoxy), observe the cited maxim along with the authorized articles.
  - 1.2 Hence Mr. [Pfenninger](#), when he defended his friend, Mr. [Lavatar](#), on behalf of his assertion of an always possible belief in miracles, quite properly accused these teachers of inconsistency, that they (for he expressly excepted those thinking naturalistically in this point), asserting miracle workers actually present in the Christian community some 1700 years ago, now no longer wanted to admit such, but still without being able to prove from the scriptures that or when they are to have ceased (for the rationalizing that miracles are no longer needed is a presumption of greater insight than a person should want to claim), and they owe him this proof.
  - 1.3 It was, therefore, only maxims of reason that they did not want to admit or permit, not objective insight that there were no miracles.
  - 1.4 But does this maxim, which looks to the troublesome disturbance in the body politic now, not also hold concerning the fear of a similar disturbance in the philosophic and, in general, rationally thinking community?—
  - 1.5 Indeed, those who do not concede great (sensational) miracles, though they are generous in still admitting small ones under the name of an extraordinary management (because the latter, as merely steering, only require a little application of force on the part of the supernatural cause), do not consider here that the concern is not of the effect and its size, but rather of the form of the course of the world, i.e., regardless of the manner in which it occurs, whether naturally or supernaturally, and that for God no distinction of ease or difficulty can be thinkable.
  - 1.6 But concerning the mystery of supernatural influences, such an intentional concealment of the importance of an event of this type is even less suitable.
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- 3.1 Concerning the theistic miracles, we can certainly make a concept of the efficacious laws of their cause (as a being which is all powerful, etc., and also moral), but only a general one, to the extent we think it as world creator and ruler according to the order of nature as well as a moral order, because we can obtain information about both of these immediately, which reason can then find useful.
  - 3.2 But if we assume that God occasionally has nature deviate from its laws in particular cases, then we do not have the least concept, and also can never hope to obtain such, about the law according to which God then proceeds with the arrangement of such a miraculous event (apart from the uni-

## General Remark

versal moral one that everything he does will be good; but concerning which, with respect to this particular event, nothing is determined.)

- 3.3 Now in this way reason is crippled by being hindered in its dealing with known laws, and not being instructed about any new ones, nor even being able to hope to be taught about such in the world
- 3.4 Among these, however, the demonic miracles are the most incommensurate with the use of our reason.
- 3.5 For with regard to the theistic miracles they would be able to have at least a negative sign for their usage, namely that if something is represented as commanded by God in an immediate appearance, which is still directly in conflict with morality, it cannot be a divine miracle even with all appearance of being such (e.g., if a father were commanded to kill his, as far as he knows, perfectly innocent son<sup>5</sup>). But with the assumption of a demonic miracle this characteristic vanishes. And if to counter this someone wanted to grasp for a positive sign for the use of reason, namely that if in that way an invitation arose for a good action which we already recognize as duty on its own, then the miracle did not arise from an evil spirit. But then we could still be mistaken; for this evil spirit often disguises itself as an angel of light,<sup>6</sup> as it is said.
- 4.1 In the occupations, therefore, it is impossible to count on miracles, or to bring them rationally into play (and that is necessary in all phases of life).
- 4.2 The judge (despite how much he might believe in them in the church) hears the allegation of the delinquent concerning satanic seductions (which he alleges to have suffered) as though nothing at all had been said. And this even though, if he considered this case as possible, he would always consider it worth at least some regard, namely that a simple common man might have slipped into the snares of a cunning villain. But he cannot summon this villain to appear in order to confront both together. In a word, he simply cannot make anything reasonable out of this.
- 4.3 The rational cleric will, in all likelihood, avoid filling the heads of those parishioners assigned to his charge with stories from the fiendish [Proteus](#) and have their imagination run wild.
- 4.4 But concerning the miracles of the good sort, people in the occupations mention them only as phrases.
- 4.5 The doctor says that the patient cannot be helped this side of a miracle, i.e., he will definitely die.—
- 4.6 Now among the occupations is also that of the natural scientist in seeking the causes of events in their natural laws. And I say, in the “natural laws” of these events, which he, therefore, can verify through experience, even if he must relinquish the knowledge of what works according to these laws on their own or what they might be for us in reference to another possible sense.
- 4.7 Likewise the moral improvement of the humans is an obligatory occupation for him. And let there be ever so many divine influences cooperating for that or being held necessary for the explanation of the possibility of that, he does not know how to distinguish them securely from the natural

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<sup>5</sup> This reference is to Abraham and will be considered further in [Part IV, The Guide Of The Conscience In Matters Of Belief, Par. 4.6](#).

<sup>6</sup> [2 Corinthians 11:14](#).

ones, nor to bring them and heaven down to him, as it were. Since immediately he does not know where to begin with them, he makes a rule of no miracles in such a case,\* and instead, if he gives ear to the precepts of reason, he acts as though all change of heart and improvement depended solely upon his own effort applied to that.

- 4.8 But that one is even himself empowered through the gift of believing theoretically in miracles to also effect them and in that way to storm heaven, this goes too far beyond the boundaries of reason to dwell any longer with such senseless incidences.\*\*

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 This is the same as saying that he does not incorporate any belief of miracles into his maxims (neither of theoretical nor of practical reason), but still does not dispute their possibility or reality.

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 It is a typical evasion of those who lead the gullible to the magical arts (or at least want to make them believe in such in general) that they cite the admission of the natural scientists as to their ignorance.
- 1.2 We don't know the cause of heaviness, they say, nor of the magnetic force, and so on.—
- 1.3 But the laws of these forces we still recognize with sufficient detail under determined limitations to the conditions under which alone certain effects take place. And that is enough for a secure, rational usage of these forces as well as for the explanation of their appearances, *secundum quid* and downwards to the usage of these laws in ordering experience under them, even if not *simpliciter*, and upwards in order to penetrate the causes of the effecting forces according to these laws.—
- 1.4 In this way the internal phenomenon of human understanding is also comprehensible: why so-called natural wonders (i.e., sufficiently authenticated, although nonsensical, appearances or properties of things, unexpectedly thrusting themselves into prominence and deviating from the natural laws known up until then) are apprehended with such avidity; for the mind is enlivened as long as these are held to be natural. On the other hand it is disheartening to announce them as a true miracle.
- 1.5 For the first (the natural) open a view into a new acquisition of nourishment for reason, i.e., they give hope for the discovery of new natural laws. The second (the miraculous), on the other hand, raises concern about losing the confidence for those laws already accepted as known.
- 1.6 But if reason is deprived of the laws of experience, then in such an enchanted world it is of no further use at all, not even for the moral usage of reason in that world in compliance with its duty. For then we no longer know whether alterations with even the moral incentives proceed through miracles, unknown to us, concerning which no one can distinguish whether it is to be ascribed to that or another incomprehensible cause.—
- 1.7 Those, whose judgmental ability is so determined in this that they think themselves unable to be helped without miracles, believe the impetus which reason takes to moderate this, namely they assume these miracles take place only seldom.
- 1.8 If in this way they want to say that this already lies in the concept of a miracle (because if such an event were commonplace, it would not be declared a miracle), then indeed one can grant them this sophistry (changing an objective question about what a matter is into a subjective one about the meaning of the word, which we use to indicate that matter), and ask then again how often? once every hundred years, or indeed earlier, but now not any more?
- 1.9 Here is nothing determinable for us from the familiarity of the object (for according to our own admission, that object is exuberant for us), but rather only from the necessary maxims of the usage of our reason, i.e., admit miracles either as commonplace (only concealed behind the facade of a natural event) or not at all; and in the latter case not to posit them as the basis to our rational explanations or to the measure of our actions. And since the former (the commonplace miracle) is completely incompatible with our reason, nothing else remains for us, but to assume the latter maxim, i.e., not to admit them at all; for only maxims of judgment, and not theoretical assertions, remain always for this principle of miracles.

## General Remark

- 1.10 Consider the amazing preservation of the species in the plant and animal kingdoms, where every generation presents again each spring its original and as undiminished with all internal perfection of mechanism and (as in the plant kingdom) even with all such tender colored beauties, without the destructive forces of the inorganic nature in the ill-tempered autumn and winter weather being able to harm the seeds in this regard in any way.—No one can press the imagination so high from his insight to proclaim definitely that this preservation be a mere consequence according to natural laws, or not far rather claim to penetrate whether an immediate influence of the creator be required for this.—
- 1.11 But these are experiences. For us, therefore, they are nothing other than natural effects and should never be judged otherwise; and indeed for the sake of modesty of reason in its requirements.<sup>7</sup> To want to go out beyond these boundaries is audacity and immodesty; even though in the assertion of miracles one frequently pretends to prove a humiliating self-disparaging way of thinking.

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<sup>7</sup> To admit any miracle is to admit chaos to the utilization of reason both with regard to experience and also to morals. The solution is to admit miracles theoretically but never to appeal to them for any practical purpose.

### **PART III - The Victory Of The Good Principle Over The Evil And The Establishment Of A Kingdom Of God Upon Earth**

- 1.1 The struggle, which each morally well disposed person must endure in life under the leadership of the good principle against the temptations of the evil principle, can procure for him no greater advantage, no matter how hard he tries, than liberation from the rule of the evil principle.
- 1.2 That he is free, that he "is freed from bondage to the law of sin in order to live for righteousness"<sup>1</sup> is the greatest gain which he can achieve.
- 1.3 But he remains always exposed to the attacks of the evil principle. And to assert his freedom, which is constantly contested, he must continue to remain armed for the fray.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.1 It's the human's own fault that he is in this very dangerous situation. As a result he is obligated to extricate himself from it to the extent he is capable, at least to apply his power.
- 2.2 But how? that is the question.—
- 2.3 If he looks about for the causes and circumstances, which draw him into this danger and keep him there, he can easily convince himself that it is not due to his own raw nature to the extent he stands isolated, but rather to humans with whom he stands in relationship or connection.
- 2.4 It is not because of the incitements of his own nature that the passions, properly so termed, stir in him and produce such devastation in his originally good structure.
- 2.5 His needs are only small and his mental state in their procurement moderate and peaceful.
- 2.6 He is poor (or considers himself so) only to the extent he is concerned that others might consider him so and scorn him for that.
- 2.7 Envy, tyranny, avarice and the malignant inclinations combined with them assail his otherwise adequate nature as soon as he is among people. And it is not even necessary that these people be sunk in evil and presupposed as corrupting examples. It suffices that they are there, that they surround him and that they are human in order for them mutually to spoil each other in their moral structure, and to make each other evil.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.8 Now some means must be found to effect a unification which is actually and entirely directed toward the prevention of this evil and for the promotion of the good in humans. Without such an enduring and continually self-expanding association, erected for the preservation of morality and

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<sup>1</sup> [1 Peter 2:24](#).

<sup>2</sup> Even though the evil principle no longer rules a person dedicated to the good principle, still a struggle against that principle will continue (as we learned in Part II Section [II, The Struggle Of Both Principles Against Each Another](#)), and temptations will constantly arise; and so that the person dedicated now to the moral will have to be always be alert and on guard.

<sup>3</sup> While the propensity to evil is innate in all, it is provoked by the competition we find naturally among all humans. And so it is hardly to be expected that we can extricate ourselves from temptations via will power alone, since these temptations are naturally prompted by this socializing and competition among all people. This condition is first suggested in Part I, The Original structure For Good In Human Nature, [Par. 3.1](#).

which counters evil with united power, this evil will keep the individual continually in danger of a relapse, regardless of the extent to which he might have been able to remove himself from its rule.<sup>4</sup>—

- 2.9 The rule of the good principle, therefore, to the extent humans can work toward it, is not otherwise achievable, as far as we can tell, except through the establishment and expansion of an association according to laws of virtue and for the promotion of those laws. This would be an association which has taken on the task and duty of encompassing the entire human race in its scope through reason.—
- 2.10 For only in this way can there be hope for a victory of the good principle over the evil.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.11 In addition to the laws which morally legislating reason prescribes to each person individually, it also displays a banner of virtue as a point of unification for all who love the good in order to assemble them under it, and so first and foremost to get the upper hand over the ever assailing evil principle.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.1 In accordance with the precepts of this Idea, such an association of humans under laws of virtue alone we can call an ethical association. And to the extent these laws are public it would be an ethical-civil association (in contrast to juridical-civil), or an ethical commonwealth.
- 3.2 This can exist in the midst of a political commonwealth and even be made up of all members of that body (and indeed could not be brought about at all by humans without this political body as the foundation<sup>7</sup>).
- 3.3 But the ethical commonwealth has a particular unification principle peculiar to itself (virtue) and hence also a form and constitution which is distinguished from the political in a very essential way.
- 3.4 There remains, however, a certain analogy between the two, considered as two commonwealths in general, with respect to which the former can also be denominated an ethical state, i.e., a kingdom of virtue (of the good principle), concerning which the Idea has a well founded objective reality in human reason (as the duty to associate in such a state), even if subjectively there could never be any hope in the good will of humans to resolve to cooperate together for such a kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Thus the very social environment of the human is itself conducive to the spread of evil among people.

<sup>5</sup> Since the natural social order works toward weakening our individual stand against evil, the only reasonable expectation of moral progress is via a group of individuals dedicated to mutual encouragement and strengthening of their moral resolve.

<sup>6</sup> As a species we are reciprocally battered in the world by the temptation to do evil and to avoid the moral act. Therefore, we will need to band together and forge a union to help each other keep to the straight and narrow path of the moral good.

<sup>7</sup> We must first have an orderly and lawful society before we can expect to organize for our mutual improvement morally.

<sup>8</sup> In the same way that we are required to leave a state of nature (each on his own) and enter into a civil society, we are also called to leave the ethical state of nature and to join an ethical commonwealth to strive together for a common goal of moral perfection. And yet there is no guarantee that we will find others also willing to join in such a commonwealth for mutual improvement. More on this follows below.

## First Section - Philosophical Representation Of The Victory Of The Good Principle On The Basis Of A Kingdom Of God On Earth

### I. The Ethical State Of Nature

- 1.1 A judicial-civil (political) state is the relationship of humans among one another to the extent they stand together under public judicial laws (all of which are laws of coercion).
- 1.2 An ethical-civil state is one where they are united under non-coercive laws, i.e., sheer laws of virtue.
- 2.1 Now just as the legal (although not always just) state of nature, i.e., the juridical, is contrasted with the former of these two states (the political), the ethical state of nature is contrasted with the latter (the ethical-civil state).
- 2.2 In both of these each person is a law to himself and there is no external law to which he sees himself subjected along with all others.
- 2.3 In both each person is his own judge and there is no powerful public authority to determine with juridical force, in accordance with laws, the duty of each person in given cases, and to execute these laws universally.
- 3.1 In an already existing political commonwealth all political citizens as such are found in an ethical state of nature and are also justified in remaining there, for to force a citizen to enter into an ethical commonwealth would be a contradiction (*in adjecto*)<sup>1</sup> because the concept of that commonwealth already entails freedom from coercion.
- 3.2 Every political commonwealth can indeed wish that it also had internally a rule over minds and tempers according to laws of virtue. For where those coercive means do not reach, since the human judge cannot penetrate into the inner being of another person, the virtuous disposition would produce the desired effect.
- 3.3 But woe be to the lawmaker who would try to implement a constitution directed to ethical purposes by force!
- 3.4 For he would not only produce the exact opposite of the ethical constitution, but would undermine the political one as well and make it insecure.—
- 3.5 The citizen of the political commonwealth, therefore, remains completely free with regard to the legislative authority of the ethical commonwealth, i.e., as to whether beyond the political commonwealth the citizen wishes to unite with fellow citizens in an ethical union, or rather to remain in the ethical state of nature.
- 3.6 Only to the extent that an ethical commonwealth must be based on public laws and obtain a charter based on those laws do those who obligate themselves freely in entering into this status have to permit themselves to be commanded by the political power, i.e., not as to how they are to be organized or not organized internally, but only regarding a restrictive condition, namely that nothing take place within that which conflicts with their duties as citizens. But this is of no concern if the original association is of a genuine sort.

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<sup>1</sup> In the German original this phrase was rendered as “in adiecto.”



- 4.1 We might add parenthetically that because the duties of virtue touch the entire human race, the concept of an ethical commonwealth always refers to the Ideal of a whole of all people, and is distinguished in this way from the concept of a political one.
- 4.2 Thus a group of people united for that purpose cannot yet be called the ethical commonwealth itself, but rather only a particular society which strives for the unanimity of all people (indeed of all finite, rational creatures) in order to construct an absolute ethical whole of which each partial society is only a representation or schema. The reason for this is because each society can be represented in turn as being in relationship to others of this type as in an ethical state of nature, along with all of the imperfections of that (and very much like different, political states which stand in no relationship in terms of international law.)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Various ethical commonwealths would all want to be the universal, but would relate to each other in an ethical state of nature much like the various civil states relate to each other as not being bound by common laws, i.e., in competition.

## II. A Person Should Leave The Ethical State Of Nature To Become A Member Of An Ethical Commonwealth

- 1.1 Just as the juridical state of nature is a state of war of each against all, the ethical state of nature is a state of ceaseless attack by the evil which is found within each and every person, who together (as indicated above) mutually corrupt the moral structure of each other and through their dissensions, due to the lack of a principle uniting them, distance themselves from the common goal of the good, just as though they were a tool of evil (even presupposing the good will of each individual), and bring each other into danger of falling under its rule again.
- 1.2 Furthermore, just as the state of a lawless external (brutal) freedom and independence from coercive laws is a state of injustice and of war by everyone against everyone else, and from which the human is to depart in order to enter into a political civil state,\* the ethical state of nature is a public reciprocal attack on the principles of virtue and also a state of an internal lack of morality from which the natural human is to endeavor to extricate himself as soon as possible

\* Kant's annotation.

- 1.1 Hobbes statement that the natural state of humans is war against all (*status hominum naturalis est bellum omnium in omnes*) has no other error except it should say: is a state of war (*est status belli*, etc.).
  - 1.2 For even if one does not admit that actual enmity always rules between humans, who do not stand under external and public laws, the state of that (*status iuridicus*), i.e., the relationship in and through which they are capable of rights (of the procurement or retention of those rights), is such a state in which each will be himself the judge of what is right for himself toward others, but also has no security against the same from others, nor gives to them, except via each his own might. This is a state of war in which every one is continually armed against every one else.
  - 1.3 His second statement that everyone should exit the state of nature (*exundum esse e statu naturali*) follows from the first, for this state is a continuous abscess of the rights of all others through the presumption of being judge in one's own matters and permitting other humans no security with regard to theirs except merely his own discretion.
- 2.1 Now here we have a duty of a peculiar type, not person-to-person, but rather of the human race toward itself.
  - 2.2 Each species of rational beings is determined objectively, i.e., in the Idea of reason, for a common purpose, namely the promotion of the Highest Good as a common good.
  - 2.3 But since the highest moral good is not achieved through the endeavor of the individual person for his individual moral perfection alone, a unification with others in a whole for the very same purpose being required, i.e., a system of well-disposed humans, in which and through the unity of which alone it can come to pass;<sup>1</sup>

and since the Idea of such a whole as a universal republic according to laws of virtue is an Idea entirely distinguished from all moral laws (which concern what we know to be within our power), namely to work toward such a whole, even though we cannot tell whether such is within our power:

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<sup>1</sup> Here we are thinking of the moral perfection of all.

it follows that this duty is different from all others with respect to type and principle.<sup>2</sup>—

- 2.4 One will already suspect in advance that this duty will have need of the presupposition of another Idea, namely that of a higher moral being through whose universal management (*Veranstaltung*) the inadequate powers of the individuals are united for a common effect.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.5 But we must first pursue the guide of that moral need in general and see where that will lead us.

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<sup>2</sup> It is one thing to comply with one's personal duty regarding moral actions (for this is always within the capacity of each person), and something else entirely to join with others in a union (for this requires something which may be beyond our capacity, namely to find others who are willing to join in for this joint effort).

<sup>3</sup> Since this is a duty of the species and not of the individual per se, something must be added for there to be any expectation of success.

### **III. The Concept Of An Ethical Commonwealth Is The Concept Of A People Of God Under Ethical Laws**

- 1.1 If an ethical commonwealth is to arise, then all individuals must be subject to a public legislation, and all laws, which obligate each person, must be viewable as commands of a common legislator.
- 1.2 Now if the commonwealth to be established were a juridical one, then the group uniting for such a whole would have to be the legislator itself (the constitutional law) because the legislation proceeds from the principle that the freedom of each is to be limited to the condition that it can coexist with the freedom of all according to a universal law\* and, therefore, where the universal will establishes lawful, external coercion.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 But if the commonwealth is to be an ethical commonwealth, then the people as such cannot be viewed as legislating.
- 1.4 For in an ethical commonwealth all laws are actually aimed at promoting the morality of actions (which is something internal, and so cannot be subject to public, human laws). In contrast, the public laws, which would make up a juridical commonwealth, are aimed solely at the legality of the actions, which are visible, and not to the (internal) morality which we are speaking about here.
- 1.5 Therefore, something other than the people must be viewed as legislative for an ethical commonwealth.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.6 Nonetheless, ethical laws cannot be thought as originally proceeding merely from the will of this superior (like decrees which would not be binding without a command having first been issued), because then they would not be ethical laws, nor would the duty commensurate to them be free virtues. Instead they would legal duties subject to coercion.
- 1.7 Therefore, a supreme legislator of an ethical commonwealth can only be thought as one, regarding whom all true duties, hence also the ethical,\*\* must be portrayed simultaneously as his command; and who, therefore, must also be a knower of hearts in order to see into the deepest core of the disposition of each person and, as it must be in every commonwealth, to allot to each that which his actions deserve.
- 1.8 But this is the concept of God as a moral world ruler.
- 1.9 An ethical commonwealth, therefore, cannot be conceived otherwise than as a people under divine commandments, i.e., as a people of God, and indeed according to laws of virtue.

\* Kant's annotation.

1.1 This is the principle of all external laws.

\*\* Kant's annotation:

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<sup>1</sup> In order to travel safely in automobiles on the highways, my right to drive as I pleased would have to be limited by traffic laws ruling me and all, e.g., that I must drive on the right side of the highway.

<sup>2</sup> An ethical commonwealth cannot exist except that the moral commands are viewed as touching the disposition and as immutable, and so cannot be subject to public law which is always directed according to the principle of the mutual limitation of freedom and deal with external actions only (and not the disposition).

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- 1.1 As soon as something is recognized as duty, even it were a duty imposed through the mere discretion of a human law-maker, it is nonetheless a divine commandment to obey it.
- 1.2 We cannot, of course, term statutory civil laws divine commandments, but if they are rightful, their observance is simultaneously a divine command.
  
- 2.1 One could also easily think of a people of God according to statutory laws, i.e., the compliance with which does not touch upon the morality of actions, but instead merely upon their legality, which would be a juridical commonwealth where God would indeed be the legislator (the constitution being, therefore, theocratic), although humans receiving his commands directly from him through priests would lead to an aristocratic government.
- 2.2 But such a constitution, the existence and form of which rests entirely upon historical foundations, does not constitute the task of pure, morally legislating reason. And here we are occupied solely with the solution of this task. Such an historically based constitution will be considered in a subsequent historical section as an establishment according to political-civil laws, whose lawgiver, even though God, is still external. Here instead we are dealing with a lawgiver whose legislation is entirely internal, a republic under laws of virtue, i.e., a people of God "zealous to do good works."<sup>3</sup>
  
- 3.1 Such a people of God can be contrasted with the Idea of a band of the evil principle (a coalition whose members participate in the spreading of evil) and it is a responsibility of such a people of God not to allow that coalition to arise; even though here too the principle assailing the virtuous attitudes lies within us ourselves, and is only represented as an external power illustratively.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [Titus 2:14](#). See also Part II, Rightful Claim Of The Evil Principle To The Hegemony Over The Human And The Struggle Of Both Principles Against Each Another, [Par. 2.6](#); and Part III, Historical Representation Of The Gradual Establishment Of The Reign Of The Good Principle Upon Earth, [Par. 4](#).

<sup>4</sup> This treatment of good and evil as a conflict between the Son of God and the Prince of the world is introduced in Part II, [The Rightful Claim Of The Evil Principle To The Hegemony Over The Human And The Struggle Of Both Principles Against Each Another](#).

#### **IV. The Idea Of A People Of God (Under Human Auspices) Cannot Be Accomplished Otherwise Than In The Form Of A Church**

- 1.1 The sublime and never completely attainable Idea of an ethical commonwealth diminishes considerably in human hands, down to an institution such that only its form is capable of a pure representation. Concerning the means of erecting such a totality, however, it is very limited under conditions of the human, moral nature.
- 1.2 But how can anyone expect that something perfectly straight should be fabricated from such crooked wood?
- 2.1 To originate a moral people of God, therefore, is a work whose accomplishment cannot be expected of humans, but rather only of God Himself.
- 2.2 But the human is not permitted for that reason to be inactive with regard to this occupation, as though each person might see merely to his own moral, private affairs and leave the entirety of the affair of the human race (regarding its moral determination) to a higher wisdom.
- 2.3 He must far rather proceed as though everything depended upon him. And only under this condition dare he hope that higher wisdom will impart a consummation to his well-intended endeavor.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.1 The wish of all well-meaning people, therefore, is "that the Kingdom of God come, that His will be done on earth."<sup>2</sup> But what are they to undertake so that this will occur with them?
- 4.1 An ethical commonwealth under divine, moral legislation is a church, which, to the extent it is not an object of possible experience, is called the invisible church (merely the Idea of the unification of all righteous people under a divine, immediate, but moral world government, which serves as the pattern to be established by humans).
- 4.2 The visible church is the actual union of humans in a whole, which accords with that Ideal.
- 4.3 To the extent that each society under public laws entails a subordination of its members (in relationship of those obeying its laws to those who look to the performance of these laws), the group united to that whole (of the church) is the parish, which under their superiors (denominated teachers or also shepherds) administer only the business of the invisible head of that church. When referred to in this way they are called servants of the church, even as occasionally the visible head in the political commonwealth refers to himself as the first servant of the state, even though he recognizes no one above him (usually not even the body politic itself).
- 4.4 The true (visible) church is that which portrays the (moral) Kingdom of God on earth as much as can be done by humans.
- 4.5 The requirements, hence also the characteristics, of the true church are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Kant is constantly concerned that the human not become a slacker, but always do his very best and not count on any divine assistance before that best effort. See Part I, General Remark, [Par. 8.4](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Matthew 6:10](#).

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- 5.1 1. The universality, hence the numerical unity of the church: this must contain the structure within itself such that even though divided and disunited in contingent opinions, the essential purpose is still erected upon such principles which must lead necessarily to a universal union in a single church (therefore, no sectarian divisions).
- 6.1 2. The character (quality) of this church, i.e., the purity: union with nothing but moral motives (cleansed from the nonsense of superstition and the delusion of fanaticism.)<sup>3</sup>
- 7.1 3. The relationship under the principle of freedom; and not only the inner relationship of the church among its members with one another, but also externally to the political power, and both in a free state (therefore, neither hierarchy nor illuminism, the latter of which is a sort of democracy through an exceptional inspiration, which can vary from one member to another, each according to his own inclination).
- 8.1 4. The modality of the church: the unalterability with respect to its constitution, though with the reservation that contingent arrangements may be changed according to time and circumstance, and which concern merely the administration and which must still contain the secure principles within itself (in the Idea of its purpose) a priori.<sup>4</sup>
- 8.2 (Under original laws, therefore, established once publicly as precepts, as though according to a statute book, and not arbitrary symbols which, because they lack in authenticity, are contingent and exposed to contradiction and are alterable.)
- 9.1 An ethical commonwealth, therefore, considered as a church, i.e., as a mere representation of a state of God, does not actually have any principles similar to a political constitution.
- 9.2 This church is neither monarchical (under a pope or patriarch), nor aristocratic (under bishops and prelates), nor democratic (as a sect of illuminati).
- 9.3 It might best be compared with a household (family) under a common, though invisible, moral Father, to the extent his holy son, who knows the Father's will and simultaneously stands in blood relationship with all its members, fills the position of making his will more precisely known, and which members, therefore, honor the Father in him and so enter voluntarily into a free, universal and enduring union of hearts.

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<sup>3</sup> See Part IV, Moral Principle Of Religion Set Opposed To Religious Delusion, [Par. 7](#), for a discussion of superstition and fanaticism.

<sup>4</sup> The constitution will establish that a disposition for compliance with moral duty is what is pleasing to God, while the administration of the church can vary according to circumstances.

## **V. The Constitution Of Every Church Always Arises From Some Historical Belief (Revelation), Which We Can Term Ecclesiastical Faith, And This Is Best Established Upon A Holy Scripture**

- 1.1 Only the pure, religious belief can actually establish a universal church, because only a belief of reason can be convincingly communicated to all people. An historical belief, on the other hand, which is based merely upon facts, cannot spread its influence further than the news about it can spread, dependent as it is upon circumstances of time and place and our capacity for making judgments concerning its credibility.
- 1.2 It is due, however, to a particular weakness of human nature that we can never count as much on the pure belief as it actually deserves, namely to base a church on it alone.
- 2.1 Human beings, aware of their incapacity to recognize extrasensory (*übersinlicher*) things, though indeed honoring that (pure) belief (which must be convincing for them in general), are still not so easily convinced that the assiduous dedication to a morally good course of living is all that God requires of humans to be well-pleasing subjects in his kingdom.
- 2.2 They cannot think of their obligation except as some sort of service which they are to perform for God, and where it does not depend so much on the internal moral worth of actions as rather on performing them for God in order to please Him, at least by passive obedience, regardless of how morally indifferent these actions may be on their own.
- 2.3 People just cannot get it into their heads that whenever they perform their duty toward humans (themselves as well as others) they also comply with divine commands, hence are continually in the service of God in all their doing and forbearing to the extent these refer to morality, and that it is simply impossible to serve God more precisely in any other way (because in the last analysis these other ways may influence and affect creatures of this world, but not God).
- 2.4 Since every grand lord in the world has a special need to be honored by his subjects and to be praised through subservient displays, without which he cannot expect from them as much obedience to his commands as he might think necessary for ruling them, and moreover, since the human, regardless of how rational he may be, still always finds an immediate pleasure with marks of esteem, he treats duty, to the extent it is simultaneous a divine command, as the pursuit of an affair with God rather than with men, and in this way the concept of a religion of divine service arises, rather than that of a pure moral one.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.1 Every religion consists in considering God as the legislator for all our duties, and deserving honor by all. Concerning then the determination of religion with regard to our conduct in conformity with these duties, it is important to know how God might want to be honored (and obeyed).—
- 3.2 But a divine, legislating will commands either on its own, i.e., purely statutorily, or through moral laws.
- 3.3 With respect to the latter, every person can recognize the will of God (which lies as the basis of one's religion) by merely thinking about it rationally. For the concept of divinity actually arises

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<sup>1</sup> It would seem then that the human wants to consider God as an exalted earthly king and to comply with his laws in order to impress him and secure his favor, and not so much to comply with duty simply for the sake of duty. This is treated especially in Part IV, [The General Subjective Basis Of Religious Delusion](#).



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only from the consciousness of these laws and from the need of reason to assume a power which can supply to these laws the effect possible in a world and commensurate with the final, moral purpose.<sup>2</sup>

- 3.4 The concept of a divine will, determined merely in accordance with pure moral laws, permits us not only to think merely one God, but, therefore, also only one religion, which is purely moral.
- 3.5 But if we assume statutory laws and make religion mean our compliance with them, then the knowledge of religion is not possible through our own sheer reason, but only through revelation. And in that case, no matter if given to each individual secretly or publicly (in order to be propagated among humans through tradition or scripture), it would be an historical religion, and not a pure belief of reason.—
- 3.6 But even assuming there were divine statutory laws (which would not be recognized as binding of themselves, but rather only by virtue of the revealed, divine will), it would still be the pure, moral legislation by means of which not only the will of God is originally written in our hearts—the unavoidable condition of every true religion in general—but also what constitutes that religion; and the statutory laws can only contain the means to its promotion and propagation.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.1 If, therefore, the question "how might God wish to be honored" is to be answered universally for every human, considered merely as human, there is no hesitation in saying that the legislation of his will should simply be moral. For statutory legislation (which presupposes a revelation) can only be considered as contingent and so not as having arisen, or being able to arise, from every human being, and thus not binding for humans in general.
- 4.2 Hence it is "not those who say 'Lord, Lord', but rather those who do the will of God;"<sup>4</sup> i.e., it is not those seeking to please him through exaltation (or that of his emissary as a being of divine descent) according to revealed concepts, which not every human can have, but rather it is those seeking to please God through a virtuous life (with respect to which every person knows God's will) who will be the ones providing him with the true veneration which he demands.
- 5.1 But if we do not conduct ourselves merely as humans, but also as citizens in a divine state upon earth, and as obligated to work for the existence of such a union (*Verbindung*) under the name of a church, then the question of how God might want to be revered in a church (as a community of God) does not seem answerable through sheer reason, but rather has need of a statutory legislation, becoming known through revelation, hence an historical belief which we may call an ecclesiastical belief in contrast to the pure, religious belief.<sup>5</sup>
- 5.2 With the pure, religious belief, everything depends merely upon what makes up the material of the veneration of God, namely the observance of all duties arising in a moral disposition as his

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<sup>2</sup> This is presented in the [CPrR](#) (beginning on or around page 142) where we learn of the need of reason for the Highest Good (and its conditions of God and immortality) in order to provide a purpose to the moral law. Without a purpose any law is inane, and obedience either a vanity or an insanity.

<sup>3</sup> We are to obey the moral law because it is the moral law, and not because it is a divine command. Indeed the moral law precedes any knowledge of God (per the preceding footnote).

<sup>4</sup> [Matthew 7:21](#).

<sup>5</sup> Here then the assumption is that people unite in a church in order to bring about a moral improvement in themselves and in the world via cooperation as in a divine state.

command. But a church, as a union of many people under such a disposition for a moral commonwealth, has need of a public commitment, an ecclesiastical form resting on certain experiential conditions, and which is contingent and manifold on its own, and hence cannot be recognized as duty without a divine statutory law.

- 5.3 But the determination of this ecclesiastical form need not for that reason be immediately seen as an occupation of the divine legislator. Far rather one may reasonably assume that the divine will would be for us to execute the rational Idea of such a commonwealth ourselves. And even though the humans may have sought many forms of a church with unhappy results, they are still not to cease striving for this goal through new attempts, if necessary, which best avoid the mistakes of the earlier ones. And this endeavor, even though a duty for them, is left entirely up to them.
- 5.4 Therefore, we do not really have cause to hold the laws for the establishment and form of some church as divinely statutory. Far rather it is presumptuous to consider them as such in order to spare ourselves the endeavor of improving the form of the church or, even with the usurpation of great authority, to lay a yoke upon the crowd with ecclesiastical rules through the pretension of divine authority. Concerning all this, however, it would be an equal conceit to utterly deny that the manner of the organization of a church could also be a particular, divine arrangement if, as far as we can see, it is in the greatest agreement with the moral religion and, additionally, if this agreement could not be realized were such a moral religion to have suddenly appeared without the appropriate, preparatory progress of the public in religious concepts.
- 5.5 Now with doubt regarding this task, i.e., whether God or the humans themselves founded a church, we see the propensity of the humans for a religion of worship (*cultus*) and, because this goes back to arbitrary directives, for a belief in statutory, divine laws under the supposition that, in addition to the best course of living (which the human may ever take in accordance with the directions of the pure, moral religion), a divine legislation, not recognizable through reason, but rather requiring revelation, would still have to be added. In this way we would emphasize immediately the honoring of the highest being (and independently of compliance with his laws, which are already prescribed to us through reason).
- 5.6 Now it happens in this way that humans will never consider unification into one church, nor agreement with respect to the form given to it, and likewise not on public events being necessary as such for the promotion of the moral aspect in the religion. It is rather, as they say, to serve God through ceremonies, confessions of faith in revealed laws, and observances of the regulations belonging to the form of the church (which itself is still merely a means). And even though all these observances are fundamentally of morally indifferent actions, still it is precisely for that reason, because they are done merely for his sake, that they are held to be all the more pleasing to him.
- 5.7 Hence the ecclesiastical faith naturally precedes the pure, religious faith in the preparation of the human for an ethical commonwealth.\* And temples (buildings dedicated to public, divine services) were earlier than churches (assembly places for the instruction and stimulation of moral attitudes), priests (sacred administrators of pious practices) before preachers (teachers of the pure, moral religion), and it is still more often than not the case for the masses in matters of rank and worth.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Morally speaking it should be the other way around.

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- 6.1 Now if it is once unalterably established that a statutory, ecclesiastical belief is<sup>6</sup> attached to the pure, religious belief as a vehicle and means for the public union of the humans for the promotion of that pure belief, then we would also have to admit that the unalterable preservation of the ecclesiastical belief, its universal and uniform transmission and even the respect for the revelation assumed in it, cannot be cared for sufficiently through tradition, but rather only through a writing, which itself in turn (as revelation for contemporaries and later generations) must be an object of great respect. For that is beneficial regarding the need of the people to be certain of their duty with respect to their divine service.
- 6.2 For with those who do not read it (and indeed most especially with them), at least with those who cannot make any coherent religious concept out of it, a holy book acquires the greatest respect, and all rationalizing accomplishes nothing against that peremptory dictum which destroys all objections, namely: it is written.
- 6.3 Hence also the places in such a book which are supposed to establish a point of belief are simply called sayings.
- 6.4 It is precisely by virtue of their activity that the appointed expositors of such a writing are consecrated persons, as it were. And history proves that not even the most devastating revolution of a state has been able to eradicate a belief established on writings, while that based on tradition and ancient public rituals finds its demise at the ruin of a state.
- 6.5 Blessed\* indeed if such a book, having come into the hands of humans, and in addition to the statutes of the laws of the faith, should completely contain the purest moral, religious teaching which can be brought into the greatest harmony with those laws (as a vehicle for introducing this teaching). In such a case that book can assert an authority equivalent to revelation in aid of the purpose to be attained in that way, as well as with the difficulty of making comprehensible the source of such a book through the preceding illumination of the human race in accordance with natural laws.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 An expression for everything wished for or worth wishing for, which we still can neither see in advance nor produce through our effort according to laws of experience, for which we, therefore, if we want to cite a reason, can adduce nothing except a beneficent providence.

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- 7.1 Now something yet which is appended to this concept of a revelatory faith:
- 8.1 There is only one (true) religion; but there can be any number of types of faith.—
- 8.2 To this we can add that in the various churches, separated from one another due to the diversity of their way of belief, one and the same true religion can be encountered.
- 9.1 Hence it is more fitting to say (as also actually happens in usage): a person is of this or that faith (Jewish, Islamic, Christian, Catholic, Lutheran), rather than of this or that religion.

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<sup>6</sup> The published German original calls for a “not” (i.e., “nicht”) to be inserted here, but which this translator considers to be an error (even though it appears in both of Kant’s approved two editions).

- 9.2 The term “religion” should not even be used when addressing members of the public at large (in catechisms and sermons). It is excessively academic and hardly understandable for them. Indeed recent languages provide no equivalent word for it.
- 9.3 With that term the common man always understands his ecclesiastical belief, which he can see before him, instead of the religion hidden within him and concerning moral attitudes.
- 9.4 We honor most people entirely too much by saying that they belong to this or that religion. For they know and require none; the statutory ecclesiastical belief being all that they understand with this word.
- 9.5 Even the so-called disputes of religion, which have so often shaken the world and splattered it with blood, have never been anything more than wrangling about ecclesiastical beliefs. And those who were suppressed did not actually complain about being hindered in adhering to their religion (for no external power can do that), but rather for not being allowed to follow their ecclesiastical belief openly.
- 10.1 Now if, as usually happens, a church presents itself as the only universal one (even though it is based upon a particular, revelatory belief which, as historical, can never be required of everyone), then whoever does not acknowledge its (particular) ecclesiastic belief is termed an unbeliever and is passionately hated. And whoever deviates only partly from it (in nonessentials) is an errant and to be at least avoided as contagious.
- 10.2 If he ultimately professes that church, but still deviates in some essential of the belief (namely what was added) and especially when he spreads his erroneous belief, he is called a heretic\* and, like an insurrectionist, is deemed punishable as a foreign enemy and is excommunicated by the church (similar to what the Romans pronounced against those who went beyond the [Rubicon](#) without the consent of the Senate) and is given over to the demons of hell.
- 10.3 The presumed, solitary correctness of belief of the teachers or leaders of a church concerning ecclesiastical faith is termed orthodoxy, which can be divided into despotic (brutal) and liberal orthodoxy.—
- 10.4 If a church, which proclaims its ecclesiastical belief as obligatory for all people, is called catholic, while a church, which defends itself against this claim (even though it often wants to exercise the same authority, if it only could) is called protestant, then an alert observer will encounter many laudable examples of protestant catholics and, in contrast, even more obnoxious arch catholic protestants. The former are people of an expansive manner of thinking (even though their church is not) against which the latter, with their very limited manner of thinking, are in clear demarcation and not at all to their advantage.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The Mongolians call Tibet (according to [Georgii Alphab. Tibet.](#) Page 11) Tangut-Chazar, i.e., the land of house dwellers, in order to distinguish them from those who live in tents as nomads in the wilderness. From them the name of Chazaren is derived, and from this that of heretic (Ketzer) because the former were attached to the Tibetan belief (of the Lamas) which agreed with [Manichaeism](#), perhaps even originating from the Mongolians and spreading into Europe with them in their invasion. And so, therefore, for some time heretic and Manichaeism were used as synonyms.

## **VI. Ecclesiastical Belief Has The Pure Religious Faith As Its Supreme Interpreter**

- 1.1 We have noted that even though a church dispenses with the most important indication of its truth, i.e., a rightful claim to universality, if it establishes itself upon a revealed belief which, as an historical faith (even though widely spread through scripture and assured to the most recent descendants), is still incapable of a universally convincing communication, nonetheless some sort of an historical ecclesiastical belief, which we also usually already find in place, must be utilized due to the natural requirement of all humans always to demand something material and tenable for the highest concepts and principles of reason, something like an experiential confirmation (which one must actually keep in mind when intending to introduce a belief universally).
- 2.1 But now, in order to unite the foundation of a moral belief with such an empirical belief, which seems to have come into our hands by chance (be it as an end or as a means), an exposition of the revelation of that empirical belief is required, i.e., a thorough explanation in a sense agreeing with the universally practical rules of a pure, rational religion.
- 2.2 For the theoretical part of the ecclesiastical belief cannot interest us morally unless it works toward the fulfillment of all human duties as divine commands (which constitutes the essential aspect of every religion).<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3 In light of the text (of the revelation) this interpretation may often seem to be forced, and indeed frequently is. And yet it must be so if it is even possible that the text assumes something according to a literal way, which contains utterly nothing for morality or indeed works contrary to moral incentives.\*<sup>2</sup>—
- 2.4 It will also be found that it has always been so held with all types of ancient and modern belief, partly composed in sacred books, and that rational and well-thinking, popular teachers have expounded these so long until gradually, regarding their essential content, they were able to bring these into line with the universal, moral principles of belief.
- 2.5 The moral philosophers among the Greeks, and later among the Romans, gradually did the same thing with the mythological teachings of the gods.
- 2.6 They finally knew to interpret the coarsest polytheism as a merely symbolic representation of the properties of the united, divine being, and to underlay the various depraved actions, or even the wild (though still beautiful) fantasies of their poets, with a mystical sense which brought a popular belief much closer to a moral teaching, one that was understandable to all people and alone profitable in a moral way. And it would also not have been advisable to eliminate the popular belief (polytheism) since some atheism, perhaps far more dangerous to the state, could have arisen in its place.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hence we begin with human duties and then, via religion, we have those duties count as commandments of God. And in this we have the essential core of anything that counts for a moral belief.

<sup>2</sup> For an example of a difficult passage see Part IV, Guidance Of The Conscience In Matters Of Belief, [Par. 4](#).

<sup>3</sup> For a discourse on atheism and the moral law see [Sagan and Kant](#) and [Lecture At An Atheist Youth Camp](#). Furthermore an alleged atheism may have been a major reason for the execution of the Greek philosopher [Socrates](#).

- 2.7 The later Judaism, and even Christianity, consist of such partially very strained interpretations, but in both cases for undoubtedly good purposes and necessary for all people.
- 2.8 The Muslims (as [Reland](#) shows) know very well to impute a spiritual sense to the description of their paradise, which is bedecked with full sensuality. The Indians also do this in the exposition of their Vedas, at least for the enlightened portion of their population.—
- 2.9 But that this can even be done without constantly challenging the literal sense of the popular belief is due to this: long before this popular belief arose, the structure to a moral religion lay concealed in human reason, of which indeed the first crude expressions were aimed at use in worship services, and even induced the alleged revelation in aid of these; but in this way still laid something of the character of its supernatural origin even in these fictions, although unintentionally.—
- 2.10 Furthermore, such interpretations cannot be charged with dishonesty, assuming that no one will assert that the sense, which we give to the symbols of the popular religion or even to the holy books, is also intended by them, but rather that they permit this sense and only assume the possibility of understanding their authors in this way.
- 2.11 For even the reading of these holy writings, or the inquiry concerning their content, has the making of better people as its final intention. The historical consideration, on the other hand, contributing nothing at all to that intention, is entirely a matter of indifference and to be treated as one will.—
- 2.12 (The historical belief, considered as confessional, is "dead in itself,"<sup>4</sup> i.e., of itself. It neither contains nor leads to anything which were of moral value for us.)

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 As an example, we might consider the [59th Psalm](#), Verses 11-16, where a prayer for revenge is found, reaching all the way to horror.
- 1.2 [Michaelis](#) (*Moral*, 2nd Part, P. 202) justifies this prayer and adds, "The Psalms are inspired. If punishment is beseeched in these, then it cannot be wrong and we are not to have a higher morality than the Bible."
- 1.3 I remain with the latter expression and ask whether morality is to be interpreted according the the Bible, or the Bible far rather according to morality?—
- 1.4 Without even taking recourse to the New Testament passage, "To the ancients it was said, etc.; But I say to you, 'Love your enemies, bless those who persecute you,' etc."<sup>5</sup> and wondering how this, which is also inspired, can coexist with that Psalm, I will first attempt to adapt it to my self-evident, moral principles (somewhat like living enemies not being meant here, but rather ones which are far more despoiling and invisible to us, under the symbol of the former, namely evil inclinations which we would wish to have completely underfoot). Now if this does not work, I would rather assume instead that this passage is not at all to be understood in a moral sense, but rather expresses the relationship in which the Jews considered themselves to be vis-à-vis God as their political regent, somewhat as in another place in the Bible it says, "Revenge is mine, says the Lord, I will repay,"<sup>6</sup> which we usually interpret to be a moral warning against self-revenge, although it very likely only implies the law valid for that state, to seek atonement for offenses in the courts of the ruler; where the thirst for revenge on

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<sup>4</sup> This may refer to [James 2:17](#). Here the writer is referring to a faith which is devoid of action.

<sup>5</sup> This is taken from [Matthew 5:43-48](#).

<sup>6</sup> [Romans 12:19](#).

the part of the plaintiff may not be sanctioned in any way, supposing the judge were to permit him to propose as harsh a punishment as he might want.

- 3.1 So, therefore, even if a writing is accepted as divine revelation, still the supreme criterium of that, as such, will be: "all scripture, given of God, is useful for teaching, for punishment, for improvement, etc."<sup>7</sup> And since the latter, namely the *moral* improvement of the human, makes up the actual purpose of all rational religion, this too contains the supreme principle of all scriptural exposition.
- 3.2 This religion is "the Spirit of God, which leads us in all truth."<sup>8</sup>
- 3.3 But this is he who, by instructing us, also simultaneously animates us with principles for actions, and he refers everything, which the scripture may contain for the historical belief, entirely to rules and incentives of the pure moral belief, which alone constitutes in every ecclesiastical belief that which is actual religion within it.
- 3.4 All inquiry and exposition of scripture must proceed from the principle to seek this spirit in it and "one can only find eternal life in that, to the extent it witnesses to this principle."<sup>9</sup>
- 4.1 There is yet another principle associated with that of this scriptural exposition, though subordinated to it, namely that of scriptural scholarship.
- 4.2 The view of scripture as the most worthy and now, in the enlightened parts of the world, the only instrument of unification of all humans in a church, makes up the ecclesiastical belief, which cannot be neglected as popular religion, because no teaching based purely upon reason seems to be suitable as an unchanging norm to the populace. And this belief requires divine revelation, hence also an historical certification of this authority through the deduction of its origin.<sup>10</sup>
- 4.3 But human art and wisdom cannot ascend to heaven in order to verify the credibility of the transmission of the first teacher himself, but rather must be satisfied with the marks which, apart from the contents, can still be taken from the manner in which such a belief was introduced, i.e., from human reports, which must be gradually sought in ancient times and in now dead languages in order to vouchsafe it with respect to its historical credibility. Given this, it follows that scriptural scholarship is required to maintain in authority a church based upon holy scripture, though not a religion (for this must always be based upon sheer reason in order to be universal). And this is so even if this latter (a religion) constitutes nothing more than prohibiting the scripture from containing in its origin something making the assumption of it as an immediately divine revelation impossible. This would be sufficient for keeping those who think to find in this Idea special strengthening of their moral belief (and hence to assume it gladly) from being hindered in doing that.—

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<sup>7</sup> This is based on [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) which reads in one English translation as "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

<sup>8</sup> [John 16:13](#).

<sup>9</sup> [John 5:39](#).

<sup>10</sup> Thus it seems unfortunate that a pure religious belief cannot satisfy the human species. Consequently some appeal to an historical faith seems inevitable if we are going to make progress on the moral front.



- 4.4 But for the same reason not only the authentication, but rather even the exposition, of the holy scriptures has need of instruction.
- 4.5 For how will the layman, who can only read it in translation, be certain of the sense of those scriptures? Hence the interpreter, who is familiar with the original language, must still also possess extensive, historical information and critique in order to take from the circumstances and customs and opinions (of the popular faith) of that time the means, whereby understanding can then be opened to the ecclesiastical commonwealth.
- 5.1 Rational religion and scriptural scholarship, therefore, are the actual, competent expositors and trustees of a holy document.
- 5.2 It is obvious that in this sphere, these two are not to be hindered by the secular arm in the public use of their insights and discoveries, nor bound to certain articles of faith. For otherwise the laity would be requiring the clergy to acquiesce in its own opinion, but which it still only has from the instruction of the clergy.
- 5.3 If the state only ensures that there is no lack of teachers and men of good moral reputation to administer the whole of the ecclesiastical body, to whose conscience it entrusts this task, then it has done everything involving its duty and authority.
- 5.4 But to direct these in the schools and to involve itself with their disputations (which, if only not led by the chancellery, leaves the ecclesiastic public in complete peace) is an imposition, which the public cannot require of the legislator without immodesty, because it is beneath its dignity.<sup>11</sup>
- 6.1 But there emerges yet a third pretender to the office of expositor, one who has no need either of reason or scholarship, but only of an internal feeling, in order to recognize the true sense of the scriptures and simultaneously their divine origin.
- 6.2 Now, of course, no one can bring into agreement that "who follows their teaching and does what they prescribe, will find in any case that they are from God" and that the urge for good actions and propriety in the course of living, which the human who reads it or hears it proclaimed must feel, would have to be conveyed by the divinity itself; because this is nothing other than the effect of the moral law permeating the human with internal respect, which also for that reason deserves to be viewed as a divine commandment.
- 6.3 But just as a recognition of the laws and the fact that they be moral cannot be inferred and ascertained from some sort of feeling, even less so can the secure mark of an immediate, divine influence be recognized through a feeling, because more than one cause can take place for the same effect. But in our case here, the sheer morality of the law (and the teaching), recognized through reason, is the cause of the feeling, and, given even the possibility of such a divine origin, it is a duty to give it the latter meaning, i.e., a recognition via reason, if one does not want to open the door to all sorts of fanaticism, nor slay the dignity of the unequivocal moral feeling through affinity with other fantastical ones.—
- 6.4 Feeling, if the law is known in advance from or according to which it ensues, each has only for himself and cannot impute it to others, hence also not tout it as a touchstone of the genuineness of a revelation. For feeling teaches utterly nothing, but rather contains only the manner in which the

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<sup>11</sup> We might wonder if Kant had here [Constantine the Great](#) in mind who pushed the ecclesiastic authorities to resolve their differences and present a common understanding and doctrine to the public.



subject is affected with regard to his pleasure or pain, and no recognition whatsoever can be based on this.<sup>12</sup>

- 7.1 There is no norm of an ecclesiastical belief, therefore, except the scriptures, and no other interpreter of that belief than the pure rational religion and scriptural scholarship (which addresses the historical aspects of the belief). Of these latter two the former alone is authentic and valid for all the world, while the scholarship is only doctrinal in order to transform the ecclesiastical belief into a definite and perpetually self-maintaining system for a certain people at a certain time.
- 7.2 But concerning this latter, it is unavoidable that the historical belief finally becomes nothing more than a belief in scriptural authorities and their insight. This does no particular honor to human nature, of course, but then again can be made good through the public freedom of thought to which this is all the more justified because only by the learned set displaying their expositions to the test of every person, while at the same time remaining open and receptive to better insight, can they count upon the trust of the commonwealth for their decisions.

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<sup>12</sup> If we hear an alleged communication of God and find that it is morally edifying and that we react to it accordingly, this is nothing else than the moral respect which arises by virtue of the human moral nature. And so this is no proof that this communication be indeed from God, although, of course, all moral duties are now looked upon as divine commands. This subject is mentioned again in Part IV, Section II, Religious Delusion, [Par. 6.1](#).

## VII. The Gradual Transition Of Ecclesiastical Belief Into The Supremacy Of Pure Religious Belief Is The Approach Of The Kingdom Of God

- 1.1 The indicator of the true church is its universality. But concerning this, on the other hand, the mark of its necessity and determinability is possible only in a single way.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 Now the historical belief (which, as revelation, is based upon experience) has only particular validity within itself, namely for those familiar with the history on which it rests. Also, like every experiential recognition, it does not contain the consciousness that the believed object would have to be so and not otherwise, but rather only that it is so. Hence there is an awareness of its contingency.
- 1.3 Historical belief can indeed, therefore, suffice for an ecclesiastical belief (of which there can be many). But only pure religious belief, based entirely upon reason, can be recognized as necessary, and thus as the only belief which can identify the true church.—
- 1.4 Therefore, even if an historical belief affects pure religion as a means of introduction (conformable to the unavoidable limitation of human reason), but still with the awareness that it is merely historical, and if this belief, as an ecclesiastical belief, entails a principle continually to approach the pure belief of religion in order finally to be able to dispense with that means, then such a church can be called the true church. But since the dispute concerning the doctrines of the historical faith can never be avoided, it can only be termed the disputative church; but still with the view of sprouting into the unalterable and all-uniting triumphant church!
- 1.5 The belief of every individual, who possesses the moral receptivity (worthiness) to be eternally blessed, is called sanctifying belief.
- 1.6 This belief, therefore, can also be only a single one, and with all diversity of the ecclesiastical belief it can still be encountered in what, with respect to its goal of pure religious belief, is practical.
- 1.7 The belief of a religion of divine services, on the other hand, is that of a compulsory and mercenary belief (*fides mercenaria, servilis*<sup>2</sup>), and because it is not moral, it cannot be viewed as a sanctifying belief.
- 1.8 For a moral belief must be a free belief, based on pure attitudes of the heart (*fides ingenue*<sup>3</sup>).
- 1.9 The belief of a religion of divine services fancies itself to be pleasing to God through actions (of the cult) which still (even though tedious) have no moral value of themselves and, hence, are necessitated through fear or hope, which also a person of ill will can express. Sanctifying belief, on the other hand, presupposes a morally good disposition as necessary.
- 2.1 Sanctifying belief contains two conditions of its hope for sanctification: the one regarding what we cannot do ourselves, namely to make our own previously occurred actions legally not to have

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<sup>1</sup> As presented below in 1.3.

<sup>2</sup> A mercenary faith, a slavish belief. Examples might be repeating rote prayers and attending worship services without paying much attention and thinking this proves one's devotion.

<sup>3</sup> Natural, indigenous, free-born.

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occurred (before a divine judge); and the other with respect to what we can and should do ourselves, namely to convert to a new life conformable to our duty.

- 2.2 The first belief is that of an atonement (payment for one's guilt, redemption, reconciliation with God). The latter is the belief of one's ability to be pleasing to God by a moral course of living from henceforth.<sup>4</sup>—
- 2.3 Both conditions make up only a single belief and belong necessarily together.
- 2.4 But we cannot comprehend the necessity of a connection except by assuming that one might be derived from the other. Therefore, either the belief in the absolution for the guilt lying upon us produces the moral course of living, or the genuine and active disposition to lead a good life from this moment on produces the belief in the absolution according to the law of morally efficacious causes.
- 3.1 Here we have now a remarkable antinomy of human reason, the solution to which (or, if this should be impossible, at least its settlement) can alone make out whether an historical (ecclesiastical) belief would always have to be added beyond the pure religious belief as an essential part of the sanctifying belief, or whether it can finally be incorporated into the pure religious belief as a merely introductory means, regardless of how far in the future this might extend.<sup>5</sup>
- 4.1 1. If we suppose that some atonement were provided for the sins of humans, it would be quite understandable that each sinner would gladly appeal to that, and if its application depended merely upon the belief (which is to be understood as nothing more than wanting that to be applied) would not hesitate for even a moment.<sup>6</sup>
- 4.2 But it is not at all comprehensible how a rational person, knowing himself to be due a punishment, could seriously believe that he only needed to believe the tidings of an atonement provided for him and to accept it as efficacious (as the jurists say) in order to view his guilt as totally eliminated and indeed in such a way (even with the roots) that the inevitable consequence of this belief and the acceptance of the proffered benevolent deed would be to lead a good life for the future, for which he had heretofore not made the least effort.
- 4.3 No man of reflection (regardless of how often self-love transforms the mere wish for a good, for which he does or can do nothing, into a hope) can effect this belief within himself, as though his object would arrive on its own, lured through the mere yearning.
- 4.4 We cannot think this possible in any other way than the human himself being divinely infused with this belief, and thus to consider it as something about which he has no need to task his reason further concerning any accountability.

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<sup>4</sup> The first belief looks to the past sins and wants to become pleasing to God by being rid of them, i.e., forgiven; and the second looks to the future and wants to please God by being committed to righteous living.

<sup>5</sup> Kant's purpose is to eliminate the *need* for an historical belief, and to use it merely as an introductory means for the pure religious belief, but also without insisting upon the disregard of the historical belief.

<sup>6</sup> Some years ago there was a report of a small Christian group in Japan (which is predominately non-Christian) stopping people on the way home from work to be quickly baptized in order to be able to go to heaven when they die.

- 4.5 If he cannot do this, or is too honest to conjure up such a trust as a means to ingratiation, then with all respect for such an exuberant atonement, and with every wish that such might be open to him, he still cannot avoid considering it as conditioned, namely that his improved course of living, as much as is in his power, would have to precede, and only in this way could he acquire even the least basis for a hope that such a high merit could accrue to his benefit.—
- 4.6 If, therefore, the historical recognition of the latter (the atonement) belongs to the ecclesiastical belief, but the former (a moral course of living), as its condition, to the pure moral belief, then this latter (the moral course of living) must precede the ecclesiastical.<sup>7</sup>
- 5.1 2. But if the human is corrupted by nature, and if he is conscious of the trespasses through which he has made himself guilty and that he is still standing under the power of the evil principle and can find no adequate power within himself to do better in the future, then try as he will, how can he hope to make himself into a new person pleasing to God?
- 5.2 If he cannot consider the judgment, which he pronounces against himself, as removed through a foreign atonement nor find himself through this belief as new born, as it were, such that he could then enter upon a new course of living, which would unite him with the good principle as a consequence, on what then will he base his hope of becoming a person favorable to God?—
- 5.3 Therefore, the belief in a merit which is not his own, and by means of which he is reconciled with God, must precede before all striving to do good works.  
But this conflicts with the preceding proposition.
- 5.4 This conflict cannot be worked out through any insight into the causal determination of the freedom of the human being, i.e., the causes which make a person to be good or bad. Hence it cannot be solved theoretically. For this question transcends the entire speculative capacity of our reason.
- 5.5 But from a practical consideration, namely where the question for the usage of our free discretion is not where we should begin naturally, but rather morally, whether from a belief in what God has done on our behalf, or from what we ought to do in order to become worthy of that (regardless of how that might arise), there is no hesitation in opting for the latter.<sup>8</sup>
- 6.1 For the assumption of the first requisite for sanctification, namely the belief in a vicarious atonement, is at most necessary merely for the theoretical concept. And we cannot make the cleansing from sin conceivable in any other way.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Consider the episode with the [thief-on-the-cross](#).

<sup>8</sup> The solution here is not theoretical, but entirely practical, namely: we ought first to strive, or at least (I maintain) *sincerely* and *earnestly* resolve to strive, for moral perfection on our own and then we have reason to hope for God to write off past trespasses.

<sup>9</sup> In Part II, C) Difficulties Concerning The Reality Of This Idea And Their Solution, beginning with [Par. 4.1](#), Kant speaks of one's own personal atonement where the potential pain of complying with the moral law in the new character of the convert is counted as equal to the punishment deserved for the potentially infinite evil deeds that could have arisen from the formerly "old man" and in that way atoning for them. But whereas that had to do with a purely rational (moral) religion, we are now dealing with an ecclesiastical faith as an introduction and means to that moral religion.

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- 6.2 On the other hand, the necessity of the second principle is practical and indeed purely moral, i.e., we cannot hope with confidence to participate in the dedication of a foreign atoning merit (and thus of sanctification) otherwise than by qualifying for that through our endeavor to comply with every human duty. And this endeavor must be the result of our own effort and not in turn a foreign influence to which we are passive.
- 6.3 For since this latter commandment is unconditional, it is also necessary that the human underlay a maxim to his belief, namely: that he begin from the improvement of living as the supreme condition under which alone a sanctifying belief can take place.<sup>10</sup>
- 7.1 Ecclesiastical belief, as an historical belief, properly begins with atonement. But since it only contains the vehicle for pure religious belief (in which the actual purpose lies), that which is the condition in the religious belief as a practical belief, namely the maxim of action, must make the beginning and that of the knowing (or theoretical belief) must effect the strengthening and completion of that maxim of action.
- 8.1 Here we can note that, according to the first principle, belief (in a substitutionary atonement) would be charged to the human as a duty, while the belief of a moral course of living would be counted as grace.—
- 8.2 According to the second principle this is reversed.
- 8.3 For according to this second principle, a moral course of living, as the supreme condition of grace, is unconditioned duty, while the higher atonement is a matter of sheer grace.—
- 8.4 The first principle is subject to the charge of ritualistic superstition (often not without justice), where a wrongful course of living can be united with religion.<sup>11</sup> The second principle is subject to the charge of naturalistic disbelief, which joins an otherwise perhaps quite exemplary course of living with indifference (or even aversion) toward all revelation.<sup>12</sup>—
- 8.5 This would be to cut the knot (through a practical maxim) rather than solving it (theoretically), which is always permitted in questions of religion.—
- 8.6 However the following can serve for the satisfaction of the theoretical demand.—
- 8.7 The living belief in the archetype of a humanity pleasing to God on its own (the Son of God) refers to a moral Idea of reason to the extent this Idea serves not only as a guide, but also as an incentive.<sup>13</sup> And so it makes no difference whether I begin with this belief as a rational belief, or with the principle of the moral course of living.

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<sup>10</sup> See the footnote to [Par. 8.4](#), General Remarks to Part I above concerning this requirement of full and personal effort on the part of the individual; and which is a mark of the Christian religion.

<sup>11</sup> This reflects the doctrine called “[once saved, always saved](#)” or “eternal security” which has it that a person who *sincerely* accepts Jesus as his Lord and Savior *at some point in his life* cannot fail to enter into heaven, no matter how immorally he might live from that time forth. Sincerity at conversion is the key.

<sup>12</sup> This might easily describe the life and thinking of [Gandhi](#), and perhaps also that of Kant himself.

<sup>13</sup> This refers to Part II, [Claim of the Good Principle](#).

- 8.8 On the other hand, the belief in precisely the same archetype in the appearance (in the God-man) as an empirical (historical) belief is not the same as the principle of the moral course of living (which must be entirely rational), and it would be something entirely different to want to begin with that appearance\* and derive the moral course of living from it.
- 8.9 To this extent there would be a conflict between the two propositions cited above.<sup>14</sup>
- 8.10 But in the appearance of the God-man there is nothing which enters our senses about him, or which can be recognized through experience. Rather that archetype, which lies in our reason and which we superimpose upon him (because, as far as we are able to perceive from his example, he will be found conformable to that) is actually the object of the sanctifying belief, and such a belief is identical with the principle of a course of a living pleasing to God.<sup>15</sup>—
- 8.11 Therefore, we don't have here two different principles on their own which require us to strike out on the one or the other of two opposing ways, but rather merely one and the same practical Idea which we take in one way to the extent it represents the archetype as situated in God and as proceeding from him, and in the other way to the extent it represents this archetype as situated within us, but in both cases as representing the measure of our course of living. And so the antinomy is merely apparent, namely through a misunderstanding to view one and the same practical Idea with its two different referrals as two different principles.<sup>16</sup>—
- 8.12 But if we wanted to make the historical belief in the actuality of such an appearance, happening once in the world, the condition of the solitary, sanctifying belief, then it would be two entirely diverse principles (one empirical, the other rational), concerning which then a true conflict of maxims would arise as to whether we would have to begin with the one or the other, and which no reasoning would ever be able to settle.—
- 8.13 Consider this proposition: we must believe there were once a human who, through his holiness and merit (about which reason tells us nothing), not only did enough for himself (with regard to his duty), but also for all others (and for the deficiency with regard to their own duty), in order to hope that we, but only through the power of that belief, can ourselves be blessed with a moral course of living. Such a proposition speaks quite differently from this: we must strive with all our might for the holy disposition of a God-pleasing course of living in order to be able to believe that the love of this God for humanity (already assured to us through reason), to the extent they (the humans) strive to accomplish his will with all their strength, will, with regard to the sincere disposition, supplement a lack of deed, regardless of how.<sup>17</sup>—

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<sup>14</sup> Cited above in paragraphs 4 and 5.

<sup>15</sup> The archetype, per our reason, enables us to recognize the God-man, and that means the God-man is an example for us to emulate as well as an incentive for us to strive toward moral perfection.

<sup>16</sup> On the one hand we have the atonement (payment for our sins) which we ourselves initiate via the concept of the archetype within us, i.e., the Son of God (See [Personified Idea Of The Good Principle](#) and 3rd Difficulty, [par. 4](#)) and on the other hand there is the atonement provided by the God-man (see [par 8.10](#) above and footnote to [par. 6.1](#) above) who is recognized via that same archetype; and where together they constitute two different referrals to the same Idea of sincere striving toward sanctification.

<sup>17</sup> This is a constant theme of Kant: we must do the best we can before we can expect the aid of God. And it reflects the "hope of the Christian" from the [CPrR](#), V. Existence of God which is quoted above in the footnote to [Par. 8.4](#) of the General Remark to Part I. Here again Kant indicates that a moral religion requires one's best effort in pursuing moral perfection, and before expecting any divine assistance.

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- 8.14 But the former proposition [belief in the appearance of the man-God] does not stand in the capacity of every human (including the uninformed).
- 8.15 History proves that in all forms of religion this conflict of two principles of belief has predominated. For all religions had expiation, put it as they might.
- 8.16 But also from its side, the moral structure in every human did not neglect to make its demands known.
- 8.17 But still in all times the priests have complained more than the moralists; the former loudly (and with the challenge to the authorities to control disorder) about the neglect of divine services which were instituted to reconcile the populace with heaven and to stave off misfortune to the state; but the latter, on the other hand, upon the decline of mores (*Sitten*) which they reckoned very much to the account of that first cited means of absolution, whereby the priests made it easy for everyone to be reconciled with the divinity regarding even the grossest vices.
- 8.18 As a matter of fact, if an unlimited fund is available for the payment of debts already or yet to be made, which one only needs to transfer to himself (and with all claims made by one's conscience being satisfied first and foremost and beyond doubt) in order to make oneself free of debt, while the resolution for a moral course of living can be held in abeyance until one is cleansed with regard to the former, it is not easy to think of any other consequence to such a belief.—
- 8.19 But let us assume that this belief itself were so represented as though it had such a special force or mystical (or magical) influence that even though it could be held as merely historical, as far as we knew, it were still able to improve the human inside out (making a new person out of him) if we adhere to it and the feelings connected with it. Then this belief would have to be viewed as conveyed and conferred immediately from heaven (along with, and subordinate to, the historical belief), where then everything, even with the moral constitution of the human, finally resolves into an unconditioned decree of God, “he will have mercy upon whom he will, and will condemn whom he will,”<sup>18\*\*</sup> which, taken literally, is the dance of death (*salt mortale*) for human reason.

\* Kant's annotation.

- 1.1 Which must base the existence of such a person upon historical evidence.

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 That can easily mean that no human can say with certainty how it is that one person becomes good and another evil (both comparatively), since frequently the structure to this distinction seems to be already encountered at birth. Occasionally also contingencies of life, which no one can answer for, result in this. And also with no more certainty can we speak about what can become of him.
- 1.2 Therefore, we must leave the judgment about this to the All-Seer, which here indicates that his decree for them is pronounced before they are born, prescribing for each the role each is to play.
- 1.3 Prescience (and predestination with it) is in the order of the appearances for the world originator when he occasionally is conceived anthropologically.
- 1.4 But in the supernatural order of things according to laws of freedom, where time vanishes, it is merely an all-seeing knowledge without an explanation as to why one person acts in one way while another acts in accordance with opposing principles. And at the same time such knowledge is also compatible with freedom of will.

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<sup>18</sup> [Romans 9:14-18](#).

- 9.1 There is, therefore, a necessary consequence of the physical and, simultaneously, the moral structure in us (the latter being both the foundation and the interpreter of all religion), namely that religion finally and gradually becomes liberated from all empirical, determination foundations and from all statutes which are based on history and which, by means of an ecclesiastical belief, provisionally unite humans for the promotion of the good, so that ultimately pure, rational religion rules over all "so that God is all in all."<sup>19</sup>—
- 9.2 The placenta, in which the embryo first develops into a human, must be discarded if he is to see the light of day.
- 9.3 The binders of the holy tradition with its appendages of decrees and observances, which provided a good service in its time, become gradually dispensable, indeed finally a fetter when adolescence is reached.
- 9.4 As long as it (the human species) "was a child, it understood as a child" and knew how to issue ordinances (which were applied to itself without its involvement) and to bind both scholarship, and even a philosophy serviceable to the church. "But now that he becomes a man, he puts aside childish things."<sup>20</sup>
- 9.5 The deprecating distinction between laity and clergy ceases, and equality arises from true freedom, though without anarchy, because each obeys the (non-statutory) law which each prescribes to himself, but which still must also be viewed as the will of the World Governor—revealed to the human through reason—Who binds all invisibly into one state under a common government, which was previously insufficiently detected and prepared for through the visible church.—
- 9.6 All this is not to be expected from an external revolution which, very dependent upon fortuitous events, produces its effect like a violent storm in which what is provided at the establishment of a new constitution is regretfully retained for centuries, because it is not to be changed again or at least not otherwise than through a new (always dangerous) revolution.—
- 9.7 It is in the principle of the pure religion of reason as a divine (though not empirical) revelation, continually happening to all men, that the basis of the transition to that new order of things must lie. This basis, once grasped in mature consideration, is brought through progressive reform to completion to the extent it is to be a human work. For concerning revolutions which could shorten this advance, that is left to providence and cannot be introduced systematically without injury to freedom.
- 10.1 But we have reason to say that "the Kingdom of God has come to us"<sup>21</sup> even if only the principle of the gradual transition of the ecclesiastical belief to the universal religion of reason, and so to a (divine) ethical state on earth, has generally taken root publicly somewhere, even though the actual establishment of that state still lies an infinite distance from us.
- 10.2 For because this principle contains the basis of a continuing approximation to this perfection, the whole lies (invisibly) within itself as though a developing seed which, consequently, in turn impregnates itself and which shall eventually illuminate and rule the world.

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<sup>19</sup> [1 Corinthians 15:28](#).

<sup>20</sup> [1 Corinthians 13:11](#).

<sup>21</sup> [Matthew 12:28](#).



The Gradual Transition Of Ecclesiastical Belief Into The Supremacy Of Pure Religious Belief  
Is The Approach Of The Kingdom Of God

- 10.3 But the true and the good, in which the basis as well as the insight and the interest of the heart lies in the natural structure of every human, is, when once made public, thoroughly adequate for communicating itself by means of the natural affinity in which it stands with the moral structure of rational beings.<sup>22</sup>
- 10.4 The suspension through political, civil causes, which may restrict its expansion from time to time, serves rather to make the unification of minds for the good (which, once captured in sight, never leave their thoughts) all the more fervent.\*

\* Kant's annotation

- 1.1 Its useful influence as a vehicle can be retained by the ecclesiastical belief without renouncing its merit or attacking it, and nonetheless removing from it, as a delusion of a God-serving duty, all influence on the concept of actual (namely moral) religion and so, at the diversity of statutory ways of belief, a conciliatory spirit of the adherents of those ways of belief among one another becomes established through the principles of the solitary rational religion, in which the teachers have to interpret all those articles and observances, until the time when, by means of the finally predominant, true enlightenment (of a legality proceeding from moral freedom), the form of a demeaning compulsory vehicle can (with the agreement of every person) be exchanged for an ecclesiastical form which is commensurate to the dignity of a moral religion, namely that of a free belief.—
- 1.2 To unite the ecclesiastical unity of belief with freedom in matters of belief is a problem, for the solution of which the Idea of the objective unity of rational religion through the moral interest, which we take in it, is continuously propelled, even though there is very little hope of the production (of such unity) in a visible church when we consider human nature.
- 1.3 It is an Idea of reason, the description of which in a commensurate perspective (*Anschauung*) is impossible for us, but which still has objective reality as a practical regulative principle for working toward this goal of unity with the pure rational religion.
- 1.4 It is the same here as with the political Idea of a constitutional law, to the extent it should be referred to a universal and authoritative international law.
- 1.5 Experience denies us all hope for this.
- 1.6 There seems to be a propensity in the human race (perhaps intentional) that every single state, if things go according to its wish, endeavors to subjugate every other state to itself and to establish a universal monarchy. But then upon reaching a certain size, it splinters into smaller states.
- 1.7 Likewise every church cherishes the proud claim to become a universal church. But as it expands and becomes ruling, it also reveals a principle of dissolution and separation into diverse sects.\*\*

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The premature and, for that reason (that it comes before the humans have become morally better), dangerous melding of the states is hindered—if we may be permitted here to assume an intention of providence—particularly through two powerfully effecting causes, namely the diversity of language and of religion.<sup>23</sup>
- 11.1 Therefore, even though not noted by human eye, this is the persistently advancing cultivation of the good principle for the establishment of a power and a kingdom in the human race as a commonwealth according to laws of virtue, which asserts the victory over the evil and assures the world of an eternal peace under its rule.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Part I, The Original structure For Good In Human Nature, [Personhood](#).

<sup>23</sup> Kant refers to this in more detail in his footnote to Part I, People Are Evil By Nature, [Par. 2.4](#).

<sup>24</sup> See [Perpetual Peace](#) by Kant.

## **Second Section - Historical Representation Of The Gradual Establishment Of The Reign Of The Good Principle Upon Earth**

- 1.1 We can demand no universal history of religion upon earth (in the most narrow sense of the word) with respect to the human race itself. For a religion based upon pure moral belief is not a public matter, and each person can only be conscious for himself of his own progress toward that.
- 1.2 Hence, it is of ecclesiastical belief alone that we can expect a general, historical description; and indeed by comparing it, according to its diverse and changing forms, with the solitary, unchanging and pure religious belief.
- 1.3 From that point on, where the ecclesiastical belief publicly recognizes its dependence upon the limiting conditions of the pure religious belief and the necessity of agreement with it, the universal church begins to form itself into an ethical state of God and to advance toward the completion of that according to an enduring principle which is one and the same for all humans and for all times.—
- 1.4 We can foresee that this history will be nothing other than the narration of a continuing struggle between the ecclesiastical and moral religious beliefs, the former of which, as historical belief, the human is continually inclined to position first in importance. However, the latter has never surrendered its claim to priority, which belongs to it as the solitary soul-improving belief, and ultimately will most certainly assert it.
- 2.1 But this history can only possess a unity if it is limited merely to that part of the human race with whom now the structure for the unity of the universal church is already brought close to its development, where through it at least the question concerning the distinction between rational and historical belief is already publicly posed, and a decision for the greatest moral matter has been made. For otherwise the history of the articles of diverse peoples, whose belief stands in no connection among one another, imparts no unity for the church.
- 2.2 But for this unity it cannot be reckoned that a certain new belief would suddenly arise in one and the same people and which would be decisively distinguished from the previously ruling belief; even if this previous belief includes the occasioning causes for the new formation.
- 2.3 For there must be a unity of the principle if one is to count the consequence of diverse ways of belief successively to the modification of one and the same church. And it is the history of the latter that actually occupies us now.
- 3.1 With this intention, therefore, we can only treat the history of that church which, from its beginning, encompassed the germ and the principle for the objective unity of the true and universal religious belief, to which that church is gradually brought closer.—
- 3.2 In the first instance we can see that the Jewish belief does not stand in any connection whatsoever, i.e., in no unity according to concepts, with the belief of this church (the history of which we want to consider), even though it immediately preceded and provided the natural inducement for the foundation of this (Christian) church.

- 4.1 The Jewish belief, with respect to its original institution, is a complex of purely statutory laws on which a state constitution was based. For whatever moral amendments were added either then or later simply did not pertain to Judaism as such.
- 4.2 Judaism is actually not a religion at all, but rather merely a union of a group of people who, because they belonged to a particular tribe, formed themselves into a commonwealth under merely political laws, and thus not into a church. Furthermore, it was supposed to be merely a secular state so that if it were shredded apart by adverse circumstances, the political belief (adhering to it in an essential way), that the state would be reestablished once again (upon the advent of the Messiah), would continue.
- 4.3 Even though this state constitution was theocratic at its foundation (visibly an aristocracy of priests or leaders who extolled themselves by receiving instructions directly from God), such that the name of God was honored (though here merely as secular regent who made no demands at all about or upon the conscience), that did not turn it into a religious constitution.
- 4.4 The proof that it was not supposed to be the latter is clear.
- 4.5 First of all, all commandments were of the sort that a political government could also uphold and impose as compulsory laws, for they dealt only with external actions. And even though the Ten Commandments hold as ethical by reason, even if they had not been given publicly, still they are not given with the demand for a commensurate moral disposition (in which Christianity later placed the chief importance), but were directed entirely for external observation. This is also clear since, secondly, all consequences of compliance with these laws or of their transgression, i.e., all rewards or punishments, were limited only to the sort which could pertain to everyone in this world, but not even here in accordance with ethical concepts; for these consequences were to touch also the descendants who had taken no practical part in those deeds or lack of deeds. This might indeed be a prudent means for a political government in pursuit of compliance, but would violate every notion of fairness in an ethical one.<sup>1</sup>
- 4.6 Now since no religion can even be conceived of without some belief in a future life, Judaism as such, taken in its purity, is no religious belief at all.
- 4.7 This notion is confirmed by the following remark.
- 4.8 It is difficult to believe that the Jews as well as others, even the crudest societies, had no belief in a future life, and hence in their heaven and their hell. For this belief urges itself upon every person due to the universal moral structure in human nature.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.9 Hence it must have been an intentional act of the legislator of this people, even though it is represented as God himself, not to have wanted to have the least regard for any future life. This indicates that he only wanted to establish a political commonwealth, and not an ethical one. And given that supposition, it would have been a very inconsistent and inept procedure to have spoken of rewards and punishments which cannot be visible in this life.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: [Exodus 34:7](#) where we read that the punishments for transgressions of one generation are to be inflicted on their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

<sup>2</sup> In his [CPrR](#), Kant shows that the purpose of the moral law is the Highest Good and that the conditions of this in turn are immortality and God. See 2nd Book, 2nd Part, IV and V, beginning around page 159.

- 4.10 Now even though it is not to be doubted that the Jews will subsequently have made a certain religious belief, each for himself, which were mixed in among the articles of their statutory legislation, still none were ever made part of the legal system of the Jews.
- 4.11 So far is it, thirdly, from Judaism ever having had an epoch suitable for the state of a universal church or ever having this universal church even in its time, that it, being a special people, chosen by Jehovah<sup>3</sup> for himself, far rather excluded the entire remaining human race from its community and would be hostile to all other people, and for that reason would incur the hostility of all other people.
- 4.12 With this it is also not too far fetched to suppose that this nation positioned a single God, representable through no image, as the universal ruler of the world.
- 4.13 For we find with most other peoples that their belief doctrines progressed in a like fashion, such that they only made themselves suspect through the worship of certain mighty gods of polytheism, who are subordinate to that world ruler.
- 4.14 For a God who merely wants compliance with such commandments, for which no improved moral disposition is required, is still actually not that moral being whose concept we necessarily must have for a religion.
- 4.15 This would be more easily acceptable regarding a belief in many such powerful, invisible beings if a people thought about things such that, regardless of the diversity of their spheres of influence, these gods would still all agree together to the extent of providing their favors only to the person who were worthy by adhering to virtue with one's entire heart rather than with a belief dedicated to only a single being who made a mechanical cult the primary concern.
- 5.1 To the extent we want to present a system, therefore, we cannot begin the universal church history otherwise than from the origin of Christianity which, as a complete abandonment of the Judaism from which it arose and, based on an entirely new principle, effected a total revolution in the teachings of belief.
- 5.2 The effort given by the teachers of Christianity (or which they may have given just at the beginning) to tie both (Jewish and Christian) in a manual by wanting to consider the new belief as only a continuation of the former (the Jewish), in which all events were retained as preparatory, indicates all too clearly that for them it concerns, or did then, the most fitting means of introducing a pure moral religion in place of the old cult to which the people were much too strongly attached, but still without directly violating their prejudices.
- 5.3 Already the subsequent abolition of the bodily insignia, which served to totally isolate the Jewish people from others, enables us to judge that the new belief was not bound by the statutes of the old, indeed not by any at all,<sup>4</sup> and was to contain a religion which was to be valid for the world and not merely for a single people.
- 6.1 From Judaism, therefore—but not from the patriarchal and unadulterated teaching positioned merely upon their own political arrangement (which was also already very disarrayed), but rather

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<sup>3</sup> The Jewish name for God.

<sup>4</sup> Here we recognize the revolutionary aspect of [Christian Liberty](#) as presented in [Acts 15](#), especially here the abolition of ritual circumcision.

from a Judaism mingled with a religious belief through a moral teaching gradually becoming public in circumstances where much foreign (Greek) wisdom had come to this otherwise ignorant people, which presumably also contributed to an enlightenment of these people through concepts of virtue and to a preparation for a revolution regarding the heavy burden of their statutory belief upon the occasion of the decline in the power of the priests through their subjugation to the rule of a people (the Romans) who viewed all foreign popular beliefs with indifference—from such a Jewish faith Christianity suddenly arose, though not without preparation.

- 6.2 The teacher of the gospel announced himself as one sent from heaven. And as one worthy of such a mission, he simultaneously proved his genuineness through the moral course of living and by declaring the compulsory belief (in sabbaths, confessions and customs) to be nothing in itself, and the moral belief, on the other hand, which alone makes humans blessed “as their Father in heaven is holy”<sup>5</sup> to be the single sanctifying belief. But after he, through his teaching and suffering (including even his guiltless and simultaneously meritorious death\*), had given an example in his person commensurate to the prototype of a humanity which alone is pleasing to God, he was represented as returning again to heaven from whence he had come. And after leaving his last will verbally (as though in a testament) and concerning the power of the remembrance of his merit, teaching and example, he could still say “he (the Ideal of a humanity pleasing to God) would nevertheless remain with his disciples until the end of the world.”<sup>6</sup>—
- 6.3 This teaching would certainly require confirmation through miracles if it had to do with an historical belief about the appearance and the perhaps supernatural rank of his person, but can dispense with such evidence of its truth since it has to do merely with a moral, soul-improving belief. Nevertheless the teaching is associated with miracles and secrets in a holy book, and its circularization is in turn itself a miracle and requires an historical belief which can be authenticated, as well as secured regarding its meaning and sense, only through scholarship.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 With which the public history of this teacher closes (which history, therefore, could also serve generally as an example for those to come).
- 1.2 The more secretive and added history of his resurrection and ascension, occurring only to the eyes of his confidants (which, taking them simply as Ideas of reason, would indicate the beginning of another life and entrance into the seat of sanctification, i.e., into a community with all good people), cannot, even leaving its historical dignity undamaged, be used for religion within the limits of pure reason.
- 1.3 Not merely because it is an historical narration (for that is the case with the narration preceding it), but rather because, taken literally, it is a concept very commensurate to the representational manner of humans, but very burdensome to reason in its belief in the future. For the narration assumes the materialism of all world entities and even the materialism of the personhood of the human (the psychological) which takes place only under the condition of just the same body, and assumes as well the presence in a world in general (the cosmological) which, according to this principle, could only be spatial. In opposition to this the hypothesis of spiritualism of rational finite beings, where the body remains dead in the earth and with the person remaining still alive, and likewise the human with regard to the spirit (in its non-sensitive quality) able to reach to the seat of the blessed without being placed in any location in infinite space which surrounds the earth (and which we also call the heavens), is more advantageous to reason, not merely due to the impossibility of making a thinking material comprehensible, but rather, and especially, due to the contingency which our existence after death is exposed to, that it is based merely on the cohesion of a certain clump of matter in a certain form instead of thinking of the duration of a simple substance as so established in its nature.—

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<sup>5</sup> [Matthew 5:48](#).

<sup>6</sup> [Matthew 28:18-20](#).

- 1.4 With the latter supposition (that of spiritualism), however, reason can neither find an interest in dragging about a body for all eternity, be it as refined as it might, which still (if the personhood depends upon the identity of the body) must always consist of the same stuff which makes up the basis of its organization and which it never grew overly fond of even in life, nor make conceivable to itself what this calcareous earth, from which it is made, is to do in heaven, i.e., in another region of the world where, supposedly, other materials might make up the condition of the existence and the preservation of living beings.
- 7.1 But every belief, which, as an historical belief, is based upon books, has need of an educated public for the guarantee of its surety, in which it can be monitored, as it were, through writers of that time, of whom there is no suspicion of being in a particular conspiracy with its first promoters and who have maintained an uninterrupted continuity with our own community of writers.
- 7.2 In contrast to this, the belief of pure reason has no need of such a certification, but rather proves itself.
- 7.3 Now at the time of this revolution, there was already an educated public in the people who ruled the Jews and even dispersed in their midst (the Romans), from whom the history of the then current time, concerning the events in the political arrangement, was handed down to us through an uninterrupted series of writers. Also this people, even if they were little concerned about the religious beliefs of their non-Roman subjects, still were in no way incredulous with respect to the miracles which were supposed to have taken place publicly among them. Though contemporaries, however, they did not mention anything about these nor about the revolution (with regard to religion) which advanced publicly and which these miracles spawned in the people subjected to them.
- 7.4 Only later, beyond the life of any individual, did they undertake an investigation as to the constitution of this alteration in belief, which until then was unknown to them and had remained so (which had not proceeded without public commotion). But they did not investigate the history of its first beginnings in order to look in their own annals for this alteration.
- 7.5 Hence from then on, until the day that Christianity had procured an educated public for itself, its history is blurred and it remains unknown to us what effect its teaching had on the morality of its religious followers, whether the first Christians were really morally improved people or of the ordinary stamp.
- 7.6 But from the time that Christianity itself became a learned public, or rather entered into the general public, its history, concerning its beneficial effect which one can properly expect of a moral religion, hardly redounds to its credit.—
- 7.7 How mystical fanaticism in the lives of hermits and monks and a glorification of the holiness of the single life made a large part of the people unproductive for the world;  
how vain miracles, in conjunction with that, shackled the people with a blind superstition;  
how an hierarchy oppressing free people raised the terrible voice of orthodoxy from the mouth of presumptuous and exclusively appointed scriptural interpreters, and ripped Christendom into embittered parties due to varying opinions of belief (where no universal concord can be produced if one does not call upon pure reason as interpreter);  
how the state in the East even occupied itself in a ridiculous way with articles of belief of the priests and the clerics instead of holding them within the narrow limits of a mere scholastic occupation (which they are always inclined to transform into a ruling one);

how, I say, this state finally unavoidably became plunder for foreign enemies who at last had to bring its ruling belief to an end;

how in the West, where the belief erected its own throne independently of the secular powers, and where the civil order along with the sciences (which maintain that order) were shattered and made powerless by a self-presumed regent of God;

how both Christian parts of the world were fallen upon by barbarians, not unlike plants and animals which, when their dissolution through sickness is near, lure destructive insects to complete this;

how in the latter (the West) that spiritual monarch ruled and chastised kings like children by the magic wand of his threatened excommunication, and roused them off to foreign wars (depopulating another part of the world via the Crusades) and to attack one another, inciting subjects against their authorities, and provoking the most bloodthirsty hatred against contrary-thinking companions of one and the same universal so-called Christendom;

how the root to this enmity, which even now is restrained from a violent outbreak through political interests, lies concealed in the principle of a despotically commanding ecclesiastical belief, and still prompts anxiety about the occurrence of similar woes;—

this history of Christendom (which, to the extent it is supposed to be established upon an historical belief, could not have turned out otherwise), if it were encompassed in a single glance like a painting, might indeed justify the exclamation: *tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!* (that religion could lead to so much ill!) . . . if it did not shine forth so clearly from its foundation that its true first intention can have been nothing other than the launch of a pure religious belief about which there can be no conflicting opinion (and all that tumult, through which the human race was disarranged and is still divided, arose merely from an evil propensity of human nature) and which at the beginning was to serve for the introduction of that pure religious belief, namely to win over a nation, accustomed to the old historical belief, to the new belief by means of its own prejudices, and in that way to become the foundation of a universal world religion.

8.1 Now if someone asks as to which period of the entire known church history is the best, I do not hesitate in saying that it is the present one, and precisely because we can permit the seed of the true religious belief, as it has been positioned in Christianity indeed by only a few (but still publicly), increasingly to develop without hinderance in order to expect from that a continuous approximation to that church, uniting all people forever, and which constitutes the visible representation (schema) of an invisible Kingdom of God upon earth.—

8.2 Reason in things, which should be moral and uplifting with respect to their nature and wrenching itself loose from the burden of a belief constantly expounded according to the discretion of an expositor, has in all lands in our part of the world under true religious reverence first of all assumed universally (even if not everywhere publicly) the proposition of reasonable modesty in pronouncements concerning everything called revelation.

And now, since no one can contest the possibility that a scripture containing much divineness with respect to its practical contents could be actually viewed as a divine revelation (namely with regard to what is historical in it),

and since likewise the connection of humans to a religion cannot be brought about conveniently nor made enduring without a holy book and a ecclesiastical belief based upon that;

and since also, as the present state of human insight is constituted, a new revelation introduced through new miracles is hardly to be expected—

it is the most reasonable and right thing to continue using this book, once it is there, as the foundation of the ecclesiastical instruction, and not to weaken its value through unnecessary or wan-

ton attacks, but also not to insist upon it as necessary for the belief of any person for the achievement of sanctification.

- 8.3 The second principle is this: since the sacred history, which has been formulated merely in aid of the ecclesiastical belief, can and should have of itself utterly no influence upon the assumption of moral maxims, but rather is given to this belief only for the lively presentation of the maxims' true objective (virtue striving to holiness), it would always have to be taught and explained as directed to the moral aspect. But in this regard it must be inculcated carefully and repeatedly (especially because the common person has a persistent propensity to step over into passive\* belief) that true religion lies not in knowledge or confession of what God does or has done on behalf of our salvation, but rather in what we must do in order to be worthy of that. And this can never be anything else than what has an undoubted and unconditional value of itself, thus what alone can make us pleasing to God. And at the same time every human can be completely certain of the necessity of this without any scholarship.—
- 8.4 It is the duty of the rulers not to hinder these principles from becoming public. On the other hand, it is very daring and a personally risky undertaking to intervene in the course of divine providence and to benefit certain historical ecclesiastical teachings, which still at most have only a probability of truth and are to be accounted for by scholars, by bringing\*\* the conscientiousness of the subjects into temptation through offers, or refusals, of certain civil advantages otherwise remaining open to each person, which, not counting the damage which happens in this way to holy freedom, can hardly procure good citizens for the state.
- 8.5 Who among those who offer to hinder such a free development of divine structure for the betterment of the world or even to suggest such, and thinking about it with the counsel of conscience, would want to stand good for all the evil which can arise from such a violent attack through which the progress intended for the government of the world into goodness might be hindered for a long time, indeed even subjected to reversal; even if it can never be entirely canceled through any human power and organization?

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 One of the causes of this propensity lies in the safety principle that the mistake of a religion into which I am born and raised, whose instruction did not depend upon my choice, and in which I have changed nothing by my own rationalizing, is not accountable to me, but rather to my guardian or to the teacher publicly appointed for that. This is another reason why people do not easily applaud the public change in a person's religion, along with yet another (deeper lying) reason, of course, that of the uncertainty felt in each person concerning which of the several (historical) beliefs is the correct one, while the moral one is always that about which no one finds it especially necessary to stir up any furor.

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 If a government does not want to be known as constraining conscience when it only prohibits the public expression of one's religion, while not hindering the secret thinking of what each finds good, people commonly joke about this and say that this is not a freedom granted by the government at all, since in any case it cannot be restricted.
- 1.2 But what the greatest worldly power cannot do, the spiritual can, namely to prohibit thinking and actually to restrict it, namely by being empowered to impose such a requirement even on those of powerful authority, i.e., the command not even to think otherwise than as prescribed.—
- 1.3 There is a propensity on the part of humans for compulsory belief of adoration, to which they are not only inclined of themselves to give the greatest importance over the moral belief (through the observance of their duties of serving God in general), but even the sole importance, alleviating any other deficiency. Due to this propensity it is always easy for the defenders of the orthodoxy, as shepherds of souls, to frighten their herd piously away from the least deviation from certain historically based arti-



cles of belief and even in advance of any investigation of these articles, so that they will not dare to allow a doubt against the articles impressed upon them to arise even in thought; because this would mean as much as giving ear to an evil spirit.

- 1.4 It is true that in order to be rid of this coercion, one only need want to do so (which is not the case with the sovereign coercion with regard to public confession). But precisely this wanting is what is internally barred.
  - 1.5 However, while this actual coercion to the conscience is bad enough (because it leads to internal hypocrisy), it is still not as bad as the restriction of external freedom of belief, because the former must gradually vanish of itself through the progress of the moral insight and the consciousness of one's freedom from which alone the true respect for duty can originate. But the latter (the external restriction), in contrast, hinders all freely desired progress in the ethical community of believers (which constitutes the essential core of the true church) and subjugates the form of that community entirely to political regulations.
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- 9.1 Finally, with regard to the management of providence, the Kingdom of Heaven is represented in this history not only as in an approach, which tarries at certain times (though still never entirely interrupted), but is even at its entry.
  - 9.2 Now it can only be interpreted as a symbolical representation, aimed merely at enlivening hope and courage and for striving toward that Kingdom, when to this historical narration a prophecy is added (as in the [sibylline books](#)) concerning the completion of this great world alteration in the painting of a visible Kingdom of God on earth (under the government of its returned vicar and regent) and of the happiness to be enjoyed here on earth under him after the exclusion and ejection of the rebels (who attempt yet once more a resistance) and their entire eradication along with their leaders (in the [Apocalypse](#)), and so making the end of the world the closing of history.
  - 9.3 The teacher of the Gospels had shown his disciples the Kingdom of God on earth only from the splendid, spiritually elevating, moral side, namely the worthiness of being a citizen of a divine state, and indicated to them what they needed to do not only in order to achieve to that themselves, but rather also to unite themselves with others of a like mind and, where possible, with the whole human race.
  - 9.4 But concerning happiness which makes up the other part of the unavoidable human wish,<sup>7</sup> he said in advance that they should not plan on that in their earthly life.
  - 9.5 He far rather prepared them to be ready for the greatest affliction and sacrifice. However, because a complete renunciation of the material aspect of happiness can not be expected of a person as long as he exists, he did add "be of good cheer and comfort, it shall all be made good in heaven."<sup>8</sup>
  - 9.6 The introduced addition to the history of the church, concerning its future and final destiny, represents it as ultimately triumphant, i.e., after overcoming all obstacles, and then even crowned with happiness here on earth.—
  - 9.7 The separation of the the good from the evil which, during the advance of the church toward its perfection, would not have been conducive to this goal (for the mixing of both among one another was precisely what was needed in order, partly, to serve the good as the whetstone of virtue, and,

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<sup>7</sup> The Idea of the Highest Good entails two components: moral perfection and a commensurate perfection in happiness.

<sup>8</sup> This human inability to renounce physical happiness reflects Kant's justification of the Highest Good as the purpose of the moral law, namely moral perfection and commensurate happiness. See the [CPrR](#) on or near page 142.

partly, to draw the others away from the evil one through the example of the good) is represented as the last consequence of the church after the complete establishment of the divine state. Then the last proof of her staunchness, considered as power, is added, i.e., victory over all external enemies who are considered likewise as in a state (that of hell), at which point then all earthly life comes to an end, "the last enemy (of the good people), death, being abolished"<sup>9</sup> and immortality arises for both parts, salvation for one, decay for the other, and the form of a church is dissolved, the residents on earth entering into one class with those elevated above them as heavenly citizens and in this way God being all in all.<sup>10\*</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 This expression (if we ignore the mysterious aspect which reaches out beyond all boundaries of possible experience and which pertains merely to the sacred history of humanity, hence not touching us in a practical sense) can be so understood that the historical belief (which, as ecclesiastical belief, needs a sacred book as a guide for humans, but precisely for that reason hinders the unity and universality of the church) will itself cease and turn into a pure religious belief, illuminating all the world equally. And it is toward this that we are already to work diligently through the persistent development of the pure rational religion from that husk which is not yet dispensable.
  - 1.2 Not that the historical belief should cease (for it may always be useful and needful as a vehicle), but rather could cease; with which is meant only the internal stability of the pure moral belief.
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- 10.1 This representation of a narration of the history of a posterity (which is actually no history at all) is a beautiful Ideal of a moral epoch of the world, foreseen in faith and efficacious through the introduction of the true universal religion, up to its completion, which we cannot view empirically, but rather only look to in a continuous advance and approximation to the Highest Good possible on earth (concerning which there is nothing mystical, but rather where everything proceeds naturally in a moral way), i. e., to its establishment.
  - 10.2 The appearance of the Antichrist, the [chiliasm](#), and the proclamation of the impending end of the world can take on a good symbolic meaning for reason, and the proclamation, represented as an unpredictable event (like that of the end of life, whether near or remote), expresses very well the necessity of always standing in readiness, but in fact (giving this symbol an intellectual sense) to view ourselves always actually called as citizens of a divine (ethical) state.
  - 10.3 "When is the Kingdom of God coming?"—
  - 10.4 "The Kingdom of God does not come in a visible form.
  - 10.5 "You will not say: look here it is, or there it is.
  - 10.6 "For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you!" ([Luke 17:21-22](#)).\*

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Here a kingdom of God is not represented according to a particular confederation (not messianic), but rather as a moral kingdom (recognizable through sheer reason).
- 1.2 The former (*regnum divinum pactitium*) would have to obtain its proof from history, and then it would be divided into the messianic kingdom according to the old or the new confederation.

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<sup>9</sup> Probably [Revelation 21:4](#).

<sup>10</sup> Probably [Ephesians 4:6](#).

- 1.3 Now it is noteworthy that the devotees of the former (the Jews), although scattered through all the world, have maintained themselves as such even up to the present day, while other religious adherents have usually fused their belief with the belief of the people among whom they have been dispersed.
- 1.4 This phenomenon has appeared so wondrous to many that they judge it not to be possible according to the course of nature, but rather as an extraordinary arrangement of a particular, divine purpose.—
- 1.5 But a people which has a written religion (holy books) does not easily merge into one belief with such a one which (like the Roman Empire—at that time the entire civilized world) has nothing similar but merely customs. And this is true regardless of the duration of the proselyting.
- 1.6 Hence also the Jews were not guilty of running after strange gods (which was their propensity) after the Babylonian captivity, at which time, it seems, their holy books were first publicly read.<sup>11</sup> This is especially true after the Alexandrian culture, which also had to have influence on them, was able to be favorable to them in procuring a systematic form for these books.
- 1.7 Hence the [Parsis](#), adherents to the religion of the [Zorasterns](#), have retained their belief even up to now, regardless of their dispersion; because their Desturs had the [Zendawesta](#).
- 1.8 The Hindus, on the other hand, who were scattered far and wide under the name of gypsies, because they came from the scum of the people (the [Parias](#), who were even forbidden to read their holy books), did not escape mingling with foreign beliefs.
- 1.9 But what the Jews would still not have accomplished on their own, the Christians, and later the Muslims, did for them, especially the former; because they presupposed the Jewish belief and the holy books belonging to it (even if the Muslims consider them to be falsified).
- 1.10 For the Jews could always find their old documents from the Christians (who proceeded from them) if in their wanderings, where the skill of reading them and, hence, the desire to possess them might frequently have been extinguished, they only retained the remembrance of them which they once would have had.
- 1.11 Hence one does not encounter Jews outside of those cited lands, if we except the few on the coast of [Malaba](#) and perhaps one congregation in China (of which the former could be in continuing commerce with their fellow believers in Arabia), even though it doubtlessly was so that they would not have expanded in those far lands and, except for the lack of any kinship of their belief with the forms of belief there, they would have completely forgotten their own.
- 1.12 But to base edifying considerations upon this preservation of the Jewish people, together with their religion, among such disadvantageous circumstances is very precarious, because each of the two parties believes to find his opinion supported there.
- 1.13 In the preservation of the people, to which he belongs, and the old belief remaining unmixed despite the dispersion among so many nations, one party sees the proof of a future, earthly kingdom under a protective, special, benevolent provision. And the other sees nothing except the warning ruin of a destroyed state in defiance of the forthcoming Kingdom of Heaven, and which still retains a particular providence, partly to preserve in memory the old prophecies of a Messiah going forth from this people, and partly to impose on this people the example of a punishing justice, because of its obstinacy in wanting to make for itself a political concept of that old belief and not a moral one.

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<sup>11</sup> This seems to refer to [Nehemiah 8 & 9](#), although there is a reference in [2 Kings 22 & 23](#) to the discovery of a writing which was read to the public before the Babylonian captivity. It seems then that it was from the Nehemiah time that the writing was read on a regular and public basis.

## General Remark

- 1.1 In all forms of belief which refer to religion, the investigation into their internal constitution comes unavoidably upon a mystery, i.e., upon something sacred, which indeed can be familiar to each individual, but which still cannot be known publicly, i.e., cannot be universally communicated.—
- 1.2 As something sacred it must be a moral object, hence an object of reason, and can be recognized internally in a manner adequate for practical usage. But as something mysterious, it cannot be so recognized for any theoretical usage, because it would have to be communicable to all people and, therefore, also become known externally and publicly.
- 2.1 Now the belief in something, which we are also to consider as a sacred mystery, can be held either as a divinely instilled belief or as a pure belief of reason.
- 2.2 Without being forced through the greatest need to accept the former, we will make a maxim of holding to the latter.—
- 2.3 Feelings are not recognitions and, therefore, indicate no mystery. And since mystery has a reference to reason, but still cannot be communicated universally, each will have to seek it (if there be such) in one's own reason.
- 3.1 It is impossible to make out a priori and objectively whether there be such mysteries or not.
- 3.2 Accordingly we will have to investigate directly the internality (in the subjective) of our moral structure in order to see whether such is found within us.
- 3.3 But among the holy mysteries we may not count the (for us) unfathomable foundations for the moral, which indeed permits of public communication (but for which the cause is not given to us), but rather only that which is given to us for recognition, but which is still not capable of public communication.
- 3.4 Thus freedom, a property which is manifest to a person from the determination of his discretion through the unconditioned moral law, is no mystery, because its recognition can be communicated to each person.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.5 But precisely this freedom is also that alone which, when applied to the final object of practical reason, i.e., the implementation of the Idea of the moral, final purpose,<sup>2</sup> leads unavoidably to holy mysteries.\*

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Hence, the cause of the universal heaviness of all material of the world is unknown to us to such an extent that we can see that it could never be recognized by us, because its concept already presupposes a first motive force (*Bewegungskraft*) residing unconditionally with it.

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<sup>1</sup> See [CPrR](#), 2nd Task, Remarks, Par.3 beginning on or near page 36 as to how we know we are free.

<sup>2</sup> This final purpose is the Highest Good which denotes moral perfection and a happiness commensurate to that perfection per the [CPrR](#). See 2nd Book, 2nd Part, IV and V, beginning around page 159.

## General Remarks

- 1.2 But still it is no mystery, but rather can be made known to all because its law is sufficiently recognized.
  - 1.3 Even if Newton represented it as though it were the divine omnipresence in the appearance (*omnipraesentia phaenomenon*), that is not an attempt to explain it (for the presence of God in space contains a contradiction). But it is still a sublime analogy in which notice is taken merely of the unification of corporeal bodies in a world whole by underlaying to it an incorporeal cause. And that would fare similarly with the attempt to comprehend the autonomous principle of the unification of rational beings of the world in an ethical state and to explain that unity via an incorporeal cause.
  - 1.4 Only our duty, which draws us to that ethical state, do we recognize. The possibility of the intended effect, even if we obey it, lies beyond the boundaries of all human insight.—
  - 1.5 There are mysteries, concealments (*arcana*) of nature, and there can be mysteries (confidentiality, *secreta*) of politics, which are not to be made public. But both of these could become known to us to the extent they are based on empirical causes.
  - 1.6 There can be no mystery regarding what is a universal, human duty (namely the moral). But with regard to what only God can do (something which exceeds our ability, hence also our duty), there can actually be something, namely a holy mystery (*mysterium*) of religion, and to know that there is such an actual something and to understand it, though not penetrate it, might be useful for us.
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- 4.1 Because the human cannot himself implement the Idea of the Highest Good (not only with regard to the happiness pertaining to it, but also to the necessary unification of the humans to the entire purpose) and which Idea is connected inseparably with the pure moral disposition, but nonetheless encounters within him the duty to work toward that, he finds himself drawn to the belief in the cooperation or management by the world governor, through whom alone this purpose is possible. And then there opens to him an abyss of mystery of what God might do in this, if anything, and what is to be attributed to God. And all the while the human recognizes with every duty nothing except what he himself has to do in order to be worthy of that unknown, or at least incomprehensible, supplement.
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- 5.1 This Idea of a moral world governor is a task for our practical reason.
  - 5.2 It is not incumbent upon us so much to know what God be on his own (his nature), but rather what he is for us as moral beings. Although we must think and assume the divine constitution of his nature in aid of this relationship to us, as it is necessary for this circumstance in the entire perfection, which is requisite to the performance of his will (e.g., as an unchanging, all knowing and all powerful entity, etc.). Without this relationship nothing can be recognized of him.
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- 6.1 Conformable to this need of practical reason, the universal true religious belief is now the belief in God as
    1. the all powerful creator of heaven and earth, i.e., morally as the holy legislator,
    2. preserver of the human race, as its good regent and moral provider, and
    3. the administrator of his own, holy laws, i.e., as just judge.
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- 7.1 This belief actually contains no mystery because it expresses solely the moral conduct of God toward the human race. And it presents itself to the reason of every human and, hence, is encountered in the religion of the most civilized people.\*
  - 7.2 It lies in the concept of a people as a commonwealth, in which such a triune superior power (*pouvoir*) must always be thought, only that this is represented here as ethical. Hence, this three-fold

quality of the moral head of the human race can be thought united in one and the same being, which in the juridical-civil state would have to be divided into three diverse subjects.\*\*

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 In the history of the holy prophecies of the last days,<sup>3</sup> the world judge (actually he who will take those who belong to the kingdom of the good principle under his rule and will isolate them as his own) is not represented as God, but rather as the Son of Man and so named.
- 1.2 That seems to indicate that humanity itself, conscious of its limitations and weakness, will pronounce sentence in this selection. This is a kindness, but does no injury to justice.—
- 1.3 On the other hand, the judge of humans in his divinity, i.e., represented (as the Holy Spirit) as speaking to our conscience according to the sacred law recognized by us and to our own accountability, can only be thought as judging according to the rigor of the law, because we ourselves, on account of our weakness, utterly do not know how much could work toward our good, but rather have before our eyes merely our trespasses along with the consciousness of our freedom and the dereliction of duty, and which counts entirely as our guilt. And so we have no basis for assuming kindness in the judgement concerning us.

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 It is not easy to account for the reason why so many ancient peoples reached agreement in this Idea unless it be that it lies in the universal reason of humans, if we want to think of a popular government and (according to an analogy with that) a world government.
  - 1.2 The religion of [Zoroaster](#) had these three divine personages: [Ormuzd](#), [Mithra](#) and [Ahriman](#); the Hindu: [Brahma](#), [Vishnu](#) and [Shiva](#) (only with the distinction that Zoroaster represents the third person not merely as originator of the ills of the world, to the extent it is a punishment, but rather even of the moral evil, for which the human is punished; while the Hindu represents this third person merely as judging and punishing).
  - 1.3 The Egyptian religion had its [Phtha](#), [Kneph](#) and [Neith](#), concerning which, as much as the obscurity of the accounts surrounding the most ancient times of this people lets us guess, the first was to be represented as a spirit distinguished from matter, i.e., the world creator, the second principle as a preserving and ruling kindness, the third being the constraining wisdom, i.e., justice.
  - 1.4 The Gothic religion honored their [Odin](#) (the All-father), [Freya](#) (also Freier, the good) and [Thor](#), the judging (punishing) God.
  - 1.5 Even the Jews seem to have pursued this Idea in the latter time of their hierarchical constitution.
  - 1.6 For in the complaint of the Pharisees, that Christ had named himself a Son of God, they do not seem to have put the weight of his guilt on the teaching that God had a son, but rather only on his assertion of being this son himself.<sup>4</sup>
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- 8.1 This belief has purified the moral relationship of the human to the highest being from injurious anthropomorphism in aid of religion in general, and has adapted it to the genuine morality of a people of God. But because it was first presented in a (Christian) teaching of belief and only through that to the world in a public way, we can term the announcement of that as the revelation of what was until then a mystery for humans, and due to their own fault.
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- 9.1 In it, namely, we find first that we are not to portray the highest legislator as one who is gracious and, hence, indulgent of the weaknesses of the humans, nor also as despotic and commanding

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<sup>3</sup> See [Revelations](#).

<sup>4</sup> This may refer to [Matthew 27:43](#) and/or to [John 5:18](#).

## General Remarks

merely according to his unbounded right with laws merely arbitrary and entirely unrelated to our concepts of morality, but rather with laws related to the holiness of humans.

- 9.2 Secondly, we must not place his kindness in an unconditioned favor towards his creatures, but rather by having him look first to their moral quality (by means of which they first can become pleasing to him) and only then to a supplementation of their inability of satisfying this requirement on their own.
- 9.3 Thirdly, his justice cannot be represented as kind and pardoning (which involves a contradiction) and even less as exercised in the quality of the holiness of the legislator (before whom no human is just), but rather only as a restriction of the kindness to the condition of agreement of the humans with the holy law to the extent they, as human children, can be capable of such agreement.—
- 9.4 In a word: God is to be served in a threefold, specifically diverse, moral quality for which the denomination of the diverse (not physical, but moral) personalities of one and the same being is not an unsuitable expression. Such a symbol of belief simultaneously expresses the entire moral religion which, without this separation, runs into the danger of degeneration into an anthropomorphic servile belief. And this is due to the human propensity for thinking of the divinity as a human master (because we don't usually separate these three qualities in our governmental authority, but often mix or confuse them).<sup>5</sup>
- 10.1 But if this very belief (in a divine trinity) were not considered merely as a representation of a practical Idea, but rather of what God be on his own, then it would be a mystery which transcends all human concepts and which, therefore, would be incapable of a revelation for the human power of comprehension, and would be announced as such.
- 10.2 The belief in that as an expansion of the theoretical recognition of the divine nature would only be the confession of a symbol of the ecclesiastical belief, which is entirely incomprehensible to the humans and, should they allege to understand it, then as anthropomorphic, in which case nothing at all would be provided for the moral improvement.—
- 10.3 Indeed, only that which we can understand and penetrate quite easily in a practical referral, but what exceeds all of our concepts for theoretical purposes (for the determination of the nature of the object on its own), is a mystery (in one referral) and can still be revealed (in another referral).
- 10.4 Of the latter sort (the revealed), we find what was cited above, and which can be divided into three mysteries revealed to us through our own reason:
- 11.1 1. That of the calling (of the human as a citizen to an ethical state).—
- 11.2 We cannot think the universal unconditioned subjugation of the human to the divine legislation otherwise than by looking at ourselves as his creatures. Likewise God can only be viewed as the originator of all laws of nature because he is the creator of the things of nature.
- 11.3 But it is utterly incomprehensible for us rationally as to how beings are to be created for a free use of their powers. And this is so because we, according to the principle of causality, can attribute no other internal basis of action to a being than that which the productive cause has placed

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<sup>5</sup> This is treated in more detail in Part IV, Second Section - Pseudo-Service Of God In A Statutory Religion #1. [The General, Subjective Basis Of Religious Delusion](#),

in it, and which then also determines every action of that being (hence, through an external cause), according to which this being itself would not be free.

- 11.4 The legislation, therefore, which is divine, holy and, hence, pertains merely to free beings, is not by our rational insight to be reconciled with the notion of a creation of free beings. Rather one must treat these as already existing in freedom, which are not determined through their natural dependence by means of their creation, but rather through a merely moral necessity possible though the laws of freedom, i.e., a summons to citizenship in a divine state.
- 11.5 Hence, the summons to this purpose is morally quite clear, but the possibility of this summons is an impenetrable mystery for speculation.
- 12.1 2. The mystery of atonement.
- 12.2 The human, as we know him, is corrupted and in no way commensurate to that holy law of himself.
- 12.3 Nonetheless, if the goodness of God has called the human into existence, as it were, i.e., has invited him to a particular way of existing (as a member of a heavenly kingdom), then he must also have a means of supplementing the deficiency of the requisite fitness for that from the abundance of his own holiness.
- 12.4 But this is contrary to the spontaneity (which is presupposed with all moral good or evil which a human may have on his own) according to which such a good must not stem from another, but rather from himself, if it is to be reckoned to him.—
- 12.5 As far as reason can penetrate, therefore, no one can represent another through the superfluity of his good conduct and merit. Or if this is assumed, it can only be necessary to assume it in a moral intention. For it is an inaccessible mystery for rationalizing.
- 13.1 3. The mystery of election.
- 13.2 Even if that substitutional sufficiency were admitted as possible, the morally credulous acceptance of that is still a determination of the will for the good, which already presupposes a disposition in the human which is pleasing to God, but which no human can produce on his own due to the natural corruption within himself.
- 13.3 But that a heavenly grace should work in him, which grants this assistance to one and denies it to another and not according to the merit of the works, but through an unconditioned mandate, destining one part of our race to blessedness and the other to eternal destruction, there is in turn no concept of a divine justice, but rather everything would have to be referred to a wisdom whose rule is for us an utter mystery.
- 14.1 Now consider these mysteries, to the extent they touch the moral life history of every human, namely: how it comes about that in general there is a moral good or evil in the world; and still (if the evil is in each person and at every time) how from the evil the good can arise and be produced in any person at all; or why, if this happens with some, but others remain excluded from it. Concerning all these mysteries God has revealed nothing to us, and also cannot do so, because we still would not understand.\*



## General Remarks

14.2 It would be as though we wanted to explain and make conceivable to us what happens to a person through his freedom, about which God has indeed revealed his will through the moral law in us, but has left the causes, by which a free action happens or does not happen on earth, in such darkness and where everything must remain for human investigation, but what, as history, is still to be grasped from freedom according to law of causes and effects.\*\*

14.3 But everything that we need for the objective rule of our conduct is sufficiently revealed (through reason and scripture) and this revelation is likewise understandable for every human.

\* Kant's annotation:

1.1 One usually has no scruples about demanding the belief in mysteries from the novice of the religion, because the fact that we do not comprehend them, i.e., do not penetrate the possibility of their objects, can justify us just as little in rejecting their assumption as rejecting, for example, the fecundity of organic material, which also no one grasps, and yet cannot for that reason decline to accept, even though it is and will remain a mystery for us.

1.2 But we still understand quite well what this expression is to say and we have an empirical concept of the object along with the consciousness that there is no contradiction within it.—

1.3 Now of each and every mystery, advanced for a belief, one can justly require an understanding of what is meant by it. This does not occur by understanding the individual words by which it is expressed, i.e., that they be connected with a meaning, but rather that these words, grasped together in a concept, must allow a meaning, and not that all thinking terminates with them.—

1.4 That God could permit this recognition to come to us through inspiration, if only there is no lack of a sincere wish on our part, is not thinkable; for it cannot inhere within us at all; for the nature of our understanding is not capable of such.<sup>6</sup>

\*\* Kant's annotation:

1.1 Hence, we understand very well what freedom is in a practical context (when speaking of duty). But concerning the causality of freedom (its nature, as it were), we cannot even think of wanting to understand it in a theoretical sense without contradiction.

15.1 That the human is called to a moral course of living through the moral law,  
that he finds unquenchable respect for this law lying within him as well as promise for confidence regarding this good spirit and for a hope to be able to satisfy that spirit, regardless of what may come,

that finally, holding together the latter expectation (the hope) with the stringent command of the former (the living), he would have to continually test himself as required by a judge for accountability;

concerning all this reason, heart and conscience instruct and likewise impel.

15.2 It is immodest to demand that more be opened to us, and if this were to occur, it must not be counted to a universal human need.

16.1 Even though that great mystery, encompassing everything named in one formula, can be made comprehensible through one's own reason to every human as a practically necessary religious

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<sup>6</sup> It would seem to follow that if God created the humans, then he also restricted himself at the same time in being unable to communicate with them except to the extent of their capacity for communication. Recognizing a divine communication is treated in Part IV, [Guidance of Conscience](#).

Idea, we can still say that in order to become the moral foundation of religion, especially of a public one, it first became revealed at the time when it became publicly taught and was made the symbol of an entirely new religious epoch.

- 16.2 Solemn formulas usually contain their own language, determined merely for those who belong to a particular group (a guild or a commonwealth). They are frequently mystical and not understood by all, and these should be utilized (out of respect) only in aid of a ceremonial performance (as perhaps when someone is to be initiated as a member into an exclusive company).
- 16.3 But the highest aim of moral perfection for finite creatures, never fully to be attained by humans, is the love of the law.
- 17.1 Conformable to this Idea there would be a principle of belief in the religion: "God is love."  
In it one can honor the loving one (with the love of the moral pleasing of humans, to the extent they are adequate to his holy law), the father;  
furthermore, in him, to the extent he presents himself in his all-sustaining Idea as the beloved archetype generated of himself, his son;  
finally also, to the extent he limits this pleasing to the condition of the conformity of the human with the condition of that love of the pleasing, and in that way manifests love based upon wisdom, the holy spirit.\*  
But this is not actually to invoke a multiple personhood as such (for that would indicate a diversity of the being—but he is always only a single object), but in the name of the beloved object, honored of himself beyond everything, to stand in union with whom it is a wish and simultaneous a duty.
- 17.2 By the way, the theoretical confession of the belief in the divine nature in this three-fold quality belongs to the sheer, classical formula of a church belief in order to distinguish it from other modes of belief derived from historical sources, with which only few people are able to combine a clear and determined concept (exposed to no misunderstanding) and whose discussion pertains more to the teachers in their relationship to one another (as the philosophical and scholarly expositors of a holy book) in order to agree as to its sense, in which not everything is for the common capacity for comprehension or even for the needs of this time. For the sheer, literal belief spoils the true religious disposition rather than improves it.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 This spirit, through which the love of God as sanctifier (actually our mutual love conformable to this) is unified with the fear toward God as legislator, i.e., the conditioned with the condition, which, therefore, can be represented "as proceeding from both"<sup>7</sup> is additionally "he leads in all truth (observance of duty)," and simultaneously the actual judge of humans (before their conscience).
- 1.2 For judging can be taken in a two-fold meaning: either as that concerning merit and lack of merit, or guilt and innocence.
- 1.3 God, considered as love (in his Son), judges humans to the extent that a merit can prove beneficial over their guilt, and here arises his pronouncement as to worthiness or unworthiness.
- 1.4 Those, to whom such (merit) can be attributed, he separates apart as his own.
- 1.5 The remainder go away empty handed.

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<sup>7</sup> This and the following quote suggest [John 16:13-15](#).

## General Remarks

- 1.6 In contrast, the sentence of the judge with respect to justice (the one actually to be denominated under the name of the Holy Spirit), concerning someone for whom no merit is forthcoming, is simply: guilty or innocent, i.e., condemnation or acquittal.—
- 1.7 In the first case, judging means the isolation of the meritorious from the undeserving, both of whom apply for a prize (blessedness).
- 1.8 But with merit here no benefit of morality is understood with reference to the law (regarding which no surplus of observance of duty can offset our guiltiness), but rather only in comparison with other humans concerning their moral disposition.
- 1.9 The worthiness always has a negative meaning (not-unworthy), namely the moral susceptible for such a kindness.—
- 1.10 He, therefore, judging in the first quality (as a referee), makes a judgment of selection between two persons (or parties) competing for the prize (of blessedness). But in the second quality, however, the sentence (by the actual judge) of one and the same person before a court (the conscience), makes a legal determination between prosecutor and defense.—
- 1.11 Now if it is assumed that all humans stand under the guilt of sin, but for some a merit can be allowed, then the judgment of the court takes place from love and where, at the lack of merit, there can only be an excommunication. And then the judgment of damnation (by the human submitting to the judge due to justice) would be the inevitable consequence.—
- 1.12 In this way the apparently conflicting statements, "the Son will come to judge the living and the dead"<sup>8</sup> and "God did not send Him into the world to condemn the world but rather that through him it becomes holy" ([John 3:17](#)), can be reconciled, in my opinion, and stand in agreement with the statement that "who does not believe in the Son is judged already" ([verse 18](#)), namely through that spirit of whom it is said "he will judge the world for its sins and in justice"<sup>9</sup>—
- 1.13 The anxious concern of such distinctions in the field of sheer reason, for the sake of which they are actually placed here, one could easily hold as an unnecessary and burdensome subtlety. And indeed they would be that if they were applied to the investigation of the divine nature.
- 1.14 But since in the affairs of their religion the humans are continually inclined to appeal to divine kindness on account of their transgressions, but still cannot avoid his righteousness, but then since a gracious judge in one and the same person is a contradiction, one easily sees that even in a practical regard the concepts about this are very shaky and must be incongruent with each other. Its rectification and precise determination, therefore, would be of great practical importance.

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<sup>8</sup> [2 Timothy 4:1](#).

<sup>9</sup> [Acts 17:31](#).

## **PART IV - Service And Pseudo-Service Under The Rule Of The Good Principle, Or Religion And Clericalism**

- 1.1 There is already a beginning to the rule of the good principle and an indication “that the Kingdom of God comes to us,”<sup>1</sup> even if only the principles of its constitution start becoming publicly known. For it is already in the world of thought if the foundations, by means of which alone that rule can be achieved, have taken universal root, even though the complete development of its appearance in the sense world is drawn out into the unforeseeable future.
- 1.2 We have already seen that there is a duty of a peculiar sort (*officium sui generis*<sup>2</sup>) to unite into an ethical commonwealth, and that even if each person complies with his private duty, such that we might even be able to infer a contingent agreement of all for a common good even without a particular organization being necessary for that, this agreement of all persons is still not to be hoped for if a specific endeavor were not undertaken from the union of these persons with each other for precisely that purpose and for the establishment of a commonwealth under moral laws as a united and, therefore, strengthened force to withstand the challenges of the evil principle (to which all people are tempted to serve as a tool, each against the other).<sup>3</sup>—
- 1.3 We have also seen that such a commonwealth, as a kingdom of God, could only be undertaken by people through religion,<sup>4</sup> and that finally, in order for this to be public (which is requisite for a commonwealth), it would have to be represented in the physical form of a church, whose organization, therefore, the humans are obligated to establish as an undertaking which is left to them and of whom it can be required.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.1 But to establish a church as a commonwealth according to religious laws seems to require more wisdom (with regard to both insight and a good disposition) than one might dare to trust to humans. And this seems especially so since it appears that the moral good, which is intended through such an organization, would have to be presupposed on their behalf in support of this endeavor.
- 2.2 In fact it is even nonsensical to suggest that humans should establish a kingdom of God (in the way they can establish a kingdom of a human monarch). God himself must be the the originator of his Kingdom.
- 2.3 But since we do not know what God does immediately to constitute in actuality the Idea of his Kingdom, in which we find within us the moral determination to be citizens and subjects (though we certainly do know what we must do in order to make ourselves fit members of that kingdom),

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<sup>1</sup> [Matthew 6:10](#).

<sup>2</sup> This may mean a “duty to accomplish together.”

<sup>3</sup> This hearkens back to Part III, A Person Should Leave The Ethical State Of Nature To Become A Member Of An Ethical Commonwealth, [Par. 2](#). And see also Part III - The Victory Of The Good Principle Over The Evil And The Establishment Of A Kingdom Of God Upon Earth, [Par. 2](#), related to the effect of the competitive makeup of the human in society, i.e., improved culture (a good) and also aggression (an evil).

<sup>4</sup> Atheism, therefore, would not be adequate to the task. See paragraph on [atheism](#) in the Translator’s Summary of the *CPrR*, page xv. See also above [Part III-1-III](#).

<sup>5</sup> Thus all who want to join together for the moral perfection of the world will have to do so in the form of a church (which was justified earlier in [Part III-1-IV](#)).

this Idea, regardless of whether it has been awakened and made public in the human race through reason or through scripture, still binds us to the regulation of a church, whose founder in the final analysis is God himself, and who is also the originator of its constitution. Even so humans are still the originators of the organization as the members and free citizens of this Kingdom. Accordingly there are those among the latter (the originators of the organization) who administer the church's public business as its servants, even as all others make up a fellowship subject to their laws, i.e., the congregation.

- 3.1 Since a pure religion of reason, as a public religious belief, provides merely the Idea of a church (namely an invisible one), and since the visible church, based upon statutes, is alone needful and capable of an organization through humans, it follows that service under the governance of the good principle in the invisible church cannot be considered as ecclesiastical service. Hence this pure religion has no legal servant as administrators of an ethical commonwealth, for each member receives his orders directly from the highest legislator.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.2 But nonetheless, since we stand in the service of God with respect to all our duties (which we simultaneously have to view altogether as divine commands), the religion of pure reason will have all well-meaning people as its servants (but not as its administrators). But they cannot be called servants of a church, i.e., of a visible church, and it is solely of this that we are referring to here.—
- 3.3 Meanwhile, because each church established upon statutory laws can be the true church only to the extent it contains within itself a principle to continually approach the pure rational belief (which, if it is practical, actually constitutes the religion in every belief), and eventually to be able to dispense with the ecclesiastical belief (with respect to what is historical in it), we will still be able to place in these laws, and to the administrators of the church founded on them, a service (*cultus*) of the church to the extent these direct their people and organization always to that last purpose (a public religious belief).<sup>7</sup>
- 3.4 Conversely, the servants of a church who take no regard at all for this, who far rather proclaim the maxim of continuous approximation to the pure rational belief as damnable, and the adherence to the historical and statutory part of the church belief as alone sanctifying, can rightly be blamed with a pseudo-service<sup>8</sup> of the church or (what is represented through this church) of the ethical commonwealth under the rule of the good principle.—
- 3.5 With a pseudo-service (*cultus spurius*) we mean persuading someone to serve through such actions which in fact annul his intention.
- 3.6 But this happens in a commonwealth where what has value only as a means of satisfying the will of a superior is equated with, and substituted for, that which makes us immediately pleasing to him. In this way then the intention of the superior is frustrated.

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<sup>6</sup> Presumably this will be the effect of the moral law on humans.

<sup>7</sup> Thus the currently existing churches would have to be considered as transitional with respect to laws and administrators.

<sup>8</sup> Here pseudo is to be defined as “not authentic or real, but without the intention to deceive.”

## First Section - Divine Service In A Religion In General

- 1.1 Religion (considered subjectively) is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.\*
- 1.2 If I must know in advance that something is a divine command in order to recognize it as my duty, then I am dealing with a revealed religion (or one needing a revelation). But if I must know in advance that something is a duty before I can recognize it as a divine command, then I have a natural religion.—
- 1.3 Anyone declaring natural religion alone to be morally necessary, i.e., for duty, can also be called a rationalist (in matters of faith).
- 1.4 If he denies the reality of every supernatural, divine revelation, he is called a naturalist. If he allows such, but asserts that it is not required to know it for religion nor to assume it to be actual, then he would be known as a pure rationalist. But if he holds belief in divine revelation to be necessary for a universal religion, then he could be called a pure supernaturalist in matters of belief.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Through this definition many faulty explanations of the concept of a religion in general are precluded.
- 1.2 First: that within it, concerning theoretical recognition and knowledge, no assertable knowledge (even of the existence of God) is advanced because such knowledge, given the dearth of our insight concerning supersensitive objects, could already be feigned. Instead we are permitted only a problematical assumption (hypothesis) according to speculation about the supreme cause of things.<sup>1</sup> But with respect to the object,<sup>2</sup> to which we are directed by our morally commanding reason to effect, a belief is presupposed which promises effect to the ultimate intention of this practically and, hence, freely assertable belief, which has need only of the Idea of God, to which all morally earnest (and, for that reason, credible) preparations for the good must inexorably commend without pretending to be able to secure objective reality to that through any theoretical recognition.
- 1.3 To that, which can be made into a duty for every human, the minimum recognition (it being possible that there is a God) must already be subjectively adequate.
- 1.4 Second: by means of this definition of a religion in general we prevent the errant representation as though it were a complex (*Inbegriff*) of special duties referred immediately to God. And in this way we avoid assuming (as the human is wont to do) any courtly service apart from the ethical-civil human duties (of one human to another), and avoid seeking subsequently to make good any deficiency with regard to those duties by means of such courtly service.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.5 There are no particular duties vis-à-vis God in a universal religion. For God can receive nothing from us, and we can neither influence him nor effect him.
- 1.6 If we wanted to make the appropriate reverence before him into such a duty, then we are forgetting that this is not a special action of religion, but rather the religious disposition with all our dutiful actions in general.
- 1.7 If it is said "one is supposed to obey God more than men,"<sup>4</sup> then that means nothing other than this: if civil statutes, with respect to which humans can be legislators and judges, come into conflict with duties which reason prescribes unconditionally, and concerning their compliance or trespass only God can be judge, then the duties of reason must trump such statutes.

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<sup>1</sup> This is included in the Dialectic of the [CPR](#) beginning on or near page 476.

<sup>2</sup> Per the [CPrR](#) (beginning on or near page 183) this object will be the Highest Good, i.e., a state of moral perfection coupled with a commensurate perfection in happiness.

<sup>3</sup> This avoiding of "courtly service" will be emphasized in the course of this Part IV.

<sup>4</sup> [Acts 5:29](#).

## Divine Service In A Religion In General

- 1.8 But if with that dictum we understand that God is to be obeyed more than humans, i.e., a command of God statutorily issued as such by a church, then that principle could easily become the frequently heard war cry of a hypocritical and power hungry clergy for an insurrection against their civil authorities.
- 1.9 For the permitted, which the civil authority commands, is certainly duty. But whether something, which is indeed permitted, but only recognizable through divine revelation, be actually commanded by God, is (at least for the most part) highly uncertain.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.1 By virtue of his title, a rationalist must voluntarily restrain himself to the limits of human insight.
- 2.2 Hence he will never dogmatize like a naturalist, nor will he deny the internal possibility of revelation in general, nor the necessity of a revelation as a divine means for the introduction of the true religion (for regarding this no person can determine anything through reason).
- 2.3 The point in dispute, therefore, can only touch upon the reciprocal claims of the pure rationalist and the supernaturalist in matters of belief, or concerning what the one or the other assumes as pertaining to the universal, true religion necessarily and sufficiently, or only contingently.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.1 If we don't divide religion in terms of its origin and its internal possibility (where it divides into the natural and the revealed), but rather merely in terms of its constitution which makes it capable of external communication, then this can take two forms: either a natural religion, concerning which (once it is established) everyone can be convinced through one's own reason, or an erudite religion, about which people can be convinced only by means of a teaching (into and through which they must be led).—
- 3.2 This distinction is very important, for from the origin of a religion we can conclude nothing concerning its suitability or unsuitability for being a universal human religion. But we can do this from its constitution to be universally communicated or not. And it is the constitution for universal communication that makes up the essential character of a religion which is to join all people.
- 4.1 Hence a religion can be a natural one and still revealed, if it is so constituted that the humans would and should have come upon it themselves through the mere usage of their reason, even if they would not have come upon it so quickly or with such wide propagation as is required. Its revelation, therefore, could be prudent for a given time and place and very expedient for the human race, so much so that when the religion so introduced is once present and has been made known publicly, every one can be convinced of its truth himself and through his own reason.
- 4.2 In this case the religion is objectively a natural religion, but subjectively a revealed one. And for this reason it actually deserves the former name.

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<sup>5</sup> The question of how the human can ascertain the will of God will be considered in more detail in Part IV, [Guidance Of The Conscience In Matters Of Belief](#).

<sup>6</sup> The pure rationalist will admit that a revelation is possible and may even be helpful in introducing the moral religion, while the supernaturalist will insist that a particular historical revelation and ecclesiastical belief is necessary for pleasing God; per Par. 1 above.



- 4.3 For eventually it might be entirely forgotten that such a supernatural revelation ever preceded, but without that religion losing even the least in comprehensibility, in certitude or in its power over the mind.<sup>7</sup>
- 4.4 But it is something else again with a religion which, due to its internal makeup, can only be viewed as revealed.
- 4.5 If it were not preserved in a completely secure tradition or in holy books as certifications, it would vanish from the world, and then a revelation would either have to be repeated publicly from time to time, or have to persist continually and internally in every person supernaturally; for without that the expansion and propagation of such a belief would not be possible.
- 5.1 But every religion, even the revealed religion, must, at least to some degree, contain certain principles of the natural religion.
- 5.2 For revelation can be added to the concept of a religion only through reason, because this concept itself, as derived from an obligation under the will of a moral legislator, is a concept of pure reason.
- 5.3 Hence we will review even a revealed religion and consider it in one way as a natural religion and in another way as a learned one, and we will distinguish what or how much of it arises from which source.
- 6.1 But this is not easily done when we intend to speak of a revealed religion (at least one taken for that) unless we produce some example from history. For otherwise we would still have to think up cases as examples in order to be understood, but then with the possibility of such cases being contested.
- 6.2 But we cannot do better than to consider some book, which contains a revealed religion (especially one which is intimately interwoven with moral teachings and, hence, teachings related to reason), and use that as a means for the exposition of our Idea of a revealed religion in general. Accordingly we will take one of the various books reputed to be of a revelation (and which deal with religion and virtue) in order to search out whatever may be pure, and so what may be a universal, rational religion in it. And this will exemplify an activity which is beneficial on its own. But in doing this we will not get involved in the occupation of anyone to whom the exposition of this book is entrusted as the complex of a positive, revelatory teaching, nor will we desire in this way to contest that exposition, which is based on scholarship.<sup>8</sup>—
- 6.3 This moreover is very advantageous to such an expositor, for he sets out with the philosophers in pursuit of the identical goal, namely the morally good. The latter do this very thing through their own rational foundations, and achieve what the former thinks to do in a different way.—
- 6.4 Now here this book might be the New Testament as the source of the Christian doctrine of belief.

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<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this means that the story of Jesus, for example, could become merely legendary, and still the religion could continue, only now more purely rational, i.e., without factual details necessary for belief. In other words: as an inspiring myth the Jesus story might remain just as effectual and practical.

<sup>8</sup> This seems to refer back to the [Second Preface, Par 2.1](#), with the image of two concentric circles, a larger one encompassing the other and representing all the teachings of a belief and the smaller one representing elements of the pure religion contained in that belief.



- 6.5 Consistent now with our intention, we will seek to represent the Christian religion in two sections, first as a natural religion and then secondly as an erudite religion regarding the contents of the New Testament and according to the principles arising from within it.

## First Division - The Christian Religion As Natural Religion

- 1.1 The natural religion as moral (referring to the freedom of the subject) and connected to the concept of what can procure an effect for its final purpose (the concept of God as moral originator of a world) and referred to a duration of the human, which is commensurate to this entire purpose (immortality), is a pure, practical concept of reason<sup>1</sup> which, regardless of its infinite fruitfulness, still presupposes such little theoretical capacity of reason that one can sufficiently convince each person of it practically, and can at the very least expect the effect of such conviction by everyone as a duty.
- 1.2 Within it lies the great requirement of the true church, namely the qualification of universality to the extent we understand with that a validity for every person (*universitas vel omnitudo distributiva*), i.e., universal accord.
- 1.3 In order to preserve and expand it as a world religion in this sense, it has need, of course, of a corps of servants (*ministerium*) of the merely invisible church, but no officials (*officiales*), i.e., teachers, but not prelates, because through a religion of reason of every individual no church will exist except as a universal union (*omnitudo collectiva*), or is even really intended by that Idea.—
- 1.4 But since such an accord cannot persevere of itself (and so can hardly be propagated in its universality) without becoming a visible church, i.e., the formation of a union of believers in a (visible) church according to principles of a pure religion of reason,  
and since this church does not arise out of that accord of itself, or even if it were so established would not be brought by its voluntary adherents (as was shown above) into an enduring state as a community of believers (since with such a religion none of these enlightened ones believes to have any need of compatriots for his religious attitudes),  
it follows that even if certain statutory laws are not added beyond the natural ones (which are recognizable through sheer reason), but still regulations which come likewise with legislative authority, something is still lacking, which constitutes a particular duty of humans, i.e., a means to their highest purpose, namely their enduring union in a universal and visible church.<sup>2</sup> The authority for being a founder of that church presupposes a fact (*Faktum*) and not merely the concept of pure reason.
- 2.1 Now if we assume a teacher, of whom some history (or at least an opinion which in general is not to be fundamentally disputed) says that he had first revealed a pure religion, (naturally) encompassing and penetrating the whole world (whose teaching, as open for us, we can in such case test for ourselves), and expounded it publicly and even to spite a burdensome and ruling ecclesiastical belief, which was not directed toward a moral intention (whose compulsory service can serve as an example of every belief which was primarily statutory, as was the general case in the world at that time),  
and when we find that he made that universal religion of reason to be the supreme, uncompromising condition of each and every religious belief and then added certain statutes which contain forms and observances which are to serve as means for bringing a church established on those principles into being,

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<sup>1</sup> This object is the Highest Good and is briefly discussed in the Translator's Summary and was first presented by Kant in the [CPuR](#) on or near page 142.

<sup>2</sup> This duty to join together in a church for mutual moral improvement is presented above in Part III, [II. A Person Should Leave The Ethical State Of Nature To Become A Member Of An Ethical Commonwealth](#).

then disregarding the contingency and arbitrary nature of his regulations directed to this, one can indeed deny to it the name of the true, universal church, but not to him personally the credit for having called the humans into such a church for unification, though still without wanting to add new burdensome regulations to the belief or making those actions, which are first encountered with him, to be parts of the religion and particularly holy and obligatory in themselves.

- 3.1 According to this description, we cannot mistake the person who can be honored as the founder of the first, true church, though not of the religion written in the hearts of all people and free from all statutes (for this is not of an arbitrary origin).<sup>3</sup>—
- 3.2 As certification of his worthiness as a divine mission, we want to cite some of his teachings as undoubtable attestations of a religion in general, be it as it will with the history (for in the Idea itself there is already an adequate basis for its assumption), and which indeed can have been nothing other than a pure, rational teaching. For it is this alone which proves itself and upon which, therefore, the authentication of the history must preeminently rest.
- 4.1 First he asserts that it is not the observance of external civil or statutory ecclesiastical duties, but rather only the pure moral disposition of the heart which will make humans pleasing to God ([Matt. 5:20-48](#));  
that sins in thinking are equated by God with the deed ([5:28](#)<sup>4</sup>) and, generally speaking, holiness is the goal to be sought by the human ([5:48](#));  
that, for example, hate in the heart is the same as killing ([5:22](#));  
that a wrong perpetrated against another can only be rectified through an atonement by the perpetrator personally, not through ritualistic acts ([5:24](#)), and,  
in the point of truthfulness the means of civil extortion,\* the oath, even injures respect for the truth ([5:34-37](#));—  
that the natural, though evil, propensity of the human heart is to be entirely reversed;<sup>5</sup>  
that sweet feelings of revenge must be turned into patience ([5:39-40](#)) and hatred of one's enemies into charity ([5:44](#)).
- 4.2 So, according to him, he intended to satisfy the Jewish law completely ([5:17](#)), but for which it is obviously not scriptural scholarship, but rather the pure religion of reason that must be the expositor.<sup>6</sup> Indeed taken literally, the verbiage of the law permitted precisely the opposite of all this.—

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<sup>3</sup> [Genesis 3:22](#) concurs with Kant that the moral law (knowledge of good and evil) does in fact precede the advent of Jesus, although Jesus is the first to announce the moral religion. According to this passage of Genesis the human is equal to God in this knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated all the remaining biblical citations in this section are from the book of Matthew.

<sup>5</sup> A specific scripture is not given for this clause directly, but it seems to follow from the next two, and indeed generally from all scriptures cited in this entire paragraph and especially from No. 2 in 4.6 below.

<sup>6</sup> In [Romans 13:8-10](#) Jesus was interpreted by the apostle Paul as encompassing the intent of the Jewish scriptures in the law of neighborly love.

- 4.3 Moreover, using the terminology of the narrow gate and the small way, he did not overlook the misinterpretation of the law which people assumed in order to avoid their true moral duty and to hold themselves harmless in that way by fulfillment of the duties of the church ([7:13](#)).\*\*
- 4.4 Concerning these pure attitudes he nonetheless required that they be proven in deeds ([5:16](#)), and denied the insidious hope of those who thought to atone for the deficiency of this through invocation and praises of the supreme lawgiver in the person of his emissary and to flatter their way into his favor ([7:21](#)<sup>7</sup>).
- 4.5 Concerning these works, he desires for them also to be performed publicly as examples for imitation ([5:16](#)) and indeed with a cheerful disposition and not as forced, slavish actions ([6:16](#)) so that from a small beginning of the communication and propagation of such attitudes the religion would gradually increase through its inner power into a Kingdom of God like a seed in good soil, or a fermentation of the good ([13:31-33](#)).—
- 4.6 Finally he tied all duties together into
1. a general rule (which encompasses the internal as well as the external moral relationship of humans within itself), namely: to do one's duty for no other incentive than the immediate worth of that, i.e., love God (the lawgiver of all duties) above all,<sup>8</sup> and
  2. a particular rule, namely: regarding the external relationship to other humans as a universal duty, to love every other as one's self, i.e., to promote their well-being from immediate well wishing and not from self-serving incentives.
- Both commands are not merely laws of virtue, but even proscriptions of holiness to which we should strive, but with respect to which that very striving is called virtue.—
- 4.7 To those, therefore, who think to obtain this moral quality as a divine gift from above, without lifting a finger, he denies all hope for this.
- 4.8 Whoever leaves fallow the natural structure for the good, which lies in human nature (as an entrusted treasure), in the slothful trust that a higher moral influence will easily supplement the deficient moral constitution and perfection in himself, he threatens with the loss of even that good which he may have done from his natural structure, and that nothing will remedy this omission ([25:29](#)).

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 It is not easy to see why this clear command (based on superstition and not on conscientiousness) against the coercion for the oath before a civil court, is held so meaningless by teachers of religion.
- 1.2 For that it be superstition, on the working of which one counts here the most, is recognizable by this: a man, whom one does not trust to speak the truth in a ceremonial testimony, on whose truthfulness rests the decision concerning the rights of humans (the most holy of all in the world), will still be believed to be moved to that through a formality which contains nothing beyond that testimony except that he calls for a divine punishment (which he cannot escape with regard to such a lie) just as though it depended upon him as to whether or not he might grant accountability before this highest court.—
- 1.3 In the cited passage of scripture this sort of assurance is represented as an absurd presumption to utilize magical incantation to actualize, as it were, things which are still not within our power.—

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<sup>7</sup> In the original German edition this is given as [5:21](#), but which does not tie in at all with the topic.

<sup>8</sup> See [Mark 12:28-34](#) for justification for this and the 2nd great commandments.

## The Christian Religion As Natural Religion

- 1.4 But we can easily see that the wise teacher, who says that what goes beyond the "yes, yes! no, no!" as an assurance of truth arises from evil, has in mind the wicked consequences which the oath entails, namely that the greater importance attached to it makes the common lie almost permissible.

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The narrow gate and the small way which leads to life is that of the moral course of living; the wide gate and the broad way which many travel is the church.
- 1.2 Not so much that men are lost due to it and its pronouncements, but rather that the going to the church and confession of its statutes or celebration of its customs are taken as the manner through which God actually wants to be served.<sup>9</sup>

- 5.1 Now regarding the very natural expectation of humans of a destiny commensurate to the moral conduct of a human with respect to happiness, especially upon so many sacrifices of happiness necessarily undertaken for the sake of the moral, he promises ([5:11-12](#)) recompense for that in a future world. But according to the diversity of the attitudes with this conduct, he treats those who did their duty for the sake of the reward (or also as absolution from a deserved punishment) differently from those, the better people, who performed their duties purely for the sake of duty.
- 5.2 He who is ruled by self-interest, the god of this world, if he does not find release from this god, but only refines it through reason and expands it beyond the narrow limits of present things, is represented as one who cheats his lord and wins from him sacrifices in aid of his own duty ([Luke 16:3-9](#)).
- 5.3 For when he reflects that in any case he will have to leave the world someday, perhaps soon, and that he can take along into the next world nothing of what he possesses here, then he easily resolves to write off from his accounts that which he or his lord, Self-interest, could have demanded legally of needy people here and to procure in its stead vouchers payable in another world, as it were. In this regard, i.e., concerning the incentives of such benevolent actions, he is indeed more clever than moral, but he still acts commensurate to the moral law, at least according to the letter, and dares also hope that this might find recompense in the future.\*
- 5.4 If one compares this with what is said of doing good to the impoverished from sheer motivational grounds of duty ([Matt. 25:35-40](#)), where the judge of the world declared those who are actually selected for his kingdom to be the ones who provided assistance to the needy without even considering that such was worth a reward or that this would gain them heaven as a reward, as it were, and precisely for that reason, because they did so without regard for reward, it is easily seen that the teacher of the gospel, when he speaks of reward in the future world, did not want to make it the incentive to action, but rather only (as soul-elevating representation of the completion of the divine kindness and wisdom in leadership of the human race) the object of the purest esteem and of the greatest moral pleasing for a reason judging the determination of humans in their entirety.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 We know nothing of the future and should also not seek to learn more than what stands rationally linked with the incentives of morality and its purpose.
- 1.2 To this, therefore, belongs also the belief that there is no good action but which will also have its good reward in the future world for him who undertakes it. Thus the human, be he at the end of a life ever so objectionable, must still not permit himself to be restrained from doing the least active good which is in his power, and will in that way indeed have cause to hope it might always be of more worth, ac-

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<sup>9</sup> This is discussed in some detail in Part IV, beginning with [Second Section](#) - Pseudo-Service Of God In A Statutory Religion.

according to the measure as he embraces a pure and good intention, than the empty absolution which, without contributing anything for the reduction of guilt, is to replace the lack of good actions.

- 6.1 Now here is a complete religion which can be presented to all people through their own reason and, moreover, can be made visible (*anschaulich*) in an example whose possibility and even necessity is to be the pure archetype for imitation (to the extent humans are capable), and yet with neither the truth of that teaching nor the authority and the dignity of the teacher needing any other certification (which would require scholarship or miracles, which are not effective for everyone).
- 6.2 If appeals are made in that teaching to the old (mosaic) legislation and instruction, as though they should serve him as certifications, it is easy to see that these are not given for the truth of the cited teaching itself, but rather only as an introduction to a people who cling entirely and blindly to the old legislation. And this must always be much more difficult among people, whose heads are full of statutory articles of belief and who have become almost unreceptive for religion from reason, than when it is to be brought to the reason of untaught, but also unspoiled, people.<sup>10</sup>
- 6.3 For that reason it should cause no consternation to someone who finds the presentation (accommodating itself to the prejudices of that time) to be puzzling for the present time and needing a thorough interpretation. Nevertheless, this presentation always lets a religious teaching filter through and simultaneously alludes frequently and expressly to it, which teaching must be understandable and convincing to every human without need of any scholarship.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Perhaps then St. Paul's gentile charges were more receptive to the Christian message with regard to liberty than were the Jews. See the immediately following note.

<sup>11</sup> A student of the Jewish and Christian scriptures can find all sorts of rules and regulations based on the understanding of the people at the time of the original revelation, but then would come upon [Acts 15](#) and find that none of this was binding on the conscience of the gentile Christians. See also [Christian Liberty and Promise](#).

## Second Division - The Christian Religion As An Erudite Religion

- 1.1 To the extent a religion enunciates articles of belief as necessary, but which cannot be recognized as such through reason, and nonetheless are to be communicated to all people for all time as genuine (regarding the essential content), such articles are to be viewed as a holy good entrusted to the custody of scholars (unless one wants to assume a continuing miracle of revelation).
- 1.2 For even though the religion could find entrance everywhere, accompanied at the very beginning with miracles and deeds, also in what is not authenticated through reason, still the reports of these miracles, together with the teachings which had need of authentication through them, have in the course of time needed a written, documented and unalterable instruction for the succeeding generations.
- 2.1 The assumption of the principles of a religion means most especially the belief (*fides sacra*).
- 2.2 Accordingly we will have to consider the Christian belief on the one hand as a purely rational belief, and on the other as a revealed belief (*fides statutaria*).
- 2.3 The former can be considered as something freely adopted by each person (*fides elicit*a), but the second as a commanded belief (*fides imperata*).
- 2.4 Regarding the evil which lies in the human heart and from which no one is free, and  
regarding the impossibility of holding one's self as justified before God in one's course of living, and nonetheless  
regarding the necessity of such for a valid justification, and  
regarding the inadequacy of the substitutional means for the lack of righteousness through ecclesiastical observances and compulsory services of devotion and, in contrast,  
the unremitting obligation to become a new person;  
concerning all this each person can be convinced through his own reason, and it belongs to the religion also to be convinced of that.
- 3.1 From that point on, however, since the Christian teaching is based on facts and not upon sheer rational concepts, it is no longer just the Christian religion, but rather the Christian belief, which is laid as the basis to a church.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2 The service of a church, therefore, which is sacred to such a belief, is twofold: on the one hand there is the service which must be performed according to the historical belief; and on the other hand we have the service which the church is due according to the practical and moral rational belief.

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<sup>1</sup> Once we leave rational concepts and consider facts, we have left the sheer religion and are focused on the details of the particular belief which are given in history and not simply through reason. As such they are questionable. In the first General Remarks, [Par. 8.4](#), we learn that the Christian religion is a moral religion, but this does not refer to any particular Christian belief.

- 3.3 In the Christian church neither of these can be separated from the other as though consisting of itself alone; the historical not from the moral because the Christian belief is a belief of religion, and the moral not from the historical because it is an erudite belief.
- 4.1 The Christian belief, as an erudite belief, depends upon history and, to the extent scholarship lies as the basis to that (objectively), it is not a free belief on its own nor derived from the insight of sufficient, theoretical foundations of proof (as is a *fides elicit*a).
- 4.2 If it were a pure belief of reason, then even though the moral laws (upon which it is based as a belief in a divine legislator) command unconditionally, it would still have to be considered as a free belief. And it was also represented as such in the first division of Part IV.
- 4.3 Indeed, if one did not make that belief into a duty, then theoretically, as an historical belief, it would be able to be a free belief, if everyone were instructed.
- 4.4 But if it is to be valid for everyone, even for the uninstructed, then it is not merely a commanded belief (*fides servilis*), but even one calling for blind obedience, i.e., due obedience without investigation as to whether it actually be a divine command.<sup>2</sup>
- 5.1 In the teaching of the Christian revelation, however, we can in no way begin from the unconditioned belief of revealed articles (concealed as such from reason) and permit the erudite recognition to follow, somewhat merely as a rearguard security against an attacking enemy. For then the Christian belief would not be merely *fides import*, but in fact *serviles*.
- 5.2 The belief must, therefore, always be taught as at least *fides historice elicit*a, i.e., scholarship would have to make up not the rearguard in it, as a teaching of revealed belief, but rather the vanguard. And the small number of scribes (the clerics), who would also not be able to dispense with the secular scholarship (*Gelahrtheit*), would then drag along behind them the long train of the uninstructed (the laity) who, as such, are unfamiliar with the writing (and among whom even the civil regents belong).—
- 5.3 Now if this is not to happen, universal human reason must be recognized and honored in a natural religion as the supreme, commanded principle in the instruction of Christian belief. But the revealed teaching, on which a church is founded and which has need of scholars as interpreters and preservers, must be loved and cultivated as the mere, though most highly cherished, means of giving the natural religion accessibility and expansion and continuity, even for the uninstructed.
- 6.1 This is the true service of the church under the supremacy of the good principle. But if the belief from revelation is to precede the religion, we then have pseudo-service, where the moral order is entirely reversed and what is only a means is commanded unconditionally (as though an end).
- 6.2 The belief in articles, of which the uneducated can be assured neither through reason nor scripture (to the extent the latter would first have to be documented), would be made into an absolute duty (*fides imperata*), and so be elevated, together with the observances connected with that belief, to

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<sup>2</sup> In Part IV, Second Section, [#4. Guidance Of The Conscience In Matters Of Belief](#), there is consideration of how to discern that something might be a divine communication, at least concerning a negative clue.



the rank of a sanctifying belief as a compulsory service without morally determined foundations of actions.<sup>3</sup>—

- 6.3 A church founded on pseudo-service does not actually have servants (*ministri*) as does the church of the good principle, but rather commanding, high officials, who in fact (even if, as in a Protestant church, they do not appear with the pomp of the hierarchy as spiritual officials clothed with external power, and even protest against such verbally) still want to be known as the solitary, appointed guide of a holy scripture after they have robbed the pure religion of reason of its fitting dignity in being the highest expositor of those scriptures, and have commanded scholarship to be used entirely in aid of the ecclesiastical belief.
- 6.4 In this way they change the service of the church (*ministerium*) into a domination over the members (*imperium*), even though they avail themselves of the modest title of minister in order to hide this presumption.
- 6.5 But this rulership, which would have been easy for reason, is very costly to them, namely to come with an expenditure of great learning.
- 6.6 For "blind with respect to nature, she pulls all of antiquity over her head and buries herself beneath it."—
- 6.7 The way matters ensue on such a footing is as follows:
- 7.1 First of all the procedure, prudently observed by the first propagators of the teachings of Christ in order to obtain entrance for them among their people [the Jews], is considered valid as a part of the religion itself for all time and all people, such that one was to believe that every Christian would have to be a Jew whose Messiah had come; but with an incoherence between not actually being bound by any law of the Jews (as statutory)<sup>4</sup> and, nonetheless, having to assume the entire holy book of the Jews as a divine revelation, given for all humans to believe.\*—
- 7.2 Now likewise the authenticity of this book is beset with many difficulties (which are not by any means overcome simply because passages from it, indeed the entire holy history presented in it, are utilized in the books of the Christians in aid of their purpose for the promotion of Christianity among the Jews).
- 7.3 At the beginning of Christianity, and even with a considerable expansion of it, Judaism had not yet developed into an educated public, i.e., was not yet familiar with the educated contemporaries of other peoples, and had not monitored its own history, as it were, to bring the Jewish holy books up to standards of historical belief concerning their antiquity.
- 7.4 Even admitting this, it is still not enough to be familiar with it in translation and so to deliver it to posterity, but rather, for the security of the ecclesiastical belief based upon it, it is also necessary that there be scholars for all time and with all people who are versed in the Hebrew language (as much as is possible with a language of which we have only a single book). And since it is not to be merely a matter of historical knowledge in general, but rather one upon which depends the re-

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<sup>3</sup> For example: the doctrine of the Trinity; or whether the Holy Spirit arose from the Father *alone* (per the Eastern Orthodox Church) or from the Father *and* the Son (per the Roman Catholic Church). See footnote to [Par.7.5](#) in the section on Clericalism.

<sup>4</sup> See especially [Acts 15](#).

demption of humans, it is also necessary that there be people who are sufficient versed in this language to secure the true religion of the world.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Mendelssohn utilized this weak side of the usual means of the representation of Christianity in a very ingenuous way in order to eradicate entirely every suggestion that a son of Israel were a religious transition.
  - 1.2 For, he said, since the Jewish belief, even according to the acknowledgement of the Christians, is the lowest floor upon which Christianity rests as the next, it would be the same as insisting that someone remove the ground floor in order to reside in the second.
  - 1.3 But his true opinion shows through quite clearly.
  - 1.4 He wants to say: first remove the Jewish element from your religion (though it may remain in the instruction of the historical belief as an antique), then we can give consideration to your recommendation.
  - 1.5 (In fact, there would remain then nothing else than a pure-moral religion, unalloyed with statutes.)
  - 1.6 Our burden will not be relieved in the least by the abolition of the yoke of external observances if another yoke, namely that of the confession of belief in a holy history, which presses the conscience much harder, is laid on us in its place.—
  - 1.7 By the way, the holy books of this people will still always remain preserved and honored for scholarship, even if not in aid of religion. The history of no people with some semblance of credibility to epochs of the previous times (in which all profane history known to us can be positioned) dates as far back as these books (indeed back to the beginning of the world), and so in that way will fill out the great void which must remain outstanding.
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- 8.1 The Christian religion has indeed a similar fate to the extent that, even though the holy events of the religion have occurred before the eyes of an educated people, its history was delayed more than a generation before it reached the scholastic elements of that people. Hence the authenticity of these events must be without the confirmation of contemporaries.
  - 8.2 But it has the great advantage over Judaism by being represented as proceeding from the mouth of its first teacher as a non-statutory, but rather moral, religion, and in this way as stepping into the closest connection with reason, and by means of that could be spread of itself for all time and for all peoples with the greatest security and without historical scholarship.
  - 8.3 But the founders of the first congregations did find it necessary to interlace the history of Judaism with it, which was prudent, given the situation at that time (and perhaps only for that time), and so this Jewish history has also come to us in the holy legacy of the Christian religion.<sup>5</sup>
  - 8.4 But the founders of the church took these episodic means of commendation into the essential articles of faith and multiplied them either with tradition or with expositions, which obtained legal force from councils,<sup>6</sup> or else were certified through scholarship. From the latter (or its antipode, i.e., the internal light, which every layperson can also presume) we cannot foresee how many alterations are yet impending for the belief through all this. And all this is unavoidable as long as we do not seek the religion within us, but from without.

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<sup>5</sup> Here is meant perhaps the effort by the early Christian church to appear Jewish in form (with rituals and affirmations) in order for the Jews to be comfortable in it, and thus to more easily convert them.

<sup>6</sup> For example: the [creeds](#), along with the statutes per St. Paul's take upon the world (the latter's thinking having been introduced into the belief system as laws in many churches, e.g., [no homosexual activity](#)).

## Second Section - Pseudo-Service Of God In A Statutory Religion

- 1.1 The true, solitary religion contains nothing but laws, i.e., such practical principles which we can be aware of as unconditionally necessary, and which we, therefore, recognize as revealed through pure reason alone (not empirically).
- 1.2 Only in aid of a church (and there can be several of equally good form) can there be regulations, i.e., ordinances, held as divine which, in our moral estimation, are arbitrary and contingent.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 Now to hold such statutory belief (which in any case is limited to a people and cannot contain the universal, world religion) as essential for the service of God and to make it the supreme condition for pleasing God by humans, is religious delusion.\* And its consequence is pseudo-service, i.e., an alleged honoring of God such that what is rendered is directly contrary to the true service required by him.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 Delusion (*Wahn*) arises by treating a mere representation of something as equivalent to that something itself.
- 1.2 For example, a parsimonious rich man exemplifies a miserly delusion by holding the representation of being able to utilize his riches if he wished to as a substitute for actually doing so, and hence never does.
- 1.3 If I extol another by substituting what is only an external representation of respect (and which is, perhaps, not even entertained internally) for the value which is supposed to be attributed to the internal, then I exemplify the delusion of exaltation. And to this, therefore, belongs also the addiction to titles and medals, because these are only external representations of the esteem of others.
- 1.4 Even insanity (*Wahnsinn*) bears this name because one grows accustomed to taking a mere representation (of the imagination) for the presence of the matter itself and honoring it as such.—
- 1.5 Now the awareness that one possesses a means to some sort of purpose (before actually having availed oneself of that means) is the possession of the purpose merely in representation. Hence, to be satisfied with the representation, just as though it could be valid in place of the possession of the purpose, is a practical delusion. And it is concerning this alone that we are now occupied.

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<sup>1</sup> This may mean such things as required professions of faith and assertions that the wine at communion is the actual blood of Jesus, though still with the appearance of wine. (Pseudo-service is referred to earlier in the [General Remarks to Part II. 1.2.](#), though not using that terminology.)

## #1. The General Subjective Basis Of Religious Delusion

- 1.1 Anthropomorphism is hardly to be avoided by humans in the *theoretical* representation of God and his being, and although innocent enough (as long as it does not affect the concept of duty) it is highly dangerous with respect to our *practical* relationship to his will and for our morality. For with a practical anthropomorphism we fashion for ourselves a God\* as we think we might most easily utilize to our advantage, and in this way we believe to remove the arduous, ceaseless exercise to internally improve our moral disposition.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 The principle, which the human usually makes for this relationship, is that in everything we do solely to please the divinity (as long as it does not directly conflict with morality, and even though it does not contribute to that in any way) we prove to God our willingness to serve as obedient and, for that very reason, pleasing subjects, thus also to serve God (*in potentia*).—
- 1.3 It does not always have to be sacrifices, whereby the human believes to perform this service to God. Also ceremonies, even public games as with the Greeks and Romans, have often had to serve for this, and still serve, in order to make the divinity beneficial to a people or even to the individuals according to their delusion.
- 1.4 But it is the former (sacrifices such as penance, mortification, pilgrimages and the like) which have always been held to be more powerful and more effective for the favor of heaven and more suitable for absolution, for they serve to indicate more strongly the unlimited (though not moral) subjugation to his will.
- 1.5 The more useless such self castigations are and the less directed they are to the general, moral improvement of the human, the more holy they appear. Indeed by accomplishing absolutely nothing, and yet still requiring effort, they seem to be undertaken solely as a testimony of one's submission to God.—
- 1.6 Even though, it is said, God has not been served in any way through these acts, still he would see in this the good will, the heart, which indeed is too weak for compliance with his moral commands, but makes good this deficiency through one's affirmed willingness for this submission.
- 1.7 Now here we can plainly see the propensity to a procedure which has no moral worth in itself, except perhaps as a means for elevating the sensitive, representational capacity to accompany the intellectual Ideas of the purpose or, if it could work contrary to the purpose, to restrict it.\*\* In this opinion the worth of the purpose itself is to be attributed to this procedure or (which is the same thing) we ascribe the worth to the mood of the mind for the receptivity of attitudes arising from God (termed devotion). This procedure, therefore, is merely a religious delusion which can assume all sorts of forms. In some of these it looks more similar to the moral than in the others, but in every case there is not merely unintentional illusion, but actually a maxim to attribute the worth to the means as such instead of to the purpose, for by virtue of such a maxim this delusion is then equally absurd in all these forms and is objectionable as a concealed bias toward deception.<sup>2</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

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<sup>1</sup> It is much easier to praise and glorify God than it is to work on strengthening one's moral character.

<sup>2</sup> Thus we tend to see ourselves as righteous if we have complied with the otherwise morally useless ceremonies and, accordingly, put these on par with, or superior to, the moral measure.

## Religion Within The Bounds Of Sheer Reason - Part IV

- 1.1 It sounds dubious indeed, but is not really objectionable, to say that every human fashions a God for himself. In fact, according to moral concepts (accompanied with the infinitely vast attributes which belong to the capacity of picturing an object for a world commensurate to those attributes), he would have to make such a God in order by means of that to honor the one who has made him.
- 1.2 For regardless of the way one being might be recognized by another and portrayed as a God, indeed even to appear to him as a God (if that is possible), he must first hold this representation up to his Ideal in order to judge whether it is adequate to be held and honored as a divinity.
- 1.3 From revelation, without previously placing that moral concept as the basis in its purity as a touchstone, there can be no religion, for then all worship of God would be idolatry.

### \*\* Kant's annotation

- 1.1 For those everywhere, who are not well versed in the distinctions of the sensitivity from the intellectual and who believe to encounter structural contradictions in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I note here that when we are speaking of sensitive means of promoting the intellectual (the pure moral disposition) or of obstacles which the sensitive places in way of the intellectual the influence of two such heterogeneous principles must never be thought of as direct.
- 1.2 As beings of sense we can only work on the appearances of the intellectual principle, i.e., the determination of our physical power through free discretion, which becomes prominent in actions either to oppose the law or to favor it, such that cause and effect are represented as similar in the deed.
- 1.3 But concerning the supersensitive (the subjective principle of morality within us, which lies shuttered within the inconceivable property of freedom), e.g., the pure religious disposition, we have insight into nothing except its law (but which is also quite sufficient) touching the relationship of cause and effect in humans, i.e., we cannot explain to ourselves the possibility of actions as events in the world of sense from the moral constitution of the human, as imputable to them, and precisely because they are free actions, but the explanatory foundations of all events must be taken from the world of sense.

## #2. The Moral Principle Of Religion Contrasted With Religious Delusion

- 1.1 I first assume the following proposition as a self-evident principle: everything which the human believes he can do to be pleasing to God, apart from a moral course of living, is simply religious delusion and pseudo-service of God.—
- 1.2 I say, "what the human believes he can do," for beyond everything which we can do, there might still be something in the mysteries of the highest wisdom, which only God can do in order to make us pleasing to him.
- 1.3 But if the church should perchance announce such a mystery publicly, then the opinion that believing this revelation (as it narrates the sacred history to us) and confessing it (be it internally or externally) as something on its own, whereby we make ourselves pleasing to God, would be a dangerous, religious delusion.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.4 For this belief, as an internal confession of one's steadfast avowal, is so clearly an action which is compelled through fear, that an upright person would rather acquiesce in any other requirement than this. With all other coerced services, he would be undertaking something which is only superfluous, but here it would deal with something which conflicts with his conscience in a declaration, the truth of which is not convincing to him.
- 1.5 The confession, therefore, by which he persuades himself that he could make himself pleasing to God (through God's acceptance of a good offered by him), is something which he alleges to be able to do beyond a good course of living in the world in compliance with the moral law, and indeed by turning directly to God with his service.
- 2.1 First of all reason does not leave us entirely comfortless regarding the lack of personal righteousness (valid before God).
- 2.2 It tells us that when someone, in a spirit truly devoted to duty, does as much as is in his capacity to satisfy his obligations (at least in a continuing approach to a complete correspondence with the law), he may hope that what is beyond his capacity will be completed by the highest wisdom in some way (which can make the disposition of this continuing approximation unalterable), but still without presuming to determine and to know how this consists.<sup>2</sup> For this can be so mysterious that, at best, God can reveal it to us only in a symbolic representation and where only the practical is comprehensible to us, because we cannot at all grasp theoretically what this relationship of God to man may be on its own, nor attach concepts to it, even if God wanted to disclose such a mystery to us.—
- 2.3 Assume now a certain church were to assert knowing in a determined way the manner in which God supplements that moral deficiency with the human race, and would at the same time judge as eternally objectionable all people who did not know this means for justification (which is unknowable for reason in a natural way) and so, therefore, who do not assume and confess it as a religious principle: who then is the disbelieving one? the one who trusts that what he hopes for

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<sup>1</sup> This may refer to affirmation of [sacred mysteries](#) by certain Christian faiths such as [transubstantiation](#). Consider also the [First Council of Nicaea](#) where the divinity of God the Son and his equality with God the Father are certified along with the determination of the schedule of Easter. See also 4.1 through 4.4 below for amoral actions undertaken to please God, and also [Part IV-3, Par 5.2](#).

<sup>2</sup> See the footnote to [Par. 8.4](#), General Remarks to Part I above.

proceeds without him knowing how, or the one who asserts to thoroughly know this manner of liberation of the human from evil, and in the absence of which gives up all hope for that remedy?—

- 2.4 Fundamentally not so much is really laid upon the latter person with the knowledge of this mystery (for his own reason already teaches him that to know something he can do nothing about is entirely useless). Rather he only wants to know it in order to be able to make a divine service (even if only internally) from the belief, assumption, confession and glorification of all this revelation, which could procure for him the favor of heaven in lieu of all exercise of his own powers for a good course of living, hence to produce such a life at no cost in an admittedly supernatural manner or, should things perhaps work out otherwise, at least to make good the transgression.
- 3.1 Secondly: if a person distances himself even in the least from the above maxim,<sup>3</sup> the pseudo-service of God (superstition) has no further limits. For out beyond this, everything (which does not immediately contradict morality) is arbitrary.
- 3.2 From the sacrifice of his lips, which is the least costly, up to the products of nature, which could otherwise be better utilized to the advantage of humans, indeed even to the renunciation of one's own person in becoming wasted to the world (as a hermit, fakir or monk), he surrenders to God everything except his moral disposition. And if he says that he gives God also his heart, he does not mean with that a disposition for an acceptable course of living, but rather a sincere wish that the offering might be accepted as a final payment (*natio gratis anhelans, multa agendo nihil agens*.<sup>4</sup> Phaedrus).
- 4.1 Finally, if one has once moved to a maxim of a service, which on its own is allegedly pleasing to God, one which is also necessarily appeasing, but not purely moral, then there is no essential difference between this and serving God mechanically, as it were, and so neither has an advantage over the other.
- 4.2 They are both one and the same with regard to the worth (or far rather worthlessness), and it is merely pretentious to hold oneself as more exquisite, through finer deviations from the solitary, intellectual principle of the genuine honoring of God, than those who blame sensitivity for an alleged, courser degradation.
- 4.3 Whether the devotee undertakes a prescribed path to church, or a pilgrimage to the holy shrines in Loretto or Palestine, whether he brings his ritual prayers to the heavenly authorities with lips or via a prayer wheel as with the Tibetan (who believes that these wishes can reach their goal just as easily by being written down and then moved by something, e.g., written on banners moved by the wind, or on canisters turned by hand like a fly-wheel), or whatever might be utilized as a surrogate for moral service of God, it is all one and the same and of equal worth.—
- 4.4 Here it does not depend upon the distinction in the external form, but rather upon the assumption or rejection of the solitary principle, either to please God only through a moral disposition, to the extent this can be presented in actions as its appearance as a living disposition, or through devout toys and inactivity.\*

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<sup>3</sup> Presumably referenced in 1.1 above.

<sup>4</sup> "A people who huff and puff for nothing, and with much activity accomplish nothing."

- 4.5 Is there not perchance a delusion of mystical virtue elevated beyond the limits of human capacity, which could easily be counted with the servile, religious delusion in the general class of self delusions?
- 4.6 Not at all! For the virtuous disposition is occupied with something actual, which is pleasing to God of itself, and which coheres with the good of the world.
- 4.7 It is true that a delusion of conceit can be joined with the Idea of being adequate to one's sacred duty; but this is only contingent.
- 4.8 But placing the highest value on it is no delusion, as perhaps in the ecclesiastical, devotional exercises, but rather a sheer contribution which works toward the good of the world.

\* Kant's annotation:

1. It is a psychological phenomenon (*Erscheinung*) that the adherents of a confession, where there are somewhat less statutory elements to be believed, feel themselves ennobled, as it were, and more enlightened, even though nevertheless they have retained enough of these elements not to be able, from their supposed heights of purity, to look down with contempt on their fellows in the ecclesiastical delusion (as they actually do).
  2. The cause of this is the greater proximity they find to pure moral religion, as little as that may be, even though they still always remain attached to the delusion of wanting to supplement this religion through devout observances, and where there is only a less passive reasoning.
- 5.1 Furthermore there is a custom (at least among the ecclesiastics) that whatever can be accomplished by humans by means of the principle of virtue is called nature, while that which serves to complete the deficiency of all one's moral capacity, and which (and because conformity to this is a duty for us) can only be wished or hoped and prayed for, is called grace. Both are viewed together as effecting causes of a disposition reaching a course of living pleasing to God, but are viewed not merely as distinguished from each other, but indeed as utterly opposed to one another.
- 6.1 The persuasion of distinguishing effects of grace from those of nature (virtue), or indeed to be able to produce those within ourselves, is rapturous. For we can be familiar with no supersensitive object anywhere in experience, much less have influence on it to bring it down to us, even if occasionally motions affecting us regarding the moral occur in the mind which we cannot explain and which our ignorance is necessitated to acknowledge that "the wind blows as it will, but you know not from whence it comes, etc."<sup>5</sup>
- 6.2 Wanting to perceive divine influences within oneself is a sort of lunacy, which can still be methodical (because the alleged, internal revelation must still always be conjoined with moral, hence rational, Ideas), but which still always remains a self-delusion, which is disadvantageous to religion.
- 6.3 To believe there could be works of grace, and perhaps even needful for the supplementation of the imperfection of our virtuous striving, is all that we can say about it. And incidentally, we are not empowered to determine anything with regard to their marks of identification, and even less to do anything to induce them.

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<sup>5</sup> [John 3:8](#). Hence a thought can suddenly arise in the mind which leads to moral considerations, and this might be an input from God, but still we retain our liberty in that we must ourselves decide whether to act upon this or not, and where any divine origin is unrecognizable (it could be a random firing in the brain, or a divine communication disguised as such).



## The Moral Principle Of Religion Contrasted With Religious Delusion

- 7.1 The delusion of providing anything regarding justification before God through cultic actions is religious superstition; even as the delusion of wanting to effect this through striving for an alleged intimacy with God is religious fanaticism.—
- 7.2 It is superstitious delusion to want to become pleasing to God through actions which anyone can do without having to be a good person (e.g., through confession of statutory articles of faith, through observation of ecclesiastical ceremonies and discipline, and such).
- 7.3 But it is called superstitious because one chooses merely natural (not moral) means, which can accomplish utterly nothing of themselves, concerning what is not nature (the moral good).—
- 7.4 But a delusion is called fanatical where even the presumed means, being supernatural, are not within the capacity of the human, even without looking to the inaccessibility of the supernatural goal intended by this. For this feeling of the immediate presence of the highest being, and the differentiation of this from every other feeling, even the moral feeling, would be the receptivity of a perspective (*Anschauung*) for which there is no sensory organ in the human's nature.—
- 7.5 The superstitious delusion, because it contains a means fitting on its own for many persons and is simultaneously possible for them (at least in opposing the obstacles of a disposition pleasing to God), is still this far related to reason, and only contingently objectionable by making what can only be a means into objects which are immediately pleasing to God. The fanatical religious delusion, on the other hand, is the moral death of reason, without which no religion can take place at all, for religion, as all morality in general, must be based on principles.
- 8.1 The principle of an ecclesiastical belief to mitigate or even prevent religious delusion is, therefore, as follows: along with the statutory articles, which cannot be entirely dispensed with at first, there would have to be a principle for attaining to the religion of a moral course of living as the actual goal, in order then finally to be able to dispense with the ecclesiastical belief.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This principle for attaining to the religion of a moral course of living as the actual goal seems to be incorporated in the two great commandments of Christianity, i.e., love toward God and toward other people. In this regard see the *practical* portion of [The Gist Of Christianity](#).

### **#3. Clericalism\* As An Authority In The Pseudo-Service Of The Good Principle**

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 This appellation, indicating merely the esteem of a spiritual father (*papa*), contains the suggestion of a reprimand, but only through the collateral concept of a spiritual despotism which can be encountered in all ecclesiastical forms regardless of how unpretentious and popular they are proclaimed to be.
  - 1.2 In no way, therefore, do I wish to be understood as wanting to contrast the sects in order to deprecate any of them in comparison with the others regarding their customs and arrangements.
  - 1.3 All deserve equal respect to the extent their forms are attempts by poor mortals to describe in a sensitive way the Kingdom of God on earth. But there is still also a reproof if they hold the form of the picture of this Idea (in a visible church) as the thing itself.
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- 1.1 The veneration of mighty, invisible beings, which was extorted from the helpless human through a natural fear based on the awareness of his incapacities, did not start with a religion, but rather with a menial service to God (or to idols) which, when it had obtained a certain public, legal form, became a temple service and finally, after the moral education of the human was gradually combined with these laws, a church service. Both of these services, temple and church, were based on an historical belief until someone finally began to see this belief merely as provisional, and in it the symbolic description of a pure religious faith, as well as the means for its promotion.
  - 2.1 From a Tunguskan shaman to a European prelate ruling both church and state, or (instead of looking to the chiefs and captains, if we want to focus on the adherents of the belief according to their manner of representation) from the entirely sentient Volgan hunter, who places the paw from the bearskin on his own skin in the morning with the short prayer, "slay me not," to the sublime Puritan and independent in Connecticut, there is indeed a great difference in the manner of believing, but not in the principle. For in this regard, they all belong to one and the same class, namely placing their service to God in something which does not make a better person per se (they do this via the belief in certain statutory articles, or celebration of certain arbitrary observances).
  - 2.2 Only those, who are of the opinion to find all service to God solely in the disposition of a moral course of living, are distinguished from these by a transition to an entirely different principle, one which is far more sublime than the first, namely in the confession of an (invisible) church, which encompasses within itself all well-intending people and can alone, with regard to its essential constitution, be the true universal church.
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- 3.1 Now all of the above share a single intention: to guide the invisible power commanding the fate of humans to their advantage. And they differ only in how to initiate that.
  - 3.2 If they consider that power to be a being of understanding and, therefore, ascribe to it a will through which they expect their lot, then their endeavors can only consist in the selection of the manner as to how they, as beings subject to its will, can be pleasing to that power through their acts of doing and forbearing.
  - 3.3 If they think of it as a moral being, they easily persuade themselves, through their own reasoning, that the condition of eliciting its favor would have to be their morally good course of living, especially the pure disposition as the subjective principle of that course of living.

- 3.4 But perhaps the highest being could also want to be served in some way beyond what can be made known to us through sheer reason, namely through actions, concerning which frankly we can see nothing moral, but which still are either commanded by that being, or which are arbitrarily undertaken by us in order merely to indicate our subordination towards that being. In both cases, therefore, if they constitute a whole of systematically ordered procedures, they assume in general a service to God.—
- 3.5 Now if both, i.e., the morally good and what is commanded or assumed arbitrarily, are to be combined, then either each is to be assumed immediately as the way to be pleasing to God, or else one of the two will have to be assumed merely as a means to the other, and where that other then would be the actual service of God.
- 3.6 That the moral service of God (*officium liberum*) would please God immediately is self-evident.
- 3.7 But this moral service cannot be acknowledged as the supreme condition of all pleasing by humans (which is already contained in the concept of morality) if the required service (*officium mercenarium*) could be considered as pleasing to God of itself and alone. For then no one would know in a particular case which service were the more advantageous in adapting an assessment of one's duty in that regard, or how the two services would supplement one another.
- 3.8 Actions, therefore, which have no moral value on their own, will have to be assumed as pleasing to God only to the extent they serve as means for the promotion of what is immediately good in actions (for morality), i.e., for the sake of moral service to God.
- 4.1 Now the person who still uses actions, even though containing nothing in themselves pleasing (morally) to God, as a means for procuring divine, immediate favor for himself, and in that way the fulfillment of his wishes, acts in the delusion of possessing an art for bringing about a supernatural effect through entirely natural means. And such a person we call a sorcerer. But in place of this word (since it entails the collateral concept of a communality with the evil principle, even though, parenthetically, this attempt could be considered as undertaken in a good, moral intention through a misunderstanding) we want to substitute the otherwise familiar word of fetishism.
- 4.2 But a supernatural effect of a human would be something, which is only possible in his thoughts by pretending to affect and use God as a means for producing an effect in the world for which his human powers, and even his insight, are insufficient of themselves, even though that effect might be pleasing to God. Such a concept already contains an absurdity.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.1 But if apart from what makes someone an object immediately pleasing to the deity (through an active disposition for a moral course of living) the human seeks to make himself worthy of supernatural assistance in supplementing his incapacity by means of certain formalities and, in this intention, via observances which have no immediate worth as such, but which still serve as a means for the promotion of that moral disposition, then he thinks to make himself merely receptive for the attainment of the object of his good, moral wishes. And in that case he does indeed count upon something supernatural for the supplementation of his natural incapacity, but still not as

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<sup>1</sup> The absurdity lies in thinking that a person could effect through his service what he cannot do himself by getting God to do it for him.

something which can be effected by the human (through an influence upon the divine will), but rather receptively, which he can hope for, but not produce.<sup>2</sup>—

- 5.2 But if he thinks that actions, which, as far as we can tell, contain nothing moral per se and nothing pleasing to God, are nonetheless supposed to serve as a means and indeed as a condition for expecting immediately the fulfillment of his wishes by God, he must be possessed of a delusion of being able to effect this (though having neither a physical capacity nor a moral receptivity for this supernatural feat) through natural actions, which still are not at all related to morality (the execution of which requires no disposition pleasing to God), which, therefore, the worst human can perform as well as the best through formulas of invocation, confessions of a recompensing belief or ecclesiastical observances, etc. And in that case he exhibits a delusion of being able to conjure up the assistance of the divinity, as it were; for between purely physical means and a morally effecting cause there is simply no connection according to any sort of a law which reason can imagine, such that the latter could be represented through the former as determinable for certain effects.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.1 Therefore, whoever premises the observance of statutory, revelation-dependent laws as necessary for religion, and not simply as a means toward a moral disposition, but as the objective condition for becoming immediately pleasing to God by compliance with such, and who then subordinates the striving for a moral course of living to this historical belief (instead of having the observances, as something which can be pleasing to God only conditionally, align themselves according to the moral, which alone pleases Him utterly), that person transforms the service of God into mere fetishism and a practice of pseudo-service which annuls all preparation toward true religion.
- 6.2 When we wish to combine two good things, everything depends on the order in which they are to be combined!—
- 6.3 But it is in this distinction that true enlightenment consists, i.e., in this way the service of God first becomes a free and, hence, a moral service.
- 6.4 But if we depart from that combination, then instead of the freedom of the children of God, the human is yoked to a law (of the statutory sort) which, since it is an unconditioned requirement to believe something which can only be recognized historically and, for that reason, cannot be convincing for every person, is a far heavier yoke\* for people of conscience than the entire trumpery of imposed, pious rituals might ever be. Those rituals may always be retained in order to fit in with an established, ecclesiastical commonwealth without anyone having to account internally or externally for the confession of a belief that the arrangement is ordained by God. Indeed it is in the latter way that the conscience is actually harassed.<sup>4</sup>

\* Kant's annotation:

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<sup>2</sup> Such ceremonies as the Christian communion (Eucharist) or prayer might result in the strengthening of the moral intention of the participants by evoking relevant thinking and leading to greater moral resolve and in this way making them more receptive to a moral strengthening by divine action.

<sup>3</sup> The actions of par. 5.1 render hope while the same actions per 5.2 are expected to result in immediate benefit and accordingly are a delusion.

<sup>4</sup> See Part IV, [Guidance of Conscience](#).

## Clericalism As An Authority In The Pseudo-Service Of The Good Principle

- 1.1 "That yoke is easy, and the burden light"<sup>5</sup> where the universally obligatory duty can be viewed as self imposed through one's own reason. Hence to this extent each person can assume this voluntarily.
  - 1.2 But the only yokes like this are the moral laws considered as divine commandments, and it is only of these that the founder of the pure church could say, "my commandments are not difficult."<sup>6</sup>
  - 1.3 This expression will only mean that they are not troublesome, because each and every person sees the necessity of compliance with them of himself, and so, considered in this way, nothing is imposed upon anyone. In contrast to this, despotically commanded ordinances imposed on us, even though for our own good (though not through our own reason), and which we see as devoid of utility, are vexations (drudgeries), as it were, to which one subjects himself only reluctantly.
  - 1.4 But on their own, actions, considered in the purity of their source and commanded by that moral law, are precisely those which are the most difficult for the human, and in lieu of which each person would gladly undertake the most troublesome, pious drudgery, if such a substitution were possible.
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- 7.1 Clericalism, therefore, is the constitution of a church to the extent a fetish service rules. This is always to be encountered wherever statutory commands, rules of belief and observances, rather than principles of morality, constitute its foundation and essential element.
  - 7.2 Now there are indeed several church forms in which the fetishism is so prolific and so mechanical that it almost seems to supplant all morality (and hence religion) and to take its place, and accordingly borders very closely upon paganism. But in those cases, where the worth or worthlessness depends upon the constitution of the supreme, obligatory principle, there is no concern about any more or less.
  - 7.3 If this principle enjoins an obedient subjugation to an ordinance as a compulsory service, but not a free homage, which is to be afforded to the moral law above all, then the required observances can be as limited as one will, for if they are declared to be unconditionally necessary, then it is still a fetish belief through which the crowd is ruled. And by means of an obedience under a church (not a religion), they are robbed of their moral freedom.
  - 7.4 The constitution of such a church (hierarchy) may be monarchical, aristocratic or democratic, but that touches only the organization; for under all these forms the constitution is and remains despotic.
  - 7.5 Where statutes of belief are held as constitutional law, then a clericalism rules, which believes itself able to dispense with reason and finally even with scholarship, because as the single, authorized defender and interpreter of the will of the invisible legislator, it has the exclusive authority to administer the precepts of belief and, therefore, provided with this power, need not persuade, but only command.<sup>7</sup>—
  - 7.6 But now since apart from these clerics there is only laity (including also the supreme head of the political commonwealth), the church finally rules the state; but not so much through might as rather through an influence on minds, and also through the pretense of the advantage, which this church can allegedly draw from an unconditioned obedience, to which a spiritual discipline has even accustomed the thinking of the people. With this, however, and without warning, the habituation to hypocrisy undermines the honesty and loyalty of the subjects, demeans them to a show of

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<sup>5</sup> [Matthew 11:30](#).

<sup>6</sup> [1 John 5:3](#).

<sup>7</sup> In 1870 the [Roman Catholic Vatican I Council](#) decreed that when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra* (from the chair) his decree is infallible.

service even regarding civic duties and, as with all erroneously taken principles, produces exactly the opposite of what was intended.

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- 8.1 All this is the unavoidable consequence of a certain shift which seems harmless enough at first glance, namely a shift in the principles of the solitarily sanctifying, religious belief, concerning which of the two should be assigned first rank as the supreme condition (to which the other would be subordinated).<sup>8</sup>
- 8.2 It is fair and reasonable to assume that not only those "wise according to the flesh,"<sup>9</sup> i.e., scholars or subtle rationalizers (*Vernünftler*), will be called to this enlightenment of their true salvation (*Heil*)—for this belief is to be accessible by the entire human race—but, "what is foolish in the eyes of the world," even the uninformed or those most limited conceptually must be able to lay claim to such teaching and internal conviction.
- 8.3 Now it would seem indeed that an historical belief would be of precisely this sort, especially if the concepts it needs to broadcast its news are anthropological and very compatible with sensitivity,
- 8.4 for what is easier: to comprehend and communicate to others such a simple, down-to-earth narration, or to repeat the words of a mystery to which there is simply no need to connect any sense?<sup>10</sup> It is easy for the former to find universal entrance, especially with a great and promising interest. And how deeply rooted indeed is a belief in the truth of such a story which, moreover, is based on documents [the gospel story] which have been recognized as authentic for a long period. Of course then, such a belief is also commensurate to the most common human capabilities.
- 8.5 But while the announcement of such an event, as well as the belief in rules of conduct based on it, may not be given directly or especially for scholars or intellectuals, still these are not excluded from it, and here we find so many scruples, partly regarding its truth, partly regarding the meaning in which the recitation should be taken, that to assume such a belief, which is subject to so many conflicts (even honestly intended), as the supreme condition of a universal and uniquely sanctifying belief, is the most ridiculous thing anyone might imagine.<sup>11</sup>—
- 8.6 But now there is a practical recognition which, because it rests on reason alone and has no need of any historical teaching, lies so near to everyone, even the most simple person, as though it were literally written in the heart; a law, which one must so denominate in order see beyond appearances and to agree immediately with everyone, and which entails unconditioned obligation in

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<sup>8</sup> This seems to parallel the "shift" which leads to moral evil (and presented in the Part I, Section III, People Are Evil By Nature, [Par. 9.1](#)), namely putting self-love first and morality second and then still calling one's self moral by virtue of utilizing the *effect* of an action as the measure of right and wrong instead of the *maxim* and disposition leading to the action.

<sup>9</sup> This and the subsequent quote in this sentence are from [1 Corinthians 1:26 & 27](#).

<sup>10</sup> For example, compare the commandment to love one's neighbor as one's self with the professed belief in transubstantiation of communion wine and bread of the Eucharist (see footnote to [Par 1.3](#) on or near page 173 concerning this mystery).

<sup>11</sup> Some church groups assert that people who do not believe and confess the historical narration of Christianity are simply doomed to hell. But here Kant points out the difficulty in determining the truth of such sources and their meaning. See also footnote to [Par 1.3](#) on or near page 173 concerning transubstantiation, and the diverse interpretations of this among various church denominations.

the consciousness of every person, namely that of morality. This recognition, moreover, leads of itself alone to a belief in God, or at least uniquely determines the concept of God as that of a moral legislator. Hence it leads to a pure, religious belief, which is not only comprehensible to everyone, but is also worthy of esteem in the highest degree. Indeed, it leads there so naturally that if one wishes to test it, he may ascertain this by inquiry of any person without having taught him anything about it.<sup>12</sup>

- 8.7 Hence, it is not only prudent to begin with this moral recognition and let the historical belief harmonizing with it follow later, it is certainly a duty to make it the supreme condition under which alone we can hope to be partakers in salvation, regardless of what any historical belief may promise. Indeed, we are to let this historical belief hold good (because it contains a universally valid teaching) in such a way that we can, or may, make this universally binding only according to the interpretation which the pure, religious belief gives it. And all the while the moral believer is still open to the historical belief, to the extent he finds it conducive for the stimulation of his pure, religious disposition. In this way alone then the historical belief has a pure, moral value, because it is free and not compelled through any threat (for threats exclude sincerity<sup>13</sup>).
- 9.1 But now to the extent that the service of God in a church is primarily directed toward the pure, moral worship of the divinity, according to the laws prescribed for humanity in general, one can still ask whether in this service only the teaching of Godliness [*Gottseligkeit*] or just that of pure virtue, each on its own, is to make up the content of the religious delivery.
- 9.2 The former designation, namely the teaching of Godliness, perhaps expresses best the meaning of the word *religio* (as it is understood in modern times) and most objectively.<sup>14</sup>
- 10.1 Godliness contains two determinations of the moral disposition in relationship to God: a fear of God is this disposition in compliance with his commandments due to a bounden duty (of subjects), i.e., a respect for his law; but a love of God, from a personal, free choice and due to a pleasing regarding the law (as dutiful children).<sup>15</sup>
- 10.2 Beyond morality, therefore, both determinations contain the concept of a supernatural being, who is equipped with attributes requisite for the accomplishment of the Highest Good intended through these attributes and which goal exceeds our own capacity.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, if we go out beyond the moral relationship of the Idea of that being to ourselves, the concept of its nature is always in danger of being thought anthropomorphically by us and hence, for that reason, is frequently quite detrimental to our moral principles. And so, therefore, the Idea of this being in

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<sup>12</sup> The moral law calls upon the individual to utilize maxims of action which can be universalized and attributed to every one. Accordingly this can be made clear to everyone by means of their own reasoning.

<sup>13</sup> For contrast see below in the General Remarks to this Part IV, [Par. 7.3](#), how Islam is characterized by Kant as an “extortionist” belief.

<sup>14</sup> This suggest a belief in God and eternal life the assumption of all duties as divine commands, and a practice of prayer, participating in religious services, etc.

<sup>15</sup> For a clearer understanding of Godliness and virtue see General Remarks to Part IV, [Par. 13.6](#).

<sup>16</sup> The Highest Good is a state of moral perfection and a happiness commensurate to that perfection. See translator’s [Summary](#) on or near page xvi.



speculative reason cannot exist of itself, but rather actually bases its origin, and even more its power, entirely upon a referral to the self-sufficient determination of our duty alone.<sup>17</sup>

- 10.3 Now what will arise more naturally in the first instructions of youth for confirmation and even in the presentations of the pulpit: is it the instruction of virtue and then the instruction of Godliness, or vice-versa (indeed even without mentioning the former)?
- 10.4 Both stand clearly in necessary connection with one another.
- 10.5 But since they are not identical, this is not possible otherwise than by having to think and present one as the purpose and the other merely as the means to that purpose.
- 10.6 But the doctrine of virtue is entire of itself (even without the concept of God), and the doctrine of Godliness encompasses the concept of an object, which we portray to ourselves, with respect to our morality, as a cause supplementing our incapacity with respect to the moral, final purpose.<sup>18</sup>
- 10.7 The doctrine of Godliness, therefore, cannot of itself constitute the final purpose of moral striving, but rather by promising and securing to that moral striving (as a striving toward the good, and even toward holiness) the expectation of the final purpose, to which that moral striving is inadequate, it can serve only as a means for strengthening the disposition to virtue, namely that which itself constitutes a better person.
- 10.8 The concept of virtue, on the other hand, is taken from the human soul.
- 10.9 The human contains this concept of virtue entirely within himself, even though undeveloped. And he may not derive it via inferences of rationalizing, as can be done with the concept of religion.
- 10.10 In its purity, in the awakening of the consciousness of a capacity which could never be concocted by us otherwise, namely of being able to master the great obstacles within us in the dignity of humanity, which the human must honor in his own person and its determination, to which he strives in order to attain to it; in all this there lies something so elevating to the soul and suggestive of divinity, which is so delectable through its holiness and as legislator for virtue that the human, even when he is far removed from it, is nonetheless sustained without resistance in giving this concept the power of influence on his maxims because, to a certain extent, he already feels himself ennobled through this Idea.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to this, the notion of a ruler of the world, who makes this duty a commandment for us, lies much further removed from the human and, were the human to begin there, would degrade his courage (which makes up the essential aspect of virtue) and also endanger Godliness by transforming it into a flattering and groveling subjugation under a despotically commanding power.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> It is by virtue of the need of God for the implementation of the Highest Good that we become confident of the [existence of God](#). See page xvi.

<sup>18</sup> The final purpose (the Highest Good) is moral perfection and commensurate happiness. Thus the doctrine of Godliness speaks to an anticipated happiness proportionate to the degree of moral perfection as ordained by God. Accordingly it provides an individual and objective meaning to one's moral striving and keeps it from being a sheer vanity.

<sup>19</sup> See Par. 3.12 of Incentives of Pure Practical Reason from the [CPrR](#) beginning on or near page 99.

<sup>20</sup> It is by virtue of the moral law and the respect humans have for it that God is first introduced and premised to provide the Highest Good for completion of the moral promise. It would be entirely different if God were first assumed and where the moral law were simply a command arbitrarily issued by God. See [Popular Proof of God's Existence](#) and forward on page xiv.



- 10.11 Now this courage of standing upon one's own two feet is even strengthened through the doctrine of propitiation following upon it, by representing what cannot be changed as a given [*abgetan*], and opens the path to a new course of living for us. On the other hand, if this doctrine constitutes the beginning, then the empty endeavor of making what has happened to be unhappened (the expiation), the fear concerning the application of that expiation, the representation of our entire incapacity for good, and the anxiety regarding a fall back into evil must rob the human of his courage\* and put him into a moaning, morally passive state which undertakes nothing great and good, but rather expects everything from wishing.—
- 10.12 When the talk is of the moral disposition, everything depends upon the supreme concept to which one subordinates his duties.
- 10.13 If the veneration of God is first, and we subordinate virtue to that, then this object is an idol, i.e., it is thought of as a being, whom we may hope to please through adoration and flattery, and not through moral conduct in the world. But that religion is then idolatry.
- 10.14 Godliness, therefore, is not a surrogate of virtue, in order to dispense with virtue, but the completion of virtue, in order to be crowned with the hope of the final success of all our good purposes.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The various ways that peoples have of believing will gradually and even easily give them a character which is marked externally in civil relationships. And this character is attributed to them later as though it were entirely a feature of their temperament.
- 1.2 Judaism, for example and as originally established, isolated itself from all other peoples through all imaginable, and partly even painful, observances, and the Jews were to avoid all intermarriage with them, and in that way incurred a reproach of misanthropy.
- 1.3 Islam distinguishes itself through pride because, instead of miracles, it obtains certification of its belief in the victories and domination over many nations, and all its devotional customs are of the courageous type.\*\*
- 1.4 The Hindu belief, for reasons which are directly opposed to that of Islam, gives its adherents the character of faint-heartedness.—
- 1.5 Now a like objection can be made against the Christian belief, but which does not arise from the internal constitution of that belief, but rather from how one who holds it most dear, and arising from human corruption and despairing of all virtue, places its religious principle in piety alone (understanding here a principle of passive conduct with respect to a Godliness expected through a power from above). And this is the case because the Christians never put any confidence in themselves, looking always anxiously for a supernatural assistance and thinking to possess even a means for procuring favor in this self-deprecation (which is not humility), where the external expression (in pietism or religiosity [*Frömmelei*]) signals a menial spirit.

\*\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The noteworthy appearance (of the pride of belief by an ignorant, though judicious, people) can also stem from the conceit of the founder, as though he alone had renewed the concept of the unity of God and his supernatural nature and which, of course, would be an ennoblement of his people through liberation from idolatry and the anarchy of polytheism, if he could justifiably claim such merit.—
- 1.2 Concerning the characteristic aspect of the third class of religious fellowship [the Christian<sup>21</sup>], which is based on an injuriously understood humility, the eradication of this self-conceit in the estimation of one's moral worth should not effect disrespect of his person arising through a reproach of the holiness

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<sup>21</sup> Thanks to Greene and Hudson for this clarification per their translation of Kant's *Religion* entitled *Religion Within The Limits Of Reason Alone*.

of the law, but far rather a resolution, commensurate to this noble structure within us, to bring ourselves ever closer to conformity with this law; and not rather banishing one's virtue (which actually consists in the courage for that very task) to the land of the pagans as a name (of virtue), which is already suspicious with self-conceit, and where groveling supplication for favor is extolled in its place.—

- 1.3 Excessively pious devotion (*bigotterie, devotio spuria*) is the custom, regarding the immediate occupation with God, of putting the practice of piety through indications of reverence in the place of actions pleasing to God (in the fulfillment of all human duties). And such practice must then be counted as compulsory service (*opus operatum*), except that they also add to superstition the fanatical delusion of supposed supernatural (celestial) feelings.

#### #4. Guidance Of The Conscience In Matters Of Belief

- 1.1 The question here is not how the conscience is to be led (for this admits of no leadership, for it is enough to have one), but rather how this itself can serve as a guide in the most extreme, moral decisions imaginable.—
- 2.1 The conscience is a consciousness which is a duty of itself.
- 2.2 But how is it possible to imagine such a duty, since the consciousness of all our representations seems to be necessary only in a logical intention, hence only in a conditional way, i.e., if we wish to make our representations clear, and so where such cannot be unconditional duty?
- 3.1 It is a moral principle, which has need of no proof, that a person is not to proceed with anything if there is a risk that it is unjust (*quod dubitas, ne feceris!*<sup>1</sup> Plin.).
- 3.2 The consciousness, therefore, that an action which I wish to undertake is just, is unconditional duty.
- 3.3 Whether an action in general be right or not is a judgment made by the understanding, and not by the conscience.
- 3.4 It is also not utterly necessary to know whether all possible actions be right or not.
- 3.5 But I must not only judge and think, but also be certain, that the action I intend to take is not unjust, and this requirement is a postulate of the conscience, in opposition to which we can position likelihood, i.e., the principle that the mere opinion itself that an action might be just is already sufficient for taking it.<sup>2</sup>—
- 3.6 One might define the conscience in this way: it is a capacity for moral judgment which governs itself; except this definition would be very much in need of a preceding explanation of the concepts contained in it.
- 3.7 The conscience does not direct actions as cases which stand under the law; for that is the work of reason to the extent reason is subjectively practical (hence the *cases conscientiae*<sup>3</sup> and casuistry, as a form of dialectic of the conscience). Rather reason directs itself here as to whether it has also undertaken the evaluation of the action with due consideration (as to whether it be just or unjust), and places the human, whether for or against, as a witness that this has, or has not, happened.
- 4.1 Consider, for example, an inquisitor who adheres steadfastly to the exclusivity of his statutory belief, even to the point of martyrdom if called for, and who is to judge a so-called heretic who is

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<sup>1</sup> “What you doubt, do not do.”

<sup>2</sup> It may be interesting in this regard to compare this thinking with some Muslim thinking found in [My Take On Islam](#), especially the sections on “Acting In Faith” and “Immateriality Of The Moral Law.”

<sup>3</sup> This will mean the application of general principles of morality (or ecclesiastical statutes) to definite and concrete cases of human activity for the purpose, primarily, of determining what one ought to do, or ought not to do.

accused of disbelief (and who is otherwise a good citizen). Now assuming he were to sentence him to death, can we say he judged him in conformity with his conscience (albeit error-ridden), or should we accuse him of being utterly devoid of conscience, be it through error or an intentionally wrongful act, because we could tell him to his face that in such a case he could never be completely sure he were not acting entirely unjustly?

- 4.2 He was, of course, presumably of the adamant belief that a supernaturally revealed, divine will (perhaps according to the saying of *compellite intrare*<sup>4</sup>) permitted him, even if he were not compelled by duty, to eradicate the alleged disbelief together with the unbelievers.
- 4.3 But then was he actually so convinced of such a revealed doctrine and also of this meaning of the doctrine, as would be required, that he could proceed to destroy a human in accordance with such confidence?
- 4.4 That it is wrong to take a person's life due to religious belief is certain; assuming (for the sake of the extreme case) that a divine will, which has been made known to him in an extraordinary way, has not decreed it otherwise.
- 4.5 But that God had ever expressed this terrible will rests upon historical documents and is never absolutely certain.
- 4.6 For still the revelation has come to him only through humans, and through the interpretation of humans, and even if it seemed to him to have come from God Himself (as the command given to Abraham to slaughter his own son like a sheep<sup>5</sup>), it is still at least possible that an error prevails here.
- 4.7 But then in that case he would be daring to do something which were highly wrong, and it is precisely in this that he acted unconscionably.—
- 4.8 It is the same with every historical and appearance-based belief, namely there is always the possibility of an error in this, and so it is unconscionable to permit the inquisitor free compliance, given the possibility that, perhaps, what this belief requires or permits is wrong, i.e., upon the risk violating a human duty which is certain to him.
- 5.1 And even more: to assert that an action, which such a positive (at least held as such) revelatory law commands, is permitted on its own raises a question as to whether spiritual leaders or teachers may, according to their alleged conviction, impose a confession of it by the people as an article of belief (at the forfeiture of their standing)?
- 5.2 Since conviction has no other basis of proof than historical, and since in the judgment of these people (if they will but subject the matter to the least test) there always remains the absolute possibility of an error involved with it or arising from its classical interpretation, it follows that the clergy would be requiring people to confess something, at least internally, as true, just as they believe in God (i.e., as though before the face of God), but which they still do not know with certitude to be true, e.g., to acknowledge the establishment of a certain day for the periodic, public

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<sup>4</sup> “Compel them to enter.” See also Augustine on [“coercion.”](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Genesis 22:1-19](#). See also essay by Stephen Palmquist, Ph.D. and this translator which is entitled: [‘Three Perspectives On Abraham’s Defense Against Kant’s Charge of Immoral Conduct’](#).

promotion of Godliness as a religious act immediately ordained by God, or to acknowledge a mystery about him as solemnly believed, a mystery which they do not even understand.<sup>6</sup>

- 5.3 In such a way, compelling something upon others as a belief, which he himself can never be completely convinced about, the spiritual leader would act against conscience himself and, hence, should thoroughly consider what he does, because he must answer for all misuse from such a compelled belief.—
- 5.4 Therefore, there can perhaps be truth in what is believed, but at the same time untruthfulness in the belief (or even merely in its internal confession) and this is damnable on its own.<sup>7</sup>
- 6.1 Even though, as indicated above, humans, who have made even the least beginning of freedom in thinking,\* since they were formerly under a yoke of servitude to the belief (e.g., the Protestants), immediately hold themselves as ennobled, as it were, the less (of the affirmative and of that pertaining to the precepts of the priests) they are necessitated to believe. However it remains precisely the reverse with those who have been unable to make or even want to make any attempt of this kind. For them the principle is that it is better to believe too much than too little.
- 6.2 For whatever is done beyond what is required, at least does no damage and might even be helpful.—
- 6.3 It is upon this delusion that the so-called safe-harbor maxims in matters of belief (*argumentum a tuto*<sup>8</sup>) are based, a delusion making dishonesty in religious confessions a principle (on which people are all the more easily resolved, because the religion makes good every flaw, including, therefore, also that of dishonesty), for if what I confess of God is true, then I have hit the target. But if it is not true, but also not forbidden as such, then I have only needlessly believed more than was necessary, and thus have only increased my own burden. But that is no crime.<sup>9</sup>
- 6.4 The danger of an insincerity in his assertions, the violation of conscience, the representation of something even before God as certain while being conscious that it is not of a character to be sworn to with unconditioned confidence; all this is counted as nothing by the hypocrite.—
- 6.5 The authentic maxim of safe-harbor, alone reconcilable with religion, is precisely the reverse of this.
- 6.6 What as means to, or as condition of, blessedness, cannot be known to me through my own reason, but only through revelation and taken up into my confession only by means of an historical belief, but which also does not contradict pure moral principles, I cannot indeed believe and avow as certain, but with just as little certainty can I reject as false.
- 6.7 Nonetheless, without being able to determine anything about this revelation, I can count on this much: whatever in this revelation may bring salutary blessing will come to my good to the extent

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<sup>6</sup> An example might be the article that Jesus is both entirely human and entirely divine. See [Trinity](#) and footnote to the section concerning Binity: Duality of Light.

<sup>7</sup> An assertion can be true, but if I do not know that it is true, it would be contrary to my conscience to assert it as true.

<sup>8</sup> “Argument of no risk,” meaning: it may not be true, but at least it will do no harm.

<sup>9</sup> This also hints of [Pascal's wager](#) for a belief in God.

that I do not make myself unworthy through a lack of the moral disposition in a moral course of living.

- 6.8 In this maxim there is genuine, moral security, namely to my conscience (and nothing more can be demanded of the human). In contrast to this there is the greatest danger and insecurity with the alleged means of prudence in artfully avoiding the disadvantageous consequences, which may arise to me through a lack of confession, and by consorting with both parties, it spoils both.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 I admit that I cannot easily reconcile myself to the expression which even quite sagacious men utilize: a certain people (which is in process in the cultivation of a legal freedom) is not ripe for freedom; the serfs of a property owner are not yet ripe for freedom; and, hence, also humans in general are not yet ripe for freedom in belief.
  - 1.2 According to such a presupposition, however, freedom will never occur; for one cannot ripen enough for this, if one has not previously been positioned in liberty (one must be free in order to be able appropriately to avail himself of his powers in freedom).
  - 1.3 The first attempts will be crude, of course; commonly also bound with a more difficult and dangerous situation than when one still remained under the command, but also the patronage, of others. But no one ever ripens to reasoning in any other way than by attempting it on his own (which one must be free to dare to do).
  - 1.4 I have nothing against the Idea that those who have power are necessitated by temporal circumstances to forestall widely, very widely, an emancipation from these three shackles.
  - 1.5 But a principle that those who are once subject to them are in general not suited to freedom, and that there be ample justification for keeping them from that emancipation at every moment, encroaches upon the prerogative of the divinity itself who created the humans for freedom.
  - 1.6 In the government of state, home and church it is, of course, more comfortable if one is authorized to apply such a principle.
  - 1.7 But more just?
- 7.1 If the author of a symbol, if the teacher of a church, indeed if every person (to the extent he will admit to himself as to how convinced he is of statements as divine revelations) should ask himself: do you trust yourself to affirm the truth of these statements in the presence of the Knower of Hearts and upon the renunciation of everything you hold dear and holy? then my concept of human nature (at least a nature not entirely incapable of good) would have to be very faulty for me not to foresee that even the most dedicated teacher of doctrine would have to tremble at this.\*
- 7.2 But if that is so, then how does it accord with sincerity in conscience if we still insist upon such an explanation of belief, which admits of no limitation, and to proclaim the presumptuousness of such assertions itself as a duty and devotion, but then, in doing so, to crush the freedom of the human, which is thoroughly required by everything which is moral (such as the acceptance of a religion), and not even leave room for a good will to admit, "I believe, dear Lord, help thou my unbelief!"<sup>10</sup>\*\*

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 The very man who is so bold to say that whoever does not believe this or that historical doctrine as a solemn truth is damned, would then also have to add, "if that which I teach you is not true, then I wish to be damned myself!"—

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<sup>10</sup> [Mark 9:24](#).

## Guidance Of The Conscience In Matters Of Belief

- 1.2 If there ever were anyone who could make such a frightful utterance, then I would advise people around him to be guided by the Persian proverb about a Hajji: if anyone has ever been to Mecca once (as a pilgrim), then abandon the house where he resides with you. If he has been there twice, then move from the same street where he lives. But if he has been there three times, then desert the city or even the country where he may be found.

\*\* Kant's annotation

- 1.1 Oh, sincerity! Thou Astral, who has fled from earth to heaven, how do we draw thee back from there to us, O thou fundament of the conscience, and thus of all internal religion?
- 1.2 I can admit how very much it is to be lamented that candor (speaking the entire truth that we know) is not to be encountered in human nature.
- 1.3 But sincerity (everything said being said in truthfulness) we must be able to require of each of us, and if there were no structure for that in our nature such that its development were merely neglected, the human race would have to be an object of the greatest contempt in our own eyes.—
- 1.4 But this mandatory, mental property is of a sort that is beset by many temptations and costs numerous sacrifices, hence also requires moral strength, i.e., virtue (which must be earned), but which must be guarded and cultivated earlier than any other because the contrary propensity, if once allowed to take root, is the most difficult to eradicate.—
- 1.5 Now if we compare that with our way of education, particularly in matters of religion or, even better, in the teaching of belief, where the fidelity of the recollection in answering questions relating to it is already taken as adequate for producing a believer and without considering the fidelity of the confession (concerning which no test is ever made), and thus producing a believer who does not even understand what he swears before God, we will no longer wonder about the lack of sincerity which makes outright hypocrites out of us internally.

## General Remark

- 1.1 What good the human can do of himself according to laws of freedom, in comparison with the capacity, which is possible for him only through supernatural aid, we can call nature in contrast to grace.
- 1.2 Not that we would understand with nature a physical constitution distinguished from freedom, but merely because we at least recognize the laws for this capacity (of virtue) and so where reason has a visible and unambiguous guide of that as an analogy of nature. In contrast to this, whether, when and what or how much this grace will effect in us remains completely concealed from us, and in this regard, just as with the supernatural in general (to which morality belongs as holiness), reason is devoid of any familiarity with the laws by means of which that may occur.
- 2.1 The concept of a supernatural assistance to our moral, though deficient, capacity and even to our not completely cleansed, or at least weak, disposition to accord adequately with all our duties, is transcendent and a mere Idea, the reality of which no experience can assure us.—
- 2.2 But even to assume it as an Idea in a merely practical intention is quite venturesome and hardly reconcilable with reason, because what is to be ascribed to us as morally good conduct would have to occur only through the best possible usage of our own powers and not through a foreign influence.
- 2.3 However we can also not prove the impossibility of that both nature and grace should take place side by side, because freedom itself, even though it contains nothing supernatural in its concept, nonetheless, with regard to its possibility, remains just as inconceivable to us as the supernatural, which some wish to assume in the place of that self-active, though deficient, determination of freedom.
- 3.1 But since by means of freedom we at least know the laws according to which it is determined (moral laws), but cannot recognize the least thing about any supernatural assistance, e.g., whether a certain moral strength perceived in us actually arises from that, or in which cases and under what conditions such assistance might be expected, it follows that apart from the general presupposition that what nature has not empowered within us grace will effect, if we have only used the former (i.e., our own powers) as much as possible, we can make no further use of this Idea, neither how we (apart from a steady striving for the moral course of living) might draw its assistance upon us, nor how we could determine in which cases we may expect it within us.—
- 3.2 This Idea is entirely exuberant, and we would be well advised to keep it at a respectful distance, like something sacred, so that we not render ourselves unfit for rational usage through a delusion of performing miracles ourselves, or perceiving miracles within us, or by inducing indolence by passively expecting from above what we should seek within ourselves.
- 4.1 Now there are intermediate causes which are in the power of man to utilize as means in effecting a certain intention. Accordingly then, in order to be worthy of divine assistance, there is not (and indeed cannot be) anything beyond his own serious striving to improve his moral constitution as much as possible, and in so doing to make himself receptive to a completion of what is needful to please God and which is not in man's power, because that divine assistance, which he expects, actually only aims at his moral improvement.



## General Remark

- 4.2 But that the impure man will not seek assistance in that way, but instead through certain sensitive performances (which, of course, he has in his power, but also which cannot of themselves make a better man of him, and yet are supposed to do just that and in a supernatural way), might have been expected easily enough a priori, and that is in fact the case.
- 4.3 The concept of a so-called means of grace, even though self-contradictory (according to what was just said), still serves as a means of self-deception which is just as common as it is disadvantageous to true religion.
- 5.1 The true (moral) serving of God, which believers have to render as subjects belonging to his realm, but also no less as citizens (under laws of freedom), is indeed just as invisible as this realm itself, i.e., serving in the heart (in spirit and in truth), and can consist only in the disposition to observe all true duties as divine commands, and not in actions determined exclusively for God.
- 5.2 With humans, however, the invisible still has need of some representation through something visible (the sensitive) and needs it even more to accompany the practical and, even though it is intellectual, to make it subject to a sighting (*anschaulich*), as it were (according to a certain analogy). But this, even though it is not easily dispensed with, is a means (though very much subject to the danger of misinterpretation) for representing our duty regarding the service of God and, by means of a delusion slinking behind us, is still easily held as the service of God itself and is commonly so termed.
- 6.1 This alleged service of God, traced back to its spirit and true meaning, namely a disposition consecrating itself to the Kingdom of God within as well as apart from us, can itself be divided by reason into four observances of duty, and to which certain ceremonies, which do not stand with these duties in necessary connection, have been coordinated in a corresponding way. The reason for this is because from ancient times to now, these ceremonies have been found to be good, sensitive means in serving as a schema for these duties, and in this way to awaken and maintain our attentiveness to the true service of God.
- 6.2 All of the ceremonies are based on an intention of promoting the morally good, namely:
- 6.3 1. To establish it firmly within us, and to awaken the disposition of the morally good repeatedly in the mind (the private prayer).
- 6.4 2. To communicate continuously its external propagation through public assemblies on days officially consecrated for that purpose, in order for religious teaching and good wishes (including these very attitudes) to be enunciated publicly (church attendance).
- 6.5 3. The propagation of the morally good to the succeeding generation through the reception of the newly initiated members into the community of the belief, as a duty, and also to instruct them concerning that community (baptism in the Christian religion).
- 6.6 4. The maintenance of this community through a repeated public ceremony, which continually unifies these members into an ethical body and indeed according to the principle of the equality of their rights among each other, and of their participation in all effects of the morally good (communion).
- 7.1 Every venture in religious matters, if we do not consider it merely morally, but rather hold it as a means of pleasing God as such and, therefore, for satisfying all our wishes through him, is a fetish belief (*Fetischglaube*), i.e., we are convinced that what cannot be effected via laws of either na-

ture or reason will still be produced by that belief alone, if we will only steadfastly believe that it will, and then combine certain ceremonies with that belief.

- 7.2 Even when we are thoroughly convinced that everything here depends upon the morally good, which can only arise from actually doing it, the sentient human always seeks a sly way of avoiding those difficult conditions, namely: if he will but provide the formality (the ceremony), God would readily accept that for the deed itself. This would have to be called an exuberant grace, if it were not far rather a chimerical grace of slothful confidence or, even more, a hypocritical confidence.
- 7.3 And so in all public forms of belief the human has devised certain customs as means of grace, even though, and in contrast to the Christian faith, they do not in all refer to practical, rational concepts and the attitudes conformable to them (e.g., the Muslim belief concerning the five great commandments: washing, praying, fasting, alms to the poor, the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>1</sup> Among these only the giving of alms would serve as worthy of exception, if it were to occur from a truly virtuous and, at the same time, religious disposition for human duty, for then it would deserve to be considered as a means of grace. But since this benevolence, according to this belief, is a form of extortion by giving to the poor what is intended as a sacrifice to God, it can easily take its place with the formality of the others, and does not deserve to be excepted from them).<sup>2</sup>
- 8.1 There can be, namely, three types of deranged belief leading us to possible infringements upon the boundaries of our reason with respect to things supernatural (which, according to rational laws, are objects neither of theoretical nor of practical usage).
- 8.2 First there is the belief of recognizing through experience something, which we cannot possibly assume as happening according to objective laws of experience (the belief in miracles).
- 8.3 Secondly there is the delusion of taking what cannot be rationally formulated in a concept and having to accept it among our rational concepts as necessary for our moral improvement (the belief in mysteries).
- 8.4 And thirdly we have the delusion of being able to produce through merely natural means an effect which is a mystery for us, namely the influence of God upon our morality (the belief in means of grace).—
- 8.5 We have treated the first two sorts of feigned belief in the general remarks to the two, immediately preceding parts of this essay.
- 8.6 Hence all that remains now is for us to deal with the means of grace (which are different from the works of grace,\* i.e., effects of supernatural moral influence, to which we stand passively, but the alleged experience of which is an exuberant delusion belonging to mere feeling).

\* Kant's Annotation:

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<sup>1</sup> These are the [five pillars of Islam](#) (except washing should be replaced by affirmation). These are necessary, but not entirely sufficient, for avoiding the fires of hell for the Muslim. Since [washing](#) is an important everyday task, while the affirmation is undertaken only once, Kant may have felt that washing was a pillar in a practical sense.

<sup>2</sup> Consistent with this notion of extortion is the Idea of the Muslim (especially in Pakistan) that doing good deeds is a form of banking with respect to rewards and punishment, i.e., a calculation regarding conduct. This is treated in an [article](#) from the *New York Times*. See a similar [article](#) also from the *Times*.

## General Remark

1.1 See the [General Remark to Part I](#).

- 9.1 1. Prayer, as an internal, formal service to God and considered, therefore, as a means of grace, is a superstitious delusion (making a fetish). For it is nothing more than the conveyance of a wish to a being, which has no need of an explanation of the internal disposition of the person making the wish, whereby then nothing at all is accomplished, hence no performance of duties which God obligates us to do as commands, and so where God is not actually served.
- 9.2 A hearty wish for God to be pleased in all our doing and forbearing, i.e., the disposition accompanying all our actions, to steer them as though they occurred in the service of God, is the spirit of the prayer which can and should take place within us "unceasingly."<sup>3</sup>
- 9.3 But to clothe this wish in words and formulas\* (even only internally) can at most only provide the value of a means for a repeated quickening of that disposition within us, but can have no immediate referral to any pleasing of God and cannot be a duty for every person and precisely because a means can only be prescribed for those who need it for certain purposes, and not everyone by far needs this means (to speak internally and actually with oneself, but, as alleged, more coherently with God). This disposition must far rather be sought through continued purification and promotion of the moral disposition so that the spirit of the prayer itself might be sufficiently quickened in us, and the words of the prayer (at least regarding our own benefit) might finally be able to fade away.
- 9.4 For this far rather weakens the effect of the moral Idea (which, considered subjectively, is called prayer), as indeed everything does which is aimed indirectly to a certain purpose.
- 9.5 The consideration of the deep wisdom of the divine creation in the smallest things and its majesty in the great, which humans were able to begin recognizing in the earliest times and which in our own times has expanded to amazement, has such a power to transform the mind not only into that wondering mood, which diminishes the human in his own eyes, as it were (and which we call adoration), but rather also, regarding his own moral determination, has an elevating power. Words, in contrast, even if they were those of the royal petitioner [David](#) (who knew little of all these wonders), must vanish like empty husks, because the feeling from such a look at the hand of God is inexpressible.<sup>4</sup>—
- 9.6 There is something else. The humans have a mind attuned to religion. And in this mood they take things which have meaning only with regard to their own moral improvement and eagerly change them into something like the cant of the royal courts, where humiliations and exaltations are usually taken all the less morally the more wordy they are. Given this, it is far more necessary, indeed as early as possible with children (who have need of their letters in order to thoroughly inculcate an ordered habit of prayer), that the speech (even spoken inwardly, indeed even the attempt to attune the mind for the comprehension of the Idea of God, which should approach a sighting) not be valid on its own, but rather serve only to quicken the disposition to carry out a course of living which is pleasing to God and where the speech is only a means for the imagination. Otherwise all these venerating testimonies for the conveyance of honor embrace also the danger of effecting nothing but hypocritical praise of God, instead of a practical action in his service. And this service does not consist in mere feelings.

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<sup>3</sup> [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#).

<sup>4</sup> This echos the first sentence to the Conclusion to the [CPrR](#), on or near page 201: "Two things overwhelm the mind with constantly new and increasing admiration and awe the more frequently and intently they are reflected upon: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me."

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 In the former wish, as the spirit of the prayer, the human seeks to work on himself (for the quickening of his disposition by means of the Idea of God). In the latter (formulas), however, since he explains himself by means of words, thus externally, he seeks to work on God.
- 1.2 In the first sense a prayer can occur with complete sincerity, even if the human does not claim to assert the existence of God with full certainty. In the second form of address he assumes this highest object as personally present, or at least takes the position (even internally) as though he were convinced of his presence and with the opinion that if it were not so, at least it cannot hurt, and might even procure favor for him. Hence in the latter (verbal) prayer no sincerity can be encountered as perfectly as in the former (in the mere spirit of the prayer).—
- 1.3 The truth of the latter remark everyone may find verified if he conceives of a pious and well meaning man, even though limited with respect to such a purified religious concept, whom another will surprise not in praying aloud, I won't say, but rather even in the posture (*Gebärdung*) indicating this.
- 1.4 One can expect on his own, without me having to mention it, that this man will stumble into confusion or embarrassment just as though he were caught in a shameful predicament.
- 1.5 But why is this?
- 1.6 A man found talking to himself aloud is immediately suspected of being touched in the head; and this is precisely the way we judge (and not entirely without justice) if we encounter someone alone in an occupation or posture which can only take place with someone actually before him, but which we assume is not the case here.—
- 1.7 But the teacher of the gospel has expressed the spirit of prayer very aptly in a formula<sup>5</sup> which dispenses with this predicament and, at the same time, also with the formulation itself (in terms of words).
- 1.8 In it we find nothing except the resolution to right living which, connected with the consciousness of our weakness, contains a continuing wish to be a worthy member in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, there is no actual supplication for something, which God in his wisdom could ever deny, but rather a wish which, if seriously (actively) meant, actually produces its object (becoming a person pleasing to God).
- 1.9 Even the wish for the necessities of our existence (bread) for one day (since it is expressly not aimed at its continuation, but rather is the effect of a merely animal-felt need) is more a confession of what nature within us wants than a special, considered supplication for that which the human wants. Such a supplication would be the case if the bread wished for were for the next day; but which is clearly excluded here.—
- 1.10 A prayer of this sort, which is uttered in a moral disposition (merely quickened through the Idea of God), because it, as the moral spirit of the prayer, even produces its object (a being pleasing to God), can alone occur in faith. This latter means as much as securing a favorable hearing by God; but of this sort there can be nothing other than the morality within us.
- 1.11 For if the supplication only went to the bread for the immediate day, then no one could be sure of a favorable hearing, i.e., that it be necessarily connected with the wisdom of God to protect him; it could perhaps better accord with that wisdom to have him die today for this lack of bread.
- 1.12 It is also an absurd and likewise presumptuous delusion to seek, through the throbbing intensity of our supplication, whether God might not be brought from the design of his wisdom (for the sake of our own, present advantage).
- 1.13 Therefore, we cannot with certitude consider any prayer as favorably heard which has a nonmoral object, i.e., praying for something not in faith.
- 1.14 Indeed even if the object were moral, but still only possible through a supernatural influence (or we at least only expect it in that way because we don't want to concern ourselves about it, e.g., like a change of mind, the putting on of the new man which is called the rebirth), it would still be very uncer-

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<sup>5</sup> [Matthew 6:9-13](#).

## General Remark

tain whether God would find it conformable to his wisdom to supernaturally supplement our (self-inflicted) deficiency, so much so that we might sooner have cause to expect the opposite.

- 1.15 Therefore, no one can even pray in faith for such as these.—
  - 1.16 From this it becomes clear what state of affairs would be entailed with a miracle-working belief (which would at the same time always be connected with an internal prayer).
  - 1.17 Since God can convey to the human no power to work supernaturally (because that is a contradiction), and since the human for his part, according to the concepts which he makes of good purposes possible in the world and concerning which divine wisdom judges, cannot determine and, therefore, cannot utilize any divine power for these purposes by means of a wish conjured up in and of himself, it is impossible to think a literal endowment of miracles, namely one depending upon the human as to whether he has it or not ("if your faith were that of a mustard seed," etc.<sup>6</sup>)
  - 1.18 Such a belief, therefore, if it is supposed to mean anything at all, is merely an Idea of the overarching importance of the moral constitution of the human, if he were to possess it in its entire, God-pleasing perfection (but which he never reaches), and which towers in importance over all other aims which God might have in his highest wisdom, hence to have a basis for trusting that if we were entirely, or even ever could be, what we ought to be and could become (in progressive approximation), then nature would have to obey our wishes, but which then would never be anything other than wise.
  - 2.1 But concerning the edification which is intended through attendance at church, the public prayer in that assembly is not a means of grace, but still an ethical ceremony, be it through united voices of the hymns of faith or also through the address encompassing within itself all moral concerns of the human and which is directed to God through the mouth of the clergy in the name of the entire congregation. And since this address makes this representable as a public matter, where the wish of each is to be represented as united with the wishes of all for a single purpose (bringing about the Kingdom of God), it cannot only elevate emotions to a moral inspiration (in contrast to private prayers, which are made without this sublime Idea, and which gradually and, through familiarity, completely lose all influence upon the mind), but even has a greater rational basis than the former to adorn the moral wish, making up the spirit of the prayer, in a formal address, but still without thinking of the supreme being being present or of an innate and particular power of this figurative speech as a means of grace.
  - 2.2 For here there is a particular intention, namely for every single individual through an outward ceremony, representing the unification of all people in the communal wish of the Kingdom of God, to put moral incentives increasingly into play. This cannot occur more efficaciously than by addressing the supreme head of that kingdom as though he were actually present.
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- 10.1 2. When we think of church attendance as a sensitive presentation of the fellowship of believers, then attending church as a festive, external and divine service in general in a church is not only a praiseworthy means for the edification\* of every individual, but is also a way for them, as citizens of a divine state, to be represented here upon earth and which is an immediately obligatory duty for the whole. Here we assume that this church does not contain ceremonies which lead to idolatry and which could trouble the conscience, e.g., certain devotions to God in the personhood of his infinite kindness in the name of a human, since such a sensible description is contrary to a commandment of reason, i.e., "Thou shalt make Thee no image, etc."<sup>7</sup>
  - 10.2 But to want to use that on its own as a means of grace, just as though it were to serve God in that way and as though God had combined a certain grace with the celebration of this ceremony (a merely sensitive representation of the universality of the religion), is a delusion which can accord easily enough with the thinking mode of a good citizen in a political commonwealth and with external respectability. But in the quality of a citizen in the Kingdom of God this not only con-

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<sup>6</sup> [Matthew 17:20](#).

<sup>7</sup> See [Exodus 20:4](#). Here Kant seems to suggest that Christians not pray in the name of Jesus, but to close the prayer with a simple "amen" (which is the case with the Lord's Prayer).

tributes nothing, but far rather counterfeits this quality and, through a deceptive veneer, serves to hide the bad moral stance of one's disposition from the eyes of others, and indeed from one's own eyes.

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1 If we seek a meaning commensurate with this expression, it can hardly be stated better than understanding the moral consequences of the worship service upon the subject.
  - 1.2 Now this does not consist in the emotion (which already lies in the concept of the worship service), even though most pretended prayers place it entirely in that (and for which reason they are also called hypocritical). The word edification, therefore, must mean the effect of the prayer upon the actual improvement of the individual.
  - 1.3 But this does not succeed otherwise than by going systematically to the task of instilling deeply in the heart sturdy principles according to well understood concepts, and which are erected upon attitudes commensurate to the varying importance of the duties attendant to these principle, and to preserve and secure them against temptations of the inclinations and, as it were, to erect a new person as a temple of God.
  - 1.4 It is easy to see that this construction can only proceed slowly. But it must be clear that something was constructed.
  - 1.5 But people sincerely believe that in this way they are edified (through listening or reading or singing), while utterly nothing is erected; indeed no hand has even be applied to the work. They probably believe this because they hope that that moral edifice, like the walls of Thebes, will arise of itself through sighing music and yearning wishes.
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- 11.1 3. The one and only festive initiation into the church community, i.e., the first reception as a member of the church (via baptism in the Christian church), is a ceremony with multiple meanings (which imposes great obligations on the initiate, if he is in position to acknowledge his faith himself, or upon the witnesses who volunteer to concern themselves with his development), and which aims at something sacred (the fashioning of a human into a citizen of a divine state). But it is not a sacred action on its own nor is it one effecting holiness and receptivity for divine grace within him, and so is not a means of grace. In the first Greek church it had such an excessive appearance of being able to wash away all sins at once, that this delusion also revealed a kinship with an almost more than pagan superstition at that time.<sup>8</sup>
  - 12.1 4. There is the often repeated ceremony of renewal, continuation and propagation of this church fellowship according to laws of equality (the communion) which, at most also according to the example of the founder of such a church (simultaneously also in his memory), can occur through the ritual of a communal enjoyment at the same table. This ceremony contains something great within itself, expanding the narrow, egotistical and insufferable way of human thinking, especially in matters of religion, to the Idea of a cosmopolitan moral community, and is a good means for enlivening a parish to the moral disposition for brotherly love represented in that way.
  - 12.2 But to boast that God has combined a particular grace with the celebration of this festivity, and to assume a proposition, among the articles of belief that even though merely an ecclesiastical act it is still a means of grace, is a delusion of religion which can do nothing other than to work precisely against the spirit of that ritual.—

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<sup>8</sup> Some (see [Baptism of Constantine the Great](#)) have suggested that Constantine the Great delayed his baptism until he was certain he was dying in order to have as many sins removed in this way as possible.



## General Remark

- 12.3 In general then a priesthood would be the usurped rule by clericalism over minds by giving to the clerics the appearance of exclusive possession of the means of grace.

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- 13.1 All such fabricated self-delusions in religious matters have a common basis.
- 13.2 Of all divine, moral characteristics, i.e., holiness, grace and justice, the human usually turns immediately to the second (grace) in order to avoid the fearful condition of being in conformity with the requirements of the first.
- 13.3 It is tiresome to be a good servant (the talk is always of duties). One would much rather be a favorite where he is much attended to or, even if he is grossly derelict in his duty, where everything is made good for him through the mediation of a patronage in the highest degree, so that he can always remain the disengaged servant that he was before.
- 13.4 But in order to give at least some semblance of satisfaction concerning the activity of this intention of his, he usually transfers his concept of a human (together with its shortcomings) to the divinity. And just as legislative severity, benevolent grace and strict justice are not isolated from each other by the best leaders of our race (as they should be), such that they might work of themselves for a moral effect in the actions of the subjects, and rather are also jumbled together in the thinking mode of the human ruler at the composition of his edicts, we may seek to utilize only one of these properties, the frail wisdom of the human willpower, in order that the other two might be determined with indulgence. In a like fashion he hopes to be able to apply this to God, by turning to God's grace alone.
- 13.5 (Hence for religion it was an important differentiation of the conceived properties, or much rather relationships, of God toward humans, to make each relationship especially notable through the Idea of the three-fold personhood, where each is to be thought analogously.)
- 13.6 To this end the human devoted himself to all conceivable ceremonies so he could demonstrate how much he honored the divine commands in order not to have to observe them. And in order that his wishes (without deeds) might also serve to make good his transgression of those commands, he cries "Lord, Lord" in order not to be necessitated "to do the will of the heavenly father;"<sup>9</sup> and so out of the ceremonies in the utilization of certain means for the invigoration of truly practical attitudes he comes up with the notion of a means of grace on its own. And then he even proclaims the belief, that they are such, to be an essential part of religion (indeed for the common man the whole of it) and relegates to the all bountiful foresight to make a better person of him by devoting himself to piety (a passive honoring of divine laws) instead of virtue (the application of one's own powers to the compliance with that duty which he honors). And where still the latter (virtue), connected with the former (piety), can alone constitute the Idea understood with the term: Godliness (genuinely religious disposition).<sup>10</sup>—
- 13.7 When the delusion of this alleged minion of heaven climbs to the exuberant imagination of felt particular works of grace within him (even to the presumption of a confidence in an alleged hidden intimacy with God), virtue finally becomes repulsive to him and an object of contempt.

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<sup>9</sup> [Matthew 7:21](#).

<sup>10</sup> Thus it seems that Godliness has two components, 1. To act rightly (morally), i.e., to love one's neighbor as oneself and where all people, even enemies, count as neighbors; and 2. To think rightly (piously), i.e., seek to eliminate evil thinking, assert traditional beliefs and creeds, and continue in communion with God.

Hence it is no wonder if there are open complaints that religion very seldom contributes to the improvement of the humans, and the inner light ("under a bushel"<sup>11</sup>) of this person under grace has no desire to shine externally through good works, and indeed (as one might well demand in accordance with his masquerade) especially in the face of other naturally honest people, who basically do not take up religion for the replacement, but rather for the promotion, of the virtuous disposition, which reveals itself actively in an a moral course of living.

- 13.8 Nevertheless, the teacher of the gospel has given this external evidence in the external experience itself as a touchstone, by means of which, as its fruit,<sup>12</sup> we can recognize it, each person on his own.
- 13.9 Nor have we yet seen that those who (according to their opinion) are extraordinarily favored (the elect) can in the least surpass the naturally honest man, the man whom one can trust in dealings, in business and in dire straits. Indeed, taken on the whole, their comparison with him can hardly avoid being a proof that the correct way is not to proceed from favor to virtue, but far rather from virtue to favor.

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<sup>11</sup> [Matthew 5:15](#).

<sup>12</sup> This probably refers to 13.6 above, i.e., the "do the works of my father in heaven" before "Lord Lord" will be recognized and acknowledged.



## Translator's Notes

### Technical Elements

I have gratuitously numbered Kant's sentences in terms of both paragraph order and order within the paragraph. For example the following is from the first Preface:

- 1.5      So, for example, in order to know whether I should (or even can) remain truthful in my witness before a court of law, or faithful concerning the responsibility for someone's good entrusted to me, there is no reason for me to inquire about a purpose which I might want to effect with my testimony. For it is all the same to me and so it doesn't matter what it is. Indeed anyone, whose truthful testimony is required, and who finds it necessary to look around for some purpose, is already an unworthy person.

The 1.5 indicates that this is the fifth sentence in the first paragraph of that preface. Also while in the German this is presented as a single sentence, I have divided it here into three sentences. And occasionally, in order to present a logical development more clearly, I space between the parts of the sentence.

Kant's own footnotes I have indicated within the body of the text by one or more asterisks and have positioned them at the end of the paragraph of the sentence being referenced. I have also presented it in a Helvetica typeface. Here is an example of a footnote following paragraph three of the first preface:

\* Kant's annotation:

- 1.1      The proposition "there is a God," thus "there is a Highest Good in the world," if this (as an article of belief) is to arise merely from morality, then it is a synthetic assertion a priori. For even though it is assumed only in a practical sense, it still goes out beyond the concept of duty which is provided through morality. And since this concept of duty presupposes no material for the discretion, but only its formal laws, the proposition concerning God's existence cannot be developed from it analytically.

My own comments to Kant's text I have included as regular footnotes and which are hence clearly distinguished from the footnotes of Kant (which, as I stated just above, are presented more as paragraph notes). Often these seek to state my own take on what Kant is trying to articulate.

I have tried to give a link to the Jewish and Christian scriptures for quotes used by Kant. In this regard it seems that Kant may have been working from memory or may also have wanted to interpret these scriptures; accordingly while I call them quotations they might be better understood as Kant's paraphrases of these scriptures.

### Translation of Certain Terms

*Aberglaube* = superstition

*Afterdienst* = pseudo-service

*Anbetung* = adoration

*Anlage* = structure. I also like "make up" or "framework"

*Böse* = evil

*Fetischmachen* = sorcery

*Gemeinwesen* = commonwealth

**Gesinnung** = disposition (or attitude)

**Glückseligkeit** = blessedness

**Gottseligkeit** = Godliness

**Hang** = propensity

**Lebenswandeln** = course of living

**Maxim** is taken over directly as “maxim” (and has a Latin root) and means a principle of action which an individual has taken on in order to guide his behavior rationally. For example I might have a maxim of never telling a lie, or a maxim of never lying unless it is safe and profitable.

**Schwärmerei** = fanaticism

**Triebfeder** = incentive. An advantage that is attainable through some action. The term originally refers to the drive spring of a watch. “Spur” might also work, or “motive” or “motivation.”

**Übel** = ill or bad.

**Überschwenglich** = exuberant

**Vernünffteln** is rendered here with “rationalizing” (although in other works I sometimes use “rational concocting”). This has the suggestion of making use of clever and indirect methods to achieve something, or also to arrange one’s reasonings in an ingenious and elaborate way, even if it is faulty.

**Wahl** = choice

**Wahn** = delusion

**Willkür** I have rendered with “discretion” as in the freedom to decide what should be done in a particular situation. As for “willkürlich” I have used “arbitrary.”