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Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason
And Other Writings

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The philosophical doctrine of religion

Part three
Part three
The victory of the good principle over the evil principle, and the founding of a kingdom of God on earth

The battle that every morally well-disposed human being must withstand in this life, under the leadership of the good principle, against the attacks of the evil principle, can procure him, however hard he tries, no greater advantage than freedom from the dominion of evil. That he be free, that he "relinquish the bondage under the law of sins, to live for righteousness," this is the highest prize that he can win. He still remains not any the less exposed to the assaults of the evil principle; and, to assert his freedom, which is constantly under attack, he must henceforth remain forever armed for battle.

The human being is nevertheless in this perilous state through his own fault; hence he is bound at least to apply as much force as he can muster in order to extricate himself from it. But how? That is the question. – If he searches for the causes and the circumstances that draw him into this danger and keep him there, he can easily convince himself that they do not come his way from his own raw nature, so far as he exists in isolation, but rather from the human beings to whom he stands in relation or association. It is not the instigation of nature that arouses what should properly be called the passions, which wreak such great devastation in his originally good predisposition. His needs are but limited, and his state of mind in providing for them moderate and tranquil. He is poor (or considers himself so) only to the extent that he is anxious that other human beings will consider him poor and will despise him for it. Envy, addiction to power, avarice, and the malignant inclinations associated with these, assail his nature, which on its own is undemanding, as soon as he is among human beings. Nor is it necessary to assume that these are sunk into evil and are examples that lead him astray: it suffices that they are there, that they surround him, and that they are human beings, and they will mutually corrupt each other’s moral disposition and make one another evil. If no means could be found to establish a union which has for its end the prevention of this evil and the promotion of the good in the human
being—an enduring and ever expanding society, solely designed for the preservation of morality by counteracting evil with united forces—however much the individual human being might do to escape from the dominion of this evil, he would still be held in incessant danger of relapsing into it. Inasmuch as we can see, therefore, the dominion of the good principle is not otherwise attainable, so far as human beings can work toward it, than through the setting up and the diffusion of a society in accordance with, and for the sake of, the laws of virtue—a society which reason makes it a task and a duty of the entire human race to establish in its full scope. For only in this way can we hope for a victory of the good principle over the evil one. In addition to prescribing laws to each individual human being, morally legislative reason also unfurls a banner of virtue as rallying point for all those who love the good, that they may congregate under it and thus at the very start gain the upper hand over evil and its untiring attacks.

An association of human beings merely under the laws of virtue, ruled by this idea, can be called an ethical and, so far as these laws are public, an ethico-civil (in contrast to a juridico-civil) society, or an ethical community. It can exist in the midst of a political community and even be made up of all the members of the latter (indeed, without the foundation of a political community, it could never be brought into existence by human beings). It has however a special unifying principle of its own (virtue) and hence a form and constitution essentially distinct from those of the other. There is nevertheless a certain analogy between the two, when considered in general as two communities, and with respect to this analogy the ethical community can also be called an ethical state, i.e. a kingdom of virtue (of the good principle). The idea of such a state has an entirely well-grounded, objective reality in human reason (in the duty to join such a state), even though we cannot subjectively ever hope of the good will of human beings that these will work harmoniously toward this end.

Division one
Philosophical representation of the victory of the good principle in the founding of a Kingdom of God on earth

I. CONCERNING THE ETHICAL STATE OF NATURE

A juridico-civil (political) state is the relation of human beings to each other inasmuch as they stand jointly under public juridical laws (which are all coercive laws). An ethico-civil state is one in which they are united under laws without being coerced, i.e. under laws of virtue alone.
Now, just as the rightful (but not therefore always righteous) *state of nature*, i.e. the *juridical state of nature*, is opposed to the first, so is the *ethical state of nature* distinguished from the second. In these two [states of nature] each individual prescribes the law to himself, and there is no external law to which he, along with the others, acknowledges himself to be subject. In both each individual is his own judge, and there is no effective *public* authority with power to determine legitimately, according to laws, what is in given cases the duty of each individual, and to bring about the universal execution of those laws.

In an already existing political community all the political citizens are, as such, still in the *ethical state of nature*, and have the right to remain in it; for it would be a contradiction (*in adjecto*) for the political community to compel its citizens to enter into an ethical *community*, since the latter entails freedom from coercion in its very concept. Every political community may indeed wish to have available a dominion over minds as well, according to the laws of virtue; for where its means of coercion do not reach, since a human judge cannot penetrate into the depths of other human beings, there the dispositions to virtue would bring about the required result. But woe to the legislator who would want to bring about through coercion a polity directed to ethical ends! For he would thereby not only achieve the very opposite of ethical ends, but also undermine his political ends and render them insecure. – The citizen of the political community therefore remains, so far as the latter’s lawgiving authority is concerned, totally free: he may wish to enter with his fellow citizens into an ethical union over and above the political one, or rather remain in a natural state of this sort. Only insofar as an ethical community must rest on *public* laws and have a constitution based on them, must those who freely commit themselves to enter into this state, not [indeed] allow the political power to command them how to order (or not order) such a constitution internally, but allow limitations, namely the condition that nothing be included in this constitution which contradicts the duty of its members as *citizens of the state* – even though, if the ethical bond is of the genuine sort, this condition need not cause anxiety.

Further, since the duties of virtue concern the entire human race, the concept of an ethical community always refers to the ideal of a totality of human beings, and in this it distinguishes itself from the concept of a political community. Hence a multitude of human beings united in that purpose cannot yet be called the ethical community as such but only a particular society that strives after the consensus of all human beings (indeed, of all finite rational beings) in order to establish an absolute ethical whole of which each partial society is only a representation or schema; for each of these societies can in turn be represented, in relation

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* i.e., a contradiction generated by the juxtaposition of two mutually exclusive terms.
to others of this kind, as situated in the natural state, with all the imperfections of the latter (as is also the case with separate political states not bound together through a public international law).

II.

THE HUMAN BEING OUGHT TO LEAVE THE ETHICAL STATE OF NATURE IN ORDER TO BECOME A MEMBER OF AN ETHICAL COMMUNITY

Just as the juridical state of nature is a state of war of every human being against every other, so too is the ethical state of nature one in which the good principle, which resides in each human being, is incessantly attacked by the evil which is found in him and in every other as well. Human beings (as we remarked above) mutually corrupt one another’s moral disposition and, even with the good will of each individual, because of the lack of a principle which unites them, they deviate through their dissensions from the common goal of goodness, as though they were instruments of evil, and expose one another to the danger of falling once again under its dominion. Further, just as the state of a lawless external (brutish) freedom and independence from coercive laws is a state of injustice and of war, each against each, which a human being ought to leave behind in order to enter into a politico-civil state, so is the ethical state of nature a public feuding between the principles of virtue and a state of inner immorality which the natural human being ought to endeavor to leave behind as soon as possible.

Now, here we have a duty sui generis, not of human beings toward human beings but of the human race toward itself. For every species of rational beings is objectively – in their own end, namely the promotion to all. But, since this highest moral through the striving of one individual but requires rather a union of every end, [i.e.] toward a system or through the unity of which a to pass, yet the idea of such a whole of which we know to reside within our power, a whole of which we cannot know power: so the duty in question principle. – We can already anticipate position of another idea, namely, universal organization the forces their own, are united for a common lead us.

THE CONCEPT OF AN ETHICAL COMMUNITY

If an ethical community is to be subjected to a public legislation, a capable of being regarded as community to be founded is to be joining in a union must itself be because legislation proceeds from each to the conditions under which it is in conformity with a universal law, an external legal constraint. If, however, the people, as a people, cannot such a community all the laws are morality of actions (which is subject to public human laws) which constitute a juridical community legality of actions, which is visible which alone is at issue here. Therefore the people whom we can declare the unity. But neither can ethical laws

* Hobbes’s statement, 66 status hominum naturalis est bellum omnium in omnes, has no other fault apart from this: it should say, est status belli... etc. For, even though one may not concede that actual hostilities are the rule between human beings who do not stand under external and public laws, their condition (status juridicus), i.e. the relationship in and through which they are capable of rights (of their acquisition and maintenance) is nonetheless one in which each of them wants to be himself the judge of what is his right vis-à-vis others, without however either having any security from others with respect to this right or offering them any: and this is a condition of war, wherein every man must be constantly armed against everybody else. Hobbes’s second statement, 87 ex mining esse est status naturalis, 8 follows from the first: for this condition is a continual violation of the rights of all others through the presumption of being the judge in one’s own affairs and of not allowing any security to other human beings in theirs save one’s own power of choice.

* the natural state of men is a war of all against all
* is a state of war... etc.
* juridical state
* one must exit from the natural state
* of a unique kind
rational beings is objectively—in the idea of reason—destined to a common end, namely the promotion of the highest good as a good common to all. But, since this highest moral good will not be brought about solely through the striving of one individual person for his own moral perfection but requires rather a union of such persons into a whole toward that very end, [i.e.] toward a system of well-disposed human beings in which, and through the unity of which alone, the highest moral good can come to pass, yet the idea of such a whole, as a universal republic based on the laws of virtue, differs entirely from all moral laws (which concern what we know to reside within our power), for it is the idea of working toward a whole of which we cannot know whether as a whole it is also in our power: so the duty in question differs from all others in kind and in principle. —We can already anticipate that this duty will need the presupposition of another idea, namely, of a higher moral being through whose universal organization the forces of single individuals, insufficient on their own, are united for a common effect. First of all, however, we must follow up the leading thread of that moral need and see where it will lead us.

III.

THE CONCEPT OF AN ETHICAL COMMUNITY IS THE CONCEPT OF A PEOPLE OF GOD UNDER ETHICAL LAWS

If an ethical community is to come into being, all individuals must be subjected to a public legislation, and all the laws binding them must be capable of being regarded as commands of a common lawgiver. Now if the community to be founded is to be a juridical one, the mass of people joining in a union must itself be the lawgiver (of constitutional laws), because legislation proceeds from the principle of limiting the freedom of each to the conditions under which it can coexist with the freedom of everyone else, in conformity with a universal law,* and the universal will thus establishes an external legal constraint. If, however, the community is to be an ethical one, the people, as a people, cannot itself be regarded as legislator. For in such a community all the laws are exclusively designed to promote the morality of actions (which is something internal, and hence cannot be subject to public human laws) whereas these public laws (and in this they constitute a juridical community) are on the contrary directed to the legality of actions, which is visible to the eye, and not to (inner) morality which alone is at issue here. There must therefore be someone other than the people whom we can declare the public lawgiver of an ethical community. But neither can ethical laws be thought of as proceeding originally

* This is the principle of all external right.
merely from the will of this superior (as statutes that would not be binding without his prior sanction), for then they would not be ethical laws, and the duty commensurate to them would not be a free virtue but an externally enforceable legal duty. Therefore only such a one can be thought of as the supreme lawgiver of an ethical community, with respect to whom all true duties, hence also the ethical, must be represented as at the same time his commands; consequently, he must also be one who knows the heart, in order to penetrate to the most intimate parts of the dispositions of each and everyone and, as must be in every community, give to each according to the worth of his actions. But this is the concept of God as a moral ruler of the world. Hence an ethical community is conceivable only as a people under divine commands, i.e. as a people of God, and indeed in accordance with the laws of virtue.

We might of course also think of a people of God in accordance with statutory laws, that is to say, such laws as do not involve the morality of actions but only their legality. This would be a juridical community, of which God would indeed be the lawgiver (hence its constitution would be a theocracy) — though priests, as human beings who receive their orders directly from him, would run an aristocratic government. Such a constitution, however, whose existence and form rest entirely on historical grounds, does not constitute the problem of a morally legislative reason which alone we are to bring to a resolution here. It will come up for examination in the historical section, as an institution under politico-civil laws, of which the lawgiver, though God, is yet external, whereas we only have to do here with an institution, of which the lawgiving is purely internal, a republic under laws of virtue, i.e. with a people of God “zealous of good works.”

To such a people of God we can oppose the idea of a band under the evil principle — a union of those who side with that principle for the propagation of evil. It is in the interest of evil to prevent the realization of the other union, even though here too the principle that battles the dispositions of virtue resides in our very self and is only figuratively represented as an external power.

* As soon as something is recognized as duty, even if it should be a duty imposed through the purely arbitrary will of a human lawgiver, obeying it is equally a divine command. Of course we cannot call statutory civil laws divine commands; but if they are legitimate, their observance is equally a divine command. The proposition, “We ought to obey God rather than men,” means only that when human beings command something that is evil in itself (directly opposed to the ethical law), we may not, and ought not, obey them. But, conversely, if an alleged divine statutory law is opposed to a positive civil law not in itself immoral, there is then cause to consider the alleged divine law as spurious, for it contradicts a clear duty, whereas that it is itself a divine command can never be certified sufficiently on empirical evidence to warrant violating on its account an otherwise established duty.

* Willkürlich
IV.

THE IDEA OF A PEOPLE OF GOD CANNOT BE REALIZED (BY HUMAN ORGANIZATION) EXCEPT IN THE FORM OF A CHURCH

The sublime, never fully attainable idea of an ethical community is greatly scaled down under human hands, namely to an institution which, at best capable of representing with purity only the form of such a community, with respect to the means for establishing a whole of this kind is greatly restricted under the conditions of sensuous human nature. But how could one expect to construct something completely straight from such crooked wood?92

To found a moral people of God is, therefore, a work whose execution cannot be hoped for from human beings but only from God himself. Yet human beings are not permitted on this account to remain idle in the undertaking and let Providence have free rein, as if each could go after his private moral affairs and entrust to a higher wisdom the whole concern of the human race (as regards its moral destiny). Each must, on the contrary, so conduct himself as if everything depended on him. Only on this condition may he hope that a higher wisdom will provide the fulfillment of his well-intentioned effort.

The wish of all well-disposed human beings is, therefore, “that the kingdom of God come, that His will be done on earth”;93 but what preparations must they make in order that this wish come to pass among them?

An ethical community under divine moral legislation is a church which, inasmuch as it is not the object of a possible experience, is called the church invisible (the mere idea of the union of all upright human beings under direct yet moral divine world-governance, as serves for the archetype of any such governance to be founded by human beings). The church visible is the actual union of human beings into a whole that accords with this ideal. So far as every society under public laws entails a subordination of its members (in the relation of those who obey the society’s laws with respect to those who oversee their observance), the mass of people united into that whole (of the church) is a congregation under superiors who (under the name of teachers or shepherds of souls) only administer the affairs of the church’s invisible supreme head, and, in this respect, are called servants of the church, just as, in a political community, the visible head occasionally calls himself the supreme servant of the state, even though he does not acknowledge any other human being above himself (and, as a rule, not even the people as a whole). The true (visible) church is one that displays the (moral) kingdom of God on earth inasmuch as the latter can be realized through human beings. The requisites for a true church, and also its marks, are the following:94

1. sinllichen
1. **Universality**, whence its numerical unity, for which it must be internally predisposed; to wit: though indeed divided and at variance with itself in accidental opinions, yet, as regards its essential purpose, it is founded on principles that necessarily lead it to universal union in a single church (hence, no sectarian schisms).

2. Its **make-up** (quality), i.e., purity: union under no other incentives than moral ones (cleansed of the nonsense of superstition and the madness of enthusiasm).

3. **Relation** under the principle of freedom: the internal relation of its members among themselves as well as the external relation of the church to the political power, both in a *free state* (hence neither a *hierarchy*, nor an *illuminatism* — which is a kind of *democracy* through individual inspirations, which can vary greatly from one another, according to each mind).

4. Its **modality**, the unchangeableness of its constitution — exception however made for the accidental regulations that only concern the administration of the church and must change according to times and circumstances, for which, however, the church must already possess secure principles within itself *a priori* (in the idea of its end, and hence in the form of primordial laws publicly laid down for instruction once and for all, as it were through a book of laws, not through arbitrary creeds which, since they lack authority, are fortuitous, exposed to contradiction, and changeable).

As church, therefore, i.e., considered as the mere representative of a state [ruled] by God, an ethical community really has nothing in its principles that resembles a political constitution. Its constitution is neither **monarchical** (under a pope or patriarch), nor **aristocratic** (under bishops and prelates), nor **democratic** (as of sectarian illuminat). It could best of all be likened to the constitution of a household (a family) under a common though invisible moral father, whose holy son, who knows the father’s will and yet stands in blood relation with all the members of the family, takes his father’s place by making the other members better acquainted with his will; these therefore honor the father in him and thus enter into a free, universal and enduring union of hearts.

**V.**

**THE CONSTITUTION OF EACH AND EVERY CHURCH ALWAYS PROCEEDS FROM SOME HISTORICAL (REVEALED) FAITH, WHICH WE CAN CALL ECCLESIASTICAL FAITH; AND THIS IS BEST FOUNDED ON A HOLY SCRIPTURE**

The only faith that can found a universal church is **pure religious faith**, for it is a plain rational faith which can be convincingly communicated to every-one, whereas a historical faith, though it influence no further than the tidiness of our Church on it alone.

Conscious of their impotence i.e., and though they allow every honest, the faith which must carry conviction are yet not easily persuaded that so good life is all that God requires of their Church. They cannot indeed be directed to some service or other wherein what matters is not the internal rather, that they are performed for obedience, however morally indispensable. It does not enter their heads toward human beings (themselves) conform to God’s commands; he doings, so far as these have referent to service of God; and that it is absolute in some other way (for them no other than earthly beings, most this world has a special need of being praised through signs of submission as much compliance with his orders over them effectively; and, in addition, may be, he always finds an immediate we treat duty, to the extent that transaction of an affair of God, not of a religion of divine service instead of religion.

Since all religion consists in this God as the lawgiver to be honored, so far as the conformity of our down to knowing how God wills to his divine legislative will commands either **statutory** or through purely moral laws we can recognize by himself, through lies at the basis of his religion; for he originates solely from the consciousness of need to assume a power capable to of a divine will, determined merely us to think of only one religion which
one, whereas a historical faith, merely based on facts, can extend its influence no further than the tidings relevant to a judgment on its credibility can reach. Yet, due to a peculiar weakness of human nature, pure faith can never be relied on as much as it deserves, that is, enough to found a Church on it alone.

Conscious of their impotence in the cognition of supersensible things, and though they allow every honor to be paid to faith in these things (as the faith which must carry conviction for them universally), human beings are yet not easily persuaded that steadfast zeal in the conduct of a morally good life is all that God requires of them to be his well-pleasing subjects in his Kingdom. They cannot indeed conceive their obligation except as directed to some service or other which they must perform for God—wherein what matters is not the intrinsic worth of their actions as much as, rather, that they are performed for God to please him through passive obedience, however morally indifferent the actions might be in themselves. It does not enter their heads that, whenever they fulfill their duties toward human beings (themselves and others), by that very fact they also conform to God’s commands; hence, that in all their doings and non-doings, so far as these have reference to morality, they are constantly in the service of God; and that it is absolutely impossible to serve him more intimately in some other way (for they can act and exercise their influence on no other than earthly beings, not on God). Since every great lord of this world has a special need of being honored by his subjects, and of being praised through signs of submissiveness; nor can he expect, without this, as much compliance with his orders from his subjects as he needs to rule over them effectively; and, in addition, however reasonable a human being may be, he always finds an immediate pleasure in attestations of honor: so we treat duty, to the extent that it is equally God’s command, as the transaction of an affair of God, not of humans; and thus arises the concept of a religion of divine service instead of the concept of a purely moral religion.

Since all religion consists in this, that in all our duties we look upon God as the lawgiver to be honored universally, the determination of religion, so far as the conformity of our conduct with it is concerned, comes down to knowing how God wills to be honored (and obeyed). Now a divine legislative will commands either through laws in themselves merely statutory or through purely moral laws. As regards the latter, each individual can recognize by himself, through his own reason, the will of God which lies at the basis of his religion; for the concept of the Divinity actually originates solely from the consciousness of these laws and from reason’s need to assume a power capable of procuring for them the full effect possible in this world in conformity with the moral final end. The concept of a divine will, determined merely according to purely moral laws, allows us to think of only one religion which is purely moral, just as of only one
God. If, however, we assume statutory laws of such a will, and put our religion in observing them, then cognition of these laws is possible not through our own mere reason but only through revelation. And, whether given to each individual secretly or publicly - that it may be propagated among human beings through tradition or scripture - this revelation would be a *historical* and not a purely *rational* faith. - And even assuming divine statutory laws (laws which let us recognize them as obligatory, not of themselves, but only inasmuch as they are the revealed will of God), even then pure *moral* legislation, through which God's will is originally engraved in our hearts, is not only the unavoidable condition of all true religion in general but also that which actually constitutes such religion, and for which statutory religion can contain only the means to its promotion and propagation.

So if the question How does God wish to be honored? is to be answered in a way universally valid for every human being, *each considered simply as a human being*, there is no second thought that the legislation of his will might not be simply *moral*. For a statutory legislation (which presupposes a revelation) can be regarded only as contingent, as something that cannot have reached, nor can reach, every human being, hence does not bind all human beings universally. Thus, "not they who say Lord! Lord! But they who do the will of God," say those, therefore, who seek to become well-pleasing to him, not through loud praises of him (or of his envoy, as a being of divine origin) according to revealed concepts which not every human being can have, but through a good life conduct, regarding which everyone knows his will - these will be the ones who offer to him the true veneration that he desires.

If, however, we regard ourselves as duty-bound to behave not just as human beings but also as *citizens* within a divine state on earth, and to work for the existence of such an association under the name of a church, then the question How does God will to be honored in a church (as a congregation of God)? appears unanswerable by mere reason, but to be in need of a statutory legislation only proclaimed through revelation, hence of a historical faith which we can call "ecclesiastical" in contradistinction to pure religious faith. For in pure religious faith it all comes down to what constitutes the matter of the veneration of God, namely the observance in moral disposition of all duties as his commands. On the other hand, a church which is the union in a moral community of many human beings of equally many dispositions, needs a *public* form of obligation, some ecclesiastical form that depends on experiential conditions and is intrinsically contingent and manifold, hence cannot be recognized as duty without divine statutory laws. However, we should not therefore forthwith presume that the determination of this form is a task of the divine lawgiver; there is rather reason to assume that it is God's will that we should ourselves carry out the idea of such a community. And, though human beings might have indeed tried a result, yet they ought not to carry through renewed attempts which of previous ones, since the task, which is left entirely up to them. We then informing any church, to hold its faith, is, rather, presumptuous to determine the trouble of improving even an usurpation of higher authority by means of ecclesiastical authority. But it would be just as by way a church is organized may pertain, if, so far as we can see, the *religious* and, if, in addition, we can appear all at once without the public in religious concepts. Nor whether God or human beings that proof of the human propensity since such a religion rests on arbitrary laws based on the assumption that discovered through reason but in even the best life conduct (a concept adopt under the guidance of the particular given to the veneration of the supreme will that compliance to his commands). Thus it happens that human into a church, or agreement over a *public* institution for the promotion necessary in themselves but only by their God, by means of festivities and the observance of precepts (which is however itself a means) a bottom morally indifferent actions deemed to be all the more pleasing, carried out just for his sake. Thus an ethical community, ecclesiastical faith: there were *temples* (building public ins); *priests* (consecrated stew); *ministers* (teachers of pure moral re-come first in the rank and value a)

Now once it stands as unalterable...
beings might have indeed tried out many a form of church with unhappy result, yet they ought not to cease striving after this end, if need be through renewed attempts which as much as possible avoid the mistakes of previous ones, since the task, which for them is at the same time a duty, is left entirely up to them. We therefore have no reason, in founding and informing any church, to hold its laws straightaway as divine and statutory; it is, rather, presumptuous to declare them such, in order to spare ourselves the trouble of improving the church’s form further, or, perhaps, even an usurpation of higher authority, in order to impose a yoke upon the multitude by means of ecclesiastical statutes, under the pretense of divine authority. But it would be just as arrogant peremptorily to deny that the way a church is organized may perhaps also be a special divine dispensation, if, so far as we can see, the church is in perfect harmony with moral religion, and if, in addition, we cannot see how it could ever have made its appearance all at once without the requisite preparatory advances of the public in religious concepts. Now, in the hesitation over this task – whether God or human beings themselves should found a church – there is proof of the human propensity to a religion of divine service (cultus), and, since such a religion rests on arbitrary precepts, to faith in statutory divine laws based on the assumption that some divine legislation, not to be discovered through reason but in need of revelation, must supervene to even the best life conduct (a conduct that the human being could always adopt under the guidance of the pure moral religion); attention is thereby given to the veneration of the supreme being directly (and not by way of that compliance to his commands already prescribed to us through reason). Thus it happens that human beings will never regard either union into a church, or agreement over the form to be given to it, or likewise any public institution for the promotion of the moral [content] of religion, as necessary in themselves but only for the purpose of, as they say, serving their God, by means of festivities, professions of faith in revealed laws, and the observance of precepts that belong to the form of the church (which is however itself a means). Although all these observances are at bottom morally indifferent actions, yet, precisely for this reason, they are deemed to be all the more pleasing to God, since they are supposed to be carried out just for his sake. Thus in the molding of human beings into an ethical community, ecclesiastical faith naturally* precedes pure religious faith: there were temples (buildings consecrated to public service) before churches (places of assembly for instruction and inspiration in moral dispositions); priests (consecrated stewards in the practices of piety) before ministers (teachers of pure moral religion), and for the most part they still come first in the rank and value accorded to them by the crowd at large.

Now once it stands as unalterable that a statutory ecclesiastical faith is

*† Morally speaking it ought to happen the other way around.
not added to the pure faith of religion as its vehicle and the means for the public union of human beings in promoting it, we must also concede that the preservation of this pure faith unchanged, its universal and uniform diffusion, and even the respect for the revelation assumed within it, can hardly be adequately provided for through tradition, but only through scripture; which, again, as a revelation to present and future generations, must be the object of the highest respect, for this is what human need requires in order to be certain of the duty to divine service. A holy book commands the greatest respect even among those (indeed, among these most of all) who do not read it, or are at least unable to form any coherent concept of religion from it; and no suble argument can stand up to the knockdown pronouncement, Thus it is written. Hence also the passages in it that are to lay down a point of faith are simply called sayings. The appointed interpreters of such scripture are themselves, by virtue of their very occupation, consecrated persons, as it were; and history proves that never could a faith based on scripture be eradicated by even the most devastating political revolutions, whereas a faith based on tradition and ancient public observances meets its downfall as soon as the state breaks down. How fortunate,* when one such book, fallen into human hands, contains complete, besides its statutes legislating faith, also the purest moral doctrine of religion, and this doctrine can be brought into the strictest harmony with those statutes (which [in turn] contribute to its introduction). In this event, both because of the end to be attained thereby and the difficulty of explaining by natural laws the origin of the enlightenment of the human race proceeding from it, the book can command an authority equal to that of a revelation.

And now something more relating to this concept of a revealed faith.

There is only one (true) religion; but there can be several kinds of faith. — We can say, further, that in the various churches divided from one another because of the difference in their kinds of faith, one and the same true religion can nevertheless be met with.

It is therefore more appropriate (as it in fact is more customary) to say: This human being is of this (Jewish, Mohammedan, Christian, Catholic, Lutheran) faith, than: He is of this or that religion. This last expression ought in justice not to be used at all in addressing the larger public (in catechisms and sermons), for it is too learned and unintelligible for them; indeed, modern languages provide no word for it of equivalent meaning.

* An expression for everything wished for, or worthy of being wished for, but which we can neither foresee nor bring about through our effort according to the laws of experience; for which, therefore, if we want to name a ground, can adduce no other than a generous providence.

* According to Georgius (Alphab. Tibet., p. 14), the land of the house-dwellers, in order to live in deserts under tents; hence the name the Mongols adhered to the Tibetan faith (of perhaps originated from it, and they spread too the names Haeretic and Manichaei were i.e. heretic
The ordinary human being will every time understand by it his own ecclesiastical faith, which is the one that falls within the grasp of his senses, whereas religion hides inside him and depends on moral dispositions. We do most people too much honor when we say of them that they profess this or that religion, for they know none and demand none; statutory ecclesiastical faith is all that they understand by the word. So too the so-called religious struggles, which have so often shaken the world and spattered it with blood, have never been anything but squabbles over ecclesiastical faiths. And the oppressed have never really complained for being hindered from adhering to their religion (for no external power can do this), but for not being allowed to practice their ecclesiastical faith publicly.

Now whenever, as usually happens, a church passes itself off as the only universal one (even though it is based on faith in a particular revelation which, since it is historical, can never be demanded of everyone), whoever does not acknowledge its (particular) ecclesiastical faith is called an un­believer, and is wholeheartedly hated; whoever deviates from it only in part (in nonessentials), is called an erring believer and is at least shunned as a source of infection. Finally, if someone declares himself for this church yet deviates from its faith in something essential (something made out to be so), especially if he propagates his errant belief, he is called a heretic (Ketzer)* and, like a rebel, is held more punishable than an external foe and is expelled from the church through excommunication (like that which the Romans pronounced on him who crossed the Rubicon without the consent of the Senate) and given over to all the gods of hell. The correctness of belief that the teachers or heads of a church claim solely for themselves in matters of ecclesiastical faith is called orthodoxy, which we may perhaps divide into despotic (brutal) and liberal. — If a church which claims that its ecclesiastical faith is universally binding is to be called catholic, and protestant a church that protests against such claims of others (though it would often gladly exercise them itself, if it could), then the attentive observer will come across many a renowned example of protestant catholics and, by contrast, still more offensive examples of arch-catholic protestants: the first are human beings whose frame of mind (though this is not that of their church) is given to self-expansion; by comparison with these the second clearly stand out, but not at all to their advantage, with the narrowness of theirs.

* According to Georgius (Alphab. Tibet., p. 11), the Mongols call Tibet Tangut-Chazar, i.e. the land of the house-dwellers, in order to distinguish these from themselves, nomads who live in deserts under tents; hence the name “Chazars,” and from this Ketzer* since the Mongols adhered to the Tibetan faith (of the Lames), which conforms to Manicheism and perhaps originated from it, and they spread this name in their incursions into Europe; hence too the names Haeretici and Manichaei were used as synonymous some time ago.97
* kannen
* i.e. heretic
We have noted that, although a church sacrifices the most important mark of its truth, namely the legitimate claim to universality, whenever it bases itself upon a faith of revelation which, as historical faith, (even if more widely spread and more firmly secured for the remotest posterity through scripture) is incapable of a transmission that commands conviction universally, yet, because of the natural need of all human beings to demand for even the highest concepts and grounds of reason something that the senses can hold on to, some confirmation from experience or the like, (a need which must also be seriously taken into account when the intention is to introduce a faith universally) some historical ecclesiastical faith or other, usually already at hand, must be used.

Now to unite the foundation of a moral faith (be this faith an end or merely an auxiliary means) with such an empirical faith which, to all appearances, chance has dealt to us, we require an interpretation of the revelation we happen to have, i.e. a thoroughgoing understanding of it in a sense that harmonizes with the universal practical rules of a pure religion of reason. For the theoretical element of ecclesiastical faith cannot be of moral interest to us, if it does not work toward the fulfillment of all human duties as divine commands (which constitutes the essential of every religion). This interpretation may often appear to us as forced, in view of the text (of the revelation), and be often forced in fact; yet, if the text can at all bear it, it must be preferred to a literal interpretation that either contains absolutely nothing for morality, or even works counter to its incentives.*

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* To illustrate this with an example, take Psalm 59: vv. 11-16,99 where we find a prayer for revenge that borders on the horrific. Michaelis (Ethic, Part II, p. 202) approoves of this prayer and adds: "The psalms are inspired; if they pray for revenge, then it cannot be wrong: We should not have a holier morality than the Bible." I pause here at this last statement and ask whether morality must be interpreted in accordance with the Bible, or the Bible, on the contrary, in accordance with morality. - Without now considering the passage of the New Testament, "It was said to our fathers, etc., but I say to you, Love your enemies. bless those who curse you, etc."- how this passage, which is also inspired, can hold along with the other - I shall try either to fit that passage to those of my moral principles which stand on their own (for instance, that here are understood not corporeal enemies but, symbolized by them, the invisible ones which are much more pernicious to us, namely the evil inclinations which we must wish to bring under our feet completely), or, if this will not do, I shall rather assume that this passage is to be understood, not at all in a moral sense, but in terms of the relation that the Jews considered themselves to have toward God as their political regent - as also another passage of the Bible, where it is said: "Vengeance is mine; I shall repay, saith the Lord,"100 which is commonly interpreted as a moral warning against private revenge, though it apparently only refers to the law in force in every state that one should seek satisfaction for insults in the court of justice of the overlord, where the judge's permission to the plaintiff to propose any punishment he wishes, however harsh, is not to be taken as approval of the plaintiff's vindictiveness.
We shall also find that this is how all types of faith—ancient and new, some written down in holy books—have always been treated, and that rational and thoughtful teachers of the people have kept on interpreting them until, gradually, they brought them, as regards their essential content, in agreement with the universal principles of moral faith. The moral philosophers among the Greeks and, later, among the Romans, did exactly the same with their legends concerning the gods. They knew in the end how to interpret even the coarsest polytheism as just a symbolic representation of the properties of the one divine being; and how to invest all sorts of depraved actions, and even the wild yet beautiful fancies of their poets, with a mystical meaning that brought popular faith (which it would never have been advisable to destroy, for the result might perhaps have been an atheism even more dangerous to the state) close to a moral doctrine intelligible to all human beings and alone beneficial. Late Judaism, and Christianity too, consist of such in part highly forced interpretations, yet, [in] both [instances], directed to ends undoubtedly good and necessary to every human being. The Mohammedans know very well (as Reland shows) how to inject a spiritual meaning in the description of their paradise, otherwise dedicated to every sensuality, and the Indians do the same with the interpretation of their Vedas, at least for the more enlightened part of their people. — That this, however, can be done without ever and again greatly offending against the literal meaning of the popular faith is due to the fact that, long before this faith, the predisposition to moral religion lay hidden in human reason; and, though its first raw expressions were indeed intent on just the practice of divine service and, for its sake, gave rise to those alleged revelations, yet they thereby also implanted in their poetic fabrications, though unintentionally, something of the character of their supersensible origin. — Nor can we charge such interpretations with dishonesty, provided that we do not wish to claim that the meaning we give to the symbols of a popular faith, or even to holy books, is exactly as intended by them, but leave this issue open and only assume the possibility that their authors may be so understood. For the final purpose of even the reading of these holy books, or the investigation of their content, is to make better human beings; whereas their historical element, which contributes nothing to this end, is something in itself quite indifferent, and one can do with it what one wills. — (Historical faith is "dead, being alone," i.e. of itself, considered as declaration, contains nothing, nor does it lead to anything that would have a moral value for us.)

Hence, though a scripture is accepted as divine revelation, its supreme criterion will nonetheless be something like this: "Every scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, etc."; and, since this last—namely the moral improvement of human beings—constitutes the true end of all religion of reason, it will also