

A Kantian reading of Buddhist community

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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.



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Abstract

Keiji Nishitani, in his lectures *On Buddhism* (1982), argues that Buddhism is lacking a theory of Buddhist community. He believes that a historical consciousness and a social ethics are required for a theory of Buddhist community. German philosopher Immanuel Kant argues that a theory of religious community should contain an idea of an invisible church and an expression of a visible church. This is his theory of the church. This thesis will conduct a comparative analysis to see if Kant's notions of the invisible and visible church can express the essential components to a theory of Buddhist community. This paper finds that universal communicability is a requirement for a theory of Buddhist community to express itself as a visible church. Only when a religious community has universal communicability can it appeal to the unlearned and to those who can convince themselves of the moral truth of religion. Only in this sense, can a religious community be called a universal religion and become publicly accessible for it appeals to every kind of person. Overall, this thesis is fruitful in gaining a cross-cultural philosophical dialogue into the basis of a theory of religious community. This dialogue shows much promise of expressing the role of religious scripture and tradition, for the individual's religious experience confirms what reason already knows to be the moral law of the heart.

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Introduction

A theory of religious community has been lacking in the discourse of Buddhism. In his 1971-4 lectures *On Buddhism* (2006), Zen Buddhist philosopher Keiji Nishitani had addressed a Shin (Pure Land) Buddhist organisation about the lack of rapport between Buddhism and the secular world. The foremost problem, as Nishitani understands it, is of Buddhism's lack of a concept of history, for history means a continual involvement and a self-adjustment in accordance to new movements in history. This concept of history requires, Nishitani argues, a reconstruction of the way of living that lies underneath Buddhist doctrines, and an appropriation of this way of living to new and present circumstances. Only in this conception of history can a theory of Buddhist community bridge the gap between Buddhist organisations and the general public.

Coming from the Kyoto school, Nishitani's philosophy seems to have overtones of the questioning of the human condition. His thinking is the kind that doubts everything, yet his solution to doubt is by making religion the core of one's life. The Kyoto School philosophers and scholars of religion have a "passion for inwardness",¹ as Takeuchi Yoshinori, the leading disciple of one of the main Kyoto philosophers explain it as,

This is not to deny a level at which the differences between the demands of logic and the attention to their historical texts of philosophy on the one hand, and the rituals, practices, and traditions of religion on the other come into play. But for these thinkers it is the transformation of awareness that justifies specific doctrinal and historical traditions, not the other way around. Hence, insofar as "philosophy" and "religion" refer to *modes of thought*, the terms have nothing to lose and everything to gain by mutual entailment.²

¹ Takeuchi Yoshinori, quoted in James W. Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 14.

² *Ibid*, 14.

This “transformation of awareness”³ characterises their way of thinking, and philosophy⁴ and religion⁵ are complimentary to this transformation. Naturally, philosophy and religion had never been separated in Japanese religious thought.

An unsettling aspect to Nishitani’s philosophy is the way he speaks of God from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. He never confessed belief in a divine being. James Heisig, scholar of the Kyoto School, thinks the idea of God in the Kyoto School philosophies serve as a kind of metaphor for the experience of complete awareness. It is the essential oneness of reality just as it is.⁶ Nishitani names this oneness of reality by the terms “suchness” or “nyojitsu”.⁷ These terms are a borrowed concept from traditional Mahayana Buddhism, where the oneness of reality is salvation. The experience of *nyojitsu* is characteristic of the Kyoto school’s as well as Nishitani’s way of thinking that emphasises the transformation of awareness. The Kyoto school’s emphasis on the transformation of awareness is not so different from the Buddhist religious experience. Such a transformation leads to salvation. Some philosophers criticise them for being “religiously Buddhist”,⁸ while some traditional Buddhists criticise them for being “philosophically western”.⁹ Because their thinking stands on the border between philosophy and religion, they get criticised from both sides. Unsurprisingly, the tradition of the Kyoto school is not so different from Japan’s political situation, where the country did not experience a separation between church and state

³ Takeuchi Yoshinori, quoted in James W. Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 14.

⁴ James W. Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 7-11. Historically, the definition of ‘philosophy’ was not introduced into the vocabulary of Japan until the late 18th century by Nishi Amane. Heisig explains that the term ‘Japanese philosophy’ could mean one out of many philosophies or it could mean philosophy that historically originated from Ancient Greece. The former is described as “a more critical body of thought dealing with ultimate questions, systematically recorded and transmitted” while the latter is “philosophy in its stricter sense as the particular intellectual tradition that began in Athens in the sixth century before the common era...”.

⁵ Hans Martin Krämer, “How ‘Religion’ Came to be Translated as Shūkyō: Shimaji Mokurai and the Appropriation of Religion in Early Meiji Japan,” *Japan Review*, no. 25 (2013): 89. The idea of religion in Japan as a feature of modernisation is still a contested debate, with scholars in religious studies explaining that the Japanese term ‘shūkyō’ (translated as religion in English) is a concept and a term invented during the 19th century modernisation while other scholars such as Hans Martin Krämer explain that the idea of religion was before the 19th century and little influenced by the Western notion of religion. Krämer traces the origins of the term shūkyō in his article.

⁶ Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 221.

⁷ *Ibid*, 304.

⁸ *Ibid*, 17.

⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

until the mid-twentieth century. The distinction between religious experience and the rational speculative dimension has never been severed before the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰ They were considered inseparable. Even after the mid-twentieth century, their separation has not been totally clear. For instance, even in the mid-twentieth century, the way Nishitani taught philosophy in Kyoto university and religion in Otani University was not different.¹¹

Although Nishitani came from a tradition purely stemmed from the inseparability between rational speculation and religious experience, their character of inseparability is not so different to Immanuel Kant's vision of a universal church. In a church, what is considered religious knowledge becomes a public discourse, for a church is a public form of obligation (Ak 6:105),¹² so it has the potential to be a universal religious community. Anyone, even the unlearned and the learned, philosophers and theologians alike can participate in religious knowledge otherwise hidden from public view. For Kant, religious knowledge contains rational principles. They serve to be a force of persuasion in a public discourse, to persuade to anyone that religion serves to facilitate moral development. Thus, the church contains religious knowledge in the form of its religious doctrines, holy scriptures, and tradition, yet its form is a vehicle for a rational basis that is recognisable by reason as serving to improve the morality of a human being.

Nishitani's attempts to resolve the gap between the general public and Buddhist organisations can be sympathised with Kant's attempts to have his own work on the universal church accepted for publishing. In 1793 Kant publishes the book entitled *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason* (1793/4)¹³ which concerns itself with the idea of a universal religious community. Initially, he had intended to publish four essays or pieces

¹⁰ Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, xxvii.

¹¹ Winston L. King, "Foreword," in *Religion and Nothingness*, ed. James W. Heisig (California: University of California Press, 1982), ix.

¹² Immanuel, Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. George Di Giovanni, ed. Allen W. Wood & George Di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 138. Throughout this thesis I will abbreviate Kant's book as *Religion* which includes both editions of his book.

¹³ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 41. In the original translation German, it is translated in as *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*.

(*Stück*)¹⁴ that would constitute the four parts of his book *Religion*. He had issues with censorship authorities who found his second piece on *Religion* contentious, because they deliberated it as a work of philosophy and a work of theology. In a similar fashion, critics of Nishitani's philosophy of awareness judge his work to be either "religiously Buddhist"¹⁵ or as a work of western philosophy, depending on the perspective of these critics. Critics of Kant's *Religion* saw his philosophical work on religious matters to construe the fundamental doctrines of Holy Scripture and Christianity. The ambiguity of religion's and philosophy's relationship to the human being is a sign of uncertainty of how religion should be supportive in the moral development of the human being. Kant's intention for publishing *Religion* was not intended for the general public, since that was the role of biblical scholars and the clergy. His intention was, to evaluate rational religion rather than to evaluate Christianity as biblical scholarship.¹⁶ Rational religion serves as the core for a universal religious community, and it should have a public form of obligation. This public form carries religious doctrines, holy scriptures and religious traditions as something that can strike our senses, and form our experiences which confirm what rational religion teaches – that is, a moral lifestyle.

The nature of this thesis is a comparative philosophy. It is a subfield of philosophy which intentionally sets into dialogue sources from across cultural, linguistic, and philosophical streams.¹⁷ One of the main difficulties in a comparative philosophy is the activity of descriptive chauvinism,¹⁸ which is defined as "recreating the other [tradition] in the image of oneself".¹⁹ In addressing descriptive chauvinism, we need to look at a tradition in its own terms. If this is the case with comparative philosophy, then it means that it conflicts with the philosophy of religion's method of considering the nature of religion as a whole or as

¹⁴ Stephen Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2016), 3.

¹⁵ Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 17.

¹⁶ Immanuel, Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 48.

¹⁷ "Comparative philosophy," Internet encyclopaedia of philosophy, accessed May 21, 2018, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/comparat>.

¹⁸ Internet encyclopaedia of philosophy, "Comparative philosophy." The four difficulties of comparative philosophy are descriptive chauvinism, normative skepticism, incommensurability, and perennialism.

¹⁹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1997), 118.

universal. By looking at a tradition in its own terms, we need to create an image that is original to that particular tradition and not by projecting an image of one's own onto that tradition. This means that any problem of representation of a particular religious tradition is required to be placed by its own terms. In this sense, comparative philosophy conflicts with the philosophy of religion because the universal aspect of the latter challenges the particular aspect of the former.

Kant provides an analysis of religious community by rational principles, and it can serve to evaluate the Buddhist community only as a theory. In a similar approach Nishitani is evaluating the theory of religious community, where he situates East Asian Buddhism as a test case for a theory that is ultimately concerned with all religions even in the West.²⁰ The task of this thesis is to see whether Nishitani's ideas for a theory of Buddhist community can be expressed in Kant's notions of the invisible and visible church, but this is not to disparage the bare idea that the results of this work could be used to reflect on the Buddhist community experienced by members of the Buddhist faith.

In chapter one "Keiji Nishitani and Kant on theories of religious community", I will begin the first section by discussing D. T. Suzuki's perspective on the Zen monastic lifestyle as a possible basis for Nishitani's idea of history. The purpose of this discussion is to show that Nishitani's idea of history can be connected to the Zen ideal of the "sanctity of work".²¹ The sanctity of work is focused on a lifestyle concerned with the present moment, and Nishitani's idea is concerned with a lifestyle that can effectively deal with continually new movements in history.

In the second section of chapter one, I will describe Nishitani's argument that a theory of Buddhist community cannot be without a conception of history. A Buddhist organisation needs to have a historical consciousness for handling and adjusting to new movements in history. Historical consciousness is the idea that one becomes conscious of new movements in history, and in effect, knows how to deal with new movements in history. Only when

²⁰ Keiji Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, trans. Seisaku Yamamoto and Robert E. Carter (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 23.

²¹ Daisetsu T. Suzuki, "The Meditation Hall, and the ideals of the Monkish discipline," in *The Complete works of D. T. Suzuki*, ed. Christmas Humphreys (London: Rider & Company, 1949), 316.

Buddhist organisations tap into a historical consciousness can a public response to problems be effective. A Buddhist community will consider the social relevance to public response, this relevance is called by Nishitani a “social ethics”.²²

In the last section of chapter one, I will discuss Kant’s idea of the church as a unique theory of religious community because it provides an a priori model to any religious community. A priori is a technical term for Kant that represents an abstraction from all experience.²³ This a priori model contains rational and moral principles for any religious community, so the model is an appropriate application to a theory of Buddhist community. This is to see whether Buddhism can express a universal religion suited for public discourse. In the final part of this section, I will look at how a Kantian model of religious community is different to a political and ethical community.

In the second chapter, “Kantian reading of Buddhist community”, I will begin to investigate and describe the main features of Kant’s notions of the invisible and visible church. The invisible church is the ideal union of all good-hearted human beings, while the visible church is the actualisation of that union on earth. The invisible church can only be a work done by God because he has the power to unify the moral dispositions of human beings, while the visible church can only be realised by the work of human beings because they themselves must realise the ideal union. Ultimately, Kant’s theory of the church is cooperation between God as a moral lawgiver and human beings as *servants* to the law of the church (Ak 6:101).²⁴ I will argue that the main feature of the church is its focus on a moral lifestyle. A moral lifestyle should precede all forms of religious knowledge that tell us otherwise, for we first ought to become worthy for the help from God’s power before we can even hope to receive God’s assistance.

In the second section of chapter two, a Kantian reading of Buddhist community will discuss the ways in which a Buddhist community can be made into a public discourse. In particular, I will argue that natural religion and scholarly religion function the same way as Nishitani’s

²² Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 38.

²³ Caygill, Howard, *A Kant dictionary Blackwell Philosopher dictionaries* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2000), 170-1.

²⁴ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 135.

idea of conscience and informed knowledge. The combination of knowledge gained through conscience and informed knowledge gives rise to a historical consciousness. However, Nishitani and Kant differ by the fact that the latter depends on a priori principles of practical reason while the former depends on a direct experience to communicate religious knowledge. This irreconcilability between the method of direct experience and the method of practical reason can be overcome if we look at the Kantian concept of *holy mystery* (Ak 6:137-9).²⁵ A Buddhist community focuses on what can be publicly known, but not on holy mystery because public knowledge can be communicable while holy mystery is incommunicable. Only in these senses, can a Buddhist community be suitable to become a visible church.

In chapter three, “Self-awareness as the ground for a universal religious community”, I will begin with discussing a possible response to Kant’s theory of the church. However, although Nishitani does not respond to Kant’s notion of the invisible and visible church directly he does respond to the idea of a kingdom of ends. By radicalising Kant’s idea of autonomy Nishitani reconceives the self as a compassionate self, and this can only be done by being a thing that is a means to all others. Radicalising Kantian autonomy presents problems to the conception of action. Yet Nishitani’s conception of a compassionate self is inextricably tied to the idea of a special reciprocal relationship. This relationship can be understood as the ground for a universal religious community, because it ties to a self-awareness of the inseparability between the self and the other. It seems that Kant’s kingdom of ends and Nishitani’s conception of a reciprocal relationship can be compatible to an extent, but it requires further research to be conclusive on the problem.

The final section of chapter three is the conclusion of this thesis. I will discuss the fruitfulness of the attempt to express the invisible and visible church as solutions to the problem of the theory of Buddhist community that Nishitani posed in his lectures.

²⁵ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 164-5.

Chapter 1: Keiji Nishitani and Immanuel Kant on theories of religious community

1.1 Zen Buddhist thought in Keiji Nishitani's theory of religious community

The task of this thesis is to analyse the conception of the Buddhist monastic community through the lens of Kant's theory of the church. As a religious practice, the Buddhist monastic community has served a place for practice of the Buddha's teachings. However, as a conceptual point the Buddhist monastic community is pregnant with questions concerning the constitution and formation of a religious community. In 1971 in Kyoto, Japan, Keiji Nishitani had given two lectures where he called into question this theory of the Buddhist monastic community. He problematised the topic of Buddhist community by proposing, to a Shin Buddhist organisation, its discontinuity as a universal religious community and its lack of membership in the modern world. Nishitani seems to address an issue concerned with all religions, where he says that "this gap is not unique to Buddhism, but at present is rather common to all religions, and is evident in Western nations, too. Thus, Buddhism is no exception here".²⁶ The gap is a discontinuity between religious organisations and the general public, so it presents a problem to all theories of religious communities that hope to bridge the gap and become publicly accessible. Only then can it be suitable to be a universal religion. In these lectures *On Buddhism* he wants to apply this idea of religious community as a resolution to the gap in East Asian Buddhism. Although Nishitani problematises the gap in East Asian Buddhism, I argue for an analysis of a conception of Buddhist community through the lens of Kant's theory of the church. This analysis can yield an answer to the issue that prevents Buddhism from being a universal religious community.

The theory of Buddhist community that Nishitani is advocating for is a universal religious community. The traditional Buddhist term for the Buddhist community is called the sangha. The sangha is a congregation of monks and nuns and by definition should be called a Buddhist monastic community. Nishitani wants to conceive the sangha as a universal

²⁶ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 23.

religious community. A theory of Buddhist community must consider this point only when the sangha is publicly accessible. For it can bridge the gap between Buddhist organisations and the general public. This conception of a universal religious community will have to consider both positions of the clergy and laity who either reside within Buddhist organisations or outside them. The general public or the laity is more exposed to new movements of history, while the Buddhist organisations are unable to continually adjust themselves accordingly to new movements. Nishitani expects the clergy and laity in the theory of Buddhist community to adopt each other's standpoints. The clergy adopts the standpoint of the nonclergy, while the laity adopts the standpoint of nonlaity.²⁷ What Nishitani is referring to here is not that the laity must actually become clergymen, but the fact that the laity and clergy must change their frame of mind. The clergy must step outside of religious organisations to have the perspective of the laity, while the laity must develop the perspective of the clergy to understand the importance of religious services and doctrines which constitute the basis of Buddhist organisation. In this sense, Nishitani wants to present a common ground between clergy and laity as a step to overcome the gap between Buddhist organisations and the general public. Only in this sense, can a religious community can be considered universal and publicly accessible.

Nishitani sought to describe the conception of history to develop a theory of Buddhist community, as publicly accessible and universal. He says that whenever the "*sangha* is referred to, since it is a community of human beings and human beings are always to be regarded as belonging to the secular world, we are led to the conclusion that priests live in the midst of history in their community – that is, they live in time".²⁸ In other words, he saw the basis of a theory of Buddhist community is grounded on a conception of time. For Nishitani, he saw a connection between the conception of time and the term history. Although Nishitani makes a connection between the notion of time and history in the theory of the sangha, he does not go into detail why this is the case. He provides several following reasons for why he does not develop this connection further. Firstly, he claims "because time is essentially involved in being, being cannot be thought of apart from

²⁷ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 33.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 48.

time”.²⁹ Secondly, he says that these ideas of the relationship between being and time is found in both the West and in the East, for instance, he refers to Martin Heidegger’s book titled *Being and Time*³⁰ and Dogen’s work titled *Shōbōgenzō* who both speak about how “being and time are combined into one and are thought to be united”.³¹ He admits that the relationship between being and time is ripe with problems, but he claims “fundamentally, time has something to do with being”. He concludes, “because the term “to be” is already time-oriented. Therefore, if we take time concretely, we are led to the conclusion that time has to do with history. And if we think of the sangha, it cannot be accounted for apart from its being historical, because it is concerned with human beings”.³² Even though he identifies Heidegger and Dōgen as theorists who present an explanation of the relationship between being and time, he takes them for granted in his claim that history and time are related. For Nishitani, the relationship between time and history is a truism and does not warrant further discussion. These concepts are so central to Nishitani’s argument for the requirement of a conception of history in a theory of Buddhist community.

One possible basis for understanding Nishitani’s conception of history can be found in the Zen Buddhist idea of action represented in the dictum “no work, no eating”.³³ Nishitani was a Zen Buddhist practitioner and in his lectures *On Buddhism*, he brings in Zen terminologies such as *reidanjichi* which means “knowledge acquired only by one’s self”³⁴ and *jiriki* which means self-power.³⁵ His understanding of a theory of Buddhist community is grounded in Zen thought. Japanese Buddhist philosopher Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki’s essay “The meditation hall, and the ideals of the monkish discipline”,³⁶ focuses on the topic of discipline and practice in Zen Buddhism. His essay on Zen Buddhism describes the ideals of Zen, or what he calls the spirit of Zen. Suzuki turns to the founder of the Zen sect, who emphasises the notion of work and service.³⁷ The founder, Chinese Zen master Hyakujo,

²⁹ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 48.

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York, 2010).

³¹ *Ibid*, 48.

³² *Ibid*, 48.

³³ Suzuki, “The Meditation Hall, and the ideals of the Monkish discipline,” 315.

³⁴ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 57.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 158.

³⁶ Suzuki, “The Meditation Hall, and the ideals of the Monkish discipline.”

³⁷ *Ibid*, 315.

had said that the guiding principle of his life can be summarised as the dictum “no work, no eating”.³⁸ His guiding principle was adopted into the meditation hall and into the ideal of Zen. The story that involves master Hyakujo’s dictum is as follows,

When he was thought by his devoted disciples too old to work in the garden, which was his daily occupation besides lecturing and educating the monks in Zen, they hid all his garden implements, as he would not listen to their repeated oral remonstrances. He then refused to eat, saying, ‘No work, no eating’.³⁹

It is true that the meditation hall follows this spirit of work and service, for the chief element in the life of a monk is one that consists in manual labour. This labour involves acts “such as sweeping, cleaning, cooking, fuel-gathering, tilling the farm, or going about begging in the villages far and near. No work is considered beneath their dignity, and a perfect feeling of brotherhood and democracy prevails among them”.⁴⁰ Suzuki interprets this meaning of “no work, no eating”⁴¹ as giving rise to a sense of a community of people linked by a common effort in improving themselves spiritually. This sense of community through work and service can be described as the individual “cannot be conceived as independent of the other”.⁴² The sanctity of work in Zen Buddhism highlights the idea that a sense of community is created when each individual works to become worthy of their “daily bread”.⁴³ They could not earn food if they did not earn it through their own work. Thus, the Zen Buddhist idea of action is the idea of the sanctity of work.

The sanctity of work grounds Nishitani’s concept of history in action. Nishitani distinguishes his conception of history from Indian Buddhist thought,

My sense of Buddhism is that, while it has made various attempts to understand the world of time as something to be negatively transcended, there have been few attempts that assume a forward-looking and mainly positive pose that regards the world as a field in which something new occurs. This seems to be because Indian thought has had little

³⁸ Suzuki, “The Meditation Hall, and the ideals of the Monkish discipline,” 315.

³⁹ Ibid, 315.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 315.

⁴¹ Ibid, 315.

⁴² Ibid, 316.

⁴³ Ibid, 316.

to do with history. History arises only when each of the succeeding “nows” has its own irreplaceable significance – that is, has its own date. I think that in India the view that time is dated – that is, historical time – somehow became blurred.⁴⁴

Nishitani claims that there have been few attempts in seeing the theory of Buddhist community as something concerned with the irreplaceable significance of the “now”.⁴⁵ Suzuki expresses a similar sentiment to Nishitani, where he clearly distinguishes the Indian monks from their Japanese and Chinese Zen monk counterparts. Suzuki describes the Indian monks as hermits and beggars, who retreated into quiet places from worldly concerns, but were economically supported by their secular devotees.⁴⁶ Instead, he says Zen Buddhist monks focus on the sanctity of work, where the monks themselves have to earn the fruit of their labour by their own work. When each individual works toward their goal, “no work, no eating”,⁴⁷ a sense of community arises where each individual shares a common end to which they want to achieve. The concept of history is not like the actions of Indian monks who retreat into quiet places away from worldly concerns. History consists in the action of people who carry the spirit of work and service, where they would not eat their “daily bread”⁴⁸ until they have done the work.

Suzuki describes the nature of the sanctity of work as practical, and he argues that within this practicality a moral foundation can be found.⁴⁹ For Suzuki, Zen is solely concerned with work that can “be carried out in everyday life producing lasting harmony and satisfaction and giving real benefit to all concerned – to oneself as well as to others”.⁵⁰ Nishitani’s concept of history, is concerned less with a recording of events and more concerned with a human understanding of events.⁵¹ He says once Buddhist organisations and the general

⁴⁴ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 50.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 50.

⁴⁶ Suzuki, “The Meditation Hall, and the ideals of the Monkish discipline,” 316.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 315.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 316.

⁴⁹ Although it’s not clear if this moral foundation relates to Kantian practical reason. He makes no mention of Kant. So the relation of Kant’s concept of practical reason to the sense of practicality that comes from the sanctity of work is unclear. This is because Kantian practical reason requires the will of an individual as the will of a universal law. Action in the sanctity of work is determined solely within the moment of doing.

⁵⁰ Suzuki, “The Meditation Hall, and the ideals of the Monkish discipline,” 317.

⁵¹ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 75.

public develop a historical consciousness, they can understand history is not just a mere record of events but that we have the control and power to reshape it. This is why Suzuki explains that actions, from a Zen understanding, have no value if they are solely abstract and theoretical. They must, he argues, be “joined to life”⁵² and be concerned with a lifestyle. The power to reshape and control one’s way of life is inseparable to action. Only in this sense are actions considered practical.

Nishitani’s concept of history in the theory of religious community is solely concerned with a lifestyle that we can control and reshape. He says that,

Originally, religious rituals and doctrines were thought of as having been concerned with a human being’s fundamental way of life. They originated in answers to various doubts that arose gradually through confrontation with the basic problems of living”.⁵³

Rather than being involved with religious doctrines on the abstract and theoretical level, their value can only arise from being concerned with a “fundamental way of life”.⁵⁴ The same can be said of the sanctity of work, where the abstract and theoretical can only have value when they are “joined to life”⁵⁵ in a lifestyle. For Nishitani believes that a theory of Buddhist community cannot be solely concerned with Buddhist precepts, but it should be concerned with what lies underneath these precepts,

...it is of more importance to see that the human way of being lies at the base of the precepts, and thus of a religious community – that is, to use the popular terminology prevalent in the Shin sect of Buddhism, the community of fellow men and women sharing the same faith.⁵⁶

Not only does a religious community need to be concerned with a lifestyle, but it needs to recognise the shared basis lying underneath the precepts – that is, a sense of community that consists in labour before being worthy of or even earning their daily bread. “The

⁵² Suzuki, “The Meditation Hall, and the ideals of the Monkish discipline,” 317.

⁵³ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 26.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 26.

⁵⁵ Suzuki, “The Meditation Hall, and the ideals of the Monkish discipline,” 317.

⁵⁶ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 50.

history of the *sangha*”,⁵⁷ Nishitani argues, is “the theory of Buddhist community”,⁵⁸ for without a historical consciousness of events as being more than a mere record, we will not have this sense of community that lies within the present world we live in.

There is much to be said of Suzuki’s contribution to the theory of Buddhist community through Zen Buddhist thought, and I think we have covered some of the main points of his contribution. Nishitani is the one who problematised the theory of the sangha in the Buddhist learnings, and he suggested that the theory of the sangha should be equally relevant to Buddhist teachings. Of Buddhism he says that there has been a lack of attention towards the theory of the sangha and its conception of history. Since whenever the religious community is referred to, it is a community of human beings *who live within the present world*. To abstract the present and to focus solely on theoretical teachings in religion is to miss the value of a way of living that lies underneath these religious precepts.

1.2 A weak conception of social ethics and historical consciousness in the theory of Buddhist community

When Nishitani presented his series of lectures to the Shin Buddhist organisation in Kyoto, Japan, he had claimed that “the theory of Buddhist community” is “the history of the sangha”.⁵⁹ Traditionally, the sangha is part of the three core principles of Mahayana Buddhism that consist in the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha. The Buddha is the historical figure who, like Jesus Christ of the Christian religion, had become a teacher of principles that became known as the teachings of the founder of a religion. The second principle, the dharma, represents the teachings of the Buddha, while the third, the sangha, is traditionally conceived as a congregation of monks and nuns. Nishitani became convinced, that the problem of Buddhist organisations in Japan had originated in the fact that the theory of Buddhist community did “not come to the fore as inseparable from [theories of the] Buddha and dharma”.⁶⁰ In his argument, he claims Buddhism was not particularly enthusiastic about the study of history. He even claims people from the West

⁵⁷ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 50.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 50.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 50.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 50.

who encounter Buddhism comment that there is “no mention of history, or, rather, [that] there is no evidence of [the concept of a] historical consciousness in its doctrines”.⁶¹ Nishitani undertakes this idea of history as a serious issue for Buddhism, simply because Buddhism has not dealt with the changing times effectively, for in Japan he claims that there is a big gap between the various Buddhist organisations and the general public. Various Buddhist temples are no longer places for practice or preaching, it “becomes a place where only funerals are performed and visitors entertained, or a place for sightseeing”.⁶² Even within the last decade, Buddhism is still seen as a social custom,⁶³ a “funeral business, a collection of musty, antiquated rituals concerning death and memorialization of the dead, topics... left to priests, ... and other elderly folks with an interest in such things”.⁶⁴

The challenge at present, for Nishitani, is to make Buddhism and its principles socially relevant – that is, to be concerned with a social ethics. In response to critics of East Asian Buddhism, who he does not identify, he redefines ethics from the “abstract and theoretical” and defines ethics as “a basic motive power... that contributes to the opening up of the modern world, and thus serves as a driving force in contemporary life”.⁶⁵ At the end of his series of lectures he redefines ethics (*rinri*) yet again and extends its concern with, “what form genuine human relationships should take”,⁶⁶ and “what attitudes we should take toward others, or what deeds we should perform insofar as we are in this sacred relationship with the other”.⁶⁷ Ethics, for Nishitani, is a power that is creative and influential and also concerning of our relationship with the other. But one may ask where the source of ethics comes from, as a creative power that defines our human relationships, how does ethics become a strength in driving contemporary life? At least for Nishitani, the

⁶¹ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 39.

⁶² Keiji Nishitani, “The religious situation in present-day Japan,” in *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 1, no.1 (March 1990), 22.

⁶³ Nishitani, “The religious situation in present-day Japan,” 22.

⁶⁴ Christopher Ives, “Protect the dharma, protect the country: Buddhist war responsibility and social ethics,” in *The Eastern Buddhist* 33, no. 2, (2001), 15.

⁶⁵ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 114.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 114.

answer is to be found in one's self-awareness – that is, an awareness that we can change things.

The study of history, which Nishitani claims that Buddhism has no interest in, has the same source as social ethics. History, as an idea, is not simply the task of a historian who records history such as “a mere description of the past”.⁶⁸ Rather Nishitani understands history to be “an interior human understanding of events” – that is, one has a self-awareness that their livelihoods are not just a record of an event but one is living in an event. In his own words, he says that “the historical world comes into sight for us is connected with the fact that the way of life of an individual itself turns out to be historical, and that one comes to realize that one is living a historical life oneself”.⁶⁹ This interior understanding of the self through a historical consciousness characterises the same self-awareness that constitutes a social ethics. Thus, when he argues that Buddhism was not particularly enthusiastic about the study of history, he means that the Buddhist way of thinking⁷⁰ is not concerned with coming to an understanding that they too are part of the world and that they too must develop, change and transform themselves according to the times. “The history of the sangha” is referred to as a community of human beings who “live in the midst of history in their community”⁷¹ – that is, human beings live in the world at present. And so, these individuals who live in history must collectively come to a self-awareness.

It is “the theory of Buddhist community” which is “the history of the sangha” that appears to be lacking in East Asian Buddhism. He emphasises that this issue is not peculiar to Buddhism, rather it is “common to all religions, and is evident in Western nations, too”.⁷² It appears, that the notions of social ethics and historical consciousness are of universal concern for organised religions. Organised religions have this universal concern for a social ethics and historical consciousness because without a transformation of awareness the gap between organised religion and the general public will remain.

⁶⁸ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*. 75.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 40.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 49.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 48.

⁷² *Ibid*, 23.

Buddhism is currently incapable of handling the idea of history as a serious issue because separates the theory of the sangha from the theories of the Buddha and dharma.

Traditionally in Mahayana Buddhism, the three principles of the Buddha-dharma-sangha are inseparable. On the one hand, the sangha implies a community of people who dwell within time and are subjected to time which is “susceptible to constant transition, for it always renews itself and continually manifests transient ups and downs – that is, phases of prosperity and decline”.⁷³ The theory of the sangha is concerned with a human community living within the present world. On the other hand, the dharma expresses what goes beyond time. The dharma, which is the teachings of the Buddha, teaches that the present world is a world of suffering and that it must be transcended.⁷⁴ Nishitani claims Buddhism had ignored the human community living within the present world, so instead its doctrines were more concerned with transcending the present world.⁷⁵ Buddhism, Nishitani argues, has not placed emphasis on the inseparability of the three pillars of religion, so the idea of history did not come to the fore of Buddhist thought.

Nishitani looks to the Judeo-Christian religion as a historical model for the development of historical consciousness. He explains that because the Judeo-Christian tradition was exposed to new movements in history, he is thinking of the Protestant Reformation,⁷⁶ a sense of self-awareness had developed. It is the awareness of capacity to realise a livelihood because they can reshape it and control it. This awareness, which has the power to change things, is what Nishitani calls ethics. This self-awareness works in concord with the development of a historical consciousness, for a historical consciousness arises from “various movements that continually have improved the present situation in search of a new society in which the full potential of human life is realized. This self-awareness is tied up with human freedom, through which one realizes that it is up to oneself to create a new society”.⁷⁷ The human being does not just see history as a record of an event, but that they themselves are living within history and so they can control and become aware of ethics as

⁷³ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 48-9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 50.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 50.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 39.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 59.

a power to change their livelihoods for the better. With a historical consciousness, the religious community will be able to enact change in the world through a social ethics and so make its religious doctrines relevant to the general public. Only in this sense, does the gap between the religious community and the general public become bridged.

Nishitani understands the only way forward for Buddhism is to re-interpret and reevaluate its own religious services and doctrines. Nishitani defines interpretation as,

We must try to interpret, for instance, what religious services really entail, or what the doctrines with which the study of dogma deals in various fashion really meant to us right now... What I intend to convey by the term “interpretation” is the attempt to grasp genuine meaning in the midst of really living our own lives in one way or another. The “meaning” that is inherent in religious services or in the study of dogma is that they give expression to a human way of life.⁷⁸

Religious meaning that comes from doctrines and services, and it can only be valued in interpretation when we realise these teachings through action in our lifestyles. This kind of interpretation is to be distinguished from a scientific and scholarly interpretation. Scientific and scholarly interpretation, he argues, are solely concerned with an abstract and theoretical understanding that has no bearing on changing one’s livelihood for the better. The point is to realise these understandings in the very midst of living our lives. Robert E. Carter, scholar of Nishitani’s philosophy, explains that Nishitani is more concerned with a “map for action, a pattern, form, or structure for appropriate living”,⁷⁹ because this is how we come to understand religious meaning in the context of our lives.

Although Nishitani does not explain the details of a social ethics, I suspect that it has to do with a Buddhist theology. James Heisig, another scholar of Nishitani’s philosophy, had said that Nishitani “calls for a ‘Buddhist theology’ to rethink the idea of the Buddha as well as the meaning of the death of the Buddha”.⁸⁰ This Buddhist theology is evident at the end of

⁷⁸ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 27.

⁷⁹ Carter, “Introduction,” in *On Buddhism*, trans. Seisaku Yamamoto and Robert E. Carter (Albany: State University of New York Press), 4.

⁸⁰ Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 254.

Nishitani's lectures *On Buddhism*, where he attempts to interpret the Buddha's death by addressing a Buddhist organisation,

There is a chapter entitled "*Jorobon*" (Buddha's Span of Life") in the *Lotus Sutra*, in which the death of Gotama Buddha is questioned. But he is infinite in life and is permanent. His dying right now cannot be conceived of, since he is the eternally enlightened Buddha who entered into nirvana countless aeons ago. Behind the problem concerning the fact that the Buddha died, questions need to be raised, it seems to me, as to why the Buddha, who had already entered into nirvana, should die, and what in the world the death of Buddha is supposed to mean. These questions are related to the fact that Gotama Buddha really did die.⁸¹

Nirvana is the final goal for a Buddhist, so Nishitani is conflicted about the concept of a Buddha who had reached that final goal yet also died in the world. Keeping in mind his lecture audience were a majority from Buddhist organisations. The questionable outcome of the Buddha's death and "what in the world" does his death mean is meant to be an example of Nishitani attempt to unbuckle the doctrinal rigidity of Buddhism. Since Buddhist organisations are unconcerned with the general public, and the general public finds no interest in these self-enclosed organisations, it seems that a social ethics depends on a re-interpretation of religious scripture, doctrines, and dogma. Indeed, Nishitani criticises Buddhism for its lack of a clear ethic in responding to changes in the world, so it is mandatory to revisit tradition and interpret it for our present situation,

For instance, it is necessary to put issues such as Buddha's death and the meaning of nirvana into the context of our present situation, and to ponder the implications of these matters. After all, such issues are entangled with questions about atheism and nihilism. I think that something similar happens with respect to the various issues concerning the world and human beings.⁸²

⁸¹ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 155.

⁸² *Ibid*, 156.

1.3 Kant's theory of the church

Immanuel Kant had provided a well-developed idea of a religious community in his book *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason* (1793/4)⁸³ known in its original translation as: *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*.⁸⁴ The title of Kant's *Religion* merely hints, though not conclusive, at the approach he will take on the idea of a religious community. One notable commentator of Kant's *Religion*, Stephen Palmquist, had explained that in the title the word *bloßen Vernunft* had been translated previously as "reason alone",⁸⁵ or "mere reason"⁸⁶ or in the text as "naked reason".⁸⁷ These previous translations of *bloßen* give the impression of an eliminative reductionism, for it implies "reason" by itself is all that is needed to explain away all possible explanations of religion.⁸⁸ However, Palmquist argues that *bloßen* is better translated as 'bare', since this word can better articulate the double meaning of Kant's approach to religion. Werner S. Pluhar and Stephen Palmquist both adopt bare as a translation of *bloßen*.^{89,90} In his second preface to *Religion*, Kant adds a comment about his title that introduces this double approach, "Since *revelation* can still at least comprise pure *rational religion* as well but the latter (rational religion) cannot, conversely, comprise the historical element of revelation, I shall be able to consider revelation as a *wider* sphere of faith that encloses pure rational religion as a *narrower* one within itself (not as two circles located outside each other but as concentric ones)" (Ak 6:12).⁹¹ The word "bare"⁹² that Palmquist recommends as a translation of *bloßen* can adequately express this double approach, whereby a "naked"⁹³ body of religion is

⁸³ Immanuel, Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Hackett Publishing Company, 2009). I prefer to use Di Giovanni's translation, but I will alternate between translations from time to time.

⁸⁴ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, x.

⁸⁵ Immanuel, Kant, *Religion within the limits of reason alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934/1960).

⁸⁶ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason."

⁸⁷ Stephen Palmquist, "Does Kant Reduce Religion to Morality?" *Kant-Studien* 83, no. 2 (1992), 132.

⁸⁸ Palmquist, "Does Kant reduce religion to morality", 130 & 132.

⁸⁹ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*.

⁹⁰ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, xii-xiii.

⁹¹ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 11.

⁹² Palmquist, "Does Kant reduce religion to morality," 132-3.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 132.

analogous to “pure *rational religion*” (Ak 6:12).⁹⁴⁹⁵ This naked body of religion is clothed in the historical element of revelation. Kant’s *bloßen* metaphor best describes the way in which the bare body of rational religion is made *presentable*, or socially acceptable by a historical element of revelation.⁹⁶ If readers of Kant understand his approach to religion to solely be explained away by reason alone, then they miss Kant’s main point. His point is if one begins with revelation they can be lead back to reason, and if one begins with reason then they can be lead back to revelation (Ak 6:12-3).⁹⁷ Kant essentially addresses his main point to those who have misunderstood “the intention hidden under” his book’s title (Ak 6:12).⁹⁸ Since the inner circle overlays the outer circle, as well as the outer circle encloses the inner circle, it can be said that rational religion and revelation as a *historical system* are within each other’s territories (*Grenzen*) (Ak 6:12-3).⁹⁹ The word *Grenzen* does not mean absolute limits, but as Palmquist argues it is like a boundary or “a fence dividing two portions of land”¹⁰⁰ through which we may cross over into one or the other. In this sense, rational religion and revelation are not merely compatible but also unified – that is, one cannot have one without the other.

The idea of a religious community, for Kant, is well-developed if it comprises in its constitution the bare body of rational religion and is clothed in a *historical system of revelation* (Ak 6:12).¹⁰¹ The project of *Religion* is to test particular religious communities that already have historical systems of revelation, namely, a holy scripture and a religious tradition that preserves revelation (Ak 6:106-7).¹⁰² These religious communities are tested by beginning with a supposed revelation, and seeing if this revelation leads us back to rational religion. This test is called the second experiment, where we must initially abstract from pre-conceived notions of a rational religion as a self-subsistent system in itself (Ak

⁹⁴ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 32-3.

⁹⁵ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 11.

⁹⁶ Palmquist, “Does Kant reduce religion to morality,” 133.

⁹⁷ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 11-2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 11.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 11-2.

¹⁰⁰ Palmquist, “Does Kant reduce religion to morality,” 132.

¹⁰¹ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 11.

¹⁰² Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 140.

6:12).¹⁰³ In the third piece (Stück)¹⁰⁴ of his *Religion*, Kant provides four markings that should prove if a particular religious community has the rational core of religion, these are: *universality, purity, freedom, and unchangeability* (Ak 6:101-2).¹⁰⁵ Briefly stated, *universality* represents a numerically singular religious community, *purity* represents the sole incentive of morality as a motivational factor, *freedom* represents the respect for the autonomy of members within religious community and of non-members outside, and *unchangeability* recognises the four markings as the constitution of a religious community and that these four markings should not change. As we recall the clothing metaphor by Kant, the four markings of rational religion are unchangeable while anything that clothes rational religion has changeable laws which derive from a historical system of revelation. All four markings are the ideals of a religious community and are a priori, these ideals are called the invisible church. The word a priori is a technical term for Kant that represents an abstraction from all experience. A religious community that exhibits the markings of an invisible church is called a visible church, and its establishment properly satisfies the second experiment as well as being rightly called a well-developed religious community.

Kant's theory of the church is unique since it provides four a priori markings for any religious community to test its own suitability as a visible church. The Kantian religious community is numerically singular and universal, so any denominations of religion and its communities are candidates to becoming a part of the universal religious community. If a Buddhist community can prove itself suitable to be a visible church, then the Buddhist community is just one expression of a universal religion. The diversity of religion in contrast with the numerically singular religious community refers back to Kant's double approach to religion (Ak 6:12).¹⁰⁶ The analogy of the concentric circles and the clothing metaphor both signify the inseparability of the two aspects of 'religion'. Kant gives these two aspects a number of different names, the most common are the twofold names: "faith" and "pure (rational) religion".¹⁰⁷ Objectively: "There is only *one* (true) *religion*; but there

¹⁰³ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 136.

¹⁰⁶ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ Palmquist, "Does Kant reduce religion to morality," 133.

can be several kinds of *faith*" (Ak 6:107-8).¹⁰⁸ Subjectively: "The common man understands by it (religion) always his church faith, which strikes his senses, whereas religion (proper) is hidden inwardly and depends on moral attitudes" (Ak 6:108).¹⁰⁹ Each particular example of the visible church is called a *congregation* (Ak 6:101)¹¹⁰ which is organised solely by human beings, for instance Buddhist organisations or Christian organisations are examples of congregations. Each congregation, Kant argues, are *servants* (Ak 6:101)¹¹¹ of the visible church, and thus. each congregation are servants to one another. These congregations are called visible churches only when they are suitable in conforming to the law of the invisible church – that is, the moral law.¹¹²

In his lectures *On Buddhism*, Nishitani's project for the Buddhist sangha is objectively concerned with a Buddhist sangha that can be theorised as a universal religion. Since Nishitani even states the gap "between the general public and those who belong to special religious organizations... is not unique to Buddhism, but at present is rather common to all religions (subjectively considered as faiths), and is evident in Western nations, too".¹¹³ For Nishitani argues that there is lack of a historical consciousness and a social ethics in East Asian Buddhism, so the Kantian a priori test is suitable in seeing if the Buddhist community can be called a visible church. This test will have to compare and analyse whether the marks of a visible church can express the notions of a historical consciousness and a social ethics which Nishitani advocates for in Buddhism.

Before we begin the analysis of comparing two of Nishitani's notions of a historical consciousness and a social ethics to Kant's two notions of an invisible and visible church, we need to distinguish the Kantian idea of a religious community from other kinds of Kantian communities. In the literature concerning Kant's religious community there are some readers who have not gone far enough in explaining the role of the *historical system* that Kant would constitute as the outer circle of religion. One reader of Kant's *Religion*, Paul

¹⁰⁸ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 140.

¹⁰⁹ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 118.

¹¹⁰ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 135.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 135.

¹¹² Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 269.

¹¹³ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 23.

Guyer, provides a good exegesis of the various concepts of community in Kant's practical philosophy.¹¹⁴ However, he does not mention the religious community, ecclesiastical faith or even the invisible and visible church. His various exegesis of Kantian communities only goes so far, they only good at giving an account for the grounds of a religious community. These grounds for a religious community are represented by Guyer as the ethical community. The idea of an ethical community contains "an earthly condition of cooperation that facilitates the development of individual and thereby collective virtue", and a "communalistic conception of the highest good".¹¹⁵ The absence of Kant's idea of a religious community is quite concerning, for Guyer argues that "Kant is also vague about just *how* the ethical community provides its support for its members' efforts to maintain their virtue... it would be contradictory for the ethical community to advance the cause of virtue by providing coercive enforcement of moral laws – this must be left to the "juridico-civil (political) state".¹¹⁶ If Guyer's project was to move from the inner circle of rational religion to the outer circle of revelation, what Kant would characterise as a test of the first experiment (Ak 6:12),¹¹⁷ then it may be too complicated for Guyer as Kant's "position is not easy to interpret"¹¹⁸ to make the conceptual link between Kant's previous works on critical philosophy to the Kantian ethical community in *Religion*. It is no wonder that the closest exegesis Guyer has about the Kantian religious community is his claim about the ethical community as the grounding for moral *education*,¹¹⁹ but he does not specify the kinds of practices that come from a historical system which has revelation as its source. Yet Kant's second experiment explicates the following notion, that one can move from a historical system of revelation to the inner core of religion without presupposing the self-subsistent system of rational religion (Ak 6:12).¹²⁰ It would be far easier, as Kant suggests in the second preface, to test a religious community with the second experiment. Those who are

¹¹⁴ Paul Guyer, "Kantian communities: The realm of ends, the ethical community, and the highest good," in *Kant and the Concept of Community*, edited by Charlton Payne and Lucas Thorpe (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 89.

¹¹⁵ Guyer, "Kantian communities: The realm of ends, the ethical community, and the highest good," 108-9.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 112.

¹¹⁷ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 11.

¹¹⁸ Guyer, "Kantian communities: The realm of ends, the ethical community, and the highest good," 109.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 112.

¹²⁰ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 11.

not familiar with Kant's critical philosophy can understand the principles laid out in *Religion*, for one only needs a "common morality" (Ak 6:14).¹²¹ However, both experiments must be made from the standpoint of the narrower sphere – that is, to abstract from any posteriori (historical) input and adopt a bare a priori approach to religion (Ak 6:12).¹²² The word posteriori is a technical term used by Kant to describe the inclusion of experience. This includes religious experience.

In sections I-III of the third piece (*Stück*),¹²³ Kant distinguishes the ethical community from the political community (Ak 6:94-100).¹²⁴ Kantian communities in general are public, so they consist in a civil union of members who are unified by laws (Ak 6:94).¹²⁵ Although an ethical community cannot be brought into existence without the foundation of a political community (Ak 6:94),¹²⁶ a political community can continue to exist without an ethical community because the former is concerned with external and coercive laws (Ak 6:95).¹²⁷ By contrast, the ethical community entails the idea of non-coercive and internal laws, so members of a political community can still reside in the *ethical state of nature* (Ak 6:95).¹²⁸ Because political laws are coercive, it cannot coerce an individual through ethical laws which are by its very concept non-coercive. Members of an ethical community cannot include anything in their constitution that contradicts the duty of a political community (Ak 6:96).¹²⁹ The internal/non-coercive and the external/coercive are the distinguishing marks of an ethical community and a political community, respectively. In a religious community that has proven to contain the rational core of religion, the third mark of the visible church *freedom* (Ak 6:102)¹³⁰ legislates that the religious community cannot go against or be allowed to be controlled by the laws of the political community (Ak 6:102).¹³¹ Insofar as the religious community is grounded by ethical laws which are by its very concept non-

¹²¹ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 13.

¹²² Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 33.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 3.

¹²⁴ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 129-34.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 130.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 130.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 130.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 131.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 131.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 136.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 136.

coercive, it seems like the political community does not have a role in the theory of the church. However, some readers of Kant's *Religion* consider the political community to be more than a mere "stepladder that is simply left behind once the ethical community has been achieved".¹³² Guyer, towards the end of his exegesis of Kantian communities, suggest that "the highest degree of virtue *that we can reasonably expect to attain under natural conditions* is the creation of political conditions that will at least enforce outward compliance with the demands of morality".¹³³ Guyer suggests the political community plays a necessary role in the enforcement of ethical laws in a religious community, even though the very nature of political laws are its external and coercive characteristics.

Kant's conception of the religious community can unite a political and ethical community, where the political can only be in the necessary and paradoxical sense. It is normally seen that political laws are external and involve coercion while ethical laws are internal and involve non-coercion. Human beings by nature cannot penetrate into the internal dispositions of other human beings, namely, they cannot know whether the other is following the ethical law or not. So it is up to the task of a "higher moral being" (Ak 6:98)¹³⁴ who "knows the heart" (Ak 6:99)¹³⁵ to look into the internal dispositions of everyone. It is in section III of the third piece, that God is considered an enforcer of the laws of virtue only insofar as it is an internal enforcement (Ak 6:99).¹³⁶ This leads to the following idea of God as lawgiver, and the concept of an ethical community becomes "the concept of a people of God under ethical laws" (Ak 6:98).¹³⁷ An ethical community and a political community can arise with God seen as either a moral ruler or as a political (external) potentate (Ak 6:100).¹³⁸ A political community can consist in God as a lawgiver, but this would mean that its laws are still external and so these political laws will take on the form of *statutory laws* (Ak 6:99).¹³⁹ Such a political community who recognises God as lawgiver is called by Kant as a "theocracy – though priests, as human beings who receive their orders directly from

¹³² Guyer, "Kantian communities: The realm of ends, the ethical community, and the highest good," 116.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 116.

¹³⁴ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 133.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 134.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 133-4.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 133.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 134.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 134.

him, would run an aristocratic *government*. Such a constitution... [rests] entirely on historical grounds" (Ak 6:100).¹⁴⁰ By definition, an ethical community does not contain *statutory laws*, since its laws are internal and non-coercive. So a theocracy will only enforce the legality (political laws) of actions leaving our moral (ethical laws) actions undetermined (Ak 6:99).¹⁴¹ Yet few readers of Kant's *Religion* do see the value of external (political) statutory laws to the Kantian religious community.

Even though Guyer mentions the fact that the "creation of political conditions... will at least enforce outward compliance with the demands of morality",¹⁴² he does not explore further the *historical system* that preserves revelation through holy scripture and traditions. Instead, he claims that "Kant is... vague about just *how* the ethical community provides its support for its members' efforts to maintain their virtue",¹⁴³ and at most suggests the indispensable role of moral *education*.¹⁴⁴ Palmquist, on the other hand, recognises that Kant does provide practical guidelines for the *empirical implementation*¹⁴⁵ to establish an ethical community. This practical guideline is found in the form of a political system that "rest entirely on historical bases" (Ak 6:100).¹⁴⁶ As we recall from Kant's definition of theocracy (Ak 6:99-100),¹⁴⁷ a political community with God as lawgiver seems to legislate only *statutory laws* which are coercive and external. However, Palmquist recognises the importance of a theocracy only if it is non-coercive. A non-coercive theocracy recognises external and coercive laws only as an expression or depiction of "a shared concern [by members] to strengthen and promote each others' [inner] *convictions* (*Gesinnungen*)."¹⁴⁸ The source of this shared concern is internal ethical laws, and by its very concept is non-coercive. External and therefore coercive (political) power are statute laws which rest on entirely historical bases (Ak 6:100).¹⁴⁹ In a religious community, these statutory laws rest

¹⁴⁰ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 134.

¹⁴¹ Stephen Palmquist, "Kant's model for building the true church: Transcending "might makes right" and "should makes good" through the idea of a non-coercive theocracy." *Diametros* 54, no. 54 (2017), 86.

¹⁴² Guyer, "Kantian communities: The realm of ends, the ethical community, and the highest good," 116.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 113.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 113.

¹⁴⁵ Palmquist, "Kant's model for building the true church: Transcending 'might makes right'," 77.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 86.

¹⁴⁷ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 134

¹⁴⁸ Palmquist, "Kant's model for building the true church: Transcending 'might makes right'," 86.

¹⁴⁹ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 134.

on the *historical system* of revelation – that is, holy scripture and religious traditions which are preservers of revelation. These preservers of revelation have a historical base as well as an empirical base – that is, they are the historical facts of a religious community. The word empirical is a technical term that Kant uses to describe concepts or intuitions that can only be attained posteriori (by experience).¹⁵⁰ What Kant is saying is that these historical facts of religion, whether in the form of scripture or statutory laws, are political depictions of the internal ethical laws. These historical facts cannot be a source of action for those who share concern for each other's inner convictions. To do so would universalise “the historical instead of the moral”.¹⁵¹ Instead, a Kantian religious community unites both ethical laws and political laws, where the latter is understood in a paradoxical and necessary sense. Statutory laws serve to depict the internal moral law of a church, insofar as what is written in code¹⁵² can necessarily serve to express what is “engraved in our hearts” (Ak 6:104).¹⁵³ If external political laws are prioritised over internal ethical laws then political regimes can impose an unacceptable legal rule onto the ethical side of a religious community. For instance, the freedom to have discourse on the philosophy of religion was restricted in the time of King Frederick William II, whose royal edict commanded Kant to stop writing on matters of religion for as long as the king lived.¹⁵⁴ In the next chapter we will investigate the proper order of the rational core of religion and any historical bases of religion, which properly called is the invisible and visible church.

¹⁵⁰ Caygill, *A Kant dictionary Blackwell Philosopher dictionaries*, 170-1.

¹⁵¹ Palmquist, “Kant’s model for building the true church: Transcending ‘might makes right’,” 92.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 81.

¹⁵³ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 138.

¹⁵⁴ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 4.

Chapter 2: Kantian reading of Buddhist community

2.1 The main features of the invisible and visible church

The invisible church and visible church represent the gradual movement to realise the standpoint of the highest good. Since a religious community is a group of upright individuals and no single individual can realise the highest good on their own, it becomes a collective duty for all of humanity to realise “the highest good as a good common to all” (Ak 6:97).¹⁵⁵ Kant defines the invisible church as the mere idea of the union of all upright human beings (Ak 6:101),¹⁵⁶ while the visible church represents the actual union of human beings (Ak 6:101).¹⁵⁷

Before we investigate further into Kant’s notions of the invisible and visible church, it will be good to investigate the scholarship of Kant’s ecclesiology; since only a few scholars recognise the importance of a religious community that contains a historical and statutory system. For instance, Kant scholar Stephen Palmquist considers a church to represent the *partnership* between God as the founder of the church and human beings as responsible for organising a church that approximates to the idea of a visible church.¹⁵⁸ Another Kantian scholar, Philip L. Quinn, looks at the idea of Kant’s ecclesiology as a comparison to an actual ecclesiology – that is, the Roman Catholic church.¹⁵⁹ An ecclesiology is the study of the church. Many scholars focus on the concept of the ethical community, but do not wholly concern themselves the role of the church. For instance, Allen W. Wood is open to the idea that “the ethical community must be open even to agnostics”,¹⁶⁰ and even claims “it is virtually impossible to overestimate the importance of organized religion in Kant’s scheme of things”.¹⁶¹ Yet, the notions of the invisible and visible church have not been mentioned here. The invisible and visible church both represent the cooperation between God as the

¹⁵⁵ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 133.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 135.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 135.

¹⁵⁸ Palmquist, “Kant’s model for building the true church: Transcending ‘might makes right’,” 91.

¹⁵⁹ Philip L. Quinn, “Kantian Philosophical Ecclesiology,” *Faith and Philosophy* 17, no. 4 (October 2000).

¹⁶⁰ Allen W. Wood, “Religion, Ethical community, and the struggle against evil,” in *Kant and the Concept of Community*, edited by Charlton Payne and Lucas Thorpe (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 133.

¹⁶¹ Wood, “Religion, Ethical community, and the struggle against evil,” 135.

founder of the invisible church and human beings as the responsible agents for organising a visible church. Another Kantian scholar, Paul Guyer looks at Kantian communities. However, the role of the historical and statutory system of a religious community as a resource of revelation and moral teaching has been overlooked by him. He says that “Kant is also vague about just *how* the ethical community provides its support for its members’ efforts to maintain their virtue”.¹⁶² Yet the answer lies in a historical system of revelation which provides resource for the maintenance of virtue. Lastly, Kant’s ecclesiology has often been interpreted as an extension of his ethics since Kant mentions “the highest good” (Ak 6:97)¹⁶³ in his *Religion*. It is often assumed to be the Kantian idea of the highest good often found in his “Critique of practical reason (1788)” (Ak 5:110-3).¹⁶⁴ Kant’s idea of the highest good in the third piece of his *Religion* is defined as “a common good to all” (Ak 6:97),¹⁶⁵ while the idea of the *second Critique* is an individual’s highest good (Ak 5:111).¹⁶⁶ Kant makes the point in the second preface of *Religion* that his book was to be read for those who are not familiar with Kant’s critical philosophy such as the *Critique of Practical Reason*. He claims one only requires a “common morality” to understand the content of his book *Religion* (Ak 6:14).¹⁶⁷ Because of the misrepresentation of Kant’s last two pieces in *Religion* as something concerning more to do with the ethical community rather than the religious community or even a church, the scholarship on the notions of the invisible and visible church suffer from a lack of mention, or even a development of these central ideas to Kant’s ecclesiology.

The invisible church and visible church represent the work that needs to be done by the cooperation between human beings and God. Kant argues originally given our natural incentive to compare ourselves with others, we are inclined to *gain worth in the opinion of others* (Ak 6:27).¹⁶⁸¹⁶⁹ The individual, however, is always already in a state of anxiety

¹⁶² Guyer, “Kantian communities: The realm of ends, the ethical community, and the highest good,” 112.

¹⁶³ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 133.

¹⁶⁴ Immanuel, Kant, “Critique of Practical Reason,” in *Practical philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, ed. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 228-30.

¹⁶⁵ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 133.

¹⁶⁶ Kant, “Critique of Practical Reason,” 229.

¹⁶⁷ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 75.

¹⁶⁹ Wood, “Religion, Ethical community, and the struggle against evil,” 127.

around others because the other might be “striving for ascendancy over us”, and as a result this feeling eventually transforms into an unjust desire to gain superiority over others through the vices of *jealousy* and *rivalry* (Ak 6:27).¹⁷⁰¹⁷¹ When we are around others we are always already struck with the social problem of evil. It is in the third piece of his *Religion* that he explains that social evil can eventually be overcome in a universal community of upright individuals. Victory of the good principle over social evil is to be found in a universal organisation, where the efforts of single individuals “insufficient on their own, are united for a common effect” (Ak 6:98).¹⁷² This is the social interpretation of Kant’s concept of radical evil that some commentators such as Wood had argued.¹⁷³ The solution to radical evil, as Wood interprets, is a social one that is found in a universal organisation of upright individuals. However, I believe it is a mistake to keep this solution at the level of an ethical community because the solution involves a religious dimension, that is a historical and statutory system. This historical system serves to support not as secondary but as an essential character to a universal organisation. Since section III of the third book of *Religion* states that “The concept of an ethical community is the concept of a people of God under ethical laws” (Ak 6:98),¹⁷⁴ and it is within an ethical community that duties are essentially the commands of God. It is in the idea of a higher moral being, God, who has the power to unify the predispositions of individuals to create a universal religious community of upright individuals as a *people of God* (Ak 6:99).¹⁷⁵ God’s role is to unify the work of individuals, who work to become good-hearted through self-improvement, into a universal religious community. The completion of this is called the *invisible church* (Ak 6:101).¹⁷⁶ Indeed, it is in this universal religious community of good-hearted individuals that the need to feel superior over others will be extinguished since the social problem of evil will be cut off from its roots. Instead of feeling anxiety over whether we are superior over others or not, in a universal religious community where everybody is good-hearted we will be all considered equals to one another. “...The concept of a people of God under ethical laws” is a

¹⁷⁰ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 75.

¹⁷¹ Wood, “Religion, Ethical community, and the struggle against evil,” 127.

¹⁷² Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 133.

¹⁷³ Wood, “Religion, Ethical community, and the struggle against evil,” 128 & 137.

¹⁷⁴ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 133.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 136.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 135.

precursor to the idea of an *invisible church* introduced in Section IV. The role of individuals is to work toward the outcome that closely resembles the universal community that can only be unified by God.

Objectively, such a voluntary commitment to self-improvement is dependent on the belief that God has the capacity to unite our ends – that is, not solely on our individual ends that practical reason imposes upon us each as a person, but simply harmonising our ends with the other’s ends. Kant argues that we ought to believe in God as an idea, *for the sake of our species*,¹⁷⁷ that is why the highest good is a common good to all and it can only be achieved through a *collective duty*.¹⁷⁸¹⁷⁹ As subjects we do not know what God would do to display the universal community in actuality but we do know what we must do to be fit to be members of such a community (Ak 6:152).¹⁸⁰ In other words, there lies an,

...abyss of mystery regarding what God may do, whether *anything* at all is to be attributed to him and *what* this something might be in particular, whereas the only thing that a human being learns from a duty is what he himself must do to become worthy of that fulfillment, of which he has no cognition or at least no possibility of comprehension (Ak 6:139).¹⁸¹

Theoretically, God is not an object of possible human knowledge. We can only encounter God as an idea of reason through the conditions of the possibility of the realisation of the highest good in which we attempt to realise in its nature¹⁸² As Kant scholar Peter Byrne puts it, God can only be a necessary reference via relational and negative characterisations.¹⁸³ The idea of God is a necessary consequence of grounding our maxims under the moral law, because our duty to promote the ultimate object of the moral law as the highest good inevitably draws us into “the abyss of a mystery regarding what God may do” (Ak 6:97 &

¹⁷⁷ Stephen Palmquist, “Kant’s Religious Argument for the Existence of God: The Ultimate Dependence of Human Destiny on Divine Assistance,” in *Faith and Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (January 2009), 16.

¹⁷⁸ Palmquist, “Kant’s Religious Argument for the Existence of God,” 16.

¹⁷⁹ Guyer, “Kantian communities: The realm of ends, the ethical community, and the highest good,” 108.

¹⁸⁰ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 176.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 176.

¹⁸² Guyer, “Kantian communities: The realm of ends, the ethical community, and the highest good,” 105.

¹⁸³ Peter Byrne, “The Positive Case for God,” in *Kant on God*, ed. Peter Byrne (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 77.

6:139).¹⁸⁴ Thus, even though God as an object is not given to us via cognition, the attempt to establish a universal community inevitably runs into the idea that we alone cannot realise the community and that we need God to do so through the *invisible* church. Our only hope is to approximate, i.e. what we must do to be fit to be members of such a community, to the ideal of an invisible church through a *visible church*. It seems like a hopeless task since such an approximation must consider that we can only know God as a condition of the possibility of realising the highest good, yet we have no access to one another's predispositions to judge each other as good-hearted human beings. The gradual establishment or the gradual transition into an invisible church is not that it "will" be achieved, but that it "can" be achievable (Ak 6:136).¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the historical and statutory vehicle that carries the ideals of a church "can cease" to give way for rational religion and/or *pure moral faith* (Ak 6:136).¹⁸⁶ In viewing the role of human beings in a visible church, we ought to believe in God (as an idea) for assisting us in the realisation of our collective end. Only in this sense does the religious community have a shared basis in the moral law, so it becomes publicly accessible since we all share the belief in God as an idea who cooperates with us. This determinative 'ought' is the characteristic of practical reason and "genuine morality is by definition *self-legislated*".¹⁸⁷ Since, whenever morality is in question, reason attends to its own interest as practical reason and this can only be internal within each rational being. The invisible church is self-legislated by reason, yet the visible church approximates to this ideal through the work of human beings as a *species* and as a *collective duty*. Thus, it is in the work of the human species and God as partners that we establish the universal community.

The realisation of a universal community can only be achieved through a visible representation of the invisible church. There has been not enough literature concerning Kant's theory of the church, for instance Palmquist and Quinn are some examples of Kantian scholars who read into Kant's ecclesiology.¹⁸⁸ The ethical community is often

¹⁸⁴ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 134 & 165.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 162.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 176.

¹⁸⁷ Palmquist, "Kant's model for building the true church: Transcending 'might makes right'," 85.

¹⁸⁸ Palmquist, "Kant's religious argument for the existence of God," 9.

overstated by some Kantian readers, like Wood and Guyer, who talk about the ethical community as a substitute for religion and ecclesiastical faiths solely in terms of its function of bringing into an awareness the moral law. Kantian scholar Scott R. Stroud¹⁸⁹ argues that the term “ethical community” is functionally equivalent to the kingdom of ends from the “Groundwork of The metaphysics of morals (1785)” (Ak 4:433),¹⁹⁰ and an invisible church for the ethical community is seen as a people of God where God is a moral lawgiver and a people under divine commands are subjects of the moral law. Palmquist claims it is an “almost universally accepted assumption”¹⁹¹ by Kantian readers who see Kant’s work on *Religion* to be part of his moral and practical philosophy. The idea of a *visible church* is not explicated enough in scholarly literature. Indeed, section IV’s title is clear on this point that “The idea of a people of God cannot be realized (by human organization) except in the form of a church” (Ak 6:100).¹⁹²

The visible church is approached in two ways, pure religious faith and ecclesiastical (church) faith as historical faith. Some readers of Kant’s ecclesiology, like Philip Quinn,¹⁹³ acknowledges that it may seem easy to realise the ethical community since it rests upon practical reason being self-legislated internally in every single rational being. Yet the task of realising the existence of a visible church is difficult because of “a peculiar weakness of human nature” (Ak 6:103).¹⁹⁴ The weakness of human nature is that human beings cannot be easily convinced that all God requires of them is to serve him by their duties in improving their moral lifestyle (Ak 6:103).¹⁹⁵ Instead, human beings naturally serve God through “festivities, professions of faith in revealed laws, and the observance of precepts to the [external] form of a church” (Ak 6:106).¹⁹⁶ These are the facts of a religion and it is called a *historical faith* (Ak 6:103).¹⁹⁷ On the one hand, Kant considers historical faith to be

¹⁸⁹ Scott R. Stroud, “Rhetoric and moral progress in Kant’s ethical community,” 329.

¹⁹⁰ Immanuel, Kant, “Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals,” in *Practical philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, ed. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 83.

¹⁹¹ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 5.

¹⁹² Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 135.

¹⁹³ Quinn, “Kantian Philosophical Ecclesiology,” 515.

¹⁹⁴ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 137.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 137.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 139.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 137.

the outer sphere of religion that carries with it a historical and statutory system. This historical system preserves revelation through holy scripture and tradition, and can it also be called an ecclesiastical faith because these are church observances as well. On the other hand, pure religious faith or pure moral faith is the rational core of a religion which holds the a priori principles of a church. Pure religious faith holds the four a priori marks of a church, as well as the ideal of the church – that is, they hold the principles of the invisible and visible church.

Due to the weakness of human nature, when human beings establish religious communities, historical (ecclesiastical) faith naturally precedes moral faith (Ak 6:106).¹⁹⁸ This natural preface presents a problem; how can we distinguish which religious observances are divinely ordained, or which are mere statutory laws from the human under the pretense of divine authority? Since a religious community based solely on the moral law is internally legislated, to know what laws are moral cannot be found in observing external ecclesiastical statutes like in a political community. Kant's ecclesiology acknowledges that moral faith alone can never be relied on as much as it deserves to found a visible church (Ak 6:103).¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, it is equally presumptuous "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" (Ak 6:105).²⁰⁰ This conundrum presents an issue, so Kant presents a perspectival solution – that is, the practical solution to the antimony of faith (Ak 6:116-9).²⁰¹ Kant defines faith as the acceptance of the principles of a religion (*fides sacra/sacred faith*) (Ak 6:163).²⁰² The "remarkable antimony" (Ak 6:116)²⁰³ of faith represents a settlement (*Beilegung*)²⁰⁴ or resolution (*Auflosung*)²⁰⁵ on whether we should start with a historical (ecclesiastical) faith or a pure religious faith. What is at stake here is to realise the visible church and approximate to the invisible church as much as collectively possible, to do this it is

¹⁹⁸ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 139.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 137.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 139.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 147-50.

²⁰² Ibid, 184.

²⁰³ Ibid, 147.

²⁰⁴ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 307.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 307.

questionable whether historical (ecclesiastical) faith must always be added and take priority over a pure religious faith. A faith in atonement is already given to us given through a historical faith – that is, revelation as preserved in scriptures and traditions. At the same time, a historical (ecclesiastical) faith becomes one with the purpose of pure religious faith in the distant future because a visible church will eventually become the invisible church. The invisible church represents the moral ideal, so an active self-improvement of a good lifestyle will elicit faith in atonement in accordance to the logic of morally efficient causes (Ak 6:116-7).²⁰⁶²⁰⁷ In other words, before we can even hope that God will directly help us to become good we must work to become worthy of receiving help from God. For without the idea of God an invisible church will never be realised. This is the necessary partnership between God and the human species. In the antinomy of faith, both statements appear to be true. It is in Kant’s interest to find a way to resolve these seemingly conflicting claims. Firstly, if atonement (the help from God) is given to us already through historical faith before the individual did anything to deserve such atonement, then it is rational for the individual to accept this gift from God and use it for their advantage.²⁰⁸ Yet to do so would presume that we have the speculative capacities to assent to a knowledge claim that God has given to us as if we can cognise when and how he gave us this atonement. No rational person, who is guided by practical reason, would accept this atonement if they had not made the least effort so far. To consider that “for which one does nothing... as though the object were to come on its own, lured by the mere yearning for it” (Ak 6:117)²⁰⁹ is quite an irrational way to proceed.²¹⁰ If we consider self-improvement through a change in lifestyle as much as it lies within our power, “as having to come first, before [we] [give] even the least credit to the hope that” we gain atonement, *pure moral faith must take precedence over the ecclesiastical [faith]* (Ak 6:117).²¹¹

On the contrary, if humanity is inherently corrupt by nature then we must accept a foreign influence. For God’s atonement into us must precede any self-improvement because we

²⁰⁶ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 306.

²⁰⁷ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 147-8.

²⁰⁸ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 308.

²⁰⁹ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 148.

²¹⁰ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 308.

²¹¹ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 148.

cannot hope to change our lifestyles if we are already corrupt (Ak 6:117).²¹² As a result, there is a circular nature to this antinomy. On the one hand, we assume we cannot have the atonement before we strive to change our lifestyle. This is because we do not have the cognitive capabilities to recognise and even assent to such a supersensible influence. On the other hand, since we are corrupt by nature we need the supersensible influence, so we come back to the first point.

The circular nature of the antinomy remains a problem for theoretical reason, however, practical reason is the highest interpreter of historical faith in a visible church. The antinomy consists in a circular nature and does not seem to be able to be settled or resolved. Insofar as the supersensible influence is beyond our cognitive capabilities to assent to and recognise God's influence, the circular nature is only a problem for theoretical reason. This is because we cannot have theoretical cognition of God's influence. If practical reason is given precedence then even the supposed supersensible influence, which already is given to us as a historical faith, can be authenticated as a guideline for principles of action. "Maxims of action" (Ak 6:118)²¹³ must come first, while the "maxim of knowledge or theoretical faith must only bring about the consolidation and completion of that maxim of action" (Ak 6:118).²¹⁴ In the antinomy of faith as a practical idea, historical (ecclesiastical) faith can complement and have the same goal as a pure religious faith insofar as practical reason is taken precedence. Therefore, Kant argues for these two approaches of the visible church because they have one and the same goal. They belong together necessarily because when they work together, they bring about the realisation of the actual union of upright human beings. Historical faith is by itself "dead" (Ak 6:111).²¹⁵²¹⁶ The words of scripture and of statutory faith do not bring meaning into our lifestyle unless it attends to make us better human beings. Only when a historical faith is animated by pure religious faith can a form of a visible church arise.

²¹² Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 148.

²¹³ Ibid, 149.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 149.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 143.

²¹⁶ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 295-6.

2.2 Kantian reading of sangha

The task of this thesis is to analyse whether Kant's notions of the invisible and visible church can give expression to the theory of Buddhist community as a public and universal religion. Nishitani argues that the theory of Buddhist community has been neglected as part of the three religious learnings of the Buddha-dharma-sangha. As we saw in chapter 1, the Buddha is the historical figure who had become known as the founder of Buddhism. The second principle, the dharma, represents the teachings of the Buddha, while the third, the sangha, is traditionally conceived of as a congregation of monks and nuns. He comments how Buddhism had placed emphasis on the world we live in as "transient and that [this world] is a world of suffering",²¹⁷ rather than placing emphasis on the community of human beings who live in the world at present. To answer this problem, I had turned to Immanuel Kant's theory of the church to explore if his notion of a *visible church* can reanimate the Buddhist faith. For part of his theory of the church involves a moral interpretation of holy scriptures, so as to reanimate a *historical faith* which otherwise is "dead" by itself (Ak 6:111).²¹⁸ The fruitfulness of this comparative analysis between two distinct traditions, will be to identify the relevance for a sense of community that can be based on a universal assent by human beings who live in the world at present.

The invisible church and visible church represent the work that needs to be done by the cooperation between human beings and God. The individual cannot remain good for long, so long as they are by themselves. In a church, God (as an idea) is the source of the moral law (Ak 6:98-9)²¹⁹ since he is lawgiver to a religious community. And the ultimate object of the moral law is the highest good. However, no single individual can realise the highest good on their own since we live in a world of others, and as we know through internal squabbles over doctrines of faith, or external authorities who instigate political laws which attempt to control what is by nature moral and internal. We find that as human beings, we easily corrupt one another's dispositions. So a *collective duty* is needed to realise the

²¹⁷ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 49-50.

²¹⁸ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 143.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 133-4.

highest good as a common good to all (Ak 6:97).²²⁰ This can only be done when human beings give assent that their ends are to be in harmony with the ends of others. A church is the ideal religious community where we no longer feel coerced into fear or feel *jealousy* or *rivalry* to gain superiority over others. As assenting individuals, we become *servants* of the church, so that we are all equal before the moral law. The invisible church represents the ideal union, but it cannot be the object of possible experience. Instead, the visible church represents the realised union of human beings as whole which concords with this ideal (Ak 6:101).²²¹ Kant argues that we ought to believe in God (as an idea) for assisting us in the realisation of our collective end. Only in a cooperation between God (as an idea) and the human species can an establishment of the visible church be approachable. The point is not that an invisible church “will” arise, but that an invisible church “can” arise (Ak 6:136).²²² It is up to human beings to work towards being worthy of fulfilling an end that cannot be theoretically knowable, and to which we know that in our striving we are not alone in this endeavour. Human beings *as a species* work together to form visible churches to fulfil the highest good as a common good to all.

I want to articulate on the notion of the visible church more not so much because it involves the realisation of the ideal church, to which we cannot know, but more importantly the visible church is the work that only human beings can and should carry out together.

In a Kantian reading of Buddhist community, it seems like there is an irreconcilability between Buddhism and Kant’s theory of the church. For in the Buddhist faith there is no concept of God, yet practical reason demands that we ought to believe in God (as an idea) to assist us in realising our collective end. Only when human beings as a species cooperate with God can they realise the visible church, without which, there may not be any ideal community to approximate towards.

I argue that Nishitani’s idea of conscience can express the object of practical reason, whereby we do not initially assume God’s existence, but that we run into the idea of God as

²²⁰ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 133.

²²¹ Ibid, 135.

²²² Ibid, 162.

a *holy mystery* behind faith (Ak 6:137).²²³ This is not evident at first, but I will like to draw out these connections between Nishitani and Kant. I have prepared several following statements. Firstly, Nishitani describes conscience as “‘assurance’ or ‘certainty’”²²⁴ and equates it to knowledge. Nishitani investigates the etymology of the English word conscience, and the German word for certainty *Gewissheit*. The word ‘conscience’ in English can be broken down into the prefix ‘con’ meaning “‘to gather’ or ‘to take together’”,²²⁵ while “‘science’ means ‘to know’”.²²⁶ In the German word *Gewissheit*, the prefix *ge* refers to “knowledge as a whole... acquired synthetically instead of individually”.²²⁷ In both of these words there is a characteristic of leaving “no room for doubt, uncertainty, or anxiety”.²²⁸ For Nishitani, the study of religious dogma involves coming to acquire knowledge in this way by convincing oneself that this knowledge is certain “by saying ‘this is it’”.²²⁹ Yet at the same time there is this uncertainty that pertains to the way we live our lives. Uncertainty can be overcome by certainty only when what we learn is realised in our way of living. For Nishitani, we should not simply remain in uncertainty about the application of religious knowledge to our livelihoods.

Nishitani draws upon the Zen Buddhist tradition to describe the idea of conscience in the Buddhist faith,

“...Zen Buddhism describes with the term *reidanjichi*, which means that we cannot know whether water is cool or warm unless we taste it with our tongue. However many times we may hear other people talk, we cannot know from that alone what it is like for water to be cool or warm. It is not until we have had the direct experience of drinking the water ourselves that we come to know it. In my opinion, at the rear of conscience lies this “knowledge acquired only by one’s self.” What is only accessible and understandable

²²³ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 164.

²²⁴ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 54.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 54.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 54.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 54.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 54.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

to one's self implies man's most basic self-awareness... The same can be said not only of these familiar things but also of philosophical and religious truths at a higher level."²³⁰

Nishitani's idea of conscience is a knowledge that is known only to oneself, acquired by only one's self, and it is certain. For instance, we can know the dharma in an abstract and theoretical manner, but to make it our own and realise it in our way of living is another matter altogether.²³¹ Conscience is a knowledge in which it is incommunicable to the other, where no matter how "many times we may hear other people talk"²³² we are not certain of that knowledge because it has not made it into our experience and not realised into our livelihoods. Nishitani does not go into detail about the moral sense of conscience, but he merely acknowledges the fact that it is ordinarily the basis of morality and ethics.²³³ He is more concerned with conscience's relation to faith because faith is about, as he describes about the Judeo-Christian tradition, leaving "ourselves to God so completely that there is no room left for doubt".²³⁴ It seems like his return to Zen Buddhist tradition terminology "*reidanjichi*"²³⁵ is a way for him to correlate the same concept of leaving no room for doubt in the Buddhist faith. Only on this foundation he says, can a social ethics arise in a Buddhist community.²³⁶

Nishitani's concept of conscience is remarkably similar, in this case, to the Kantian idea of *holy mysteries*. Like Nishitani's conception of conscience, *holy mysteries* are only known to oneself and are incommunicable to others. When human freedom applies itself to the task of attempting to realise the highest good,²³⁷ the human being inevitably runs into an "abyss of a mystery regarding what God may do, whether *anything* at all is to be attributed to him and *what* this something might be in particular, whereas the only thing that a human being learns from a duty [to promote the idea of the highest good] is what he himself must do to become worthy of that fulfillment, of which he has no cognition or at least no possibility of

²³⁰ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 57.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 53.

²³² *Ibid*, 57.

²³³ *Ibid*, 55, 93 & 111.

²³⁴ *Ibid*, 55.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, 57.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 56.

²³⁷ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 357.

comprehension" (Ak 6:139).²³⁸ The *cause* of freedom in the world cannot be cognised (Ak 6:138),²³⁹ it remains a mystery, since it is beyond the world of appearances. The same can be said of the idea of the existence of God. However, freedom as an object of practical reason, can be communicated to everyone in public. This is because freedom can be made manifest (as an effect) through our duties to the moral law, and in our attempt to realise the highest good. Freedom's effect is often called free choice or the will, which is not mysterious for it is public knowledge and everyone possesses it. Without free choice there would be no autonomous will that self-legislates and is subject to the moral law. In this sense "morality allows of open communication, even though its cause is not given to us" (Ak 6:138).²⁴⁰ The Buddhist faith does not need its members to find out what God is, as simply possessing free choice is enough. All they need to do is to attend to the law that is "engraved" (Ak 6:104)²⁴¹ in their hearts by working toward a common end with all others. I think this is what Nishitani has meant by conscience. For conscience is a knowledge that is incommunicable to others as well as a source of self-knowledge that is certain because we are able to realise it in our livelihoods. For Kant, to realise the moral law is through our duties and this is done by living "a morally good life" (Ak 6:103).²⁴² Even though we cannot be certain about the ultimate cause of our duties or the ultimate source of the moral law. To call this ultimate source God is to merely satisfy reason's need for a unification of ideas in the world. On the other hand, religious experience tells us revelation is from God, but this experience merely confirms what reason must figure out on its own. Thus, we cannot consider whether a particular religion is universal if we test only its inner possibility, because the knowledge of the ultimate cause or source is uncertain and cannot be communicated to the other. The only way a historical (ecclesiastical) faith can be proven to be universal and is suitable to be an ideal union of all good-hearted human beings, is if it is universally communicable. Only when a historical faith is universally communicable can

²³⁸ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 165.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 164.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 164.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 138.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 137.

others become convinced and be certain of the moral truths that lie within religious doctrines and scripture.

There are two ways in which the universal communicability of a historical faith can be proven, the first is natural religion and the second is scholarly religion. They are two ways in which a historical (ecclesiastical) faith can convince the other of moral truth. Natural religion is defined by its self-authenticity, where anyone who possesses practical reason can find “doctrines of reason” (Ak 6:159)²⁴³ in scriptural texts, and religious dogma. Reason can convince itself of the truth of religion. For instance, the person convinced by reason finds in the Bible to say that “to hate in one’s heart is tantamount to killing (5.22);²⁴⁴ that an injustice brought upon a neighbor can be made good only through satisfaction rendered to the neighbor himself, not through acts of divine service (5.24)”²⁴⁵ (Ak 6:159).²⁴⁶ Scholarly religion is defined by the constitution of scriptural scholars. They play a significant role in guiding people who otherwise cannot rely solely on reason as a source of self-authenticity, but who need supplementary written revelation to be convinced of religious truth. Scholarly religion protects the unlearned (Ak 6:163-6)²⁴⁷ and the vulnerable. People who find intellectually abstract concepts to be overly demanding need scriptural scholars who “have a broad acquaintance with history and critical judgment, in order to draw from the situation, the customs and beliefs (the popular religion) of an earlier time the means with which to unlock the understanding of the church community” (Ak 6:113).²⁴⁸ These scriptural scholars need not only be biblical theologians, but can be philosophical theologians as well (Ak 6:8-11).²⁴⁹ For both kinds of scholars are spiritual soldiers who

²⁴³ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 181.

²⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and edited by Allen W. Wood & George Di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 466. The editor did not provide a biblical citation. “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I saw unto you. They have their reward.”

²⁴⁵ Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, 466. “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest of all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.... The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

²⁴⁶ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 181.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 184-6.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 144.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 61-3.

protect the laity (Ak 6:164-5).²⁵⁰²⁵¹ So Kant argues that these written documents of revelation “must be cherished and cultivated as a bare means, though a most precious one, for giving meaning, diffusion, and continuity to natural religion even among the ignorant” (Ak 6:165).²⁵² A *scholarly public* (Ak 6:166)²⁵³ is the aim of a scholarly religion where the history and language of various scriptures can become a means to make the unlearned informed of statutory laws. Although written documents of revelation (aptly known as *historical faith*) is “dead” (Ak 6:111)²⁵⁴ on its own, it is through a moral interpretation that can animate these words and enliven our religious conviction. Both natural religion and scholarly religion work together in a church because they both attempt to encompass all kinds of people who either can or cannot be convinced solely by their reason, or by those who find liturgical service to be more promising. It is through these two kinds of *external communication* (Ak 6:155)²⁵⁵ that the church can be universally communicable, and so prove itself suitable to be a visible church.

Nishitani’s argument for a theory of Buddhist community which is lacking in the Buddhist learning, stems from the idea that the dharma (the teachings of the Buddha) expresses what goes beyond time. While the sangha implies a community of people who dwell within time, and are subjected to time which is “susceptible to constant transition, for it always renews itself and continually manifests transient ups and downs – that is, phases of prosperity and decline”.²⁵⁶ Rather than emphasising the people who live in the world at present, Buddhism has only paid attention to transcending the world of suffering. He believes that the theory of the *sangha* can begin from the standpoint of history. As he explains,

“There was something in Buddhism preventing it from grasping the question of how to deal with the theory of the *sangha* as an essential concern of the study of Buddhist teachings. This is why Buddhism was not particularly enthusiastic about the issue of

²⁵⁰ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 185-6.

²⁵¹ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 413.

²⁵² Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 186.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 187.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 143.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 178.

²⁵⁶ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 48-9.

history. Basically speaking, the study of history is concerned with a way of understanding by means of which a human being tries to grasp the nature of his or her own existence. Buddhism falls short of such historical understanding. This is now the foremost problem for Buddhism as a religious organization.”²⁵⁷

Nishitani defines history as a way in “which a human being tries to grasp the nature of his or her own existence”.²⁵⁸ It is not clear as to what theories of history he is referring to, or to who he is responding to. Insofar as these questions merely inform us about his interlocutors, I think it is of more importance to carry out Nishitani’s standpoint of history. By articulating his claim that history (or a historical understanding) is needed to develop a theory of the sangha, and to make it relevant to Buddhist organisations, is because what is at stake here is whether these Buddhist organisations can play a public role by bridging the gap between itself and the general public. An answer to this gap will likely express the criteria of a Kantian idea of universal communicability and subsequently its suitability for being a visible church.

History, as an idea, is not simply the task of a historian who records history such as “a mere description of the past”.²⁵⁹ Rather Nishitani understands history to be “an interior human understanding of events”,²⁶⁰ which is the recognition that our livelihoods are not just a record of an event but that we ourselves are living in that event. In his own words, he claims “the historical world comes into sight for us is connected with the fact that the way of life of an individual itself turns out to be historical, and that one comes to realize that one is living a historical life oneself”.²⁶¹ Nishitani looks at the Reformation as an example of the pursuit of human freedom, where “various movements that continually have improved the present situation in search of a new society in which the full potential of human life is realized. This is tied up with human freedom, through which one realizes that it is up to oneself to create a new society”.²⁶² Nishitani is interested in a development of self-

²⁵⁷ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 52.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 52.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 75.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 75.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, 40.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 59.

awareness that gives rise to a historical consciousness, where one is free to control their own livelihoods.

When conscience and informed knowledge are united, they give rise to a historical consciousness. On the one hand, Nishitani's idea of conscience is described as a self-knowledge which is realised in one's way of living. On the other hand, informed knowledge is acquired through reading religious scripture, listening to dharma, and listening to other people. For Nishitani, informed knowledge is theoretical and abstract. The study of the dharma or religious dogma, even when we pursue it exhaustively, will not yield certainty in our lives. It is only by bringing informed knowledge into our lives can there be a self-awareness, and a certainty through the realisation of self-knowledge. History is the same process, where we have the knowledge that our livelihoods are historical, but it is only in living a historical life does this self-awareness arise through the guise of historical consciousness.

I think these two kinds of knowledge can express both natural religion and scholarly religion, because informed knowledge provides us with the resources of revelation while conscience can animate these teachings into our livelihoods because they are self-authenticating. Although the self-authentication of conscience is not through reason but through a direct experience – that is, “we cannot know whether water is cool or warm unless we taste it with our tongue”.²⁶³ If “direct experience”²⁶⁴ were to be understood in Kantian terms it will be quite similar to the idea historical faith meeting the human demand for what *the senses can hold on to* (Ak 6:109).²⁶⁵ Concepts of reason, like practical reason and morality, need to be confirmed by experience because *the senses need to hold on to* “doctrines of reason” (Ak 6:159)²⁶⁶ found in historical or church scripture, tradition and statutory laws (Ak 6:109).²⁶⁷

For Nishitani, he saw Buddhist theology to be an answer to the problems of doctrinal rigidity as well as the bridge between Buddhist organisations and the general public. In

²⁶³ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 57.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 57.

²⁶⁵ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 142.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 181.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 142.

Kantian terms, the religious organisation (which is a congregation) needs to open up to the wider public to grant public accessibility of the moral law found within their historical faith. The two ways in which a congregation can become a public form of moral obligation is through natural religion and scholarly religion. By reading holy scripture, natural religion is a communicative process whereby anyone who possesses practical reason can convince themselves of the moral truth of religion. These individuals understand that “to hate in one’s heart is tantamount to killing” (Ak 6:159).²⁶⁸ Scholarly religion, on the other hand, can be a source of knowledge for the unlearned and the vulnerable. The role of scriptural scholars is to “unlock the understanding of the church community” by appealing to history, language, critical judgment, custom and belief of a popular faith. The role of scholarly religion is to create a *scholarly public* (Ak 6:166),²⁶⁹ where people become learned and familiar with matters of a historical faith. Only in these two senses, for Kant, can a historical (ecclesiastical) faith be universally communicable and be accessible by all kinds of people. In the case of Buddhism, Nishitani believes that a social ethics can be found if conscience becomes the foundation of our understanding. Historical consciousness is found only when informed knowledge acquired by familiarising ourselves with the dharma (the teachings of the Buddha), and it is realised in our way of life through conscience,

Through our endeavor to assess what role conscience plays in present-day Buddhism, we must come to grips anew with the Buddha and with the basic standpoint of Buddhism. It is true, however, that our endeavor will be of no use if it disregards the traditional way of thinking that is characteristic of Buddhism.²⁷⁰

By reading the dharma, and by steeping ourselves into tradition we can realise this informed knowledge into the very midst of our livelihoods. Historical consciousness arises from being aware that we can control and change our livelihoods accordingly to the teachings of scripture. Indeed, Kant argues that 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

²⁶⁸ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 181.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 187.

²⁷⁰ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 156.

itself quite indifferent, and one can do with it what one wills. – (Historical faith is “dead, being alone...”) (Ak 6:111).²⁷¹ A social ethics arises from interpreting religious scripture and doctrines, just as Nishitani had attempted to interpret and reanimate the meaning of the Buddha’s death found in the Buddhist scripture by asking “what in the world the death of Buddha is supposed to mean”.²⁷² Only when religious knowledge appeals to what is “engraved in our hearts” (Ak 6:104)²⁷³ can our moral dispositions be enlivened and the uncertainty of our present situation may be resolved with conscience.

Kant’s notion of the visible church can give expression to the public form of moral obligation found in a theory of Buddhist community. Although the Buddhist faith is only one historical faith, it is an ecclesiastical form that can be the source of a scholarly public. Only in its universal communicability can the Buddhist (ecclesiastical) faith be suitable to be a visible church. For the visible church is a work done by human beings alone, however, we are not alone in this endeavour as we must work together as a whole species. For clarification, Kant is not saying that we should expect all visible churches to be united, for their historical systems are bound to be diverse (6:123-4).²⁷⁴²⁷⁵ Rather these visible churches, which Buddhism is only one historical faith, are united by a rational principle. This rational principle is the four marks of a visible church as well as being characterised by its public accessibility.

Establishing a visible church requires that we first become worthy of receiving cooperation from God before we can even hope that He can somehow make up for our lack of a moral disposition. Even though a Buddhist faith does not have the concept of God, to know what God is or what God does is irrelevant to our moral dispositions. Simply possessing free choice is enough, because Buddhists can choose to live a life which can be the result of a confirmation of experience about the moral teachings found in their historical faith. A theory of Buddhist community must have a form of universal communicability, as Nishitani explains that it must have a historical consciousness as well as a social ethics.

²⁷¹ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 143.

²⁷² Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 155.

²⁷³ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 138.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 152-3.

²⁷⁵ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 323.

Reinterpreting the meanings of Buddhist scriptures, such as the Buddha's death, can give relevance and meaning into the context of our present situation – that is, the way we live our lives. To bridge the gap between Buddhist organisations and the general public, a theory of Buddhist community must consider being a *scholarly public* (Ak 6:166)²⁷⁶ to the unlearned and ignorant. Only in this sense, can Buddhism truly be a universal religious community for its moral teachings can reach all kinds of people. Yet a visible church must be based on consent as well as being free from coercion and fear of the other (both internally and externally),

...the so-called religious controversies that have so often shaken the world and spattered it with blood have never been anything other than [internal] squabbles over church faith; and the oppressed person complained in fact not that he was prevented from adhering to his religion (for no external power can do this), but that he was not permitted to pursue it publicly." (Ak 6:108)²⁷⁷

We are all equals when we are all *servants* of the church as well as when we all share a common end. What is at stake for a theory of Buddhist community is to make this moral idea a public knowledge.

Nishitani poses a problem in Buddhism, "there was something in Buddhism preventing it from grasping"²⁷⁸ the theory of the sangha as something essential to the Buddhist teachings. The answer, for Nishitani, is conscience which says "this is it!"²⁷⁹ Since conscience, as a knowledge realised in our livelihoods, is a task left in the care of members of a Buddhist community. To become certain in one's livelihood is to prepare as much as possible in being worthy of becoming a visible church by working with others. Only by becoming a visible church can we even hope that God has the power to unify good-hearted human beings into a single universal community. There are many historical faiths, but they are all unified by a single set of rational principles. It is these rational principles that make historical faiths publicly accessible and universal. Kant admits that:

²⁷⁶ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 187.

²⁷⁷ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 118.

²⁷⁸ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 59.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 54.

...though human beings 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 (Ak 6:105).²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 138-9.

Chapter 3: Self-awareness as the ground for a universal religious community

3.1 Nishitani's response to Kantian autonomy

In section IX of his chapter “Sunyata and History”,²⁸¹ Nishitani responds to Kant’s notion of autonomy. It is only the one instance that he responds to Kant in a detail discussion.

Although Nishitani does not respond directly to Kant’s notions of the invisible and visible church, he does mention and respond to Kant’s kingdom of ends. Kantian scholar Scott R. Stroud claims that Kant’s notion of the kingdom of ends is functionally equivalent to the invisible church and an ethical community,²⁸² they all hold a common idea that agents are to base their duties on their own free choice²⁸³ and cannot be coerced by any external laws of a political community. In investigating Nishitani’s response to Kantian autonomy, I want to exclude questions of how the invisible/visible church are connected to the Kantian idea of a kingdom of ends. This is because such a task in connecting these two ideas will involve familiarity of Kant’s practical philosophy before his work in *Religion*. He had said in the second preface of *Religion* one does not need to be familiar with his critical philosophy but require a “common morality” (Ak 6:14).²⁸⁴ This investigation is to be framed by Stroud’s idea that Kant’s kingdom of ends, invisible/visible church, and an ethical community all function to encourage free choice in some capacity. Freedom (as an effect) and God (as an idea) need be only confirmed by experience, so the idea that we possess free choice can be *communicated* to everyone and become publicly accessible (Ak 6:138).²⁸⁵ This is the role of natural religion and scholarly religion which we discussed in the last chapter. Although there are important differences between an ethical community and a visible church, the former relies only on the doctrines of reason while the latter requires public accessibility through a historical faith. Much of this has already been explained in section 1.3. Nishitani

²⁸¹ Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt, ed. James W. Heisig (California: University of California Press, 1982), 272-80.

²⁸² Stroud, “Rhetoric and moral progress in Kant’s ethical community,” 329.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 328.

²⁸⁴ Kant, *Religion within the boundaries of bare reason*, 13.

²⁸⁵ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 164.

never talks about Kant's theory of the church and only responds to Kant's practical philosophy. There has been an insubstantial amount of literature regarding Nishitani's response to Kant's practical philosophy. The literatures that do concern both Kant and Nishitani have been written almost twenty-five years ago. I believe a further investigation into these two figures will be fruitful in better understanding the role of the sangha in a Kantian framework of a theory of the church.

There are two responses to Kant which Nishitani provides in section IX, the first response is concerned with Kant's idea of autonomy.²⁸⁶ He describes Kant's idea of autonomy as the standpoint of the person seeing themselves as an end in themselves which Nishitani calls the "autotelic" self.²⁸⁷ The autotelic self is never treated as a means, because the person's free choice comes from an internal incentive that is voluntary rather from an external coercion. This can be seen in the difference between an ethical and political community which we discussed in section 1.3. Nishitani also sees that Kant's idea of autonomy is concerned with a community of autotelic individuals whose individual ends are shared with the ends of the other. The forming of a community of a people as autotelic individuals, Nishitani says, consists in a "commonwealth of ends".²⁸⁸ The term "commonwealth of ends" refers to the "kingdom of ends" in the "Groundwork of The metaphysics of morals (1785)" (Ak 4:433).²⁸⁹ Nishitani does not explain the connection between the autotelic self and the commonwealth of ends, but merely states Kant's position on autonomy. To see the connection between the autotelic person and Kant's idea of a kingdom of ends, one needs to be familiar with Kant's practical philosophy. In Kant's *Religion* the autotelic self is represented by an individual who self-legislates the law of the church (the moral law), but the key difference between a kingdom of ends and a church is that forming an ethical community has a special duty (*sui generis*) (Ak 6:97).²⁹⁰ This special duty is the duty to form ethical communities. Individuals alone cannot form ethical communities, but only can when the individual has the perspective of humanity as a whole working toward the

²⁸⁶ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 273.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 273-276.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 273-4.

²⁸⁹ Kant, "Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals," 83.

²⁹⁰ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 132.

formation of an ethical community. Nishitani describes a commonwealth of ends as a “reciprocity”²⁹¹ of autotelic individuals. Yet he does not make a claim about the special duty of humanity. In the third piece (*Stück*) of *Religion*, Kant argues that an ethical community cannot be realised except in the form of a visible church (Ak 6:100).²⁹² Nishitani’s response to Kantian autonomy is only concerned with Kant’s practical philosophy rather than Kant’s notions of a special duty or even the invisible/visible church in *Religion*.

Since Nishitani’s response to Kant remains within Kant’s practical philosophy, his response is limited within the confines of free choice made by individuals rather than viewing the ends of humanity as a common good. For humanity has a special duty to form ethical communities. Nishitani does not mention the special duty of humanity that is found in Kant’s third piece on *Religion*. His concern is whether Kant’s idea can truly express a deeper sense of “subjective self-awareness”.²⁹³ He respects Kant’s approach to the autonomous self and the kingdom of ends for their capacity to give rise to a sense of “respect for the dignity of person in oneself and in others”.²⁹⁴ He also respects their capacity to give rise to “brotherly love”.²⁹⁵ Nishitani believes that a deeper sense of self-awareness is only to be found when the individual becomes a thing that is a means to all others.²⁹⁶ He provides a story about T’ang Zen master Joshu to describe this notion of being a thing to others,

A monk said to Joshu, “The stone bridge of Joshu is widely renowned, but coming here I find only a set of steppingstones and do not see the stone bridge.” The monk said, “What is the stone bridge? Joshu said, “It lets donkeys cross over and horses cross over.”^{297,298}

The individual who becomes a thing to the other is described by Nishitani as being like a stone bridge, by allowing others to cross over one must be “as low and modest as a

²⁹¹ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 274.

²⁹² Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 135.

²⁹³ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 273.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 274.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 274.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 274-7.

²⁹⁷ Katsuki Sekida, *Two Zen Classics* (1977): 291, quoted in Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness* (California: University of California Press, 1982), 273. This is Case 52 of the *Hekiganroku*.

²⁹⁸ Katsuki Sekida, *Two Zen Classics* (New York: Weatherhill, 1977), 291.

bridge”.²⁹⁹ He describes this as the standpoint of laying oneself beneath all things and it is a practice of everyday life.³⁰⁰ John C. Maraldo, scholar of Nishitani’s philosophy, clarifies this point. He says Nishitani does not distinguish between us and them. There is no willful self that acts toward an end.³⁰¹ Practice, or as Nishitani calls it the “action of non-action”,³⁰²³⁰³ is to consider “clouds moving across the sky, water flowing, leaves falling, and blossoms scattering are all forms of practice... Clouds moving and water flowing are themselves without will and intent, and are not aimed at any goal”.³⁰⁴ Nishitani is not collapsing the ontological distinction between natural occurrences and human beings because a human being does not cease to become a human being. It is rather a redirection of attention toward the activity itself such as water flowing, or clouds moving. Only in this redirection of attention can a deeper sense of self-awareness rise. Nishitani is also moving away from a “willful self”,³⁰⁵ because willing implies an instrumental way of thinking which normally associates practice with the idea that “we apply what we think to what we do. And what we do usually has a certain intent or goal”.³⁰⁶ To become a thing as a means to all others is a practice with an absence of a will, where there are no ends directed.³⁰⁷ In the practice, the self considers itself and others “just as they are”³⁰⁸³⁰⁹ and without exception. There is no instrumental value in becoming a thing as a means to others, no goal and no end, only a non-instrumental practice that gets “in touch with the reality of things”,³¹⁰ and sets up the place for things and others “just as they are”.³¹¹ He characterises this practice as the “action of non-action”.³¹² This standpoint of the person as a thing to others will fly in the face of Kantian autonomy, for Kant requires the human being to have a will to self-legislate and be

²⁹⁹ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 276.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 276.

³⁰¹ John C. Maraldo, “Practice, Samādhi, Realization: Three Innovative Interpretations by Nishitani Keiji,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 25, no. 1 (1992): 9.

³⁰² Maraldo, “Practice, Samādhi, Realization,” 11.

³⁰³ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 277.

³⁰⁴ Maraldo, “Practice, Samādhi, Realization,” 9-10.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 9.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 9-10.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 11.

³⁰⁹ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 279.

³¹⁰ Maraldo, “Practice, Samādhi, Realization,” 10-1.

³¹¹ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 279.

³¹² *Ibid*, 277.

subject to the moral law (Ak 4:431).³¹³ Nevertheless, Nishitani believes that self-awareness is to be found only when the self becomes a means to all others.

Nishitani's second response to Kant is concerned with the idea of self-love. His concern is whether self-love can express a deeper sense of self-awareness in the subject. In *Religion*, Kant understands self-love to be about incentives of action which come from comparing ourselves to others such as in *rivalry* and *jealousy* (Ak 6:27).³¹⁴ The individual is always in a state of anxiety around others since self-love is a natural incentive to *gain worth in the opinion of others* (Ak 6:27).³¹⁵³¹⁶ For Kant, self-love can never be the source for a moral incentive and for autonomy. A deeper sense of self-awareness, Nishitani argues, comes from the idea that we love the other as oneself. He calls this "non-differentiating love"³¹⁷ where the other is loved "just as he is: loving him as a sinner if he be a sinner, as an enemy if he be an enemy".³¹⁸ He calls this religious love, where in the Buddhist faith it is called compassion (*karuna*) while in Judeo-Christian religions it is called *agape*.³¹⁹ Commentator Elizabeth Gallu touches on Nishitani's concept of compassion, where she describes it as a way to bring the notion of service into awareness. "Suffering is beyond differentiation. It is not a question of my suffering or your suffering it is the nature of suffering to permeate us both".³²⁰ She argues that Nishitani's project in *Religion and Nothingness* is to deconstruct the conceptions of self to bring about the notion of a place that brings forth the possibility to see things and others "just as they are".³²¹ The self that is able to do this, for Nishitani, is called a compassionate self.³²² Loving others as oneself means to love the other "each and every one without exception".³²³ Loving others as oneself and loving the other "just as they are" may be conflictual conceptions, but Nishitani does not distinguish the self and

³¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. p. 81.

³¹⁴ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 75.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, 75.

³¹⁶ Wood, "Religion, Ethical community, and the struggle against evil," 127.

³¹⁷ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 278.

³¹⁸ *Ibid*, 278.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 274.

³²⁰ Elizabeth Gallu, "Śūnyatā, Ethics, and Interconnectedness," in *The Religious Philosophy of Nishitani Keiji*, ed. Taitetsu Unno (Asian Humanities Press, 1989), 195.

³²¹ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 279.

³²² Gallu, "Sunyata, Ethics, and Interconnectedness," 195.

³²³ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 278.

other since there is no will to set ends that one normally finds in instrumental understanding of practice.³²⁴ It is precisely in this deep sense of self-awareness, he argues, can there be a special relationship with every other person. He calls this special relationship by his own term “circuminsessional” (*egoteki*)³²⁵ which means a reciprocal divine relationship that he believes closely approximates to the relationship “between the divine persons of the Trinity”.³²⁶ This idea of loving the other as oneself, encompasses not only the relationships between human beings, but also of “all living beings... all things”.³²⁷ For Nishitani, Kantian autonomy is not enough since it considers the shared ends of other willing rational beings. He is mainly talking about a freedom of the will³²⁸ – free choice. A circuminsessional relationship involves finding one’s own ends in all living beings and all things even for those without wills, but at the same time “without ceasing to be a human being”.³²⁹ For the person view themselves as a thing that is a means for all other things. It seems paradoxical, how can a person be a thing yet not ceases to be a human being? The answer appears to be that Nishitani is redirecting human awareness to the idea of the “non-duality of self and other”,³³⁰ where there is no distinction between self and other because this is the place where one’s self-awareness is at a deeper ground.

The conception of self-awareness that lies at the basis of a circuminsessional relationship has bewildered some readers of Nishitani, who attempt to situate his thought in the field of “the web of dutiful relations”.³³¹ One such commentator, David Little, explains that Nishitani’s idea of self-awareness has compromised the foundation for action in Kantian autonomy.³³² The web of dutiful relations are assumptions of duties between the self and the other that are indubitable and incontestable, examples include: “duties of truth-telling, keeping promises, refraining from cruelty and gratuitous injury, assisting others in need,

³²⁴ Maraldo, “Practice, Samādhi, Realization,” 9-10.

³²⁵ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 294-5.

³²⁶ *Ibid*, 294-5.

³²⁷ *Ibid*, 280.

³²⁸ *Ibid*, 277.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, 280.

³³⁰ *Ibid*, 280.

³³¹ David Little, “Ethics in Religion and Nothingness,” in *The Religious Philosophy of Nishitani Keiji*, ed. Taitetsu Unno (Asian Humanities Press, 1989), 183.

³³² Little, “Ethics in Religion and Nothingness,” 183.

relieving suffering, etc..."³³³ These in-built predispositions can be the grounding for an analysis that attempts to deduce their ethical significance.³³⁴ Kant's "Groundwork of The metaphysics of morals (1785)"³³⁵ is based on an analysis of these practical assumptions, to develop an ethical theory that represents the constitutive grounding of a system of duties (Ak 4:431).³³⁶ Little argues that:

While I understand what Nishitani is saying (the formulations are intelligible in one sense), *I do not understand what they mean for action, and especially for the web of dutiful relations*. In having these deeply altered dispositions, does one *act* differently? How? In what way? Does one still honor one's commitments? Does one honor them in a different way? How? Does one still refrain from cruelty? How? Why? Does one still protect the innocent from arbitrary abuse by others? How? Why?³³⁷

Little believes that Nishitani, by setting the self as a thing to others, is radicalising Kant's view "by going Kant one better",³³⁸ and by doing so Nishitani has dissolved the basis for a Kantian theory of action and duties.

Although Nishitani does not consider notions of an invisible/visible church in his response to Kantian autonomy, he does provide the basis for a connection between Kantian autonomy and his idea of practice.³³⁹ This basis is a deeper sense of self-awareness. For Nishitani is not simply deconstructing Kantian autonomy, in section IX he is attempting to find a ground for ethics rooted in a deeper sense of self-awareness. Comparatively, he does admit Kantian autonomy expresses a form of "subjective self-awareness"³⁴⁰ because the person recognises themselves as a place for ethical actions and its actualisation. He also admits the importance of a person's inextricable connection with the ends of others which characterises the commonwealth of ends.³⁴¹ However, Nishitani believes that there is a

³³³ Little, "Ethics in Religion and Nothingness," 182.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 183.

³³⁵ Kant, "Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals," 83.

³³⁶ Immanuel Kant, "Ground of The metaphysics of morals (1785)."

³³⁷ Little, "Ethics in Religion and Nothingness," 185.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, 185.

³³⁹ Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 277.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 273.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, 273.

connection between individuals and others that run deeper than the commonwealth of ends. Answering Little's questions will require further investigation which is outside the scope of this thesis. Little's concern is genuine for the action of a compassionate self seems to compromise dignity. A self being a thing to others that is a means to all others appears to breach the dignity of the human. For Kant dignity is not a price value that is replaceable but an absolute one which "admits of no equivalent" (Ak 4:434).³⁴² A human being, for Kant, can never be a means for the other. A person is an end in themselves. Nishitani's view on the self as a thing is based on the idea that there is no distinction between self and others, and self and things. Although not pursued here further, I suggest this non-duality of self and other can exist even in a Kantian theory of autonomy. What is innovative in section IX is that Nishitani does not reserve the practice of action of non-action solely within the activity of clouds moving or water flowing,³⁴³ he responds to Kantian autonomy because Kantian autonomy is one understanding out of many where the practice of the action of non-action is exercised. Buddhism, insofar as Nishitani is concerned, should pay attention to "the community of fellow men and women sharing the same faith"³⁴⁴ that lies at the base of Buddhist precepts. He thinks Buddhism should see a special fellowship with others, based on the non-duality of self and other, which form the core of a Buddhist community. Only in this sense can it overcome the gap between Buddhist organisations and the general public. This is similar to Kant's view of the special duty to form ethical communities. Human beings are drawn to the idea that there is a special duty (*sui generis*) to form ethical communities. It is apparent that self-awareness is the basis of this special duty, because it brings forth the idea that we ourselves are not alone in our ends that we share with others. In Nishitani's words, the individual is always already in an inextricable connection with the other. In a Kantian church, this relationship is represented by humanity's cooperation with a moral lawgiver as well as other human beings. I believe a further investigation into this matter will be required. For Nishitani does not talk about Kant's theory of the church. Nishitani's response to Kantian autonomy will have to extend its arguments in offering a Kantian theory of the church a better understanding on a deeper sense of self-awareness. I

³⁴² Kant, "Ground of The metaphysics of morals (1785)," 84.

³⁴³ Maraldo, "Practice, Samādhi, Realization," 10.

³⁴⁴ Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 50.

believe such an investigation will be fruitful in finding a deeper sense of self-awareness as the basis for a theory of a universal religious community.

3.2 Conclusion

Nishitani was concerned with what Buddhism was lacking, so he looked towards what Buddhism could become if it paid attention towards the human being's fundamental way of life. It is the moral lifestyle that underlies Buddhist precepts that is more important.

Overall, this thesis has accomplished a reading of the Buddhist faith through evaluating core rational principles. These principles afford Buddhism a theory of Buddhist community which unifies members of a Buddhist organisation as well as the general public. A theory of Buddhist exhibits qualities of public accessibility and universality.

In this thesis I have not thoroughly investigated the scenario of church members who serve God by being passive.³⁴⁵ They become passive when they prioritise historical faith over a moral rational faith as the core of their religious convictions. Prioritising historical faith over moral faith is not a service to God. It is called pseudoservice of God (Ak 6:167-8).³⁴⁶ To serve God is by committing oneself to a moral lifestyle. A pseudoservice, on the other hand, is when members prioritise statutory laws as the supreme condition in serving God in a church (Ak 6:167-8).³⁴⁷ Instead of focusing on a moral lifestyle, these members of a pseudoservice believe that honouring God through statutory laws will make them good. This is why Kant believes that internal squabbles over church faith happen, which have become the "so-called religious controversies that have so often shaken the world and spattered it with blood" (Ak 6:108).³⁴⁸ Rather the focus of this thesis is a Kantian reading of a Buddhist community – that is, to find unifying principles which underlie a Buddhist faith and to express a theory of Buddhist community which can be publicly accessible and universal.

³⁴⁵ Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, 436.

³⁴⁶ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 188.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 188.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 118.

For Nishitani, a theory of Buddhist community will have to bridge the gap between Buddhist organisations and the general public. Statutory laws of scripture and tradition merely serve as a source of instruction. It is us and our reason who must figure out the principles of reason that dwell within these laws. In the terminology of a Buddhist faith, only in a moral interpretation of the dharma (teachings of the Buddha) can one's lifestyle be in accordance with the law that is "engraved"³⁴⁹ in one's heart. The goal is to improve our inner dispositions. An achievement of Kant's theory of the church is that it allows us to solve the issue of the gap between Buddhist organisations and the general public. The Buddhist faith can be suitable to be a visible church because Buddhism has the quality of being a scholarly religion. Buddhism is publicly accessible to all kinds of people. The unlearned and the vulnerable may access these moral teachings because scriptural scholars introduce these statutory laws through the appeal of popular customs and beliefs as well as history and language. While those who possess practical reason may convince themselves of the moral truth of religion. Kant's notions of the invisible and visible church give expression to a theory of Buddhist community. Only in this sense, does it bridge the gap between Buddhist organisations and the general public. And only in this sense, is it called universal because its teachings are accessible to everyone.

Both Nishitani and Kant appear to offer two different approaches to a theory of religious community. Although they both emphasise the role of the interpretation of scripture, namely, for Kant it is a scholarly religion and for Nishitani it is a social ethics. Practical reason is not to be found at the basis of Nishitani's idea of a religious community. Rather, the basis of a religious community for Nishitani lies within a transformation of self-awareness, while Kant's theory of the church is based on both reason's own interest as practical reason and the means of a historical faith in bringing about a moral lifestyle. According to Kant, the self-authentication of religious scripture found in historical faith is based on reason seeing doctrines of reason that carry their own proof (Ak 6:159).³⁵⁰ For the person who is convinced by practical reason finds that the religious scriptures already appeal to the moral law within us, "for example, to hate in one's heart is tantamount to

³⁴⁹ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 138.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, 181.

killing” (Ak 6:159).³⁵¹ However, Nishitani’s idea of conscience is not based on a priori reasoning whereby one’s reason provides itself concepts that are found in a historical faith. Conscience is grounded in a direct experience, for “we cannot know whether water is cool or warm unless we taste it with our tongue”.³⁵² This direct experience is a knowledge acquired by one’s self. So, it seems that natural religion is not found within Nishitani’s theory of religious community. In terms of scholarly religion, however, there does not appear to be any conflict between Kant’s and Nishitani’s theories of religious community. Concepts are supplied by religious scripture which tells us about a figure who has lived a particular way of life. For a Buddhist community, a social ethics can be found in a Buddhist theology by interpreting the meaning of the Buddha’s death and situating that in our own livelihoods and present situation. A historical consciousness is an idea that is agreeable to Kant’s idea that all that is required by God (as an idea) in a church is that servants becoming well-pleasing to Him only by “conduct of a morally good life” (Ak 6:103).³⁵³ For, a historical consciousness focuses on self-awareness where the knowledge from the dharma can be realisable in our livelihoods. It appears that Kant’s and Nishitani’s theories of religious community represent two different approaches in convincing individuals of the moral truth of religion. One through practical reason, the other by direct experience. However, they can be united by the fact that historical faiths serve to satisfy the natural need of human beings. Human beings have the natural desire to confirm their religious experience and convictions by what reason already knows concerning the moral law of the heart.

Universal communicability is the main characteristic of a theory of religious community. For Nishitani, a theory of Buddhist community must consider a historical consciousness and a social ethics to be universally communicable. While for Kant, natural religion and scholarly religion are two forms of *external communication* (Ak 6:155)³⁵⁴ which serve to convince people of moral truths of religion. A religious community that exhibits universal communicability shows a sign that it can be suitable to be a visible church. A unification of

³⁵¹ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 181.

³⁵² Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, 57.

³⁵³ Kant, “Religion within the boundaries of mere reason,” 137.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 155.

all visible churches is not to be expected, for the diversity of visible churches that arises from different congregations have distinct historical systems of faith. Kant's theory of the church provides a guiding rational principle, the invisible church, that serves to unify the conditions possible for a historical faith to become publicly accessible and universally communicable. This is because we do not know what God may do for us, but we do know that we must work together to promote the highest good as a common good to all. It is up to the human being to work towards being worthy of fulfilling an end that cannot be theoretically knowable, and to which we require others in this endeavour. Human beings as *a species* must work together to form visible churches to fulfil the ultimate condition for the highest good as a common good to all.

Although not pursued here, I believe a cross-cultural investigation will be fruitful in understanding the role of relationships in forming the basis of a religious community. Nishitani can teach us about Kant's views on relationships which have not been within the scope of this thesis. In *Religion* Kant provides the analogy of the church as a household (family) (Ak 6:102),³⁵⁵ and Palmquist suggests that *friendship*³⁵⁶ is a good metaphor for the unifying aspect of the church. Nishitani, on the other hand, considers no distinction between self and other. This absence of a distinction reminds the individual that they are always already in a relationship with others. Such cross-cultural investigation has much promise because Kant and Nishitani represent two figures who have dealt with different approaches to historical faiths but have reached a similar conclusion on the role of religious scripture, and how a universal religious community is to be formed. Both Kant and Nishitani agree that any theory of religious community needs to consider its basis on relationships. Cooperation is the hallmark of a theory of religious community, whether it is the relationship between the self and the other, or the self and God. These relationships drive us to do our duties as well as carry us toward our shared end – the highest good. Kant's and Nishitani's ideas of religious community both imply that we are never in shortage of friends who can guide us toward the common good.

³⁵⁵ Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason," 136.

³⁵⁶ Palmquist, "Kant's model for building the true church: Transcending 'might makes right'," 90.

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